

**TOWARDS A CRITICAL EDITION OF THE SHORT
FICTION OF SARAH GRAND, PART 2.**

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the
University of the West of England, Bristol for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy.**

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the West of England, Bristol.**

August 2015

CONTENTS

Editorial Procedures	2
Abbreviations	4
Our Manifold Nature	5
Preface	6
The Yellow Leaf	8
Eugenia	48
Ah Man	83
Kane, A Soldier Servant	90
Janey, A Humble Administrator	97
Boomellen	112
Emotional Moments	122
Preface	123
An Emotional Moment	128
From Dusk til Daybreak	135
A New Sensation	141
The Condemned Cell	150
The Baby's Tragedy	156
She was Silent	164
When the Door Opened...?	171
The Rector's Bane	177
The Wrong Road	183
The Butcher's Wife	190
The Man in the Scented Coat	198
The Undefinable	206
Variety	220
The Turning of the Worm	221
Vanity and Vexation	245
The Saving Grace	256
I Can't Explain It	260
A Thorough Change	270
One of the Olden Time	275
Josepha Recounts a Remarkable Experience	283
The Commandant	290

Editorial Procedures

My work towards a critical edition of Sarah Grand's short fiction uses as the copy-text the first edition in volume form of each of Grand's three short story collections: *Our Manifold Nature* (London: Heinemann, 1894), *Emotional Moments* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1908) and *Variety* (London: Heinemann, 1922). I have taken, as my definition of copy-text, that of Richard Altick and John J. Fenstermaker: the copy-text reproduces "verbatim and in its entirety, a single text that the editor considers to be the closest to the author's intention, with variant readings in other editions printed in footnotes" (*The Art of Literary Research* 69).

The majority of Grand's stories were published first in magazines and newspapers, many of which were revised before their subsequent appearance in book form. A comparison between the periodical texts and the book versions reveals that she made minor but significant alterations to a number of stories while making major changes to only a few. The variants between the periodical text and the book text have been clearly indicated in my annotations to the individual stories.

I have, therefore, made the assumption that the book version of the stories is the version that Grand felt most satisfactorily represented her intention in communicating with her audience. As no story manuscripts, page proofs or any other material indicating editorial decisions survives, either of the periodical or book versions, it would appear that Grand edited her own work.

Although *Our Manifold Nature* was published simultaneously as a Tauchnitz "Copyright Edition" by Bernard Tauchnitz, Leipzig, and in New York by Appleton in 1894 and *Emotional Moments* was also published simultaneously by Tauchnitz in 1908, the text in these editions is reproduced from the Heinemann and Hurst and Blackett editions. As the 1894 and 1908 editions of these and the 1922 edition of *Variety* have never been republished,

there have been no further opportunities for further changes to the text by either the author or editors.

Apart from silently correcting a few obvious typographical errors, in the form of accidentals, all the stories are faithfully transcribed from the book volumes. I have produced what D.C.Greetham terms a “diplomatic transcript” rather than a “type facsimile” (*Textual Scholarship: An Introduction* 351), adopting Grand’s spelling, punctuation, use of italics and capitalisation. I have, however, chosen a standard font, Times New Roman, for the titles and body of text, throughout, rather than reproduce the various type-faces of the copy-text. The type-sizes and lineation are uniform although do not correspond with those of the copy-text.

Abbreviations

Works by Sarah Grand

OMN = *Our Manifold Nature*. London: Heinemann, 1894

EM = *Emotional Moments*. London: Hurst and Blackett, 1908

V = *Variety*. London: Heinemann, 1922

THT = *The Heavenly Twins*. London: Heinemann, 1893

TBB = *The Beth Book*. 1897

Other Works

SSPSG = *Sex, Social Purity and Sarah Grand*. Ed. Ann Heilmann and Stephanie Forward. London: Routledge, 2000

WWD = *Women Who Did: Stories by Men and Women 1890-1914*. Ed. Angelique Richardson. London: Penguin, 2002

DM = *Darling Madam: Sarah Grand and Devoted Friend* by Gillian Kersley. London: Virago, 1983

Periodicals

PMM = *Pall Mall Magazine*

TB = *Temple Bar*

WAH = *Woman at Home*

WM = *The Windsor Magazine*

LR = *The Lady's Realm: An Illustrated Monthly Magazine*

TI = *The Idler*

EIM = *The English Illustrated Magazine*

TLM = *The London Magazine*

TLW = *The Lady's World*

OUR MANIFOLD NATURE

Preface

THESE stories are simply what they profess to be – studies from life of our manifold nature. They appeared originally in magazines, some of them in a more or less unsatisfactory condition, having been mutilated for convenience of space or in order to remove from them any idea of unusual import. Successful magazines dig deep grooves for themselves, and anything that does not fit into these is shunned as dangerous. Once established they become for the most part unprogressive, neither leading nor following, but continuing to offer us the kind of thing that pleased our parents. Consequently they cease to appeal to us, and finally expire in a resolute effort to resist any attempt to induce them to air the grievances, touch upon the interests, or meet the special demands generally of the present generation. Diffident young writers, full of the force which is carrying us onward and upward, and cruelly perplexed between what they perceive and what those in authority insist that they ought to be perceiving, crawl along in them on feet of lead until the restraint becomes unbearable, and then they break out on their own account in new directions, and their success proves to be the deathblow of their oppressors. The old order changeth in this as in all else. We are growing and learning to walk, and must have room to tumble about in; if those who are left to find out for themselves how to do it have the most falls, they are also the strongest eventually. Fiction has always been held to be at its best when it was true to life. To be true to life seems, therefore, to be the noblest ambition of an author; and this has led in our day to an effort to go beyond the mere semblance and to grasp the reality of life. But those who try it are immediately met with the objection that their work is inartistic. Fiction is found fault with because it is not fact, and fact because it is not fiction. It is the old story of the man, the boy, and the donkey. Personally, I think the only art worth cultivating is the art to be interesting. If a book is readable it is churlish to object to it because it has not been made so by methods which succeeded in somebody else's work. To "make school" is gratifying to the author as a proof of success, but all that imitators make is much monotony for the reader. A novel, it seems to me, should be like life itself – an unfolding, and not a regular structure; but, at the same time, I recognise that in many moods and to many minds only artificial regularity is acceptable. That form was the outcome of a day which we have not yet done with.

But there is one thing which strikes me as significant, and it may be instructive, with regard to these little essays of my own in the new direction, and that is, that it is not the embellishments, but the literal facts, which have been attacked by the critics as melodramatic and altogether impossible, as, for instance, in "The Yellow Leaf." There is no fiction whatever in Evangeline's story. It began, continued, and ended exactly as described, yet nearly every one has fallen foul of the conclusion as being utterly improbable, especially for the reasons which are shown to have led up to it. This would seem to indicate that, in order to be convincing, a study from life must be a garnished interpretation rather than a literal transcription. An actor has to paint his face to make it look natural in the glare of the footlights, and some analogous process must be resorted to by the writer who would produce the effect of life in his work. We are accustomed to the false and conventional in the world of art, as we are to the distorted figure of a fashionable woman, and, consequently, when truth and Nature are presented to us, they strike us at first as strange; we do not recognise them, and we do not like them. Art is constantly confounded with artificiality, because the difference between the two is subtle as that between the real and a good imitation. Writers are confident in themselves with regard to selection and arrangement, believing them to be merely matters of taste; and so they are; but taste itself has its two great divisions of good and bad, and opinions are constantly changing as to which is which, so that here again, with the best intentions, we are not only apt to be mistaken but misled. The conclusion comes to us, therefore, by process of elimination, that we have little for our guidance to lay hold of but

Preface

faith in ourselves. There is no finality in art. The heights which have already been reached may be revisited, but if these are inaccessible to us, there will always be others which we are at liberty to attempt of we choose.

These studies were an experiment, and they now appear for the first time unmutilated as well as carefully revised.

SARAH GRAND.

March 1894.

The Yellow Leaf

“The Yellow Leaf,” first published as “The Sere, The Yellow Leaf. A Study from Life” in *The Pall Mall Magazine* 1 (September 1893): 621-640; 1 (October 1893): 781-794; 2 (November 1893): 27-48. Chapters I-VI are published in the September edition; chapters VII-X in the October edition and chapters XI-XVI in the November edition.

Illustrated by W.H. Margetson.

The Pall Mall Magazine, edited by Lord Frederic Hamilton and Sir Douglas Straight, was launched in May 1893 with the intention of appealing to readers who would “support a periodical that aimed at ... a high and refined literary standard” (“Editorial Preface” (October 1893)). Its contributors included Thomas Hardy, Grant Allen, Rudyard Kipling, Walter Besant and Rider Haggard.

The following text is transcribed from *Our Manifold Nature*. London: Heinemann, 1894, 1-101.

“For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?”¹

PART 1

I

“THERE will be no one to see you off to-day, as I cannot go myself,” my mother said; “but I suppose if I send you to the station in the carriage you will be able to manage; and, now that you are out², the sooner you learn to look after yourself the better.”

“All right,” I replied confidently, under the impression that I had very little to learn. And so it happened that, on this particular occasion in my early girlhood, I found myself, with the most delightful sense of importance, travelling from London seawards, alone. The sensation was more than agreeable – it was ecstatic. On the way to the station I felt as if I had never been in a carriage before. I was looking at life from a new point of view, and the people in the streets seemed to see me as I saw myself – at least I fancied that their eyes expressed a different feeling for me from any that had ever shone on me before; but I did not try to translate it. Being pleased and happy myself, it seemed only natural that a pleased and happy expression should come into every face that was turned towards me.

Having arrived at the station, found my train, and secured a seat, I began to loiter up and down the long platform, ostensibly watching the people, but really, with the happy conceit of youth, absorbed in myself, as it appears to me now; yet it was not altogether conceit, but rather the blissful absence of that sense of comparison which comes later on with the chastening effect to show us our own unimportance. The sudden sense of freedom had revealed me to myself all out of focus, as it were, and magnified, as objects appear at first to one who has just recovered his sight; and I believe if I had done a portrait of myself at that moment I should have made myself seven feet high.

¹*“For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?”* (Luke 23.31).

²*“now that you are out”*: coming out in society and being presented at court usually took place at around the age of eighteen. This occasion, frequently celebrated with a ball, marked the transition from formal education to being available on the marriage market.

But pride goeth before a fall³, and I was brought up out of this happy state with a jerk which effectually upset the dignity of my demeanour. I had perceived that the train was in motion, and it flashed through my mind that it was being inconsiderate enough to depart without me. As it was the last one in the day that would suit my purpose, I made a desperate dash for a carriage door, and scrambled in, regardless of the howling officials on the platform who would have hindered me. In doing so I became aware of exactly the same performance taking place at the farther end of the compartment; it was as if I had caught a flying glimpse of myself in a mirror as I jumped on to the footboard, opened the door, and swung myself in, after the deliberate manner peculiar to guards on the Underground. But, as often happens, although I had seen the thing done, the fact did not rise from my sub-consciousness to the surface of my thoughts, in order to present itself for my consideration, for some time after I had taken my seat.

The train slid out of the dingy station, and now everything was of interest. I even strained my eyes to read the advertisements paraded on blank brick walls, corners of squalid houses, parapets and arches of railway bridges, any and everywhere, till my brain reeled.

But then came a glimpse of the river. The unpolluted summer air streamed in upon me. The summer sunshine, unthinned by smoke, lit up the landscape, sparked on the water, brightened the blue of the sky, whitened the clouds, reddened the roofs, intensified the green, and flooded my whole soul with another kind of joy in life, very different from that which I had just been experiencing. There had been excitement in the crowd, but here alone there was supreme content.

It was a torrid day; but Fate had befriended me, for it was a cushionless third-class compartment⁴ I had stormed, all open and airy, and also empty, as I at first supposed; but in this I was mistaken. There had been nobody visible to begin with, but, on looking across after a while, I was surprised to see a pair of bright dark eyes just appearing above the backs of the seats, at the farther end of the compartment. These eyes were fixed upon me in a confident way; and involuntarily I felt, the moment they met mine, that a flash of intelligence had passed between us. The immediate consequence was, that the owner of the eyes, a lanky, dark girl, got up, fixed a struggling bull pup under her arm, where she held it firmly in spite of its kicks and yells and snaps, clambered clumsily over the backs of the seats from her end of the compartment to mine, regardless of any display she might make of lean legs by the way, and sat down opposite to me.

“Two’s company,” she remarked oracularly.

“Quite so; but you were two to begin with,” I answered.

“Counting the bull pup,” she said, drawing the creature from under her arm as she spoke. “Isn’t he a beauty?” She held him up by his forelegs, and shook him playfully, addressing him the while in tender tones: “Look at um’s chin, and um’s legs how um bows; and look at um’s werry magnificent nose!”

But the puppy, evidently not appreciating these compliments, began again to kick and growl and snap impatiently, exercises which drew from his delighted mistress assurances that “he *was* a game un, den!” as she settled him comfortably upon her lap. He was already a formidable-looking creature, a brindle of exceptional beauty, judged, of course, by his own standard of excellence.

“I bought him,” the young lady proceeded, “to draw Aunt Marsh. I want to make her believe the outcome of Woman’s Rights is bull pups. But now I’m beginning to love him – ‘a beauty den!’ – for his own sake. What a nuisance it is metaphors will mix! I was just going to

³*pride goeth before a fall*: “Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall” (Prov.16.18).

⁴*a cushionless, third-class compartment*: Third class rail travel was abolished in 1956.

remark that Aunt Marsh is the kind of bull you must take by the horns if you would get on with her; and that's what I mean, only it isn't quite right, somehow. Now, my mother is sixty thousand times cleverer than Aunt Marsh, yet she gives in to her – they're sisters-in-law, you know – but I'm a generation in advance of my mother, thank goodness!"

"I ought to tell you," I observed, "that I believe I know your Aunt: Lady Marsh, is she not?"

She looked at me with a pitying smile. "Yes, that's the person," she answered. "But, now, do you suppose that I'm quite such an idiot as to express myself so freely to a stranger of whom I know nothing?"

"Well, you have the advantage of me, for I am quite sure I have never seen you before, nor have I ever heard of anything like you."

"Anything like me! Now, that's delicious. But you mean who am I? I can't abide that roundabout way of asking who a body is. But I'll tell you who I am, just because you're not egotistical."

"How have you discovered that I'm not egotistical?" I asked.

"Because you thought first of me rather than of what concerned yourself. Most people would have wanted to find out what I knew about them, and until I told them they wouldn't have taken any interest in me."

"But you haven't told me –"

"Oh, I'm Adalesa Shutt," she interrupted offhand. "Adalesa Shutt-up is the form it generally takes with the impolite. I may mention that my parents are responsible for the name. They still survive."

There was a pause after this, during which she hugged her brindle bull-dog absently, with her dark eyes fixed on a far-away point of the horizon.

While under the influence of her bright, sharp, slangy manner as she talked, I had supposed her to be about fifteen. She wore her dress short, and her hair hanging down her back in a thick plait, as girls of that age generally do; but now, as she sat silently contemplative, she looked older.

"But why should you 'draw' your aunt, as you call it?" burst from me involuntarily, as I watched her.

She turned upon me with her infectious smile. "It is the only possible attitude for me in her abode," she said – "a don't-care-came-to-be-hanged kind of attitude. I daren't be docile or affectionate, because I have to keep her at a distance, otherwise she would give me good advice. She *did* make me suffer the first time I stayed with her!"

"But –"

"Oh yes, I know all that," she put in impatiently. "She's the kindest woman in the world, you were going to say. Everybody says so. But just you observe! I would rather have a termagant to fight. One wouldn't be afraid of hurting her. But these soft, sweet women bruise so easily, they make you suffer all round. There are your nerves and your better nature both on the alert, while your good sense is being outraged, and your worst self is fighting to be up in opposition. Heaven help me from having to encounter a feather-bed woman!"

"But how did she make you suffer?"

"Oh – I'll show you when we arrive."

"How do you know I am going there?" I asked in surprise.

Again she looked at me, and laughed, but only repeated: "I'll show you when we get there. Mind you, I don't suffer now."

The train pulled up at a little country station as she spoke, and we both alighted. An open carriage was waiting outside for us.

“Ah, there is my friend Barkins,”⁵ Adalesa exclaimed, meaning the coachman. “I’m going to drive, Barkins.” (“Barkins bein’ willin’,” she added aside to me.)⁶

“You and John must go inside,” she further insisted, “because Mademoiselle here only sits on the box. She always travels third class, and sits on the box. Those are her ladyship’s orders. I have them here in my pocket” – and she slapped that receptacle.

The coachman hesitated, and looked at me as if for confirmation, but I preserved my gravity. The misstatement Adalesa had made with regard to my usual mode of travelling led me to infer that the rest of the story was rather more facetious than accurate; but I would not have betrayed her for the world. I wanted to see what next.

The coachman slowly descended from his box, keeping a wary eye on Adalesa all the time, as if he were seeking a sign for his guidance, or suspected firearms. As he descended on the one side, however, she scrambled up on the other, and when she had seated herself he handed her the reins. I had followed her on to the box, so that there was nothing now but for him and the footman to get into the carriage.

“You’d better put the luggage in too,” Adalesa suggested; and it was with a look of relief that the men complied. “Otherwise,” she whispered to me, “any one meeting the carriage, and seeing you and me on the box, driving the servants, might have mistaken us for a travelling lunatic asylum.”

“Not such a very great mistake, perhaps, after all,” I ventured.

“Oh, my dear, speak for yourself,” she promptly rejoined; “as for me, there’s a method, you know.”

She put the bull pup between her feet as she spoke, and tightened the reins; and then we were off – not at a wild gallop, as I quite expected, but at that rapid, exhilarating trot at which only a good whip can keep a good pair of horses. I understood the coachman’s easy acquiescence better now. It was evident that the girl was accustomed to drive. She had that negligent look and attitude, and apparently careless way of holding the reins, which betoken mastery of the art. The road itself she scarcely seemed to see. Her eyes wandered away from it on all sides, and at that moment one would have said they were dreamy eyes, seeking sharp contrasts of sunshine and shadow less than mystical effects of dimness and distance.

The drive left impressions in my mind of a dusty road with heavy frondage of ferns by the wayside, all drooping, as though wearied and reposing from the ardent summer heat. Then there came a fertile land, well wooded; the sheen of a copper beech; low hills lifting a belt of sombre pines up to the azure of the sky; the grey-white wool of sheep against the green of grass; the reflection of indolent cattle standing ankle-deep in a pool; the heavy foliage on overhanging boughs; bracken on the banks, and wild flowers everywhere. Adalesa pointed out two objects of interest with her whip:

“Those chimneys there in the wood – you can see the smoke above the trees – that is the house. And there, beyond, don’t you see? that shining line, that is the sea – the sea!” She drew in her breath as if the very word were a joy to her. But presently she burst out again in her usual way:

“I should think you feel like a figure in a farce,” she said, on seeing me glance behind at the servants sitting solemnly with folded arms and their backs to the horses, opposite our trunks, which arrogantly occupied the other seat.

Then we entered the chase, and began to catch glimpses of a great house among the trees. Some places have an aspect of self-denial impressed upon every feature: as you approach they seem to insist that you shall observe the economies they have had to practise;

⁵ “my friend Barkins”: Grand’s readers would know that this is a near-direct allusion to the character of the fond carrier, Barkis, in Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield* (1850), ch.5.

⁶ In *OMN* brackets are inserted to emphasise that the remark is an aside, aimed at the narrator.

but this was just the opposite. There was a self-indulgent, spick-and-span, affluent air about everything.

“Oh,” Adalesa exclaimed, “I begin to feel feather bedding about, don’t you? Nasty unwholesome stuffy thing, feather bedding. Aunt Marsh is by way of softening me, rubbing off the rough edges, don’t you know. Just you watch!”

II

LADY MARSH must have heard the crunch of the carriage wheels as we drew up at the door, for she came hurrying down to meet us; but the men-servants had hopped out alertly, and we ourselves had descended from the box before she appeared, so that I doubt if she ever knew how we had come.

“Do come in, dears!” she exclaimed. “Come to the drawing-room and have some tea. Evangeline is out. She will be so sorry. She had to go for a ride, but of course she expected to be back in time, only one can’t always calculate. Dear children! I am so glad to see you. Why, you seem to have grown, Adalesa. You are certainly taller and – and slimmer.”

“Longer and lankier,” Adalesa translated cheerfully.

“But isn’t your dress just a little short, dearest, for your age?” Lady Marsh ventured in the gentlest way, when we were seated. She was known as “a *sweet* woman,” “one of those whom it is restful to recall” and I was not at all pleased to find that the seed of corruption, the trick of absurdly associating her with feather beds, had taken root in my mind; but it had, and there it remains.

“Long dresses!” Adalesa ejaculated: “no, thank you! I know what is expected of long dresses.”

“Dignity, is it not, dear?” her aunt ventured, with a deprecating smile.

“Yes,” Adalesa groaned; “and dignity, they say, is a mysterious carriage of the body to cover defects of the mind.”

Lady Marsh sat down at the tea-table and began to pour out tea. “But, you see, dear, men say such things,” she replied in her gentle way.

“Ah – men!” Adalesa drawled. “You see, I haven’t made up my mind to like men yet – a man perhaps, eventually – but *men!* too conceited, you know.”

“Dear child! what do *you* know about men?”

“Absolutely nothing,” was the frank rejoinder; “and that’s why I wear short dresses. I want to study man, and he only shows himself to short frocks. He’s off guard with them. But I’ll find him out! My angles fit me for the task. Thank heaven for my angles! No man who looks at me will think of me as a young lady, that most awful of human weaknesses.”

“I don’t like to hear you talk in that flippant way, dear,” her aunt deprecated. “The man is the head of the woman, you know.”

“Yes, sometimes,” said Adalesa, judicially, “and sometimes he isn’t, because the woman is a long way ahead of him. But the rule is much of a muchness, I believe.”

“Well, then, it would be a case of two heads are better than one in a household,” her aunt answered, good-humouredly.

“Or too many cooks spoil the broth – you never know,” came the ready response. “But where’s my pup?” she broke off; then rushed from the room, claiming that she’d forgotten him.

“That child’s sharpness is quite uncanny,” Lady Marsh remarked when she had disappeared. “But, oh dear, it is all so terrible – so very wrong-headed, you know! And” – stooping over to speak in an undertone, as if the matter were not quite delicate – “I am afraid it is all my poor sister’s fault. She is so sadly what they call ‘advanced’ – woman’s rights, the suffrage, short hair, and all that, you know.”

Lady Marsh spoke in a confidential tone, very flattering to a young girl from a woman of her age and station, and also flattering in that it was natural to infer from it that she thought I had been brought up in a superior manner.

Adalesa returned with the bull pup under her arm. "Isn't he *sweet*?" she demanded, putting him down and making him run towards her aunt.

"No!" Lady Marsh exclaimed, drawing her skirts together lest he should touch her – "anything but sweet. Oh! do take him away! How could you bring such a dreadful creature here?"

"Dreadful creature!" Adalesa repeated in an injured tone; then picking up her grotesque pet she hugged him like a mother whose babe has just been insulted. "And I *thought* – Well, if it is *womanly* to be so hard-hearted, I'd rather *not* be womanly."

"My dear child," Lady Marsh cried in consternation, "what have I done? You don't expect me to like that dreadful creature? I should be ashamed to have it seen about the house. Who ever heard of a gentlewoman petting such a –"

Adalesa uttered a little scream. "Don't – don't say nasty things about him. I shall hate – *any one* – who doesn't appreciate him." She drew herself up, glanced at me, and walked haughtily out of the room.

"Well!" Lady Marsh exclaimed for the second time. "Now you see, my dear, what comes of this nonsense – taking women out of their sphere and all that!"

"Do you mean," I began, "that you think a fondness for bull pups –" But here I checked myself, for I perceived that I was inadvertently playing into the hands of the wicked Adalesa.

On my way upstairs to dress for dinner, I discovered that young person's dark head in a doorway, round which she was peering. "Come in and kiss my pup," she said persuasively, looking at me with languishing eyes.

"Tell me," I said, "how much of your late misconduct was by way of 'drawing' your aunt, and how much was –"

"Innate cussedness?" she suggested.

"Innate cussedness!" I gravely repeated.

"Oh – you pays your money *et cetera*," she answered easily. "But I'm dressed and you're not," she proceeded; "and you're late. Let me go to your room and help you."

I led the way, smiling a little to myself as I pictured the sort of help I might expect from her; but I soon found I was utterly mistaken. I had imagined her awkward and inefficient, but found her deftness itself, and, what is more, she was kind. It was loving service that she did me when she laughed at some inartistic arrangement of ornaments I had devised for my hair, threw the artificial things aside, and cleverly replaced them with fresh and fragrant flowers. And all the time how she talked!

"When I first saw you to-day, I thought you were older than I am," she said, "but it seems you are younger. You say such wise things, though, and look so grave, it's easy to be mistaken. But now I see you are only a babe with a big head, and you want a lot of attention. You'll have to go through a period of feather-bedasia, and you'll suffer; but don't be disheartened. Just do as I do. Be vulgar, buy a bull pup, and chatter."

"I don't in the least see what I'm to suffer from," I protested. "Your aunt is charming."

"Yes," she rejoined; "didn't I *warn* you that she was?"

"And as for your cousin Evangeline –"

"Now stop," she interrupted. "I won't let you commit yourself to *that* stupid fallacy. Evangeline isn't charming. I am the reaction from feather-bedasia; she is the consequence of it; and she's a pig."

"I don't agree with you at all," I answered decidedly; "and I should think I know as much about her as you do, for we were at school together; and she was most popular with all the girls."

"Oh yes," Adalesa answered, imitating her aunt. "She has such pretty manners; as Aunt Marsh says, 'so gentle, so refined, so unaffected' – a whole string of adjectives, a set formula that has been flung at me – no, I should say, *gently insisted upon* for my benefit so often that I am not likely to forget it. And then she always promised to be a beauty, I suppose, which must have added greatly to her *prestige* with girls at school. But all the same, she's a pig. Why wasn't she here to receive us to-day?"

"Her mother said she had had to ride –"

"Her mother ought to know better than to excuse her. It was a fine day, and Evangeline thought it would be more amusing to go for a ride than to come in the carriage to meet us; so she went, and she has not yet returned; and that is Evangeline all over. Oh, I know her! And so would you if you'd ever been here before. Have you, by the way?"

"I thought you knew all about me! You seemed to say so in the train to-day."

"I knew your name and address, for I read them on the luggage you were looking after when you came into the station," she answered, with charming candour. "I saw you peacocking about as if you were somebody, and, as your belongings were deposited under my eyes, I had the curiosity to look and see. If I hadn't known that you were coming here you wouldn't have had the honour of making my acquaintance so early in the day, for, although free with my friends, I am not in the habit of picking up any goodness-knows-who for a travelling companion."

"Aren't you?" I said in surprise. "I should have thought –"

"You would have thought!" she exclaimed. "You innocent babe! You haven't learnt to think yet. But you are very entertaining. I nearly missed my train watching you. You were so smily and pleased with yourself and everybody else, anybody could see it was the first time you'd ever been on your own hook. My, what a blush! It's running all down your back. Well, forgive me! I didn't mean to wound your pride. But you're too sensitive, my dear – as sensitive as you're simple, and as transparent. Those who run might read your every emotion; and that would be rapid reading too, for you suffer from a singular variety of emotions in a short time."

"You seem to be a singularly acute young person," I observed, bridling.

"Well, yes," she rejoined, with unvarying cheerfulness, "I *am* sharp, very." She stood off as she spoke to see the effect of a big bow she had pinned on my dress; adding, as she looked, with her head on one side, "So you have never been here before?"

"No," I answered. "Your aunt was a friend of my mother's, long ago, before either of them was married; but they hadn't met for years until last season, when Evangeline and I left school, and came out: and then they renewed their acquaintance. They agreed that Evangeline and I mustn't consider our education finished simply because we had left school; and as Evangeline is an only child, Lady Marsh entreated my mother to let me come here for awhile to work with her. My mother is great on the question of education. She says she has suffered all her life long from having had hers curtailed, and she is determined therefore that her daughters shall have every advantage that her sons have. If we are not clever enough to profit there will be no harm done; and if we are, she expects us to be thankful that we were allowed to experiment and see what we could do, instead of being kept ignorant in deference to a mere theory that we have no mental capacity. But of course we are not coerced. Since I left school I have been allowed to follow my own inclinations, and I have chosen to be taught the same things that my brothers are studying."

"Gracious, how clever the child talks!" Adalesa exclaimed in her irrepressible way. "It's just like a book. Perhaps you learnt it by heart. I begin to suspect you have a mind. What

a terrible thing! But, anyway, what a blessing it is you met me! A few years more, and you would have been unendurable.” She stood off again, with her arms akimbo, and contemplated me from this new point of view, derisively at first, but by degrees her face softened. “And so you have come here to work with Evangeline, you innocent babe!” she said humorously. “You *must* be clever. Only a very clever person would have done such a stupid thing – a book-clever person I mean, not a world-clever person. It isn’t human to be up to everything, and your world-clever people are all out of it in literature, but your book-clever people fail in their knowledge of life. Now, do you really suppose that Evangeline will keep up anything but showy accomplishments? And even those she will only do superficially – a little music, a little drawing, rather more French because of the naughty books, which she reads regularly, but never leaves lying about, for Evangeline is wise in her generation. Yah, Simple Sincerity! Child of Light! Hot water, that’s what’s in store for you here – perpetual hot water. You’ll always be putting your foot in it.”

“You encourage me,” I said.

“Don’t mention it,” she answered.

III

HAVING dressed me to her satisfaction, much as a nurse does a child without consulting it, Adalesa made me a deep reverence, offered me her arm, and conducted me downstairs in the most gentlemanly manner. She had quite taken me under her wing by this time, and was prepared to pet and patronise me; but somehow I did not resent her assumption of superiority, for her mind was more mature than mine was, and I had to yield of necessity to her force of character, having no strength of my own at that time to oppose to it.

“What a lovely old house!” I exclaimed, on our way to the drawing-room.

“Yes, it is like Uncle Henry,” she answered – “big, solid, comfortable, strong, warm, and good. He’s early English himself, and splendid. You’ll see!”

He was alone in the drawing-room when we entered, in appearance a typical English country gentleman of the best kind, standing on the hearth-rug with his back to the fireplace in the typical attitude. He received us both most kindly, but with few words, contenting himself with looking from one to the other with a benign smile on his face, as if he were sorting our separate attractions, comparing and approving of us.

“That pig, Evangeline, has not been near us yet,” Adalesa grumbled. “It’s pretty bad manners to me, but it’s downright rude to –”

The door opened as she spoke, and Evangeline herself, all in white tulle, floated towards us, exclaiming: “*So* sorry. I was afraid you would think me rude” – she clasped her hands towards me with a little entreating gesture – “but, oh, pray don’t. I really *have* an excuse.”

“Let’s hear what it is, then,” Adalesa answered bluntly.

“My horse – I rode too far,” she commenced, stammering.

“That’s no excuse,” Adalesa interrupted.

“Dear, do excuse me,” Evangeline said to me; and when I found her so sweetly apologetic I did excuse her at once, and moreover, felt angry with Adalesa for making such a scene, although the moment before, while under her exclusive influence, I had agreed that Evangeline was rude. Now, however, with Evangeline there to delight my eyes and soothe my senses with her gentleness and grace, I could not believe anything of her that was not altogether lovely and adorable.

“You may say what you like,” Adalesa added; “but you have committed a breach of hospitality, and for the honour of the family I take upon myself to reprove you.”

“Thanks,” Evangeline said, smiling with unruffled sweetness.

Sir Henry sat down in an easy-chair, fixed his eyes on some ferns in the grate, and looked as if he had not heard; but when Adalesa went presently and lounged on the arm of his chair, with her elbow on his shoulder, he took her hand and caressed it gently.

Lady Marsh came into the room just then, smiling amiably as usual, and, dressed in an opulent manner. "Adalesa, *dear*," she said; "do move away. You will make your uncle quite hot."

Adalesa languidly complied, and Sir Henry leant back in his chair and looked up at the ceiling. His silence struck me as significant. He seemed to be, either by way of acquiescing in, or of utterly ignoring the sayings and doings of the ladies of his family, a singularly indifferent or singularly neutral person; and I wondered if he always let Lady Marsh decide whether he was too hot or not, and that sort of thing.

There were a few good pictures in the dining-room, and after dinner he showed them to me, and told me anecdotes also, about some family portraits that hung in the hall, and some ancient armour. The house was several centuries old with a long, unbroken family history, which was illustrated by most of its contents. The old carved cabinets, and everything else in the way of ornament, had their associations, and even the furniture, some of it, had a history attached to it, to which I listened with an honest interest that satisfied Sir Henry. Lady Marsh and Evangeline had remained at the table discussing the details of a dinner-dress they had seen somewhere; but Adalesa went with us, clinging to her uncle's arm with both hands.

"I would have you observe that there are no meaningless feminine fripperies here," she cried. "This has been the cradle of a sturdy race; and it looks like it. I'm one of the race," she added, laughing up at her uncle.

"Dear child!" Lady Marsh exclaimed, coming out of the dining-room at that moment, "don't hang on your uncle so; you will tire him." Then to me, in her amiable way: "This is but a bare old place at present, but now that Evangeline is old enough to take an interest in it, we must see what can be done."

"Oh dear!" Adalesa groaned; "if Aunt Marsh and Evangeline are to desecrate it, the good old oak and ebony will be disguised in down cushions and dimity in no time."

"Dear, is that quite respectful?" Lady Marsh exclaimed.

"No; nor would it be respectful for an alien to alter anything here," Adalesa rejoined doggedly.

"I am afraid, dear, your uncle spoils you," Lady Marsh said in her gentlest way, and then swept on to the drawing-room, arm-in-arm with Evangeline. At the door she looked back over her shoulder, and said to Sir Henry: "Don't make that child do too much, dearest. She has had a journey, you know."

"Which child?" he asked in an undertone, looking from one to the other, as soon as the drawing-room door was shut.

"Neither," Adalesa said, scornfully.

"Then take an arm each, my dears," he rejoined, almost in a whisper, "and we'll see what there is to be seen."

From which I perceived that this benign-looking gentleman, seemingly so yielding, was in reality a bold, bad man⁷, capable of opposition, who had put himself in my power; and I slipped my hand through his arm, and smiled up at him confidently, just as Adalesa, on the other side, was doing. He beamed down upon us both, and led us away to the library, where he lived as a rule when he was not out of doors; and there he showed us miniatures, arms, and ancient gems of his ancestors, who seemed to fill the great comfortable room as he talked about them, and to be nearer to him than the wife and daughter, with their marvellous charms

⁷a bold, bad man: In a letter to William Heinemann (11 November 1895) in which she affectionately teases him about flirting with her step grand-daughter, Beth, Grand calls him "a bold, bad man" (SSPSG2: 52).

of manner, whose tastes and interests were all so modern, of the Society kind, so far removed, if not so utterly opposed, to everything he cherished.

IV

EVANGELINE had a sitting-room of her own, a sunny south room, and here we girls were to work. We settled down to it next day, and during the morning Lady Marsh looked in, "just to see how you are getting on, dears! And what are *you* doing?" meaning me.

"Mathematics," I answered.

"Oh dear!" she exclaimed. "You must excuse me, dear child, but is it nice for a young lady to study such a very masculine subject? A girl's manner, you know, should be so very different. The woman's sphere is to refine and elevate man."

"But do mathematics make one's manners masculine?" I asked in alarm. I was diffident in those days, as became my age, and the least shade of disapproval made me unhappy.

"Well, they have not done so as yet in your case, dear child," Lady Marsh answered, with infinite tact, "But still, you know, dear, they are not womanly pursuits. You will not be fit for the duties of wife and mother by-and-by if you injure your constitution now. I know your mother's idea, but I cannot agree with her, and I often tell her I am sure she would not now be the dear, sweet *womanly* woman she is, if she had been taught these new-fangled notions as a girl. I cannot think it is right for young ladies to be educated like their brothers, and go to the university and all that nonsense, getting such ideas! I don't believe that a woman's mind is inferior to a man's, you know – far from it; and, in fact, in some things" – she looked round and lowered her voice – "there can be no doubt as to which is the superior sex, only it doesn't do to say so, men make such remarks. But, as to professions for women, and that sort of thing, why, fancy *me* a professional woman! Evangeline, *dearest*, put your French away, that's a good child, and get a story-book. I am sure you have done enough for to-day."

When she had spoken she patted my shoulder kindly, smiled on us all, and left the room.

"Now you see what you have brought on yourself, with your mathematics!" Adalesa exclaimed, her dark eyes dancing mischievously. "Aunt Marsh knew your mother's idea, and I believe she's got you down here to cure you of it. That's the sort of thing she's celebrated for. She suspected mathematics this morning, and came in prepared."

Evangeline, who had risen with cheerful alacrity to put her books away, in obedience to her mother's suggestion, turned now from the bookshelf at which she was standing dipping into a novel, and looked at Adalesa indignantly. "I don't think it is nice of you," she said, "to speak like that about my mother. She must know better than either you or I. Why, just think! You will own that we were intended to be healthy and happy – that we require to be so in order to be equal in such duties as we have to perform – and how can we be so if we go and injure ourselves with work we are not fit for? It's only common-sense, if you will think. Men were clearly intended to do all the hard work, and keep us in comfort, and screen us from anything objectionable. *My* ambition is to be a *womanly* woman. I think mamma is quite right."

By this time I was feeling uncomfortable. To be thought unwomanly seemed to me as dreadful as to be thought wicked; but yet I felt there was something wrong somewhere, for I could not see sex in a subject of study. Why should one be masculine and another feminine?

Evangeline had departed, and Adalesa was watching me with a grin on her intelligent countenance. "There is no resisting a feather bed, is there?" she asked. "Aunt Marsh is on the

warpath, I think, this morning. She'll go and order Uncle Henry's day till she's feather bedded all the comfort out of it. Let's go and see!"

She jumped up, seized me by the arm, and dragged me away to the library, where we found Sir Henry slowly pacing up and down, deep in thought. He looked from one to the other of us almost sadly when we entered, but smiled indulgently at Adalesa when she dropped my arm, and, seizing his in her energetic way, squeezed it between both hands, and then worked it up and down like a pump-handle, as if she could get what she wanted out of him so.

"Tell us about education," she demanded.

"Ah – education," he answered. "Your aunt has just been talking to me about education. She thinks you have been foolishly over-educated, and that has made you rough; and she fears for this little lady here" – meaning me – "she is anxious about you, my dear. She has a great loving heart, and every girl is her daughter. She wants you all to *have a good time*." He used this last expression apologetically.

"And so do you," Adalesa exclaimed, on the defensive. She had dropped his arm, and stood frowning intently, and biting one of her fingers between her words. "But, isn't it nonsense? Of course I'm rough. I'm rough on purpose. I'm rougher here than anywhere. If I lived like Evangeline, in cotton wool, I should grow flabby; and she says it's education! When she sees, too, that it hasn't had that effect in this other most notable case" – looking at me. "Tell me all over again about education, Uncle Henry. I'm all ruffled. I want to know."

Sir Henry began to walk up and down the room with his hands behind him. "What we learn is but a small part of education," he said, and it sounded as if he were reflecting aloud. "It is what we think of things, not what we know of them – our opinions – that affect our conduct. If you learn the multiplication table by heart, and merely remember that you know it, the knowledge will have no consequence one way or the other; but if you are taught to think that because you know the multiplication table you ought to be a very high-principled person, you'll find yourself insensibly seeking to live up to that idea. If, however, on the other hand, you hear continually that a knowledge of the multiplication table must be lowering in effect upon the character – if it is insinuated that your taste will be corrupted by it and your manners coarsened, until the notion that such a consequence is inevitable takes possession of your mind in spite of yourself – then it is only too probable that that will be the case."

"Now, that is true!" Adalesa exclaimed, "and here are we two in evidence of the fact."

Sir Henry stopped a moment to look at us, and then resumed his walk. "There's a great deal of cant rife just now on the subject of women and their education," he observed, "most of which, being summed up, amounts to a firm conviction that a half-educated girl, a creature who has learnt to live for the pleasure of the moment, to love for the joy of loving, and to marry in order to secure as many of the good things of this world as she can, is in every way a suitable and congenial companion for an educated man, and an admirable specimen of the 'woman's-sphere-is-home' woman. A toy – that's what the creature is, an unreasonable and illogical toy, neither reason nor logic having entered into the curriculum of that kind of 'womanly woman,' it having been supposed that a large establishment is most admirably managed by a mistress whose reasoning powers have never been cultivated, and a young family best brought up on the superstitious practices solemnly confided in mysterious whispers by Mrs. Gamp⁸ –"

The windows stood wide open, and Lady Marsh looked in at one of them. "Dearest children!" she cried, "don't you see how fine it is? You ought to be out. Adalesa, what are you worrying your uncle about? I am sure he doesn't want you here at this time of day."

⁸Mrs Gamp: A colourful and comical character in Charles Dickens, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, (1844).

V

IN the afternoon I went out for a ride with Adalesa. Evangeline would not accompany us. She had a packet of sweets in her pocket, and was deep in an entrancing novel by that time, from which she could not be induced to separate herself for the rest of the day, and on the next she had a bad headache. "Which just shows," her mother protested, with gentle emphasis, "how very necessary it is to supervise a young girl's studies, and what it would be if the dear child were being brought up, as too many young ladies are nowadays, alas! learning quite *masculine* matters: it is really dreadful!"

Adalesa looked older and better in her riding dress than I had yet seen her, and perhaps some consciousness of this had its effect upon her manner. So far, while looking like a child, she talked like a cynical worldly woman; but now, as she took her horse skilfully down a difficult rutty lane, her face fanned by the balmy country air, heavy with odours of full-blown flowers, and at the same time freshened by the near neighbourhood of the sea, there came a far-away look into the girl's eyes, an expression of yearning tenderness which culminated, as seemed most natural, in a long-drawn sigh.

The lane we rode in was a steep byway – a short cut to the shore, she said – only just wide enough for our two horses abreast, and so uneven that we had to look well to their going⁹. On either hand green banks, bedecked with foxglove and harebell, rose high above us and before us, making the winding way look like a *cul de sac*, and shutting out all view save that of the sky above us, a radiant strip of sky, intensely blue – blue like a dark sapphire, and full of colour, which contrasted well with the opaque blue-green of a belt of firs that crowned the summit of the bank and held their heavy plumes up motionless against the brightness. The air was so still that inanimate nature scarcely seemed to breathe; but all about us a myriad atoms of life buzzed and chirped and fluttered, rejoicing to be, making the most of their moment, and claiming a kinship with us in inarticulate murmurs, quite untranslatable, and yet becoming curiously comprehensible to some sense the longer we lingered to listen to them. The horses glanced hither and thither with big sagacious eyes, flipping a long ear swiftly towards each separate sound – now to the croak of a yellow frog in the grass, and now to the cheep of a nestling up on a branch, the bleat of an unseen sheep in the meadow above to its lamb, the low of a cow to her calf; seemingly anxious to understand, nervously glad to know; gathering the import of everything with an intelligence beyond ours, perhaps, that made them more one with the teeming beings about us than we were.

But after that sigh Adalesa burst into the midst of my meditation abruptly.

"Did you ever feel a glow in your chest, and have little warm shivers run down your backbone, and all the time keep smiling?" she demanded.

"No, never," I answered decidedly.

"Ah! then you have never been in love," she observed in a disappointed tone. "I thought, perhaps, with those eyes – and you're not so plump either."

"I don't see the connection."

"Why – don't you know? Oh, I think when girls are plump, like Evangeline, it is because they haven't felt much. Now, I'm skinny because I have a burning fiery furnace within that consumes me. So many things – interests, passions, affections – I don't know what all! are fuel to my fire; it never goes out."

"But love –?" I said, shy of the subject, yet aglow on a sudden with natural girlish curiosity about it, newly inspired; for the moment she mentioned love I knew what was in the air.

⁹going: feet (PMM).

She laughed, whipped up her horse, and rode on ahead recklessly.

When I overtook her we were in the open country, on a hard high-road, with a long level of fields on either hand, and not a glimpse of the sea.

“Where are we?” I asked.

“Oh, I had forgotten,” she answered apologetically. “I was leading you away in the wrong direction. I’m sorry – I was thinking. I was thinking of him!” and she flipped at the hedge with her whip, and laughed in a shamefaced way.

“Of whom?” I asked.

“Of my man,” she replied. “Oh, you’re obtuse! Don’t you gather? I’m in love. Sometimes I’m sick with love – love-sick. But you don’t know what that is, and you’re a little shocked!” She looked at me keenly. “You think I am committing a breach of decorum. So it would be, perhaps, for most girls; but, don’t you see – with me – oh, you must let it be different with me!”

The high-road was taking us towards a belt of wood now, above which the chimneys of the great house appeared, smoking cheerfully.

“Why, we’re going back!” I exclaimed.

“Yes, a little way,” she answered. “I’m sorry. I took the wrong turn. We should have gone to the left through the wood, instead of to the right, down that lane. But here we are. I’d better lead the way. Look out for your hat under the branches!”

The high-road ran through the wood at this point, and was bordered in either side by trees, which looked like a forest of slender masts, canopied and curtained with greenery, through which the sunlight filtered in shining shafts, making mystical pathways of dazzling brightness, beyond which the tender gloom beneath the branches deepened perceptibly. Adalesa had turned off under the trees, taking a diagonal course confidently, although there was no track that I could see; but I followed her, now in sunshine and now in shadow, winding in and out about the tree-stems, watchfully, like a princess in a land of weird enchantment, who goes, with wide-open, wistful eyes, seeking to see deep into the verdant shadows, in timidly glad anticipation of something to come that would satisfy the hunger at her heart, that strange importunate ache.

Branches broken by last year’s storms crackled beneath our horses’ feet, or their hoofs sank deep in delicious moss. Rabbits ran at our approach, and the shrill cry or clumsy flight of a startled pheasant sounded oddly insulting, as if uttered to injure the charmed silence. And here again there was life – superabundant, palpitating, generous – a joyous riot, in which we were asked to join by every little living thing that spoke. At first, in the wood, the soothing *susurrus* of leaves, stirred by light airs, sounded incessantly, a sort of softly whispering sound, all-pervading yet unobtrusive, not the main melody, but a manifold accompaniment. Presently, however, we were seized upon by a mightier voice, muffled at first and murmurous but growing in distinctness and volume as we advanced; and at the same time we ceased to see sunshafts and shadows through the wood; the green depths disappeared; and now between the trees there sparkled into view the yellow sands and the sea. We had come out upon the shore, and both involuntarily drew rein.

“Yes,” Adalesa resumed, as if there had been no break, “you must let it be different with me. I take everything so severely – measles, whooping-cough, mumps, scarlatina – all infantile diseases. Each in its turn has threatened to kill me, and now comes this new fever – love. I had to tell Evangeline even. I should have died if I hadn’t said something to some one. But now I am sorry. I wish you had come sooner, Simple Sincerity: you are another sort. If only I hadn’t told Evangeline that we are engaged!”

“Engaged!” I exclaimed. “*Secretly!*”

“Yes: isn’t it dreadful?” she answered, laughing at my horror. “But it happened in this way. I was staying with his people, and he and I were always together because we were the

only young pair on the premises; and at last – oh, the usual thing, you know! And I wanted to tell Uncle Henry, but he seemed to dislike the idea. My father and mother are in India, you know – that is why I am here; and Percy said, weren't they the proper people to be first informed? They are on their way home by this time, I believe, round the Cape¹⁰ – oh, the weary time of waiting! months! And I hate to keep Uncle Henry in the dark. I always tell him everything. But then, of course, there is Aunt Marsh. If I told him he would make me tell her, and then she would have the affair confided to the whole county in solemn confidence. At least," she corrected herself emphatically, "I don't believe he would tell her; he's too good altogether; and besides, I've told him lots of other things, but I can't make Percy understand; and he says, too, that his knowing would put the affair on quite a different footing – whatever he may mean by that. I hate concealment myself; but perhaps he has finer feelings than I have, for he says something about this being altogether sacred to ourselves – not an ordinary concealment. It sounds all right as he puts it; but I am sadly afraid I don't feel about it quite what he does, because I want to tell. I must talk. My joy bubbles up and bursts out so that I cannot contain it. There's a singing at my heart I can't quite smother; if only Uncle Henry suspected, he would hear it and question me, and then I should be glad indeed – satisfied. Now at times it is only a kind of half glad. However, are you relieved? I am not so sly as you suspected, perhaps."

"I should never have thought you sly," I declared.

"Well, reckless then," she replied, "as when I told Evangeline. That was an instance of a bubbling up and a bursting out. If I had had Uncle Henry to talk to – but there! Yet I know Evangeline is not to be trusted, for all her promises."

"Oh, surely she will not betray you if she promised!" I exclaimed, shocked by the accusation.

For a moment the cynical expression returned to Adalesa's face.

"It just depends upon what will suit her own convenience," she answered, with her usual downright directness.

The horses, tired of standing, sniffed the salt air, tossed their heads, and pawed impatiently.

"We'll let them go for a gallop in a minute," she said; "but first, just look at the sea, and listen to it. That inarticulate murmur is full of meaning to me now; and so it is with the sough of the breezes in the branches and the rustle of leaves. Since *he* came into my life I have awakened to full consciousness of a curious kinship with all things, animate and inanimate. The gladness in me, the singing in my heart, is all a part of some great whole, some universal plan, something I *know*, but can't express. But wait! – wait till you know it too!"

She had looked down at the sand as she spoke, frowning intently in the effort to put what she felt into human speech; and her horse, as if waiting upon her words, ceased for a moment to be restive; the very sea-voice seemed suspended, and the scene itself – sandhills, and shore, and grey-white, green-crowned cliffs, curving arm-like about the bay, passed from my consciousness. I saw and heard her alone till she stopped; then the waves rang out their merry murmur, the cliffs whitened into view in the sunshine, the breeze sang in my ears, the open space invited, and our horses, with one accord, as though they felt our own fine impulse to fly, had to be free, plunged out from amongst the heavy, dry drifts, on to the smooth, hard sand, and carried us off at a gallop into another world.

¹⁰*round the Cape*: In the 1890s the voyage to Britain from India through the Suez Canal (opened 1869) usually took about a month, by steam ship. If, however, the voyage was made by sail, via the Cape of Good Hope, it would take at least six months (Ian Marshall. *Passage East*. Virginia: Howell Press, 1997, 1).

VI

EVANGELINE came to my room late that night. We had not had an hour's talk together since my arrival. The moon was near the full, and she found me with my window wide open, luxuriating in the sense of stillness, which is peculiar to the exquisite, shadowy, silent night.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, with a little shiver. "Won't you take cold? Isn't that mist down there on the meadows? and aren't the trees black? It is all so comfortless –"

I shut the window.

"Ah, that's better!" Evangeline pursued, as she curled herself up in an easy-chair. "I love lays of the moon, and the sapphire solitudes one reads about; but the real thing falls far short of the description. I believe those rhapsodies are written in bed at night, with the curtains drawn, and a big fire blazing. At all events, that's the best way to read them. One forgets then, as the poet seems to have forgotten, all the unpleasant details – that it is chilly out in the merry moonlight; fatiguing to linger or loiter long, though it sounds so nice; and too damp to sit, couch, or recline on anything growing or blowing. I love poetry, but preserve me from having to live it! Cushions and comfort are my delight, ease is my ambition, and all things ordered to please me by some competent person as long as I live, my one desire!"

She cooed all this so prettily that I began to draw an invidious comparison between the sound of her words and Adalesa's. The sense did not impress me. The gentleness of her manner, the sweetness of her voice, and the charm of her appearance disarmed criticism. One felt at rest in her presence, one did not think.

She left the easy-chair, and came and sat down beside me. "Pet me," she said, putting her arms round me. "I don't seem to have seen you at all since you came and oh, I have lots of things I want to talk to you about. How pretty your neck is! – just like a baby's. I must kiss it! I could *eat* you, I think, you're so sweet! But you're not very responsive, I must say! I believe you like Adalesa best. Tell me, do you? I should be so miserable if I thought you did. But what do you think of her?"

"I think her delightful."

"So she is," Evangeline answered, returning to her chair. "But isn't it rather a pity, when she's so nice, that she shouldn't be perfect? She does say and do such outrageous things. She has gone and engaged herself secretly." This breach of confidence slipped out so easily and so naturally that I should have hesitated at the moment to apply any harsh epithet to it. "Yes," she pursued; "I met the man in London afterwards, and now he has become quite an ally of mine. When he found I knew all about the affair, he said he was glad, and would like to discuss it with me. You do believe, don't you, that men and women can have Platonic friendships? I think it is so cynical for people not to believe in disinterestedness. He says he loves to talk to me; and of course there can be no harm when it is all about another girl. What do you think?"

"I think I am inclined to be sorry for the other girl."

"Oh, now that is not nice of you!" she said reproachfully.

"Well, the things that are said about the kind of man who spends all his time with one girl in order to talk about another, are not nice either."

"Oh, but I'm sure *you* would never judge a man by the unkind things people say!" She said this so earnestly, so caressingly, she made me feel mean. "And, besides," she went on gravely, "I don't think he is quite satisfied, somehow. It is not that he says anything, you know, only he makes me fancy – and I think it just as well that the engagement was not announced. If there is any change – if nothing comes of it, you know, nothing can be said. I only tell you about it in confidence, because I know you are safe, and I did so want to consult some one. You see, he confided in me, and asked my advice, and I feel it is such a responsibility. But perhaps Adalesa told you herself. I thought she might, as you get on so

well –” She stopped here, and looked at me expectantly, but as I only replied with a steady stare, she demanded, point-blank: “Did she?”

“How can you ask?” I answered without emphasis, so as not to betray my friend; and I saw that she was baffled, but she did not like to repeat the question.

VII

EVANGELINE had been complaining of some mysterious pain in her arm, and the next day a famous physician who was staying in the neighbourhood came to see her. He was brought to our sitting-room, and I helped Evangeline, at her mother’s request, to take off her bodice, to enable him to see what was the matter with the pretty limb. It was evident that the old gentleman was interested in his charming patient, his manners, which were naturally suave, took on such an obviously extra shade of delicate, courtly consideration. Standing a little apart with Adalesa, I became deeply interested in his method of inquiring into the cause of the trouble; but he talked so much about “the long bone of the arm,” that at last, to vary the monotony, I suggested the “*humerus*” aside to her facetiously.¹¹

But the doctor overheard me. “Oh – hem – ha – yes,” he rejoined deliberately, giving me to understand at the same time, with a look, that I had sunk low in his estimation; after which he took no further notice of me.

“I am afraid you offended the doctor, dear,” Lady Marsh said afterwards. “You really must be careful by what names you call things. You see, any indelicacy in a young lady shocks a refined and cultivated man.”

“But humerus is the proper name of the bone,” I ventured, with a faint flicker of spirit, in spite of the softly smothery effect of her manner.

“We do not call things by their proper names,” she answered with gentle dignity.

“But is it really more delicate to call it the long bone of the arm?” I exclaimed. “Do forgive me for pestering you, dear Lady Marsh,” I added, seeing a shade of disapproval on her face; “but I am always being met with queer contradictions and singular gradations of right and wrong, and the effort to understand them wearies my brain.”

“Of course!” she exclaimed triumphantly. “That is what I and any sensible person would have foreseen. A young girl’s brain must suffer if she studies subjects only fit for men.”

“When we were alone, Adalesa asked me what I thought now of her sweet Aunt Marsh.

“I am trying to allow for opposite points of view,” I answered, laughing.

But in my heart I acknowledged that Adalesa had not exaggerated; for the mental agonies that perfectly delightful woman caused me to suffer, on account of the difference between her point of view and that from which I had been brought up, no one who has not been a girl under similar circumstances can possibly conceive. I began to wonder at last, when I got up in the morning, what I should blunder about that day; and from the easy absence of self-consciousness which comes of living among people who encourage discussion and allow the most extreme differences of opinion as a matter of course, I became so nervous that I shrank from speaking at all, or if by chance I did commit myself, I would have recanted every syllable in my extreme timidity rather than suffer the disapproval I detected in the attitude of those about me. Lady Marsh laboured incessantly to repair the errors of my education, and often she talked for an hour without provoking me to say anything offensive; but the moment she interested me, the moment she roused me to think for

¹¹*that at last ...facetiously*: In *PMM* this passage reads “that at last I said to her aside: ‘The humerus.’” By strengthening the humour of this interaction between the narrator and Adalesa, in the volume version, Grand has highlighted the gulf between the generations in their expectations about appropriate female education.

myself, I was lost. The duty of being a social success was one of her favourite themes; and she considered it the beginning of wisdom for a woman to make herself attractive. So did my mother; but when it came to ways and means, their principles were diametrically opposed to each other. Lady Marsh often talked to us girls earnestly on the subject, her teaching, as I now perceive, having been a fair mixture of worldly wisdom and amiable foolishness. So far as our conversation was concerned, it might be summed up in the advice: never to dispute; never utter an emphatic word; talk principally about little things that have happened; to recount and to listen is the great thing, men like to be listened to; but as we valued our reputations for womanliness we were never to express opinions. It was really better not to have any. Men do not care about women who have opinions. But it was upon the subject of personal appearance that she was greatest. A girl who was good-looking was a matter of grave importance to her, and she would appraise the marriage-market value of us all quite seriously. She expected Evangeline, whom she considered a poem in appearance, to make a brilliant match; and she was graciously pleased to express some hope for me too: "Only you *must* be careful, dear. Don't let a man imagine for a moment that you have ever thought about anything." But for Adalesa she had little hope. "She might marry a Radical Member¹², or something of that sort," she said to me confidentially one day, but she spoke dubiously. "She is so thin, you see," she added.

We were waiting with Evangeline for tea in the drawing-room, and Adalesa herself came in at that moment with her bull pup under her arm.

"I'm the thin party, I expect," she said, her dark eyes dancing mischievously.

"Party, dear child!" Lady Marsh ejaculated. "What an expression for a young lady!"

"Diddums, den!" Adalesa said to the bull pup. "Just look at him, auntie, how he wrinkles his forehead."

"I wish, dear, you would not bring that creature into the drawing-room; he is not a proper pet for a young lady."

"But, Aunt Marsh, men love sporting dogs," Adalesa remonstrated, with an injured air. "And he'll be what I never shall, and that's a beauty of his kind."

"You make a great mistake," Lady Marsh answered. "Any girl not absolutely ugly may be good-looking if she will, and you might be most elegant with that slender figure if you chose. And then also *manner* goes a good way. A girl with a very gentle, rather timid manner is irresistible to most men. Men like women to be dependent and clinging. And further, I know, for a fact, that if you bring up a girl to be a beauty she will develop into one."

"It's odd that you should say that," Adalesa answered ambiguously, "for I was just thinking something of the same sort. I was thinking if you bring up a girl to be wise she will be wise; but the custom is to bring up a girl to be a fool."

"Your mother used to be a lovely girl," Lady Marsh said to me, pointedly ignoring Adalesa. "I suppose she wishes her daughters to be beautiful."

"My mother does not despise beauty, but she considers it a charming incident, that cannot last, rather than a serious object in life," I blundered.

A solemn silence followed upon this, which Lady Marsh broke at last by remarking to Evangeline, with significant sweetness –

"There is something wrong about that dress at the waist, dearest. It drags."

"I'll tighten my stays, mamma," Evangeline answered amiably.

"You'll make your nose red if you do – or *bust!*" Adalesa observed, with her mouth full of cake.

"Adalesa, how *can* you!" her aunt remonstrated.

¹²*Radical Member*: A topical reference to the Liberal party, identified, at this time with social reform.

It was interesting to see Evangeline expand sympathetically under her mother's teaching. Her mind imbibed it with reverence as well as with relish, but to what it would be transformed when it was thoroughly assimilated, girls like ourselves could not foresee. From a chance remark of Sir Henry's, however, I gathered that he had his doubts about it being a soul-making substance.

VIII

LADY MARSH was by way of doing her best for us, as the Society¹³ mothers delicately express it, and one of the delights of that visit was to be a ball.

The joy of that ball began for us from the first moment it was discussed. In a matter of that kind Lady Marsh knew how to make girls happy, and she let us arrange it all ourselves and choose our own dresses. We sent to town for specimen programmes, and drew up a formal invitation, which we had printed; and when the cards arrived we spent a long delicious morning in our sitting-room addressing them. There were no improving books about on that occasion. The table was covered with invitations and envelopes, and we all three talked nineteen to the dozen as we addressed the latter, making many mistakes in our eagerness and glee, and giving ourselves much unnecessary trouble; but it was all a part of the pleasure.

Lady Marsh came in during the morning, and found the floor strewn with evidences of these mistakes; but she only smiled indulgently.

Then came the discussion about the dresses. We decided upon red, white, and blue. Adalesa's was to be red, with coral ornaments, because of her dark eyes and hair, and olive skin. Pale passion colour, she chose, and it looked like an expression of herself. Evangeline's was to be white – white satin with tulle and pearls, the kind of conventional thing a young lady looks her loveliest in; and also, perhaps, in that it was conventional, an exact expression of herself. Mine was to be pale blue: "Because of your white skin, my dear," Adalesa said. "And also because simple sincerity should be in true blue. Your ornaments must be turquoise and pearls and diamonds. Do you happen to have any?"

I laughed, as at an absurdity, for I was not an heiress.

The discussion about the dresses took place at luncheon one day, and Sir Henry paid much amused attention to our chatter.

"But where are you to get these fine gowns?" he asked.

"Where are we to get the money from them, you mean?" said Adalesa.

Sir Henry looked at Lady Marsh expressively, and then Lady Marsh beamed round upon us: "My dears, *I* am going to give you your dresses," she said,

The next excitement was the coming of the answers to the invitations. Adalesa slipped up to me shyly one morning, with very bright eyes and very pale cheeks. "He has accepted," she said, in a breathless whisper. "He is coming." The words were gasped between two sighs, heavy with heart-beats. From that time the tiresome child in her slumbered and slept. She never "drew" Aunt Marsh now, and she had rolled up her elf-locks and left off short petticoats. She was feverishly flushed for the most part, but she was very quiet, and would steal away alone for a ramble through the woods or a ride by the sea: "To listen to the voices," as she said; "to be one with Nature, which *knows* –"

Evangeline also knew that "he" was coming, and mentioned the matter with a self-satisfied smile: "O dear! I suppose I shall be called upon again to resolve doubts and difficulties," she observed.

"You don't mean that he will take you into his confidence when she is here!" I exclaimed.

¹³Society: society (PMM).

She smiled again enigmatically. "Well, really – one never knows," she said. "I can't think how it could ever have happened. But, there! You know Adalesa. Wait till you see him, and then judge if she is suitable. It is so lucky, I think, the engagement was never announced." She smiled complacently when she had spoken, then blushed at nothing, and finally ran away laughing. I could not make her out.

Our lovely dresses arrived some days before the event, and were duly doted upon. It seemed as if our delight had culminated in them, and could rise no higher; but when we went to dress for dinner on the eventful day itself, three cries of joy, uttered simultaneously in our three respective rooms, announced yet another item added to our ecstasy, for there, on our dressing-tables, a present from Sir Henry, were the very jewels Adalesa had described as essential to complete our happiness.

When we were dressed we ran down to the drawing-room together, with our arms round each other, red, white, and blue, all silk, satin, and tulle, to be inspected, only expecting to see the old people; but there, on the hearthrug, stood a romantic-looking young man, tall, with deep dark eyes, a stranger to me, but I knew in a moment who it was. I had met him in many books, and dreamt about him too. I knew him first by the way Evangeline started and Adalesa hung back. My own heart beat to suffocation when his eyes met mine; but what with dresses and jewels and joyful anticipations, it was a highly emotional moment with all three of us – this last element, a young man to admire us, having completed the circle.

Evangeline was the first to recover herself and greet him, and then she introduced him to me; and Adalesa, at last, summoning her courage, shyly held out a seemingly reluctant hand, the damask rose on her cheeks deepening the while; but the magnetism of her dark eyes was absent from her greeting, as she never raised them from the ground.

The young man looked from one to the other of us with a kind of pleased surprise.

"Three Graces, by Jove!" Sir Henry exclaimed, as he received our thanks.

"Impossible to choose between them. I'd turn Mohammedan if I were a young man."

"Then you wouldn't marry me," Adalesa flashed out at him.

"That's right, my dear," he answered good-humouredly. "I like your spirit and the way you show it. None of your pet pussy-cat girls for me, concealing their claws till they're married. You stick to that – the whole man, body, soul, and spirit, or nothing."

Several more guests arrived for dinner. Evangeline whispered to her mother. It is strange how one sometimes sees the significance of things one cannot hear on occasions of excitement, when all our faculties are on the alert. Until Evangeline spoke to her mother I had not thought of whom Mr. Perceval would take in to dinner, but both question and answer occurred to me on the instant. Evangeline had suggested, and Lady Marsh, not knowing, had acquiesced: he was to take Evangeline in, and, as he offered his arm to her, he looked into her eyes ardently. He looked at me, however, in just the same way a moment later, and I thought, perhaps, that that was his habitual expression; but all the same I began to feel sore and sorry for Adalesa.

They sat opposite to me at table, and talked together in undertones confidentially, Evangeline cooing softly and looking lovely all the time, while Adalesa, poor child, a little lower down, out of some growing feeling of dissatisfaction, uttered smart aggressive raileries in high-pitched tones, doing more damage to her own cause thereby than any one else could have done. I intercepted a glance of disapproval from the other side of the table, and felt that comparisons were inevitable.

"Poor Adalesa!" Evangeline murmured, with a deprecating sigh. "But she is *such* a child! And of course she will get over all these exaggerated ideas when she is older and has more sense."

"With such gentle womanly surroundings she should," he answered, gazing again at Evangeline, whose white bosom heaved with another little sigh.

“But is it not strange that the sense should be so long in coming,” she said, “considering that Adalesa has had exactly the same opportunities –?” She stopped, blushing alluringly, as if modestly afraid of even having indicated herself.

After dinner she singled me out for a confidence. “Hasn’t he exquisite Oriental eyes?” she said. “And don’t you think I succeeded?”

“I hope not: how do you mean?” I stammered.

“Succeeded in preventing any suspicion,” she answered. “I was so afraid mamma might see something.”

“Oh, I don’t think you need have alarmed yourself,” I dryly rejoined.

“But, now, *do* you think they are suited?” she asked, in such a tenderly anxious tone.

“I think that is altogether their business,” I replied.

She looked at me reproachfully, and then left me.

Mr. Perceval danced with me several times during the evening, and towards the end of the ball we were engaged for another dance; but when the time came I was tired, so we decided to sit it out. His manner the whole evening had shocked and offended me, as the manner of a married man who wanted to flirt would have done. He was Adalesa’s property, and yet I felt that upon the slightest encouragement he would have made love to me; and I had an uncomfortable doubt as to how far he might not actually have gone with Evangeline, which proved that my faith in her was shaken. I judged him harshly then – I think I could have called him a villain – but now all I feel is a sort of amused contempt for him for acting after his kind, an ordinary animal kind. He was a commonplace young man in the mood for marriage, and would have made any one of us three that had chanced to accept him a good and agreeable husband – or rather his wife would have made him pretty much what she pleased.

Because of my suspicion of him I chose to sit in the ball-room so as not to give him a chance; and, finding I would not flirt, he sat beside me quietly, and turned his attention to Evangeline and Adalesa, who were dancing, observing them closely and comparing them, as I suspected – a comparison which was far from fair to Adalesa at that age; for she was one of those girls who, in appearance, mature late. Her active mind gave her slender body no leisure to cushion itself with redundant plumpness. Evangeline might, as her mother maintained, be a poem in appearance, but Adalesa was one in fact in spite of her angles. This ordinary young man, however, with only an ideal of fleshly perfection in his mind and before his eyes, was not likely to suspect it; and, even if he had, what pleasure would it have been to him, or profit, seeing that he had no capacity to appreciate a poem?

Judged, too, merely upon that kind of observation, there was another point against Adalesa. She did not waltz well, but Evangeline floated like thistledown above the boards. Adalesa soon wearied of waltzing; she thought it monotonous, and only went on to the end of the ball to make herself useful. She excelled, however, in a higher branch of the art, to her aunt’s horror. We should call it skirt-dancing¹⁴ now, and be applauded for the accomplishment; but at that time it was a nameless enormity for a young lady to indulge in. Adalesa, nevertheless, would take her castanets sometimes, and give us an entrancing benefit of “woven paces and of waving arms”¹⁵; but Lady Marsh regularly put down this exhibition when she caught her at it; and it was hardly likely the young man knew of the accomplishment, nor could one expect him to appreciate the self-sacrifice Adalesa was

¹⁴*skirt-dancing*: A form of ballet, popular in the burlesque theatres during the latter part of the nineteenth century. The fact that Adalesa is using castanets suggests she is performing a type of flamenco dance.

¹⁵“woven paces and of waving arms”: Alfred Tennyson (Lord Tennyson). “Idylls of the King.” *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*. Ed. Christopher Ricks. Harlow: Longman, 2007, 813; 834. In this section of the poem Vivien is using her charms to persuade the elderly Merlin to divulge a secret spell.

making when she accepted one eligible partner after another the whole evening, “boring herself to one, two, three, turn, for the good of the house,” as she elegantly expressed it.

There came to me a curious fancy as I watched those girls. I seemed to see the soul of each through the casing of finery and flesh that enveloped them.

“One of the two is as good as gold without alloy,” I said to Perceval; “but the other is —”

“An inferior compound?” he suggested; “and I know which it is.”

But he looked at the wrong one; and I let him, for I did not think him worth pure gold, for all his “exquisite Oriental eyes.”

When the dance was over he left me, and Adalesa took his place. It had been pathetic to watch her during the evening. Her eyes had been eloquent at first of shy expectation, half joyful, half frightened; but then came surprise and inquiry; then an interregnum of blankness, no explanation occurring to her; and now the expression was altogether pained.

“My heart is heavy within me,” she said, in a whispering way she had, which made me think of the soft sighing of summer air through the leaves. “He seems to have forgotten.”

From where we sat I particularly noticed one of the decorations of the ball-room – a great palm, standing in a corner between a window and a door, and all in shadow with the exception of one long leaf, which it held to the light, one glossy dark green leaf, that shone and quivered like a sentient thing in the fitful airs set in motion by the whirl of the dancers. It seemed to be taking its part in the revel with delight. It had its moments of excitement when the music went mad towards the end of a dance, and the pace became frantic. Then it would flutter fan-like with the pennants streaming in time to the tune, and only gradually cease to wave as the room emptied, after the crash of the final chords. I was fascinated by the emotions of that leaf, or rather its demonstrations of emotion, and found myself gauging the success of the entertainment by it. When the spirit of the ball was at its highest, there seemed to be an extra shine on its glossy surface, but as the night waned and exhaustion began to sap the energy of the dancers, the leaf grew dim. It quivered still as the rooms thinned, but no longer waved; and when the last carriage had driven away I found it drooping in the vitiated air. There was a lounge beneath it, and on this Evangeline, who was also drooping by this time, had thrown herself. I had seen her, during the evening, sitting there with Perceval, laughing and looking into his eyes. The arm of the plant was held out over her then, but whether menacingly or whether to protect her, I could not tell. It might have had an evil spirit in it encouraging her to her destruction, or a good one warning her back; and my imagination busied itself with both possibilities. I longed to be allowed to look into the future for a moment, so that I might see enough to interpret the sign; but my soul yearned and ached on in that direction vainly: it was all impenetrably dark. From that moment, however, the great glossy plume of the palm seemed somehow to be specially associated with Evangeline, and before I saw them drooping together I had felt that I should find her there.

Lady Marsh had retired by that time, the men were in the smoking-room, and only we three girls were left of the brilliant crowd that had flaunted there so short a time before. Scraps of ribbon and lace and tulle, torn gloves and faded flowers, bedraggled flotsam and jetsam of the ball, strewed the floor. At the farther end of the room a servant was putting out the lights.

“I am tired to death,” Evangeline said, with a yawn.

“Tired, but happy, I hope?” Adalesa answered with peculiar gentleness.

Evangeline looked sharply at her, doubtless to see if she meant it, before she replied with effusion: “Oh yes, darling, thank you. I *have* enjoyed myself! I hope we all have! But I’m dying of hunger.”

I went with Adalesa to fetch something to eat from the supper-room, and at the same time I brought a jug of water for the palm.

IX

PERCEVAL had come down from the dance, and was to stay a few days. He was in every way an eligible, and Lady Marsh was exceedingly gracious to him; but I could see that Sir Henry was inspecting him critically, as if he were not sure of him, and our attitude towards the young man also came in for a share of Sir Henry's attention. Mine was morose, I confess; in Adalesa's eyes was perpetual pained inquiry; only Evangeline was natural and happy. She was extra gentle, and gracious too, as if amiably disposed to atone for what must have looked like our shortcomings.

The morning after the great event we did nothing but discuss the ball. At luncheon, however, Sir Henry suggested that we should go out: "Rest is the right thing after a dance," he said, "and then exercise in the open air. You four young people should go for a ride."

Evangeline put on a pretty little pout. "I am afraid *I* can't," she said, in a heigh-ho tone. "My horse has gone to be shod."

"I wondered why you insisted on sending him this morning," Adalesa muttered.

"But why shouldn't you three go without me?" Evangeline said sweetly.

"Why shouldn't you ride some other horse?" Sir Henry asked, rather sternly.

"Nothing would induce me to," she answered with her set smile, looking him full in the face; after which she rose with an easy, unconstrained air, carefully brushed a crumb from the front of her dress, and left the room, humming a little tune.

Adalesa had also risen from the table.

"What are we going to do?" I asked, following her into the hall.

"Nothing," she answered, sombrely. "Evangeline is going to carry out some manoeuvre of her own."

"Adalesa!" Lady Marsh called.

We returned to the dining-room. The two old people were still at the table, but Perceval was standing at one of the open windows, looking out into the garden.

"Just run upstairs, dear child," Lady Marsh added, "and see if you can find my yellow-and-black sunshade. It's somewhere, I'm sure."

Adalesa complied without a word, but she sauntered off slowly, as if reluctant to go.

"That child is *so* ungracious at times," Lady Marsh observed to Sir Henry in a stage aside. "She compares unfavourably with Evangeline, I am afraid. Evangeline is *always* so sweetly unselfish and good."

Sir Henry pursed up his mouth, and toyed with a glass on the table. Perceval's back was turned to us, but I fancied I saw him stiffen to attention when Lady Marsh mentioned Evangeline, and I believe the young man had heard and marked, for all the air of indifference with which he affected to look out over the lawn.

It was one of those radiant days when one seems to see the heat throbbing in the crystal atmosphere. The garden borders were a blaze of colour. The odour of mignonette streamed in through the open windows. Perceval looked out sleepily a little longer; then suddenly the dreamy look in his eyes gave way to a flash of interest. He said something about fetching a hat, and left the room as if with a purpose. Evangeline had appeared on the other side of the lawn, lingering among the roses, with a pair of scissors in her hand; but, judging by the way she lifted a heavy bud here, touching it tenderly, or stooped to inhale the fragrance of a full-blown flower there, she was reluctant to gather them. Perhaps she thought it cruel to shorten their pretty lives! At all events she hesitated, and in that attitude she made a charming picture; and I am sure Perceval must have thought so as he crossed the lawn. She had apparently not heard him approach, for she started and blushed when he accosted her, then looked up and said something in her winning way, to which he responded smiling. Then they turned off down a shady alley together, and disappeared from sight.

Adalesa returned without the parasol, but Lady Marsh did not seem disturbed because she had failed to find it.

The whole day passed, looking like other days on the surface, and the night with its heavy shadows settled down silently. When we went to bed I hoped Adalesa would come to my room and talk the trouble out, and I waited awhile, but as she did not come I went to her. She had taken off her dress, and was standing at her window, looking out. Her bull-dog sat beside her on the floor, leaning against her and looking up at her sympathetically. I was oppressed by a horrid sense of things gone wrong, and he seemed to be suffering from the same.

“I thought I had said good-night to you,” Adalesa muttered, turning on me as I entered.

“I hoped you would come to my room,” I replied.

She looked at me intently from under her dark eyebrows; but I doubt if she saw me.

“He has not spoken,” she said at last. “He treats me as if we had never met before. That is all there is to tell you. Now go; excuse me, I am better alone. I want to think.”

The dog whined and nestled up closer, and the sound of a great, deep, human sigh, almost a moan, accompanied me down the dark corridor as I returned to my room.

But my nerves were strained by that time. My own breath came in a succession of sighs; and, in order to tranquilise myself, I went and sat by the open window, and leant out, looking at the misty margins of the moonlit spaces, and listening to the inarticulate murmurs of the night. Very soon the sense of silence settled upon my spirit soothingly, and I was beginning to feel as if I could lie down and rest, when all at once my attention was quickened by a sharp sound from below – the sound of gravel crunched up by a springy footstep. I knew who it was before I saw her. What was she going to do? And oh, what a waste of good emotion upon a worthless object all this seemed.

I had taken off my evening dress when I came upstairs, and now had only to slip on a cap and a pair of walking shoes, which I did not wait to lace, and snatch a long coat¹⁶ from my wardrobe, and I was ready to follow her. I had to put the coat on and button it as I went, but I was in time to see which road she took. It was the road through the wood to the sea. She had on her shortest gown again, with her elf-locks hanging, and nothing on her head. Her faithful brindle, rubbing up against her still, endeavoured to keep pace with her, snuffling as he went. I could hear him. But she took no notice of him. She was looking on ahead with that same kind of look, I imagined, as that with which she had greeted me when I went to her room; yet her gait was not at all agitated, but rather lingering, as if she were taking the air in a leisurely way. Had I not known she was in trouble I should have supposed that she was enjoying the novelty of being out alone at that hour. It was dark in the wood, but she seemed sure of the way, and walked on confidently until she passed out from under the trees on to the sand-dunes. Here she paused a moment, looking up to where, on the left, the tall cliffs rose bold and black against the night sky. On in front the moonlight silvered the sea. It was a desolate scene. The tide was a long way out. For a moment I thought she was going to turn back, but she was merely looking about her before she went a little farther on and sat herself down on the shore. Her dog nestled closer, and uttered a piteous “Whuff!” and then she looked at him for the first time, and put her arm round him, and rested her cheek on his big broad forehead, which seemed to satisfy him.

I made a little *détour* to the right among the sandhills, and stole up closer, so as to see her without being seen. She was gazing at the broad path of light made by the moon on the water. She was passionately fond of her father, and that was the way he would come. Did she remember?

¹⁶ *coat*: ulster (*PMM*). An ulster is a long, loose overcoat made from a rough cloth.

The wind soughed among the sandhills, rustling the rank grass. The eternal sea-song sounded afar off, muffled, monotonous, yet mighty in that it was eternal. It made me wonder once more if the sufferings of such ephemeral specks in the great universe as we are could possibly signify. We seemed so unimportant, out there on the barren sands, that, for the first time for twenty-four hours, I ceased to care what became of us. I lay my length upon the dry, white sand, pillowing my head upon my folded arms in front of me, inhaling deep draughts of the sea-sweet air and rejoicing in its healthy fragrance. Then for awhile I watched the gem-like stars shine out in the radiant blue dark above me, and saw the shadows shift upon the cliffs, and the sea approaching. By that light the wavelets showed black-grey, like shining flints, with chalk-white rims for crests. When Adalesa sat down they were too far off to be distinguished except as a dark, moving mass, relieved by burnished sparks and flashes of moonlight; but before she rose they were close upon her; the moon had set, the stars were extinguished, and low down in the east the grey dawn shone primrose and green and white shot with flame in opaline splendour.

X

I BELIEVE in my heart that Sir Henry, in his quiet way, had more real sympathy with us girls, and more comprehension of us, than Lady Marsh, for all her demonstrations. It was to him I should have gone in any trouble rather than to her, I know; and I suppose Adalesa felt the same, for when she crawled down next morning, very late, she encountered me in the hall, and asked me where he was, and then, slipping her hand through my arm, drew me along with her to look for him. He was sitting alone in the dining-room in an easy-chair, reading a newspaper, which he put down when we entered. Adalesa went up to him and kissed him, and then sat herself down on the arm of his chair. She moved listlessly, as if there were no life left in her, and looked ill, and I could see that her uncle observed her with particular attention as she approached.

“You did not come down to breakfast,” he said, tentatively.

“No,” she answered. Then she put her arm round his neck, and rested her cheek on his head. “I don’t want to come down again,” she added, with an effort. “I want to go away from here – at once.”

Sir Henry seemed to reflect. “What is the matter, little girl?” he said at last. “Anything mentionable?”

“No,” she answered. “I want to go and meet my father. If you will telegraph to Aunt Morris, she will be glad to have me. I want to wait for him there, in town.”

Again, Sir Henry took time to reflect. “Well,” he said at last, slowly, “you shall go, and at once too, if you like.”

He looked at me when she left us. “You know what is wrong, I suppose?” he said.

“Nothing mentionable,” I answered.

He smiled at the retort, and then shook his head. “Not mentionable,” he repeated – “no, nor visible. One scents it, though, without seeing it. One feels it in the air. It is knowable without being nameable. But if one could name it one would call it –” He gave me one of his shrewd glances.

“Treachery,” I blurted out. “Robbery with violence – and you will be sanctioning it with a blessing by-and-by.”

He seemed amused at my vehemence. “It is contrary to law to condemn without proof,” he said. “I am here to administer the law, and if I am not furnished with any proof of guilt, I must acquit.”

And so it seemed, for my tongue was tied.

I should have expected fight rather than flight from Adalesa; but perhaps some sense of the unworthiness of such a contest restrained her, for the girl was self-respecting.

She left us early that afternoon, “to await her father’s arrival in town” – which was great nonsense, Lady Marsh said, since it was so uncertain when he would come; but Adalesa could do what she liked with her uncle, and when he ordered there was nothing for it but to obey.

Late that night Evangeline came to my room in a flutter. “It is *just* as I suspected,” she burst out. “He has told me all about it. He never really loved her. But he did not know his own mind until –”

“Until you stepped in?”

“Until she went off in that heartless way to-day. He was afraid she might care for him, but you see for yourself *now!* So he has written to tell her he understands by her going that she wishes to be released, and therefore he offers to release her. He didn’t utter a word of reproach, I know, for he showed me the letter.”

“Noble creature!” I ejaculated.

“Is he not!” she exclaimed, with enthusiasm. “And – oh, don’t be cold and horrid!” She caught my arm and fairly shook me in her wild excitement. “*Do* congratulate me!”

“What, so soon?” I cried, aghast.

“Oh, you *won’t* understand,” she rejoined, wringing her hands. “Yet you know, you *must* know, that a young man may make a mistake. They were utterly unsuited. It is all for the best. They would only have made each other miserable.”

“Well, perhaps you are right,” I said, upon reflection. “Adalesa is certainly difficult. And she is far above the average, too. But I shall wait for the second part of the piece before I offer any of you my congratulations.”

“You *are* horrid!” Evangeline exclaimed, with tears of mortification in her eyes. “And now I know why some of the girls at school said nasty things about you.”

PART II

*“I have lived long enough: my way of life
Is fallen into the sere, the yellow leaf.”¹⁷*

XI

IT arrived to me, as the French phrase it, to wait once more for a midday train at that same station from which I journeyed on the occasion when Adalesa and I had first encountered each other, and to lose myself – and my train again, very nearly – in the contemplation of the crowd about me. Pullman cars¹⁸ had come into existence by this time; and instead of coming to in a third-class compartment, as on that first occasion, I awoke in my rightful place in one of these: and, on looking out of the window on my left, saw something familiar in the shifting scene that recalled the bygone time with a flash. Involuntarily I glanced to the opposite end of the carriage; and there, on the same side as myself, facing me, sat a slender, elegant woman, whose dark eyes met mine with a look of inquiry, which resulted in a sudden mutual recognition of each other. We rose simultaneously, and, meeting half-way, embraced, there being no spectator, happily, whose presence might have checked the impulse. Adalesa returned with me to my corner and sank into the opposite seat.

“History repeats itself,” she said.

“Only the framework: the details are different,” I replied, recalling the tall, gaunt girl, who had thrown herself so recklessly across the intervening space, and comparing her with this richly dressed woman, whose every move was marked with a slow, deliberate grace, as

¹⁷ Shakespeare. *Mac.* 5. 3. 22-3.

¹⁸ *Pullman cars*: Luxurious first-class carriages introduced in the 1880s.

captivating as it was dignified. "When we first met we had everything to look forward to, but now we must both look back."

"True," she said. "Yet our destination is the same, I imagine. I am again going to my Aunt Marsh."

"So am I," I answered, "to welcome Evangeline back from Brazil. I haven't seen her since her marriage. Her husband is something out there, isn't he?"

"Yes – silver or diamonds, or something. Dear Perceval! Do you remember him? But of course you remember him!" she concluded, in the old downright way, laughing a little as she spoke. Then she said, with a sigh, seriously: "But if you have not met any of them since the marriage, I am afraid you will see great changes."

"Changes are what one always seems to be seeing from the moment one has lived long enough to compare this with that," I answered. "Just now I am conscious of a great change in myself. You didn't notice me 'peacocking' about the station this time, and I wonder if I were anybody because of the airs I gave myself?"

Adalesa smiled.

"And I don't want to read the advertisements any more. Just look at the hideous procession! I vow I will never use anything that is advertised to death like that."

"It would be no pleasure to you now to be recognised?" Adalesa asked.

"Oh, none," I answered. "I caught my train to-day because I heard my name mentioned, and slunk into the carriage for fear my face should also be known. Yet I remember what the joy would have been –"

"Had it come earlier? But you anticipated it. I remember so many sayings of yours that show you must have felt you would be known."

"Tell me about yourself," I put in.

"Oh, I am distinguished too in my own way," she answered in the old vein. "I lounge about the world, loving my husband, and longing for the babes that never come; and it is such an extraordinary thing for a duchess to do that I always get a kind of credit for it, which I enjoy. You always said I should end by being something eccentric."

"What became of Brindle?" I asked.

"Poor old dear boy!" she ejaculated. "He attained to an honourable old age, and only lately – left me."

"Do you remember that night on the shore?" slipped from me unawares.

She raised her eyebrows, and looked at me interrogatively; and then I was obliged to confess that I had followed her. "I thought you had some desperate intent," I explained apologetically.

"Such an idiotic idea would never have occurred to me," she answered bluntly. "It is your old-fashioned people who do that. I knew even then that there are more emotions than one worth living for, if I did not suspect that even that one, when abortive, might repeat itself perfectly. The barren sands, with the sea, and the night sky arching over all, invited me strangely. I stole out to secure the sense of immensity which is sustaining and ennobling as well as being restful. I thought I should find there what would enable me to renounce – and I succeeded. I am most devoutly thankful to say that I succeeded." She had clasped her hands, as she uttered these words, and was silent for a little afterwards. Then her countenance cleared, and she turned to me with the air of one who has put something serious aside, and means to be brighter. "Tell me about yourself," she said. "Why did you never answer my letters?"

"For fear of having to do so again!"¹⁹

"Try another," she said, smiling.

¹⁹"For fear of having to do so again!": PMM has, additionally, "I replied."

“Because I had nothing to say.”

“That’s no better. Once more.”

“Well, because I had too much to say.”

“I should think so!” she ejaculated.

“And after all,” I protested, “I am only an onlooker. I am always an onlooker, with no claim to a personality of my own which would interest my friends. I see and foresee. I have seen the setting of several old ideas, and the dawn of diverse new ones. The electric light has come to extinguish the gas²⁰, and London is bursting out into flats, huge caravanserais²¹, admirably arranged for the cremation of the dead in case of fire. Eternal punishment no longer holds up its head; and the commercial part of the church enterprise will soon be in a bad way if the priests don’t discover that we shall all reappear rich and beautiful on earth if we are good. That is all I can think of at this moment.”

Adalesa’s eyes twinkled, but she said nothing; and we both looked out of the window in silence for awhile, the truth being that we were suffering from the pressure of too much to say, so that our words only came out in jerks like water glug-glugging from full bottles. We had not met because I had been abroad so much; but of course we had received all the important heads of intelligence concerning each other; and I confess that I crowed when the news came that Adalesa had proved to have been her Aunt Marsh’s ugly duckling by marrying a duke.

At the station we found carriages waiting for us and our servants; Barkins, now a very old man, being on the box of one of them.

“Ah, Barkins, my friend, how are you?” Adalesa exclaimed, reaching up to shake hands with him. “So you’ve come to drive me yourself? I call that kind; for I know you don’t often drive anybody but her ladyship now.”

“Eh,” he rejoined, touching his hat, “I’d be main bad when I didn’t come to fetch your grace. You’ll not be driving madam there to-day, perhaps?” he added, grinning.

“Barkins will never forget our first arrival together,” Adalesa said, when we were seated. “But oh, the like in unlikeness to-day! Look round: the station – the trees – the fields – the very dust on the road is exactly the same; but look at us! My heart contracts; yet I don’t know why, for I am happier now –”

She did not finish the sentence; but I knew what she meant, for I felt very much the same. There was a certain solemn satisfaction in the feeling, though I cannot explain it; but I would not have had the day that was dead back for all “the tender grace”²² of it. One change in myself I noticed with interest. The first time I had driven along that road I was all anticipation, but now I found myself nothing but reflection. The principal events in life lay behind me; I could think of but little more that there might be to come.

As we approached the house, I was again struck with the air of affluence about the place. It looked like a toy territory, all spick and span, and there was such an affectation of defence about it in the crenelated walls that bounded the chase, and the castellation of every building, from lodge to coach-house, that one almost expected to see ornamental soldiers at regular intervals, ordering arms mechanically.

²⁰*electric light has come to extinguish the gas*: Although Thomas Edison patented the electric light bulb in 1880, electricity was not widely used in Britain until the beginning of the twentieth century.

²¹*caravanserais*: Eastern inns where merchants or pilgrims would rest on their journeys. At this period many of London’s large houses were being converted into flats in order to accommodate the growing urban population.

²²*“the tender grace”*: “But the tender grace of a day that is dead/Will never come back to me.” Alfred Tennyson (Lord Tennyson). “Break, Break, Break” (1834). *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*. Ed. Christopher Ricks. Harlow: Longman, 2007, 165.

Lady Marsh did not come out to meet us this time – another note of change. She found it necessary to save herself as much as possible now. But she rose and came forward to receive us with the stiff haste of age, when we were shown into the drawing-room, embraced us both tenderly, then held us off from her, each by a hand, looked at us, shook her head, sighed, and looked again, especially at me, whom she had not seen in the interval. While we were greeting each other, Sir Henry came pottering in – oh, so shrunken in appearance, but more benign than ever. Adalesa seized upon him, hugged him, wheeled up a big easy-chair for him, and then sat herself down on a stool at his feet, with her arm on his knee. The old man's hand wandered over her head, and rested on her neck, and she took it in hers and held it, after which they both seemed satisfied.

“Adalesa, darling, it is so sweet to see you again,” Lady Marsh exclaimed, turning round upon her just as she had settled herself; “but wouldn't you be more comfortable in a proper chair?”

“We're all right, thank you, dear Aunt Marsh,” Adalesa said; and I saw her signal to her uncle by squeezing his hand, upon which he leant back in his chair and looked up at the ceiling abstractedly. But the little scene was reassuring, showing as it did that in point of character there was no disheartening difference here.

There were three other ladies present – Lady Parkinson and Miss Creamer Patterson, both women of property living in the neighbourhood, who had come to call; and a Mrs. Crowther, who was staying in the house, a somewhat simpering, excessively dressed, youngish person, the kind of pretty thing who lights up when men are present, but languishes if there are only ladies in the room.

Before we had well settled ourselves, yet another lady, of much the same age and type as Mrs. Crowther, but looking more animated for the moment, hurried across the lawn, entered by one of the open windows, and proceeded to embrace Adalesa with effusion. Then she turned to me with the same intention, but I was so surprised that I hung back, and it was some seconds before it dawned upon me that this must be Evangeline.

“I believe you don't know me!” she ejaculated; and I could see that this was a shock to her. Patches of red appeared on her somewhat sunken, sallow cheeks, and the look in her eyes quite startled me, it was so scared. She had evidently had no notion of the change in herself until I failed to recognise her, and had perhaps been cherishing the fond delusion that, however much others might alter, time had only touched her charms to round and ripen them. “I should have known you anywhere,” she added reproachfully.

“And I you – by your voice,” I blundered again, in my anxiety to be truthful as well as to atone. I felt angry with Adalesa. She should have prepared me. Changes, indeed! Evangeline was a wreck.

“I know I am looking washed out,” she continued, glancing anxiously from one to the other of us. “The hot climate, you know. But one always recovers one's complexion at home.”

The manner was much the same, at all events, showing that here again in her case the change had been incomplete, which was a pity; for the simplicity which had been winsome at eighteen seemed silliness now, and the little *moues* and attitudes she still affected sat incongruously upon her altered looks. She was girlishly dressed, in a white frock and a large hat, much as she might have been when first we met. Her unconcealed sensitiveness about her appearance had made us all feel awkward for a moment; but Lady Marsh diverted the rest of the party by directing her attention to me.

“So now you write books?” she said, shaking her head involuntarily.

Miss Creamer Patterson changed countenance, and edged her chair away from me a little, and then edged it back again, as if, on second thoughts, she regretted the impulse. Old

Lady Parkinson peered at me, with undisguised interest, through a single eyeglass. She was prepared to relish any impropriety there might be in my occupation.

“Do tell me how you do it,” she said, in an undertone, looking about her mysteriously, and then leaning forward as if she were about to hear something one only mentions in a whisper. “I am curious to know how things are written. I’ve often thought I should like to do something of that kind myself – *on the sly you know*. It must be so pleasant to write things. But,” she added quickly, “I shouldn’t like to do anything to interfere with my night’s rest.”

Miss Creamer Patterson, having overcome her first instinctive shrinking, and being kindly anxious to atone if she had hurt my feelings, now decided to countenance me, while, of course, carefully avoiding any allusion to my lapse.

“It has been a very *dull* day,” she said.

But before I could do more than glance at her in response, Lady Parkinson began again.

“And when you write a book do you put in the stops yourself? Stops and everything! Oh, no! not the stops, of course. All that must be done for you.”

This was added as if she feared I should think she had been expecting too much of me.

“It is really most enjoyable weather –,” Miss Creamer Patterson recommenced.

“But, now, do tell me,” Lady Parkinson interposed. “Do you *really* only write on one side of the paper? I’ve been told so, but one *never* knows. People spread such reports about, you know. Then, I suppose, you make your notes on the other side?”

“This is most enjoyable weather for the country,” Miss Creamer Patterson again essayed, with exaggerated mildness – as an example, doubtless, to Lady Parkinson, who spoke out authoritatively; but the correction was lost upon the latter.

“You must write very legibly, of course,” she broke in once more.

“They say I don’t,” I had time to reply. “But it doesn’t much matter now, as we can have our things type-written.”²³

“Ah! type-written,” Lady Parkinson repeated knowingly. “I know what that is – that long, thin kind of writing. But it must spoil your night’s rest. *Surely* it does!”

“No,” I answered: “I only write in the morning. Large entertainments do that when I go to them; but I seldom go. People are never at their best in a crowd, and I like to see my friends at their best. Numbers take the individuality out of them, somehow; and the man or woman who is excellent good company by one’s own fireside, feet on fender, can only cackle in a crowd like everybody else. That which makes us kin only comes out at quiet times. When there is silence, we say an angel is passing.”

She started at me vacantly, as though not comprehending in the least, and then her eyes wandered over the floor as if she were looking for something.

“I should have thought it would interfere with your night’s rest,” she said at last. “And of course it must prevent your going into society as much as you ought.”

“Society would interfere with my writing if I would let it,” I answered. “But I never let it. I hate society.”

She gave a sort of little jump. “Hate society?” she echoed under her breath. “Oh!”

If I had blasphemed she could not have been more horrified.

Mrs. Crowther and Evangeline were talking about some lady-milliner.

“I don’t like lady-milliners, because you can’t beat them down in their prices,” Mrs. Crowther declared languidly.

²³*type-written*: Although the typewriter as we know it was launched in 1874, it was not until the 1890s that it became widely used. In Grant Allen’s novel *The Type-Writer Girl* (1897) the protagonist Juliet Appleton uses her skills in shorthand and type-writing to earn her living.

“That is so like you, dear child,” Lady Marsh ejaculated.

“What I object to about her is that she has taken to selling cheap things,” Evangeline remarked. “She offered me a bonnet for two guineas the other day.”

“Ridiculous!” said Mrs. Crowther.

Miss Creamer Patterson had had a little confidential chat with Evangeline since she last addressed me; and now she turned and beamed upon me cordially. “I hear you are a cousin by marriage of the dear duchess’s,” she said.

“I am distantly related to her husband,” I answered stiffly, seeing that she meant to wait until I spoke.

“I hope you’ll come and see me,” she rejoined. “It has been nice bright weather to-day, hasn’t it? But the country is always fresh, don’t you think so? I was three months in London this year. I am going to give an at-home. I hope you will come. It is so nice to have interesting people at one’s parties, you know. People always like to meet writers and that kind of thing, don’t you know – when they are of good family. Of course, that is the difficulty. But there *are* some undoubtedly eccentric, don’t you know; only that is amusing, and people like to meet them. Now, you will come, won’t you? Do promise me.”

On the way upstairs I asked Adalesa if she thought women were ready for the suffrage.

“Oh, I don’t know,” she answered carelessly. “Female fools are not worse than male fools; and if you tested the sexes for folly by examination you would find them much of a muchness. You can’t make flour without corn, my dear. When people have nothing to think about they don’t think.”

XII

IN going through the old house I became aware of a change in it also, as sorrowful in its way as that which I had observed in the old people. I remembered it as spacious above everything, a place where one’s lungs rejoiced in pure air always, and body and soul could expand healthily and be at ease. It had been Sir Henry’s house at that time; but as the years rolled on, that trick of not troubling had grown upon him, and he had retreated further into himself, and oftener into his library, leaving his wife and daughter to have their way, even to the blotting out of every sign of his own personality if they chose, so long as they never meddled with his pet²⁴ sanctum and private place of abode, the big library. There he and the things he loved grew old together in gentle fellowship, built up of interest and early association; and there he had preserved the space he had been born to move in, and kept the memory of his people and the traditions of his ancient house alive. I went to see him in the library next morning, and found him with a little book in his hand, looking idly out of one of the windows; and, coming upon him unawares, surprised a look of patient resignation on his face that saddened me. It was a grand old age, upright and uncomplaining, but terribly pathetic in its loneliness. Adalesa was the one creature upon earth, I believe, with whom his soul found fellowship, and she did what she could for him with joy, her great grief being that they could not meet except under the sombre shadow of an approaching parting: “If only you were a pauper, Uncle Henry,” she used to exclaim in her quaint way, “I could have you with me always.”

Outside that room the house was crowded now to suffocation with curtains, cushions, couches, ottomans, and easy-chairs, upholstered in the modern manner with mere trivialities of a costly fashion, devoid of association with the past, and not likely or even intended to last into any distant future. It was decorated, too, in excess with pictures, statues, china, arms and ornaments of every sort, stuck any and everywhere till the eye was satiated; and it would

²⁴ *pet*: “own” (PMM).

have been a relief to it to have found a square yard of oak panelling to repose upon, and a stimulant to the mind had there been any story connected with the panel to arouse reflection. It was a house furnished to death, to the great discomfort of people like myself, who crave for light to luxuriate in, air to breathe, and space in which to move freely. The excessive air of affluence out of doors had been bad enough in its suggestion of a little toy territory, but indoors it was worse, being oppressive. Every appointment was too luxurious, and it seemed impossible for human beings to live long in such surroundings and not become enervated, both from want of thought and in consequence of habitual self-indulgence. Lotus-eaters they were bound to be, growing flabbier from day to day, morally and physically, through having had everything excluded from their lives that might have served to stimulate them to the wholesome exercise of their minds and muscles. It was impossible to think of such a place as belonging to a man, or at all events as the outcome of a vigorous character. Everything about it now was womanish, to such a degree as to create a prejudice in advance, in the mind of one who likes men to be manly, against any man who lingered there. It seemed unlikely that he could be anything but of the tame cat kind, a domestic animal kept about the place by the ladies, like their other pets, for his usefulness, or to delight their eyes, and serve at odd times as an excuse for something to lavish their love upon.

Evangeline, being an only child and not very fond of the tropics, had naturally lived much of her married life at home. Our old schoolroom was now her boudoir. She had made it stuffily effeminate in the fashionable manner, with tambourines and ribbons, painted plaques, and things of all kinds converted from their honest use to serve as ornaments absurdly – as, for instance, a salad-oil bottle with a pink ribbon tied round its neck, filled with grasses and hung upon the wall – dusty fripperies! “Just like a beastly bazaar,” as Adalesa remarked. “Don’t I know them, for my sins? I’m always having to open them. And I always buy these kind of things, and then give a children’s party, so that some one may get some pleasure out of them, if it’s only the pleasure of demolishing them. I should so like to see Evangeline the Second throw billiard-balls at that oil bottle.”

It was the day after our arrival, and we had looked in there for a moment on our way to the drawing-room for afternoon tea. This meal was quite a function when Adalesa was in the house. People dropped in for it from all parts of the county, and one could see that none of them ever forgot that she was a duchess.

We found the room full on this occasion, and Evangeline, very much in her element, flitting about from one to another, all little airs and graces, gesticulating with her pretty hands to help her words out, and altogether very youthful indeed. Two lovely little children, a boy and a girl, dreadfully over-dressed, were brought in presently.

“My babies!” she exclaimed, fluttering off to meet them, and then flopping down on her knees and holding out her arms, into which the little girl sprang confidently. The boy hung back.

“Ah, this is *my* child, this is *my* darling!” Evangeline cried, covering the girl with kisses. “You go away,” she said to the other; “you’re not *my* boy at all.”

If this were meant for playfulness the little fellow did not see it, for he shrank off sensitively, and seemed too preoccupied to respond when Adalesa took him upon her knee and began to lavish attentions upon him. He sat with his eyes fixed on his mother and sister, watching them with a countenance so blank, one wondered at it, but could not understand it. I discovered afterwards, however, that he was utterly neglected, if not absolutely ill-treated, by his mother, because a dark drop that there was in his father’s family had come out in him. Evangeline had been sentimental, as a girl, on the subject of Perceval’s “exquisite Oriental eyes,” but during her sojourn in the tropics she had acquired some further information on the subject of such eyes, and now associated them with other than romantic ideas. The little girl was as fair as herself, but abroad the boy had been stigmatised as “coloured.” He was a

charming child, but almost morbidly sensitive, and one could see that his mother's continual jibes, although always delivered with an affectation of playfulness, never failed to cut him to the quick. Adalesa and I both begged hard to be allowed to keep him.

"You can halve him between you if you like," his mother rejoined. "I only want my girl – my beauty!"

"You *are* a brute, Evangeline!" was Adalesa's gentle comment.

"Ah, my dear," said Evangeline airily, "it is fortunate for the family that you became a duchess. In a less exalted position people might have tried you by your language, and found you wanting in refinement."

"Good, by way of *tu quoque*," said Adalesa appreciatively.

They had an encounter of this kind almost every time they met, and it was strange to find these two mature women jarring still, without ever quarrelling exactly, just as they used to do in their early girlhood.

XIII

MRS. CROWTHER was Evangeline's bosom friend at this time; but they had two other bosom friends, Mr. Regy Vincent and Mr. Paul Marks, who came continually to the house to pay them that kind of court which very young men are apt to lavish on dressy young women, a good deal older than themselves, if they are encouraged; and it was evident to me, so far as Evangeline was concerned, that what she lived on now was the adoration of these

*"Things whose place 'tis over ladies
To lean and flirt and stare and simper,
Till all that is divine in woman
Grows cruel, courteous, smooth, inhuman:
Crucified 'twixt a smile and a whimper."*²⁵

She took either or both about with her impartially, according to circumstances, or as they might become available, for purposes of escort. She shared them fairly with Mrs. Crowther, but would show signs of dissatisfaction if they ventured to pay any but the most unavoidable attention to other ladies. Beyond these young men, however, and the constant care and thought she bestowed upon her dress and appearance, she did not seem to have any special interest in life. It was a continual case of "What shall we do next"? with her – an inveterate running from one trivial amusement to another in order to pass the time – to get it over with as little consciousness of its flight as possible. The only moments she really lived were those which brought her some petty personal social triumph, emphasized by a tribute of admiration or of envy, no matter which, since either proved that she was still a success.

"One would think it was something glorious you were hurrying to arrive at," Adalesa said to her one day, "instead of old age, which will be upon you soon enough, I should think, without you going to meet it half-way as you do, seeing that you dread it so."

Mr. Regy Vincent and Mr. Paul Marks lounged in after dinner on the evening of our arrival. They were stiff and neglectful in their attentions to Lady Marsh on account of her age, familiar with Evangeline and Mrs. Crowther, deferential to "the duchess," and suspicious of me. Sir Henry they would have treated as an equal had he not overlooked them altogether.

"Awful fun at the cricket match this afternoon," Mr. Vincent remarked to the ceiling. He was sprawling in an armchair beside Mrs. Crowther, with his hands in his trouser pockets and his legs spread out before him.

²⁵"*Things whose place...and a whimper.*": Percy Bysshe Shelley. *Peter Bell the Third*. Part 3, *Hell*, stanza 10, lines 46-50 (*The Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*. London: Edward Moxon, 1853, 464.) The poem, written in 1819, was first published in Shelley's *Collected Poems* (1839), edited by Mary Shelley. The first line of *Hell* reads: "Hell's a city much like London." The poem is a parody of Wordsworth's *Peter Bell*. Grand has slightly misquoted the first line, which should read "Things whose trade is, over ladies."

“Oh, did you hear that girl?” said Mr. Marks, who stood near with an eyeglass in his right eye, looking down on the ladies in every sense of the word. “I can’t remember exactly what she said, but I know it was awfully good. Some one had been caught out, or something of that kind, don’t you know, and so she thought that side had lost!”

“Yet women want the suffrage!” Mr. Vincent said softly to the ceiling.

Mr. Marks very much appreciated this good thing; and the three ladies also smiled, as though to show their perfect agreement with the conclusion that, because one woman, not having learnt the ins and outs of such an important thing as a game of cricket, makes a mistake, therefore the pretensions of all women to be considered reasonable beings are absurd.

“Take care!” Lady Marsh said to Mr. Vincent playfully. “That dear child there” – meaning Adalesa – “claims equality with you.”

“Oh for heaven’s sake – pardon me,” Adalesa cried, with more than necessary emphasis, after a horrified glance at the young man’s sloping skull – “not equality! I could never come to that!”

Mr. Vincent frowned thoughtfully, and even Mr. Marks seemed to think there might be more than he perceived in this reply; but Lady Marsh smiled on serenely. There was a little pause, however, and some remarks made in undertones before the chatter recommenced; then somebody began about hands and feet.

“I know who has the smallest feet I ever saw,” Mr. Vincent declared, looking significantly at Evangeline, who assumed a simpering air of unconsciousness.

“Well, I know whose feet are the best shape,” Mr. Paul Marks declared, with a companion glance at Mrs. Crowther.

“I’ll bet you ten to one Mrs. Perceval has the smallest foot in the room,” Mr. Vincent cried.

“Done with you,” said Mr. Marks. “Ladies, a slipper each, please, to measure.”

“I beg to be excused,” Adalesa said, with dignity.

“How horrid of you!” Evangeline exclaimed. “How is the bet to be decided? It is only fun.”

“I fail to see the fun,” said Adalesa.

Others were not so fastidious, however, and the vulgar competition went on without her, one inanity leading to another until it was time to retire.

“Isn’t it delightful to see Evangeline so young and fresh?” Lady Marsh whispered to me as I wished her good-night. “She is quite a girl. Every little thing amuses her.”

I smiled as well as I could, thinking the while that it might have been better had she been less “a girl” and more fastidious.

“Oh, by the way,” Mr. Vincent exclaimed, “will you come out for a row to-morrow? We can carry four ladies in the back of the boat.”

“Where?” I asked.

“Mr. Vincent means the stern,” Adalesa explained; “but he didn’t think a lay would understand.”

We were leaving the room together at the moment; and she continued laughingly, when we were out of earshot, “I always think it so kind and considerate of those dear boys to talk down to our ladylike level.”

Adalesa laughed; then asked if I felt sleepy, because she did not, and proposed that we should go to Evangeline’s room and cackle.

We surprised Evangeline dabbing some cosmetic on her faded cheeks.

“Don’t you do anything to *your* face?” she asked Adalesa, in a sort of gently reproachful tone, as if it were not honourable to neglect cosmetics.

“I wash it,” said Adalesa.

Evangeline had left her husband in Brazil, but he was expected home next day.

"How delighted you will be to see him," I said innocently.

Evangeline failed in an attempt to look so.

"You haven't seen him since Evangeline took him off my hands for his good, have you?" Adalesa remarked, in her flippant way.

I had been nervously toying with some bottles on the dressing-table when this allusion was made, and now I knocked one over.

"My drops!" Evangeline exclaimed. "I am obliged to take something. The doctor prescribed them for my nerves: I can't trust my nerves; I can't keep up without something."

This was said almost defiantly, as if she thought we should object; but Adalesa recommended her to have some drops.

"Judging by your appearance, I should say you will never want them more than you do at this moment," she said.

When I was alone with Adalesa, I could not help remarking on the change in Evangeline.

"It amazes me," I said.

"Do you mean the change in her appearance or in her character?" she asked.

"Both," I answered.

"Well, neither need," she said; "for those soft, plump, pink-and-white girls, who mature early, and have no muscular training to strengthen and develop their physique, go off early as a rule; and if you will remember how she was taught to believe that a woman's great aim in life is to be attractive, particularly in appearance, to men, you won't wonder that she begins to be embittered by the suspicion that she is less so than she was."

"What is Perceval like now?"

"Stoutish – the last time I saw him, and I expect by now he will have quite lost his girlish figure. But in one respect he has not altered. He is still much as he was when he thought he preferred Evangeline to me – the sort of man, that is to say, who hasn't the brains to know what a fool he is."

XIV

It was Adalesa, as it happened, who welcomed the traveller back next day, Evangeline having gone out early, with Mrs. Crowther and the two young men, on some expedition, from which she did not return in time to meet her husband.

He looked to me now a somewhat irritable, elderly, careworn man, more altered for the worse, I thought, in appearance and manner, even than she was. But he won my heart by his devotion to his dark little boy. The way the two clung to each other was significant. When the father was reading his paper in the morning, the child would come in stealthily, glancing about, as if afraid of being captured and ordered off, and would climb up on his father's knee, and nestle there happily so long as he was left in peace, his father fondling him half unconsciously with his disengaged hand. And they would talk to each other, too, when nobody seemed to be noticing them; but if Evangeline came and caught them, she would gently insist upon sending the boy off to the nursery, or out for a walk; and neither he nor his father ever had the courage to disobey her.

These episodes were painfully significant. They made one heartsore and sorrowful, and all the more so because there was such a falsification in it all of the unvarying sweetness of manner and womanly graces Evangeline cultivated. She was enough to make one distrust all simple-seeming, apparently amiable women; and one felt one would rather have downright roughness with some affection, than that silken selfishness which had spoilt the

only chance a man ever had to become better than his natural self, was crushing his son, and bringing his daughter up to be detestable.

One of Evangeline's ideas was to have a ball while we were all together, "just like the one we had when we were girls," she said, clapping her hands youthfully. It did not seem to me to be a very happy idea, considering what Adalesa had suffered on that occasion; but the latter was too healthy-minded, even if she had not been to happily situated, to be troubled by inconvenient reminiscences.

Lady Marsh aided and abetted Evangeline. We should arrange it all ourselves, she said, just as we did before, in the same sitting-room, and all be girls again. But, oh, the pathetic absurdity of the attempt! three married women at the meridian expected to ape themselves as they were in the morning of life. Only Evangeline could seriously think of such a thing. She insisted that our costumes for the ball should be red, white, and blue again; and that we should wear the jewels Sir Henry had given us for the first event; and she sorrowed because the very same dresses were not in existence to be worn again.

"What *should* we look like?" Adalesa exclaimed, with her frank laugh. She was sitting beside her uncle, and now proceeded to make merry with him over the disappearance of her angles.

But Evangeline looked shocked. She thought any allusion to altered looks very bad taste; and besides, she was treating the whole thing like a sacred function, which, if solemnly performed in the right spirit, would rejuvenate us all.

One of Evangeline's wearing tricks was to exact a lover-like devotion from her husband; but only by fits and starts, when others failed or their attentions palled upon her, or when she suspected him of having looked admiringly at some one else. The poor man always did his best to respond to these exactions; but it was pitiful to witness what the effort cost him, and ridiculous to see him attach himself to her train, and feign to be a passionate young lover. At such times he made me think of a performing dog in a state of trepidation, doing his best with one eye on his master's whip, in dread anticipation of what will follow if he fails to satisfy him.

I was standing beside her when the ball began.

"How delightful to renew all the old associations!" she exclaimed. "I feel quite as excited as I did – then, you know."

I could see, however, that it was an anxious kind of excitement, more painful than pleasurable. This ball was to be decisive in some way. She kept glancing at herself in a mirror near. She had always loved the good points of her own anatomy; it had been a positive pleasure to consider them; but now there was no pleasure in her eyes, only incessant inquiry.

"I think we look pretty much the same," she said at last, airily, but tentatively also.

"The same considerably older," I answered, but instantly regretted the careless speech when I saw its effect upon her. She was not so much offended as frightened, I thought, and I was glad to see her husband approaching to make a diversion.

"We will have the first waltz together for old sake's sake," he began, with a kindly smile.

"I am engaged for it. You should have come sooner," she answered shortly.

"Well, never mind, dear," he rejoined. "Keep me one during the evening."

"If you really care about it, I think you might particularise the one," she answered.

He took her programme, and looked at it quietly; but there was no longer any of the animation in his face with which he had approached her. She had banished the light of other days effectually; and in its place there reappeared the lines which had been deeply graven there by the friction of such scenes as these.

Evangeline's partner carried her off, and then her husband turned to Adalesa, who was also standing by. I had noticed it was always to her he turned in times of trial. "You see I never do the right thing," he said, dejectedly.

"I should have said that you did so just then," she answered.

"Ah! well, then," he rejoined, "I suppose I did not do it in the right way."

He sighed as he spoke, and at that moment Evangeline glided by with Mr. Vincent, to whom she whispered and simpered as they waltzed.

There was a bevy of girls at the ball, charming, fresh, merry girls, whom it was a pleasure just to sit and watch, their enjoyment of everything was so hearty.

Adalesa and I busied ourselves in finding partners for them. Evangeline had fought against having so many girls asked, but we ultimately overruled her objection. A ball without plenty of girls would be intolerable. In my leisure moments – that is to say, when a dance was in progress – I saw her several times sitting out; and towards the end of the evening an unmistakable air of deep dissatisfaction settled upon her. She had determined to dance till daylight, but only her husband, Mr. Vincent and Mr. Marks, had asked her; by all the other men she had been overlooked.

Once during the night I saw her hurriedly leave the ball-room alone, and followed her, fearing she might be ill. I found her in her own room, having recourse to those fatal "drops", without which she professed to be so seldom equal to anything now. They seemed to raise her spirits for the moment; but, later on during a dance, she came to where Adalesa and I were sitting out together, and sank on to the ottoman beside us with such a weary, dejected air, that I felt sorry for her, and tried to think of something to say that would solace her. The effort brought back a vivid recollection of the day that we were commemorating. I recognised the very spot where I had sat looking on at the ball and wondering at her conduct; and recalled with a rush the yearning to peep into the future – and the palm. Probably one had been placed on that same spot for every ball given in the house. But this palm looked so exactly like the other, even to the position of that particular leaf on which the light had shone as it waved to the whirl of the dancers, or bent in quiet moments, above those who sat under it, that it might have been the same plant, especially as time had touched it, so that the leaf was no longer fresh and green, but dry and brown, with frayed edges much in need of the gardener's shears.²⁶

I had confided my fancy of long ago about it to Adalesa, and now she remarked upon it.

"Does it speak of spirits still?" she asked.

"Alas! no," I answered. "It has 'fallen into the sere, the yellow leaf,' and is altogether prosaic. I should have it cut off; it only disfigures the plant."

Evangeline looked up at it absently; then suddenly her eyes gleamed.

"Do I look like a horrid, wizened old woman?" she demanded.

"No," I answered sincerely.

"And what would it matter if one did?" Adalesa asked.

"What would it matter!" she groaned. "It would mean an end of everything that makes life endurable."

"Nonsense!" said Adalesa. "Every age has its pleasures; and how a woman can care to be a day younger than she is – can crave for the admiration paid to twenty when she should be enjoying the homage due to forty, I cannot conceive. The buds are beautiful in the spring, and there is beauty also in the full-blown foliage of summer; but are either more admirable in their day than the exquisite autumn leaf?"

²⁶But this palm ... the gardener's shears: In Part I, p.28, the narrator associates "the great glossy plume of the palm," dark green in colour, with Evangeline. The comparison continues here.

“But men say such things about old women,” Evangeline wailed.

“Ah – men!” Adalesa laughed. “Well, *my* man is sound on the subject. But why be forever thinking about men, Evangeline? Why don’t you go in for something sensible now? Look at Mrs. Crowther! It is for men, I suppose, that *she* makes up so abominably. And what does she gain by it? Nothing but ridicule; for if there is one thing men despise more than another, it is an artificial woman. Are you ill?”

This was said with concern, on seeing Evangeline’s face contract, as if with a spasm of pain.

“No, thank you,” she answered faintly. Then after a little, she exclaimed, “But what is there to live for, if you cease to be attractive?”

“Oh, if we are careful, we need never cease to be attractive,” Adalesa answered easily, and then abruptly changed the subject.

XV

WHEN the guests had gone, and we had got into our dressing-gowns, Adalesa came to my room, and found me sitting by the open window looking out at the lingering night. She drew up a chair, and sat beside me silently for some time.

There was no moon, and only a few stars appeared low down on the horizon; but still it was possible to see the shadowy outlines of trees and shrubs; and the scent of summer flowers was wafted up to us, the chirrup of a bird disturbed, the mournful cry of some creature far away – bird of night or beast in distress, it was impossible to say which at so great a distance – even the round clear warble of a nightingale arose now and then, though it was late in the season for these; occasionally, too, one of the dogs would set up a dismal howl, which would arouse the others in the neighbourhood, one by one, till a whole pack had joined in vigorous chorus, which subsided again into single barks, as it had begun, making room for the silence proper to the hour – that silence, never empty or distasteful to the healthy mind, which is as an atmosphere wrapped about us, through which we are conscious of the throbbing of continuous soft sounds. There came to us now from far away the solemn, deep-toned tolling of a bell; while the constant gurgle and drip of water near at hand and the voices of whispering leaves filled up every pause with lingering *crescendo* murmur and rustle, inexpressibly soothing.

“What an exquisite hour!” Adalesa said at last softly; “a night like that other night long ago; but, oh, the difference! the like in unlikeness! I *did* suffer. And now I have everything – by which I mean that in myself which is everything; while Evangeline – I do pity her; and I am anxious about her too. I never dreamt any sane woman could be so seriously affected by the suspicion that she has gone off. She has everything in the world but the charm of youth and the tribute paid to it, and that, it seems, is the only thing she cares for.”

“Oh, well, it is natural to mourn when a sudden sense of loss comes upon us,” I answered temperately. “I don’t believe, until to-night, she ever even suspected that she could go off. It must have been a blow to find herself set aside all at once. But let us hope she is sleeping now, and will awake with her mind strengthened.”

“Yes, let us hope it,” Adalesa answered. “Let us hope she will reconcile herself to the loss of her beauty, and begin to look about for more lasting interests. And let us slip out, you and I, just to mark the good time we are having, and the great change: let us slip out and sit on the shore, and watch the sun rise over the sea. Come and invoke ‘tender morning visions of beauteous souls’ and be glad. You can be glad now?” she said, with sudden sympathy, recollecting.

“Oh yes,” I answered quickly; “I enjoy every hour of my life now.”

“That’s right. That is how it should be as we get older,” she replied. “Here, let me help you into a walking-dress. Don’t you appreciate things better now than you did? – at that moment, I mean. When one is young, one is never so satisfied. One looks back and lives those delights over again; but at the time we did not understand, and so lost the full flavour. Later, one has realised how precious it is just to be alive; and then, I think, it is that one begins to live.”

We were ready by this time, and, having slipped out by a side-door, we took our way through the murmuring pine wood to the beach. It was so dusky under the trees that we could see no path; and now our feet sank deep in moss, and now dry branches crackled beneath them, making what seemed, by contrast, to be a terrific noise in the stillness. In the thicker part of the wood great shadows rushed out upon and then engulfed us; and filmy forms that hovered above the path flitted aside to make way for us; while the pine-needles falling kept up a continuous patter, as of lively little feet; and the fragrant pine-plumes, answering to a touch, bent above us caressingly.

Presently, however, we raised our heads again out in the open. It was a very different scene. The breezy sandhills lay about us, desolate as deserted streets, which they somewhat resembled in their irregular outlines, by that light – streets that the dust of ages has settled upon, making mounds, beneath which all outward semblance of human habitation is blotted out. The coarse grass, through which the wind swished, and the heavy sand hindered our feet as we stumbled on; but presently we came out upon the beach, close beside the sea, for the tide was up. And there we sat us, and together saw the sapphire dark melt out of the sky, and the first faint grey streaks of dawn shoot up in the east, shaft-like, from horizon to zenith, then slowly take on a faint flush of pink, scarcely a shadow at first, but growing momentarily deeper, and spreading till the whole east shone crimson, and the sea responded to the glory of it. Then the rim of the sun arose from the waters, and the wavelets welcomed it with merry murmurs as they broke upon the sandy shore. We saw in silence, there being no word of human speech to express the emotions of such a moment. The sea-voice sang in our ears; we scented the exquisite iodine freshness of the air, the joy of nature filled and encompassed us. No hour of earthly triumph can exceed in ecstasy the gladness of such a time. The holy calm of it settled upon us, and when at last we rose and returned arm-in-arm, our souls were satisfied, and our hearts were strengthened as by a solemn service.

XVI

NEXT morning, at a late hour, I was dressing in a leisurely manner for a late breakfast; and as I dressed I sang to myself, until the saying “Sing before breakfast, cry before night,”²⁷ flashed through my mind, bringing with it a hundred memories of happy mornings when the songs would out in spite of the saying. Now, however, somehow it silenced me, and I was just thinking, when, without warning, Adalesa burst in upon me and stood on the threshold, gasping, with scared, white face.

“Come!” she tried to articulate, but her voice failed her.

I understood, however, and followed her from the room without a word.

Outside in the corridor we encountered Sir Henry and Lady Marsh. He, with a blank, stunned look on his fine old countenance, was tenderly supporting her as he led her to her room. Poor old people, fast failing both of them, it was a terrible sight! She was all dishevelled in appearance, as if she had rushed out from her bed, with white hair streaming, and the pleased, perpetual smile banished at last and for ever from her distorted features. When she saw us she sent up a shriek, like one distraught.

²⁷ “Sing before breakfast, cry before night”: A traditional proverb.

“What horror has happened?” I tried to say, but my voice was strangled in my throat.

Adalesa, clasping her hand round my arm, hurried me on to Evangeline’s room. The door was open, and several servants, with awestruck countenances, stood outside craning their necks to peep in over each other’s heads and satisfy their curiosity. As we approached they silently made way for us, and we entered. The blinds were up, and the summer sun exposed the scene, touching with tawdriness what the moon would have enriched, and making merely revolting that which night would have divested of all but romantic interest. Was it only a few hours since we had seen that same sun rise resplendent, and felt we could cling to every hour of life only to see and salute him again and again? We had flattered ourselves then that Evangeline was sleeping off her childish pique; and now, at the first glance, she seemed to be sleeping; but at the second we stood transfixed, seeing but not believing, knowing but not acknowledging.

There was a large luxurious couch near the window; and there, still in her ball dress and her jewels, lit by the full blaze of day, she lay prone, with eyes half-shut and lips drawn back in a dreadful grin. She had many more jewels on than she had worn at the ball the night before; and I was seized with the horrid suspicion that the ball dress had been kept on for effect, and the extra diamonds added to complete the picture. But oh! if she could have seen the effect! I wish – I wish *I* never had, for I cannot forget it. Patches of rouge stood out on her sallow, shrunken cheeks, making her whole face look like old ill-coloured wax, the rigidity being further emphasized by a fly, which buzzed about, lighting now here, now there, with impunity. It was horrible not even to expect her to feel it, and flip it away.

Her husband stood beside her, looking down at her; but there was neither love nor grief in his face – only a kind of wonder mingled with repulsion. It is dreadful to see death and not weep; but all who stood by her, her lovers and her friends, were dry-eyed; and the fact that there was not one tearful face to relieve the tension with a touch of pathos made the tragedy more hideous.

Mr. Regy Vincent outside said audibly to Mrs. Crowther: “She looks too horrid; you mustn’t go in.”

Could she have heard him, had she had imagination enough even to have anticipated such a thing, she might have been saved!

Suddenly a child set up a shrill cry. It was her little boy, who had slipped in unnoticed, and now clung, shrieking and terrified, to his father. A servant, shrinking from the task, hastily tore the coverlet from the bed, and, with lips compressed, as if nerving herself, covered the couch and its ghastly burden; and then, snatching up the child, hurriedly made her escape.

Outside, Mrs. Crowther was asking Mr. Vincent if there would be an inquest.

“Oh yes! and we shall be asked to give evidence,” he answered.

“What – *me*?” she cried. “How horrid! I was never mixed up in anything so dreadful in my life. Can’t I get away?”

“Well, *I’m* going,” he rejoined; “I’ll see you safely to town if you like.”

Now that there was nothing to be seen but the dim suggestion of a figure beneath the coverlet, we were able to speak to each other.

Perceval was the first to find words.

“She seemed dreadfully depressed after the ball,” he whispered. “I could not understand why exactly. She said several times she had nothing left to live for. Then she begged me to leave her for the night. She wanted to be alone. She said she thought she should sleep if I left her alone. So I went into the next room, and was soon asleep myself, never dreaming –”

He looked absently at a little bottle he held in his hand, and muttered something about a dangerous medicine.

Adalesa slipped her hand through my arm, and, whispering "I want to speak to you," drew me away to her room. "Look," she said, drawing a paper from her pocket when she had shut the door and glanced round carefully to make sure that we were alone, "I found this, but no one else has seen it. It is not addressed to any one, and there is no signature, you see. What shall I do with it? She had it in her hand. I was the first to find her. I went in early, because I was anxious. I thought I could cheer her. She seemed to be holding it out to me as I entered, and I took it and kissed her, and asked her pardon if I had hurt her – before I saw. I ran in, you know, and flopped down on my knees beside her, giving myself no time either to see or think; so that it did not strike me as strange that she should be lying there in her ball dress and jewels, with the sun streaming in upon her. It was the cold of her cheek –"

She finished by crushing the crumpled sheet into my hand with a shudder; and I shuddered too as I opened it. One does not shrink from anything that the honoured dead have touched; but this was different – this firmly written, cool, cynical, heartless expression of a selfish determination.

When I had read it I looked at Adalesa, and made as if I would have torn it up.

"Yes, yes," she said, eagerly; "or burn it – for the sake of an honoured name – for the old people – for the children's sake – burn it. No one need ever know. Thank Heaven we were here!"

Accordingly, a large and sorrowing circle of shocked and sympathetic friends were informed eventually by the verdict that the sad occurrence had been the result of misadventure, in the shape of an overdose of morphia "taken to relieve pain."

Eugenia
A Modern Maiden and a Man Amazed

First published in *Temple Bar* 99 (December 1893): 509-40.

In *TB*, the following appeared, centred, under the title: "A STUDY FROM LIFE. BY MADAME SARAH GRAND, AUTHOR OF 'IDEALA, A STUDY FROM LIFE.'"

Grand's additions for the volume version of the story amount to 4,600 words.

Temple Bar, subtitled *A London Magazine for Town and Country Readers*, was a literary miscellany, owned by John Bentley from 1866, with a reputation for having "a bohemian edge" (Law, 194). It was published in 553 monthly issues from 1860-1906.

The following text is transcribed from *Our Manifold Nature*. London: Heinemann, 1894, 103-175.

I

I am a humble artist, studying always in the life-school of the world, blinking nothing that goes to the making or marring of life – more especially to the marring of it, for if we would make it lovely we must know exactly the nature of the diseases that disfigure it, and experiment upon them until we discover the great specific which, when properly applied, shall remedy all that. And it so happened that, in order to be accurate in every detail of a work upon which I was then engaged, I required to study human nature as it appears behind the scenes at the time of night when that part of a theatre is most characteristically crowded with the company in costume and such visitors as are admitted. A brother of mine made the necessary arrangements for me, and was so good as to escort me himself, the booking managers²⁸, to whom he had explained my difficulty, having most courteously allowed me free access for my purpose. I have only to mention here one of the numerous little items of interest I noted at the time. It happened at the beginning of the enterprise, when everything was new and strange; and, while the incident itself, although trivial, remains distinctly impressed upon my mind, the surrounding details, doubtless because of their number and novelty, escape me for the most part, as in a well-balanced picture where all is unobtrusive save the main idea; but I remember that we were involved in a crowd²⁹ of theatrical characters variously and even fantastically attired as if for a fancy-dress ball, and that the clatter of tongues was bewildering. Rank odours of a variety of scents saluted one's afflicted nostrils on all sides. This way white rose flowed from a fan which a much bedizened, vulgarly handsome daughter of the people was waving over a repulsively dissipated-looking young man in evening dress who was sprawling disrespectfully on a couch. On the other side

²⁸the booking managers: "the leading managers" (*TB*).

²⁹involved in a crowd: "wedged in a crowd" (*TB*).

patchouli polluted the air, and wood violet on a nymph in front of us was waging war with the whisky and eau de cologne which were being wafted abroad by an old unvenerable man who was essaying to ogle with dim watery eyes and to simper with loose lips that were too tremulous to respond simultaneously to the weak-willed intention. Every affectation of society was apparent about us, but coarsened into caricature. Flirtations were more evident, and grosser in the conduct of them than in Belgravia; and powder, paint and paste-diamonds were flaunted more conspicuously. Tight-lacing was also carried to a more painful extent, the various distortions of the figure to which it inevitably gives rise being of necessity exaggerated, while the difficulty of breathing with only the upper part of the lungs free caused the bare chests to heave hideously³⁰. Women's voices shrilled loudly, the cockney accent predominating. Most of the things said struck me as being disagreeably personal and flippant when not actually coarse and rude. The laughter was noisy and incessant, but mirthless, and, although there was plenty of excitement in the assembly, there was obviously little if any genuine pleasure, and as to happiness, I could detect no trace³¹, even on the youngest face, to indicate it. The predominant expression was one of anxiety, only relieved in the more callous by moments of sensual apathy. As a whole the scene remains impressed upon my mind as an unlovely travesty of much to which one becomes accustomed in society, but it possessed the attraction of repulsion for me, and I could have stood there studying all night.

My brother knew many of the people present, but I only saw one man with whom I was personally acquainted, and it so happened that I knew him well, for it was Brinkhampton, the eldest son of a near neighbour of ours in my childhood. The two families had always been intimate.

He was standing talking to some woman just behind me, and I recognised his voice before I saw him.

"I'm sure your waist's smaller than Kitty Green's," he was saying quite earnestly. "Aow, nao, you flatter me," the lady responded, nasally. "Only I daownt tight laice." There was a little pause, the Brinkhampton asked, "What are you looking for?"

"My fan. I laid it on the taible."

"There it is. Let me have the pleasure of fanning you."

"Pleasure indeed! Aow, I say! What do you want, I'd like to know? With those sheep's eyes! I'm up to you!"

And so on all up the gamut of the cheapest inanity, silly, sillier, and silliest.

I turned to look at the lady, expecting to see something so satisfying to the eye of man that no other sense asked for anything, but she struck me as being a joyless antique, largely proportioned, well preserved, and still able to affect a sprightliness she must have been far from feeling spontaneously at that time³². "That was the celebrated Sylvia,"³³ my brother told me as we came away.

³⁰*the various distortions ... heave hideously*: not in *TB*. Sarah Grand was a prominent supporter of the Rational Dress Society, founded in 1881.

³¹*no trace*: "no line" (*TB*).

³²*at that time*: "at that time of life" (*TB*).

“Wherein lieth the charm of her fatal fascination?” I asked.

“In *prestige*, which lasts longer than anything,” he answered.

Out of the crowd and heat into the open air was an intoxicating transition, so great was the relief of it. I stood for some minutes on the pavement, inhaling sweet draughts of the freshness, and feeling as if I could never rid myself of the fever and fumes of that tawdry place.

II

The next night, driving home late from some entertainment, I was forced by a block in the traffic to sit for some time at the entrance to a popular “Theatre of Varieties”. The lights blazed brilliantly, streaming across the pavement and into the carriage, so that I could have read a book had I had one, and any of my friends seeing me there must have recognised me. The thought was amusing, particularly as I happened to be alone; but it was also a trifle embarrassing because the carriage I was in belonged to friends with whom I was staying for the moment, austere people whose livery was somewhat conspicuous; and as they were well known to the public, there was always a chance of some enterprising reporter giving my friends the credit in the next day’s news of having spent their evening at this garish resort.

There was a fiendish racket going on all about me. In the road, men, women, and policemen, cabs, carts, and carriages seemed to be inextricably mixed, as if they had been performing some mystical rite with which they were imperfectly acquainted, the consequences of the confusion being great differences of opinion and eager, angry, incessant, loud disputes. I was busy looking out on that side, improving my knowledge of the vulgar tongue by making notes in my own mind of any peculiar expressions used, when I heard myself addressed by name through the window on the “Theatre of Varieties” side of me, and at the same moment recognised Brinkhampton.

“I thought I could not be mistaken,” he was saying, “however much I may be surprised by your choice of a place of amusement.”

“From whence come you?” I answered tranquilly.

“From those same halls of light,” he replied, indicating the gaudy place behind him; “and, to tell you the truth,” he added in a worn-out, weary, satiated way, “I’m sick of all that. I’m utterly used up. I think it’s time for me to reform and marry. Can you recommend me to somebody who would make a nice wife? I suppose it wouldn’t do for me to ask you for a seat in your carriage at this time of night?”

This was said tentatively, but I crushed the aspiration with a decided shake of my head. Men must have reputations³⁴ nowadays, and I should have been sorry to have been seen alone with Brinkhampton under any circumstances, poor fellow, although I had known him all my life.

“I know you are mighty particular,” he went on disconsolately, “but I assure you I’m thoroughly in earnest this time. Let me come and tell you all about it.”

³³ *the celebrated Sylvia*: Ironic reference to Sylvia in Shakespeare’s *Two Gentlemen of Verona*: “Who is Sylvia? What is she,/That all our swains commend her?” (*TGV* 4:2.40). As Grand’s story unfolds “Sylvia” becomes synonymous with a certain type of materialistic society woman.

³⁴ *Men must have reputations*: “have to have reputations” (*TB*).

As he blocked up the whole of the window, the fact that he was reeking of tobacco and stimulants could not fail to impress me unpleasantly, and his somewhat bloated features, inflamed eyes, and dissipated appearance generally rendered him still more unattractive to my fastidious mind, so, to get rid of him, I told him that I should be “at home” next day, and if he came early enough, he might find me alone for a few minutes. I quite expected he would have no recollection of the engagement, but to my surprise he arrived, and rather sooner, too, than was altogether convenient.

It was evident from the way he was dressed that the matter had cost him some thought, but no care could conceal the “used up” look about his eyes, nor produce a deceptive tinge of health on the opaque sallow of his cheeks. The effort had not been wanting, his valet having obviously done his best; but it is only a fresh and healthy skin that really takes paint and powder well: the transparency once lost, artificial attempts to restore it show on the surface like a light layer of dust on standing water. But he was a young man still, and a good-looking one, too, of the big coarse-moustached type – a typical guardsman, broad-shouldered, and so apparently strong, that a casual acquaintance would never have suspected flabby muscular tissue discounted by alcohol. He had a pleasant voice, and his manners were easy and unaffected if a trifle too candidly self-complacent. With the old fashioned sort of society woman he was a favourite, and I confess I liked him well enough in a way myself, but then I had acquired the habit of liking him when we were children together.

“Well, and so you are inclined to marry and settle?” I said, as soon as we were seated.

“Not merely inclined,” he answered; “I am quite determined. I’ve had a good time, don’t you know, rather too much of a good time if anything, and now I feel it would be better for me to settle, and I want something nice and young and fresh, with money, for a wife, so that I may repair all my errors at once; some one who has lived all her life at the back of beyond, never been anywhere nor seen anyone to speak of, and is refreshingly unsophisticated enough to mistake the first man who proposes to her for an unsullied hero of romance. And I mean to be that man, don’t you see?”

“But where do I come into this delightfully delicate, original plan?” I dryly inquired.

“Well you go a good deal to the country houses,” he answered, with what might have been either a dash of diffidence or a shock³⁵ of anxiety in his manner. “You must have met the kind of girl I want – good-looking, you know, with an ivory skin and – and money. Don’t jeer at me, I’m in earnest.”

I composed my countenance, and took time to reflect. How to decline to help him without hurting his feelings was the difficulty. There used to be a superstition in society that a man could at any time repair the errors of his youth by making a good match, and there are women still who will introduce “used up” brothers and so on to their girl friends as eligible husbands; but I belong to the party of progress myself, and would not under any circumstances have done such a thing. I had not the courage of my opinions, however, at that time to the extent of saying so bluntly, and therefore I “smiling passed the question by”; but as I had not absolutely refused, he chose to take it that I would help him if I could, and thereupon he thanked me with effusion, and I could see that he was more than satisfied, for it was as if a load of care had been lifted from his mind and left him lighter-hearted.

³⁵ *shock of anxiety*: “shade of anxiety” (TB).

III

That summer saw me seated one afternoon in a shady nook in a cliff in the north overlooking the sea. Behind me there was a lovely stretch of country, hill and dale, field and forest, with the gold of ripening grain, the scarlet glint of intrusive poppies, and the manifold tints of green, shading to grey, and even to yellow and brown, in the woods where the earlier trees were already assuming a dash of their autumn bravery. Before me was the mildly murmurous unrest of rippling wavelets, bursting with incessant merriment as they feigned to fly from the pursuit of the incoming tide which followed on always swiftly over the long level reaches of the sandy shore. It was a scene to soothe and enlighten, for such solitudes people the mind with goodly companies of glad ideas, and just and vigorous thoughts. My meditations were not long uninterrupted that day, however, for in the most absorbing midst of them I was aroused by the surprising enunciation of my own name, and, on looking up, I discovered Brinkhampton staring at me.

“Well!” I ejaculated. “What are you doing here?”

“Potting rabbits,” he answered sententiously. “I have taken the shooting.”

“You mean to be in time for it, apparently.”

“Oh, I thought I’d come and amuse myself with the rabbits. It’s the fresh air I want really, you see. My nerves have all gone to pieces. I want to be out of sinners’ ways for awhile, and I knew fellows wouldn’t come bothering much before September. I’ve taken the shooting with leave to live here for six months if it suits me. In the absence of a lord, the lady of the manor lets the right, I understand.”

“Do you know her?” I asked.

“No,” he replied. “I have not that pleasure. Do you?”

“I am staying with her now.”

Then there was a pause, during which Brinkhampton carefully examined his gun, lock, stock, and barrel. “It’s a nice place,” he remarked at last, glancing about him comprehensively. “Is the lady as goodly as her acres?”

“Has she an ‘ivory skin’, do you mean? You may judge for yourself, for behold her approach down yonder forest glade, hatless, gloveless, robed in white, with a purple parasol shielding the burnished brightness of her lovely tresses from the too ardent kisses of the sun!”

Brinkhampton stared with interest. “She’s quite young!” he exclaimed.

“Twenty-one exactly,” I replied.

He was about to say something else, but Eugenia had come up to us by this time, and I hastened to present them to each other.

“It is you who has taken my shooting off my hands this year, I suppose,” Eugenia said, glancing at his gun.

“So I have just learnt,” he answered, looking into her sweet grave face with undisguised interest and admiration.

“I hope you will find it worth your while,” she said. “The coverts are pretty well stocked this year, I believe. Where have you put up?”

“At the village inn,” he answered with a grimace.

“Oh,” she exclaimed, “then you must be uncomfortable. When I heard you were coming alone I hoped you would have friends in the neighbourhood with whom you would stay.”

“It so happens that I know nobody here as yet,” he replied. “But I really must get some decenter accommodation.”

“Why not come to the Hall?” Eugenia asked easily. “It would be a kindness to help us to occupy a little more of it. The house has suffered from having been so long shut up.”

The frank assurance of her manner seemed to surprise him. He glanced at her gloveless left hand to see if perchance she were married, and he confessed to me afterwards he could not quite class her when he found she wore no wedding-ring, being “puzzled to make out whether she was Americanised, unsophisticated, or not quite the right form, don’t you know.”³⁶ But, at any rate, the offer was a good one. “I should be afraid of intruding,” he feebly deprecated.

“No fear of that,” she answered, smiling. Then appealing to me, she added: “I am sure I may say we shall both be glad to see you. We dine at half-past seven.”

We smartened ourselves up that evening somewhat in honour of the young man, and I noticed that he and Eugenia were studying each other with a certain pleased intentness which augured well for their future friendliness. Certainly his coming had enlivened Eugenia as the coming of an eligible should enliven a girl, and I waited with interest to hear what she had to say about him. He had been looking his best when they met in the afternoon, the rough tweed shooting suit he wore being just of the cut and colour best adapted to conceal his defects; but his evening dress was altogether too calculated for effect, too evidently the outcome of serious attention to be manly. There was more than a suspicion of some horrid expensive scent about him, and his cheeks had a velvety texture which was cruelly suggestive of powder – *a propos* of all of which Eugenia remarked to me afterwards in a mysterious whisper, laughingly, “*I suspect stays.*”³⁷ But that was all she said about him, somewhat to my surprise, for I should have expected that the advent of a man of that kind would have caused a flutter of curiosity at least in the heart of a country girl. However, in such a case not asking questions is no proof of an absence of interest.

IV

Eugenia and I breakfasted at half-past eight next morning, but Brinkhampton did not appear until after ten. It was Sunday, and we were in the breakfast-room ready dressed for church when he entered.

³⁶ Compare Ella D’Arcy’s 1895 story “The Pleasure Pilgrim” which features Lulie Thayer, an American version of the New Woman: “the newest development of the New Woman ... the American edition” (*WWD* 150). Campbell, who finds her alluring but dislikes what he perceives to be her wanton behaviour, is confused: “[h]e had no standards for American conduct” (*WWD* 141).

³⁷ “*I suspect stays*”: not italicised in *TB*. Grand was opposed to the wearing of garments which would deform the natural figure. In “The Yellow Leaf” conventional Evangeline tells her mother she will “tighten my stays,” to which the irrepressible Adalesa replies, “You’ll make your nose red if you do – or bust!” (22).

“What will you have?” Eugenia, as hostess, asked him, thinking of tea, coffee, or chocolate.

“Aw,” he answered, looking round to the sideboard, “claret or hock, I really don’t care which.”

Eugenia ordered both to be brought, and then we hurried away to church.

In the middle of the litany Brinkhampton entered, and, lounging down the aisle with conspicuous deliberation, took a side seat from which he could survey us all at his ease. He was dressed as usual with extreme attention to detail, in the manner most approved for the occasion, and it was certainly not his fault if the latest thing in frock-coats as worn by himself appeared to be ridiculously singular to the rest of the congregation, in contrast to the archaic cut to which their eyes were accustomed. He looked hard at Eugenia from the moment he took his seat, but she was deep in her devotions, and took not the slightest notice of him.

It was a quaint, old-fashioned little church, only attended as a rule by tenants on the estate and the household at the Hall, close to which it was, and so situated as to seem more of a private chapel than a public place of worship. All about us, in the midst of the quiet people, Eugenia’s ancestors were taking their long rest. Knight and dame, lord and lady, soldier, sailor, and priest, good and bad, looked down upon us, or appeared prone in effigies of stone upon old tombs, while tablets of brass or marble recorded the brave deeds of one, the learning of another, the statesmanship of a third, and so on, ascribing every available virtue to each. I have often seen Eugenia beguiling the tedious sermon-time by studying these tablets, and always imagined her ignorant of the true characters of her notorious ancestors, idealising them all, and being elevated by the deep interest, the natural affection, and the innate reverence she must feel for those to whom she attributed all that was best about her.

She was peculiarly situated, being one of a long line of dominant women, the estates having descended from mother to daughter in regular succession, in accordance with a curse which had been laid upon all heirs male of the family for ever – so it was said – or at all events until such time as an heiress should contrive to expiate the crime for which the sons of her house were (somewhat unfairly, as it seems to our modern ideas of justice) doomed to suffer. Eugenia had been left an orphan at an early age, and brought up in the midst of a people who still clung fervently to all the old world superstitions. I did not know how much of these she accepted literally, but I always attributed a certain dignity and general air, as of one who is not to be trifled with, which settled upon her early, to the romantic associations of the place, and her faith in those who had gone before. They, her people, having been noble, it was proper that she also should be self-respecting and noble too – so, at least, I read her reflections when I watched her weighing the worth of those epitaphs in her own mind Sunday after Sunday as she grew to girlhood, and I fancied that the gentle gravity which gradually became the habitual expression of her countenance in repose, was due to thoughts like these.

This morning, however, she was not thinking of her ancestors in the pauses of the service. When her eyes wandered at all it was to the green graves in the churchyard, and the old trees that sheltered them. The day was warm and bright, and through the open windows the scented summer air streamed in upon her, and also there came an incessant twittering of birds, the coo of a wood-pigeon now and then, and the hoarse caws of rooks – not as interruptions to the service, however, but rather as an accustomed addition to it; the whole, with the rural people, sober in dress, and solemnly attentive in their demeanour, producing an

impression of remoteness from the world, and proportionate nearness to nature, which was inexpressibly soothing. Even Brinkhampton's starved soul expanded for the moment, just enough to let him feel some joy in life – something sufficiently worth having to make him forget for once to measure time with a view to shortening it, or "passing" it, as is the insane fashion of those who have not learnt to live.

When the service was over he walked on with me to the house, Eugenia having lingered in the porch talking to the people.

"I have found my ideal!" he exclaimed fervently, as soon as we were alone.

"Ivory skin and all?"

"Don't be malicious," he answered. "I'm in earnest. But I've a bone to pick with you. You seem to have forgotten your promise to me. Why did you not tell me of this lovely lady hidden away here in the hills?"

"For the reason you mention," I answered coolly. "I had forgotten your request."

"How could you! When she is so exactly what I asked you to find for me, too! But tell me about her. How does she come to be so situated- here, you know, like this-?"

"She is in a somewhat unusual position," I answered. "She has no relation in the world but one old uncle – who was once in your regiment, by the way. All her own people died in her infancy, and she has been brought up here principally by a very charming and excellent woman who came to be her governess, and has remained to be a mother to her. She is away just now, and I am here on duty partly, looking after Eugenia, you know, during her absence. The property's nice, is it not? It was a good deal encumbered by debts, but has been well nursed during Eugenia's long minority, and she is bent upon economy herself until it is cleared."

"Then she really is sole heiress?" he observed, looking about him with an air of complete satisfaction as if he already had a proprietary right to the place.

"Sole inheritrix³⁸, I should say. Half the neighbourhood is hers."

"But why should she be buried here still?" he asked; then added: "But I am glad she has been. I should like to see her wonder when she enters the great world; her delight when she finds what it really is to be mistress of means, with jewels and lace, a centre of attraction. She can't know what her wealth is worth a bit until she comes into competition with other women, and finds herself able to eclipse them."

This noble thought seemed to enchant him, and I could see he was hugging himself already on the prospect of her brilliant social success, and the glory which it would reflect upon himself.

I made him no answer because I had determined to be neutral. Here were the conventional elements of most romances – youth, beauty, rank, wealth, experienced man, inexperienced girl – but not a commonplace girl either. There was no knowing exactly how she would act under the circumstances, and the uncertainty was great enough to relieve the story from insipidity. I thought it would be interesting to watch the plant unfold, and I was

³⁸"*Sole inheritrix*": "*Sole inheritress*" (TB).

anxious to see for myself how this *Ouidaesque*³⁹ hero would really strike a modern maiden with ideas of her own.

That kind of man is accustomed to the Sylvias in and out of society, who will sell their immortal souls for gewgaws⁴⁰, and his mind had probably continued to divert him with promises of the irresistible attraction of such things when used with women as an argument to influence their feelings, for at our early Sunday dinner he said a good deal about diamonds, to which Eugenia listened with evident interest. She was highly intelligent, and at an age when the opposite point of view is always surprising. She was not in the habit of saying much, however. Brinkhampton was voluble, and she heard him out, then answered with a smile and in a casual tone: "You seem to be fond of diamonds. I have a lot upstairs somewhere if you would like to see them. I used to delight in them myself for their glitter when I was a child and was only allowed to see them occasionally, but now of course I only value them for some special artistic merit or for the sake of any little family history that attaches to them."

Brinkhampton stared at her, not at all perceiving that the art of being agreeable to a Sylvia is not always effectual with other girls, and divided between the pleasing thought that Eugenia would appreciate her advantages better by-and-by, when she came into competition with other women and had opportunities of testing the value of diamonds as an aid to eclipsing them, and an uncomfortable though vague perception of the unpleasant possibility of a peculiar "personal equation" that might by some mischance be swaying her taste eccentrically in the matter.

Out in the grounds later he began to fear that there was not much to amuse her, that she must often find it very dull in this benighted country place, whereupon she made big eyes of astonishment at him, and, ejaculating "Dull!" glanced comprehensively at the surrounding wonders of sky, and sea, and shore, then added: "Where can dullness come into a life like mine?"

The question nonplussed him for the moment. To be so unsophisticated as not even to have the slightest conception of the better life which includes shopping in London and the full swing of everything there in the season, was a little too much. "But," as he remarked to me afterwards, "all that enhances the charm, don't you know, it's so fresh. And it will be fun to see how her views change as her mind is enlarged by intercourse with the world, and to hear what she thinks by-and-by of this rural retreat."

"But do you suppose she has any mind?" I ventured.

"Oh dear, yes," he answered. "Quite enough for a woman, especially if she's to be one's wife. A clever woman is apt to have 'views', and that sort of thing, and lead a man a dance generally. What one wants in a wife is something nice to look at and agreeable to caress when one's in the mood, with average intelligence of course, but conventional ideas."

"Are you going to have anyone down for the shooting?"

"Well, I don't know," he answered. "That was my idea at first. But my primary motive was to get away from everybody and recruit. I told you in town I've had too good a time, and I'm quite used up. My nerve's gone to that extent that I'm afraid to fire my own

³⁹ "Ouida" was the pseudonym of popular novelist Maria Louise Rame (1839-1908). During her lifetime she wrote some forty novels, many of them sensational in tone.

⁴⁰ *gewgaws*: objects that attract attention but have no value or use.

gun if I think about it. It would certainly be better for me to settle. And the more I see of the place the more I like it. The air's delicious and it suits me too. I'm beginning to revive already."

He had just come in from "potting" rabbits, and we were sitting on a seat in the garden, he nursing his gun, when he said this, and after he had spoken he reflected a little, then added:

"It would suit me down to the ground to have this quiet retreat and Eugenia to come to whenever I felt played out as I am now."

"Then you've abandoned the idea of making a society woman of her?"

"Oh, not at all. But I should require her to be here when – I'm otherwise engaged, and can't look after her, don't you know."

I admired his foresight, it being evident that he was preparing, with playful toleration of his own weakness, to be tempted back now and then to gloat on Sylvia's superabundant flesh, and at the same time was thinking how refreshing it would be, when that kind of thing palled upon him, to return to the rarefied atmosphere which surrounded the lily of love whom he was also anxious to secure.

V

Their acquaintance rapidly ripened into intimacy, and soon I perceived that they had adopted that tone of light banter which enables young people to say so much to each other. The playful controversy turned for the most part on relative merits of town and country, and the brilliancy and wit of society compared with the petty concerns which Brinkhampton held to be all there was to discuss in a neighbourhood like this.

"I am sure," he maintained, "you would like to hear people cleverly."

"I would much rather hear them talk kindly," she answered.

She was always ready with some such response, but he soon flattered himself that her perversity was a coquettish assumption to pique him, and would try to provoke her in return by assuring her that she would know better when she was older.

The brightness which I had noticed on the first evening of the coming of the young man into Eugenia's quiet life did not diminish, but on the contrary increased if anything with the ripening of their acquaintance. Her nature was naturally joyous, and under Brinkhampton's influence her manner, while losing none of its dignified simplicity, became more girlishly playful, which was a distinct improvement, for until now she had been apt to display a too great earnestness for her age. Nothing in her attitude, however, gave me the slightest clue to her feelings for him, and as she never mentioned him except to wonder why he was late, if he were coming, had been able to amuse himself, or where he was, and that kind of thing.⁴¹ I did not know in the least whether she had ever thought of him as a possible lover or not. With him it was different. He talked of her incessantly, and of what he called his "love" for her. He even got so far as to consider the settlements, and if there would be ready money enough in hand at the time of the marriage to pay off his innumerable debts and start them clear, because it would be a pity to have to sell out anything, don't you know. The

⁴¹*and as she never mentioned ... that kind of thing: not in TB.*

“love” and the lucre longings mixed in his conversation in curiously exact proportions, but still the frank boyishness of it all was taking.

It was hot harvest weather, radiant mornings turning to turquoise and pearl-grey noons, and always exquisite amethyst seas – an ideal love-time, and it would have been strange if it had failed altogether of its effects upon two young people so thrown together. The first positive sign of serious feeling I detected in Brinkhampton was an improvement in his habits. On Sunday morning he had breakfasted between ten and eleven, on Wednesday he was up at seven o’clock. Eugenia and I were just starting for the meadow with baskets to gather mushrooms for breakfast when he appeared. He volunteered to accompany us, and wanted to carry our baskets, but Eugenia said that would only be robbing us of our occupation, and suggested that he should have one of his own.

We straggled down the road after each other. The morning was deliciously fresh, and so was Eugenia. Brinkhampton could not take his eyes off her, and, although she never glanced at him, I knew by the smile that constantly hovered about her mouth, the brightness of her eyes, the slightly heightened colour on her delicate cheeks, and the buoyancy of her step, that she was aware of his earnest gaze, and animated by his admiration. They chatted incessantly, disagreeing generally, but it was impossible to tell whether they were pulling apart or only arriving at a better understanding. There was sufficient difference of opinion to read both ways, but owing to the cheerful playfulness of the tone in which it was all expressed, it was hard to determine how much either of them really meant.

“What a change it will be for you,” was one of his remarks, “going from this vegetable existence⁴² into the thick of life.”

“What exactly *is* the thick of life?” she asked.

“Oh, Society,” he answered, gingerly picking his steps on the dew-spangled grass, as if afraid of damaging the polish on his Russia-leather boots – “London or Paris in the season, toilettes, jewels, dinners, dances, rides in the Row, and those entrancing shops you ladies love so. I should like to be a girl myself with lots of money to shop. The changes of fashion must be of such absorbing interest then, when each one means some new device with which to enhance your beauty.”

“Ah! changes of fashion,” she slowly observed. “Here we are more interested in changes of the tide. And as for the rest – to me it sounds stuffy.”

Brinkhampton smiled with a provoking air of knowing better than she did.

“You’ll appreciate it all when you’re in the thick of it,” he declared confidently. “And I expect it’s just as well you’ve had such a lot of this kind of thing. The contrast will make you enjoy your life so much more when it does begin.”

Whereupon Eugenia also smiled, then stopped, and clasping her hands across her forehead to shade her eyes, looked up. “Do you see that woodlark?” she exclaimed. “There he goes up in circles. Hear how he flutes! He seems to like his life.”

“And so will you soon, I trust,” Brinkhampton ventured softly.

She lowered her eyes and looked him straight in the face, still smiling.

⁴²*vegetable existence*: This recalls the “vegetable Love” of Andrew Marvell’s “To his Coy Mistress”, where a would-be lover is endeavouring to persuade his mistress into bed. Brinkhampton, too, is wooing Eugenia with the promise of new experience.

“Who told you I had no joy in life?” she asked.

“I did not mean that exactly,” he replied. “Any girl so – like you – must be keenly alive to all forms of joy. But I do think you are thrown away here. You waste your sweetness on the desert air.”⁴³ “Then you find no pleasure now yourself?” she said, “no gladness in the fragrance of the morning, or the song of the woodlark yonder?”

He glanced upward and listened, with a fugitive recollection of the sort of sensation that thrilled her; but his blunted faculties did not respond. Such refinements of feeling escaped him altogether now, and the nearer she was to Nature, the further away from him.⁴⁴

Cock pheasants crowed in the coverts as we passed, rabbits scampered nimbly out of the way. We crossed a limpid trout stream in a little wood, and, coming out into the open ground again, found ourselves on the edge of the cliff in full view of the sun-smitten sea. The many-murmurous voice of ocean was in our ears, the vital breath of it upon our cheeks. Our hearts expanded healthily, the blood in our veins flashed from end to end of us in great rushes of exhilaration.⁴⁵ Eugenia, standing on the brink with longing eyes, looked out first over the moving waters into the morning mists where the sea-birds revel, then turned to Brinkhampton brightly, and asked:

“Did you ever see anything like this in Bond Street?”

Brinkhampton sighed sentimentally, but wisely held his peace.

It was a high cliff upon which we were standing, and there was a narrow precipitous winding path, cut out of the chalk and very dangerous-looking, running down to the beach.

“Let us go back by the sands,” Eugenia exclaimed, our baskets being full by this time; and away she went, nimbly as a goat, I following without a thought.

At the bottom we looked back, and discovered Brinkhampton at one of the bends about half-way down, leaning against the cliff – I almost said clinging to it.

“Anything the matter?” Eugenia cried.

“I’m stuck,” he answered.

“How thoughtless of me,” I exclaimed, and ran back to help him. He was pale, and clutched my hand eagerly when I offered it to him.

“You see I have not exaggerated,” he said dejectedly. “I’ve no nerve left for anything. I’m used up. It’s high time I settled.”

My hand, however, and also perhaps the now familiar formula, helped to restore his confidence, and we got down together pretty creditably. I could see that Brinkhampton expected some sympathy for his giddiness, but Eugenia was throwing stones into the water unconcernedly when we rejoined her, and went on without a word as if nothing had happened. Near the house a tall, good-looking young man of distinguished appearance met us.

⁴³ Brinkhampton is quoting from Thomas Gray’s “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard”: “Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,/And waste its sweetness on the desert air”(55-6). He is hoping to strengthen his argument that Eugenia is missing out on much that life has to offer by remaining in the country rather than enjoying London society. (*The Oxford Book of English Verse*. Ed. Christopher Ricks. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, 279.)

⁴⁴ “What a change it will be for you,” ... *the further away from him*: a 475- word section not in *TB*.

⁴⁵ *Our hearts expanded healthily ... rushes of exhilaration*: not in *TB*.

“Here’s Saxon,”⁴⁶ Eugenia exclaimed when he came in sight, and greeted him familiarly, but did not introduce him to Brinkhampton.

I knew him of old, and asked him why he had not been to see me.

“We have had to make the most of this harvest weather,” he answered. “But I shall be able to call soon now, I hope, if I may.”

“Yes, do come, Saxon,” Eugenia exclaimed. “There are ever so many things I want to consult you about.”

“Who was that?” Brinkhampton asked afterwards.

“Saxon Wake, a friend of my youth,” Eugenia answered lightly. “His people have been here as long as we have. They were yeoman farmers, but now they own a part of what were our estates.”

“The yokel has passable manners,” Brinkhampton said patronisingly. “I suppose he picks up a little veneer at race meetings and hunt breakfasts.”

“The yokel was a wrangler⁴⁷ of his year,” Eugenia answered icily.

Brinkhampton said no more. He had not taken any degree himself.

VI

We had a private letter-bag at the Hall which was brought in for Eugenia to unlock every morning, and she usually distributed the letters herself. That day she took out one among others that instantly filled the room with some strong scent of which it was reeking: “Ugh!” she exclaimed, “after the open air, how coarse this is! Who can it be for? You—“ to Brinkhampton. It savours of ‘SOCIETY’⁴⁸ to me- ‘the thick of life’ – ‘excitement!’ But my rustic nose is unequal to the demands of such an assault. Please take it!”

Brinkhampton glanced at the superscription as she handed him the note, and his countenance expressed “Faugh!” as clearly as a countenance can speak. He was about to put the note in his pocket, but changed his mind, and laid it beside his plate. It had occurred to him that he might draw suggestions of the mysterious “fuller” life of a man from it with which to enhance his prestige with this little country girl.

“It is from Sylvia,” he observed.

“The burlesque actress?” Eugenia asked. “I suppose you know numbers of people of that kind.”

He smiled complacently.

“You must find it very difficult being here with us,” she remarked.

“Of course it is a change,” he confessed.

⁴⁶“Here’s Saxon”: “There’s Saxon” (TB). The volume version implies that Eugenia expected to meet him during the walk.

⁴⁷wrangler: A wrangler is a student who gains first class honours in the third year of an undergraduate degree in Mathematics at Cambridge University

⁴⁸“SOCIETY”:society (TB). By capitalizing “society” in the book version, Grand is strengthening Eugenia’s distaste for a way of life that both author and protagonist feel to be artificial and potentially corrupt.

“Yes,” she answered thoughtfully. “But I wonder you can endure it even for a change.”

“Oh, one would endure a good deal for the sake of some people,” he remarked⁴⁹.

There was to be a tenants’ ball that night, and all the afternoon Eugenia and I were busy helping with the preparations. Brinkhampton went out with his gun after lunch, but soon returned, had a stimulant of some kind, and then joined us in the picture gallery, which was to be the ball-room. He mooned about for the most part, gazing lackadaisically at Eugenia, who was actively engaged in superintending the arrangement of cosy corners, the disposition of flowers and foliage plants, and the decorations generally.

“This is our harvest festival,” she told him; but we shall have these dances once a month from now, and I do enjoy them so. We begin at eight, and stop about twelve.”

“What unearthly hours!” he exclaimed.

She looked up at him with an ambiguous little twinkle in her eyes, and then waltzed off down the long gallery alone, light as thistledown, the touch of her foot being all but imperceptible to eye and ear, so that she seemed to float. The sunlight flashed in on her through the open windows as she passed them in succession, for the gallery had not been built for pictures, and was on the wrong side of the house. Her summer dress fluttered in the perfumed air. She had never worn a tight or heavy garment in her life, and her figure was perfect. I did not wonder that the young man was fascinated. Anything more radiantly young and strong and healthy it is impossible to imagine. Her splendid vitality seemed inexhaustible.

When we had done with the decorations, we wandered over the house. Brinkhampton wanted to see it.

“There is very little that is old and elegant in it to show you,” Eugenia said, “but plenty that is old and ugly – and shabby too. Nothing new has been bought in the way of furniture since my mother married, and as that happened at the very worst period of domestic furnishings, none of her things are worth your notice.”

“Oh, you will be able to get rid of that rubbish easily,” Brinkhampton began, but Eugenia interrupted him with gentle dignity.

“It was from your point of view I spoke,” she said. “Of course the least little thing my mother ever looked at is of interest to me.”

“Oh, of course,” Brinkhampton lamely responded. “I didn’t mean that. But you can pick up some lovely old things now – old oak, you know, and that sort of thing, carved. I’ve seen lots in London. Really antique. Only just able to hold together.”

“Ah, that kind of thing has no charm for me,” Eugenia answered. “Of course, I appreciate the merit of good old designs; but there is no reason why they should not be as admirably executed nowadays as they ever were, and I should prefer modern copies in good new wholesome wood to the best worm-eaten originals in the market.”

Brinkhampton stared straight before him solemnly. “But the associations – the people they belonged to, and all that sort of thing, you know,” he ventured at last to remonstrate.

⁴⁹he remarked: “he blundered” (TB).

“One must discriminate, of course,” she answered. “Some are elevating, but there are certain old associations, especially with regard to people, of which one cannot approve and does not care to be reminded. I abhor staleness in any shape or form.”

She ran off as she spoke, and Brinkhampton looked gravely at me. “You see,” he said, “what comes of a life like this. She has yet to learn the very a b c of culture. I never knew a girl in her position so behind the times.”

Remembering that I meant to be neutral, I said nothing, but tried to look intelligent. It had seemed to me all day that there was a slight jar of earnest in their playful differences which had not been there to begin with, and as this new element was clearly the outcome of Eugenia’s attitude towards Brinkhampton, I began to think the balance of her feeling was going against him until she came down to dinner ready dressed for the dance. We wore demi-toilette in the evenings ordinarily, and consequently he had not seen her in full dress before, and I could see that his admiration quickened to enthusiasm when she appeared. She wore the most becoming of all dresses to such a figure – a simple white satin high-waisted empire gown with a little lace on it. The skirt was short enough to show her feet and ankles, which were exceptionally good. But she was altogether of the race-horse kind, fine of limb, slender, symmetrical, strong, supple, and enduring; and she had also to perfection the ivory white, blue-veined skin which Brinkhampton set such store upon. Ornaments of turquoise, pearls and diamonds completed her costume, the blue being a cunning touch of colour that enhanced the transparent brilliancy of her complexion. She had not been in the habit of dressing elaborately for these tenants’ balls before, and it was the fact that she had done so on this occasion which made me doubt if I had been right with regard to the jar I had fancied I felt, and forced me back to my first impression that there was hope for Brinkhampton.

On the way to the ball-room he told me confidentially that he expected to be amused by the gambols of these rustics, but he began by mistaking three splendid young tenant-farmers, in evening dress as elegant but less finickingly careful than his own, for gentlemen, and addressing them as equals instead of condescending to them in that tone of pleasant bonhomie which he held to be “the right form between a good sort of fellow, don’t you know, and his inferiors.” I believe a used-up air has gone out of fashion as an evidence of refinement, and it certainly seemed to me that he contrasted ill both in appearance and in the energy imparted by champagne which he had brought into competition with the superabundant vitality and freshness of the other young men. He took no notice whatever of Saxon Wake, thereby betraying to me that he had felt himself rebuked in the morning with regard to that young man, although he had managed to conceal the fact at the time. It gives one a qualm to suspect petty pique in a man, although one knows how inevitably those who haunt the sewers of society deteriorate.

There was only one waltz during the evening, and that Eugenia danced with Brinkhampton. The programme was altogether varied, and a curiosity in its way, consisting as it did of dances with un-heard of names which had been danced on those estates for hundreds of years, dances with steps and figures and changes of partners, girls streaming round to the right led by Eugenia, young men streaming round to the left led by Saxon, to meet at the top, catch hands in couples, and whirl down the middle together, separating again, and so back in another figure with the most perfect precision, and all to such quaint merry music it was impossible to keep your feet still. Even the old people, standing or sitting round

the room, looking on, found themselves forced to beat time. But Brinkhampton condemned it all as “a mere romp,” and would not own that there was anything picturesque even in the ribbon dance. He did not like to see Eugenia taking part in anything so childish, he verred, and was determined to wean her from all that sort of thing.

Next morning Eugenia came down to breakfast as fresh as ever, but Brinkhampton was fagged, and she noticed it. “You look as if you had revelled last night,” she said. “How did you like our ball?”

“Charmingly rustic,” he answered, not deeming it politic perhaps to speak out his true opinion to her as he had done to me; but she was not to be deceived.

“By ‘rustic’ you mean ridiculous, do you not?” she asked evenly.

“Picturesque—“

“At all events, not comparable to balls in Belgravia?” He smiled as though at the absurdity of any comparison. “You are easily pleased,” she calmly pursued. “I should be maddened by the eternal monotony of your everlasting waltzes. Fancy being restricted to one dance as you are! Here we should think such a thing the inevitable outcome of an imbecile want of competency. To dance truly one must move to more than one monotonous measure. I love to dance, and I dislike vain repetitions. Give me variety!”

“Yet you are content to live here!” Brinkhampton ejaculated. “But I believe you are cultivating a prejudice against society, and I dare-say you don’t know yourself what it is you are affecting to despise.”

“Yes, I do,” she answered readily; “I despise the sheep-like docility, the want of originality, each in dread of what the others may do or think, not daring to move on their own account, but following anywhere stupidly. And I despise the conceit that makes society think itself the most enjoyable form of existence. But, above all, I abominate the monotony! For the deadliest level of deadly dullness in living commend me to what you call the round of Society!”

“You won’t think so when you are in it,” he answered cheerfully. “This is all theory, you know.”

Again Eugenia treated him to that peculiarly direct look and smile which were perfectly enigmatical to me. He seemed to flatter himself that he understood her, however, for he always smiled in response as if he believed that, whatever she might say, they were really in accord.⁵⁰

I noticed that the shooting claimed less and less of his attention. He did not even make a pretence of going out to-day, and Eugenia herself had scarcely paid a visit or had any one at the house since his arrival. The young man, set in sunshine with an accompaniment of lovely languid autumn weather, had sufficed so far for an absorbing interest, but now at last, as we loitered in the dining-room after lunch, she raised that question of What shall we do? which usually implies the palling of an old pleasure and a desire for something new.

⁵⁰*There was to be a tenants’ ball ... they were really in accord:* This section about the tenants’ ball, comprising more than 1500 words, does not appear in *TB*. It has clearly been hurriedly added to the book, because Grand has failed to edit the next paragraph: “Eugenia herself had scarcely had ... anyone at the house since his arrival.”

She was sitting on the sill of one of the wide-open windows with her feet on the deep cushioned window seats, and as she spoke there was a sound of horse's feet spattering through the gravel below.

"Here's Saxon!" she exclaimed with animation. "Saxon! I'm delighted to see you. We want something to do this afternoon. Come and consult."

"Why not have out the coach, drive to Greenwood Sound, send the saddle-horses by the short cut across the fields to wait for you there, and race the tide home round Towindard Head," Saxon rejoined from below. "The tide will be just right for the ride if you get off in half an hour."

"Excellent!" Eugenia exclaimed. "But you must come with us, Saxon. One gentleman is not enough for two ladies, and Lord Brinkhampton does not know the coast. Do ride round to the stables and order the coach, and despatch Gould with the horses while we are putting on our habits. Come, boot and spur, my lord," she called to Brinkhampton as she dragged me from the room.

"He doesn't look very gracious about it," she said, as we ran upstairs together, "and I expect he'll take an hour to adorn himself. I suppose I shall be obliged to let him drive; Saxon won't, I know. But I do wonder what kind of whip he is. If he can't drive, however, he sha'n't pretend to, for I don't believe true womanliness consists in letting a man do badly what a woman can do well, simply because men generally are more accustomed to perform that particular exercise than women are. But let us hope he has forgotten to provide himself with the last thing in driving gloves. He would never use anything already out of date by a season."

This last little sarcasm, although playfully uttered, sounded significant, but if Brinkhampton had gone down in her estimation for any reason, he rose again when it came to offering him the reins by the frank way in which he acknowledged that he was no whip, and had never been able to handle a team in his life.

Contrary to our expectations, he was waiting for us in the porch when we went down, and was also, wonderful to relate, amicably discussing the points of the horses with Saxon. It was a smart turnout, and doubtless the possession of it, by adding an important item to other evidences of Eugenia's many material attractions, had improved his humour.

VII

Brinkhampton sat beside Eugenia on the front seat, Saxon and I were behind them, and at the back were Baldwin, the old family coachman, and a groom with the coach-horn. The horses, dark glossy bays with black points, were mettlesome beasts. They danced down the drive as if unaware of the slight encumbrance of the coach and its load behind them. It was a wonderful thing to see Eugenia, a slender girl, almost standing against her high seat with her feet planted firmly in front of her, controlling the four great prancing creatures without apparent effort. One could not help calculating what the nerve-power must be behind such ease, and what the strength of the sinews which were masked by her "ivory skin". She never looked better than on that occasion. Her riding habit, clinging close, showed the perfection of her figure. The sun was still hot, and she wore, slightly tilted back, a low-crowned white sailor hat, the roundness of which set off the delicate oval of her cheeks. Her ripe red lips

were slightly parted in a smile showing the white teeth between, her eyes danced in liquid light; one could trace the course of the blue veins beneath the transparent skin, and the fresh air and exertion had brought a brilliant colour to her cheeks. But for those with the inner eyes that see beneath the surface, there was more about her to attract than mere good looks and the ineffable charm of youth. There shone in her face the happy spirit that makes much of the smallest joy in life, and sees in the most obvious admiration of her friends only an evidence of their own good dispositions. There is more beauty than character as a rule in the delicate curves and lineless smoothness of a young girl's face; but still, in studying Eugenia, one felt that, for all her soft voice and gentle courteous bearing, she was not a person to be trifled with. There are natures which may be taught but must not be dictated to, and hers was one of those. She was, in fact, essentially a modern maiden, richly endowed with all womanly attributes, whose value is further enhanced by the strength which comes of the liberty to think, and of the education out of which is made the material for thought. With such women for the mothers of men, the English-speaking races should rule the world.

As he watched her, Brinkhampton's petty disdain of Saxon, the yeoman, sank into the background of his consciousness. One could see his countenance expand until he looked superlatively happy as his delight in her loveliness gained upon him.

And Saxon, sitting beside me with his arms folded, thoughtfully watched her too, but there was a somewhat sad expression on his handsome face. They had been playfellows, but still he saw in Brinkhampton only what was appropriate to her station in the way of a suitor, and there was no bitterness in him. It was what he had all along prepared himself to be resigned to eventually. Brinkhampton himself was not so proudly conscious of the difference of position as Saxon was; but Brinkhampton was accustomed to consider only his own interests in regard to women, and naturally assumed that Saxon was equally inferior.

It was ten miles from Towindard Hall to Greenwood Sound, but the horses seemed to have covered the ground in no time, for it was still early in the afternoon when we halted in a shady lane between the river on our left, seen through a frame of foliage, and a high bank on our right, a green bank dotted with clumps of fern and crowned with trees, beneath which sheep were quietly browsing. No one would have suspected that we were in the near neighbourhood of the treacherous ocean and a dangerous shore. There was a deep glow as of approaching sunset upon the placid river, a babble of birds in the trees above us, and somewhere unseen a cock crowed cheerily at intervals. The horses, only refreshed apparently by their ten miles' scamper, pawed the ground impatiently, tossed their heads till the harness jingled, and, recognising their stable companions who were already awaiting us under the trees with their saddles on, saluted them with loud neighs joyously.

"We must make tea here, there is plenty of time," said Saxon as he clambered down.

"Oh, how delightful! Eugenia exclaimed. "I forgot all about tea. You always remember everything, Saxon."

She threw down the reins. "Come," she said to Brinkhampton, "come and collect sticks."

Brinkhampton went of necessity, but he was not one of those men who readily adapt themselves to any position, and as he picked up the sticks his whole attitude was awkwardly condescending, and he evidently did not agree when Eugenia contended that it was half the fun on these expeditions to do all that kind of thing for oneself. I saw that she observed how

he picked up the sticks by their driest ends, and held them away from him daintily, but her countenance remained unruffled, and I could not tell if she saw anything ludicrous in such extreme fastidiousness. Stooping made Brinkhampton red in the face and giddy, and he had to stop frequently to recover himself, and always when he did so, he looked about him haughtily as if he were asking Nature to be so good as to observe that a peer of the realm was picking up sticks.

We soon had a big fire blazing in the shade, and while we were waiting for the kettle to boil, we lolled about on cushions taken from the coach, and by degrees were gained upon by the enchanting day, the heavenly quiet, and the associations of the place, so that insensibly our modern mood slipped from us, the charm of ancient days was on us, and we found ourselves a prey to thoughts of that which is not seen or known, but only felt.

“Is this Greenwood Sound?” Brinkhampton said suddenly.

“Yes,” Eugenia answered; “and when I am here I am always overpowered with a strange feeling of remoteness. It is as if my kindred claimed me – not as if they came to me here, but as if they took me to themselves – to their own times. This is a spot which has been specially sanctified by the sins of my ancestors.”

Brinkhampton asked her if she were superstitious.

“I don’t know,” she answered in a surprised tone; “I never thought about it.” Then she reflected a little. “But certainly,” she added, “No son of the house has ever succeeded.”

“Are these church lands, then?” Brinkhampton asked.

“No, the tradition is older than that,” she said. “By the way, isn’t it evident they worshipped the Evil One⁵¹ of old? Their curses were so effectual while their blessings were of such small avail. But, Saxon, tell the tale. You know it best.”

“The country folk hereabout preserve it in ballads,” he answered unaffectedly. “They give the vague date of hundreds of years ago when Towindard Hall was a castle owned by a miserly old earl. He was a direct ancestor of yours, as you know, and he had an only daughter whom he meant to barter for old to the highest bidder when she should be old enough to marry. She was a girl of magnificent physique, with a spirit as fine as her form and features, and, moreover, she was dowered, says the legend, with caution, and the gift of silence, so that when at last her father ordered her to prepare to marry a man she had hardly seen and was not prepossessed by, she held her peace instead of raising useless objections, and waited until she should know more of him. It does not say that she ever really disliked him, but at that time a man had to have as much physical courage as he has nowadays to have moral courage to recommend him to a girl –“

“A man must have both,” Eugenia put in, decidedly.

“Well, at any rate,” Saxon pursued, “from what your ancestress saw of Lord Willoughby, her suitor, before they were married, she shrewdly suspected that he was a coward, ‘unmeet with me to wed,’⁵² as the ballad says, but there was no getting out of the

⁵¹*the Evil One of old: Satan*

⁵²“*unmeet with me to wed*”: Although Eugenia refers to a ballad, Grand uses this quotation, with its strong overtones of Shakespeare’s *Much Ado About Nothing* 4.1, in which Claudio accuses Hero, on their wedding day, of being unfaithful to him. The intention is to reinforce the idea of Lord Willoughby’s sexual impurity.

match, she being her father's chattel and entirely at his disposal.⁵³ She determined, however, that before she settled down for life with the man, she would test his courage just to see who should be master, and she stipulated that on her wedding-day he should let her drive him from Greenwood Sound (where we are now) to Willoughby Chase (his place), by Towindard Head. He refused her nothing, the ballad⁵⁴ says.

*"The day broke cloudy, the wind was high,
The storm-clouds fought in a murky sky,
The wild waves whitened the sands with scud,
The sunset brightened the sky with blood.
Oh, wild! oh, wild! Ah, well a day!
Does the bridegroom note that the bride is gay?"*

*"The chariot stood at the castle door,
The hinds were holding the horses four;
The storm-wind tosses the horses' manes,
The bride has gathered the fluttering reins.
Oh, wild! oh, wild! Ah, well a day!
Does the bridegroom note that the bride is gay?"*

*"From Greenwood Sound to Willoughby Chase,
By Towindard Head in a chariot race,
Four horses racing the rising tide,
A white-faced bridegroom, a desp'rate bride.
Oh, wild! oh, wild! Ah, well a day!
For the gale blows fierce in Towindard Bay.*

*"Now, good, my lord, thou art pledged to race
From Greenwood Sound to Willoughby Chase,
To race the tide round Towindard Head;
But methinks thou art frightened, my lord, she said.
Oh, wild! oh, wild! Ah, well a day!
Crouch down on your knees at my feet and pray.*

*"At Willoughby Chase there was dole that night,
The bride has arrived all scared and white,
And the four black steeds have reached the shore,
But the bridegroom cometh again no more.
Oh, wild! oh, wild! Ah, well a day!
Lord Willoughby sleeps in Towindard Bay."*

⁵³ *her father's chattel and entirely at his disposal*: Until the Married Women's Property Act in 1882, women were considered to belong to their husbands, or their fathers before marriage. The Act allowed women to own and manage their own property.

⁵⁴ The ballad has been composed by Grand to heighten the effect of Eugenia's family legend.

“She had drowned him, then,” Brinkhampton exclaimed.

“So it was eventually supposed,” Eugenia answered easily. It is customary to assume a modest tone with regard to the crimes committed by our remote ancestors, and not to boast about them on account of their misdeeds, however narrowly they may have escaped hanging, and Eugenia always alluded to this one in the most becomingly casual manner. “She was not suspected of having done so at first, however,” she pursued. “It was believed to have been an accident, and so it may have been, for my greatest great-grandmother was evidently one of those people of strongly marked character and independent habits around whose names all kinds of stories collect by degrees, until at last there are so many that they must have done something notable on every day of their lives in order to accomplish such an amount. By Lord Willoughby’s death she became mistress of Willoughby Chase, and as she inherited Towindard also, she was in a powerful position for the times. She married again and became my ancestress; but of her second husband, my ancestor, nothing is known except that there *was* such a person. He was apparently one of those people who don’t count.”

“And is that all?” said Brinkhampton.

“No,” Eugenia answered, “the most important part is yet to come. According to the story, everything succeeded with my remarkable ancestress during her life, but on her death-bed she was seen to be in sore distress of mind, and at last she sent for a priest, but exactly what she confessed to him was never revealed, only it was observed that, when he left her, his eyes were wild and his cheeks were pale. And it is known that he had laid what he thought to be a curse on one daughter of the family in every generation. A celibate priest naturally did not understand women; he thought property and power would be a bane to us, so he condemned one of us to inherit the estates always, or until such time as we should discover how to remove the curse.”

“And you have not done so yet?” Brinkhampton said.

“Nobody has ever tried that I know of,” Eugenia answered naively. “It’s rather hard on the boys, but if it had not been for the curse there probably would not have been any property by this time.”

“Priestly justice was peculiar⁵⁵,” I interjected. “I can’t see upon what principle the unoffending innocents were condemned to death.”⁵⁶

“But there was some sense in the penance which the priest prescribed for your ancestress,” Saxon pursued. “He condemned her to drive her wild black horses against the rising tide with her cowering bridegroom crouching at her feet for ever, or until such time as her troubled spirit should be released by one of her descendants:

*“And so for evermore
Along the shore
She hears the swift wild surges roar,
For evermore she urges*

⁵⁵*priestly justice was peculiar*: “churchman’s justice is peculiar” (TB).

⁵⁶*unoffending innocents were condemned to death*: This is a biblical reference to the Slaughter of the Innocents (Matt. 2. 13-23) in which King Herod decrees that all the baby boys in Bethlehem were to be killed.

*Hot, headstrong steeds to brave the roaring surges.
With tightened traces
Full speed she races,
And those who ride
Shall hear their thund'ring rush against the rising tide."*

"But *has* any one ever heard them?" Brinkhampton objected.

"We all have," I answered, whereupon he looked mystified, because he did not consider me superstitious.⁵⁷

"And since then," Eugenia pursued, "it has been the custom for women of my house to choose their husbands for their courage. They have an hereditary predisposition to do so, you see, and it is always done involuntarily. When a lover presents himself, some occasion is sure to arise which will test him, and if he is found wanting in manliness he must go."

Brinkhampton Smiled complacently. "But *were* there chariots in those days?" he again objected.

"You are the very first person who has ever been so unromantic as to doubt it," Eugenia answered.

"I should think the use of the chariot might fix the date," Saxon observed.

"Well, then, it shall," said Eugenia merrily. "Be it known from henceforth that my greatest great-grandmother was a girl friend of Queen Boadicea's⁵⁸, and it was the latter who taught her to drive."⁵⁹

This broke the spell. The tea was ready, and tea with cream and cakes and ravenous appetites brought us back incontinently to the most sceptical mood of our own day.

"But what exactly are we going to do?" Brinkhampton asked.

"Oh, just race the tide round Towindard Head," Eugenia answered casually. "If we are there first we shall get round easily and find ourselves near home, but if the sea is before us – it complicates matters. What about the weather, Baldwin? Here in the hollow it seems to be perfectly stagnant."

The old man looked up at the sky, and then out over the river through the gap in the greenery which formed a frame for the shining sluggish water. "There'll be no sea on to-day, Missie," he answered deliberately.

"Are you coming with us?" said Eugenia.

"Ah'm certainly comin' wi' you, Missie," he answered decidedly.

The servants had had their tea by this time, and were preparing to take back the coach. We mounted our horses.

"I suppose you can calculate the state of the tide pretty accurately," Brinkhampton remarked as he settled Eugenia in her saddle. I might have been mistaken, but I thought I detected a shade of anxiety in his voice.

⁵⁷ "he did not consider me superstitious nor was he, oh dear no, not a bit!" (TB).

⁵⁸ *Queen Boadicea's*: Queen Boadicea was Queen of the Icena, a Celtic tribe from East Anglia. The Romans occupied England from 43AD and Boadicea raised an army against them in 60AD, defeating them in Colchester and London. She is legendary for her fierceness and bravery.

⁵⁹ "And since then ... taught her to drive": not in TB.

“No, that is the difficulty,” Eugenia replied. “The weather affects it. Sometimes it is a rushing race-horse, white-crested and impetuous, and sometimes it is a crawling snake, equally swift, you know, but insidious. You are caught before you suspect there is danger.”

“I suppose you love the sea,” he rejoined in a tone which affected to be as casual as her own.

“Yes,” she answered, “and I also loathe it. I look upon it as a treacherous enemy to be outwitted, and dote upon its changeful beauty all the same.”

We were off now down the winding lane. The green bank was behind us, grey sand-dunes were on either side, ahead was the desolate wide waste of shore, and far out, under a low and leaden sky, little light sapphire wavelets, scarcely flecked with foam, crisped and broke with baby impotence upon the sand. The scene was solemn in its dreariness, but not depressing. Some suggestions of boundless space are more elevating than the mountains. Away to the right the flat shore shot up suddenly into precipitous cliffs, and these, curving out with a fine sweep seawards, resulted abruptly in the towering promontory which it as our object to ride round. But between us and it there were miles of desolation.

Our horses were now being tried by the ruts of the heavy cart track which formed the only road across the sand-dunes.

“This is slow going,” said Eugenia, “but I warn you they will pull like mad the moment we are on firm sand, so sit tight.”

The warning was not unnecessary. A few more struggles, then suddenly their feet were free of the heaviness, and feeling the resistance of the firm sand, they plunged about excitedly, and then set off in a frantic gallop – pitterpat, pitterpat, pitterpat, the hoofs beat rhythmically. We were well away now, with the sea on our left, the land on our right, and on in front, looming gigantic through the haze, Towindard Head:

“Onward and northward, fierce and fleet,

As if life and death were in it!

‘Tis a glorious race, a race against time,

A thousand to one we win it.”⁶⁰

The sea-sweet air was wildly exhilarating. Even the horses seemed seized upon by the gladness there is in rapid motion and in wind-swept spaces. Every face was eager now. I felt I should shout aloud upon the slightest provocation:

“This ride was my delight. I love all waste

And solitary places; where we taste

The pleasure of believing what we see

Is boundless, as we wish our souls to be;

And such was this wide ocean, and this shore

⁶⁰“Onward and northward ... we win it”: from Henry Cholmondeley-Pennell, “The Night Mail North” in *‘From Grave to Gay’: A Volume of Selections from the Complete Poems of H Cholmondeley-Pennell*. London: Longman, Green and Co., 1884, 43.

*More barren than its billows”....*⁶¹

I was well away upon those lines, riding once more beside

*“Count Maddalo
Upon the bank of land that breaks the flow
Of Adria towards Venice.”*⁶²

But a great shout recalled me, and our gallop was checked by a sudden wild commotion. I was aware of old Baldwin shouting something, of Saxon spurring on ahead of me, of Brinkhampton’s horse floundering, of a scared look on his face, of Eugenia catching his reins, giving her own horse its head, and swinging her heavy whip with sounding slashes. The horses responded gallantly, plunging and straining. I don’t know if we all shouted encouragement, but it seemed only an instant till the incident was over, and we were off again, tearing along in a body, having swerved inland considerably. When the pace relaxed, Brinkhampton wiped his forehead. “What was it? he asked.

“The outer edge of the quicksand,” Eugenia answered. “It shifts. The last time it was here where we are now, and I thought we were giving it a wide berth to-day. Forgive me for touching your reins. There was such a racket, I despaired of making you hear, and you were pulling right into it. Look at the horses, poor brutes, how terrified they are! It would be humane to pull them up for a breathing space;” she looked on ahead, then added significantly, “*if there were time.*”

So far we had been keeping a middle course between the sea and shore, but now we began to bear down towards the water. The horses glanced suspiciously this way and that, ready to shy or swerve on the least occasion. They kept their ears pricked too, or laid them back in a nervous way, and were foaming at their mouths; and every now and then they broke out of the steady canter at which we were endeavouring to keep them in order to save them for a big spurt if necessary towards the end of the race, into a gallop which would soon have become a wild stampede had we not held them well in hand. But in the midst of these efforts, whilst I was altogether intent upon them, and without the slightest warning, my horse made an awkward stumble which sent me gracefully circling from my saddle to a safer seat on the sand. Old Baldwin, seeing what was coming, had roared “Look out!” but not in time to save me.

Brinkhampton, being on in front, did not see what had happened, and his shattered nerves, shaken already by horror of the quicksand, betrayed him. The moment he heard the shout, without waiting to see what was wrong, he let his horse go, and galloped on some distance, leaving us to our fate.

“’is ludship ‘e doan’t like yer wicksands an’ yer ghosteses,” old Baldwin chuckled as he picked me up.

⁶¹“*This ride was my delight ... more barren than its billows*”: from “Julian and Maddalo: A Conversation.” *The Complete Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*. Ed. Thomas Hutchinson. London: Henry Frowde, 1909, 186. In the poem Shelley is loosely identified with Julian and Byron with Count Maddalo.

⁶²*I was well away upon these lines ... towards Venice*: these four lines, including the three lines from Shelley’s “Julian and Maddalo,” do not appear in *TB*.

But Brinkhampton had discovered his mistake by this time, and was cantering back to us with a deprecating look on his face, like that of a diffident schoolboy who finds he has done the wrong thing and is covered with confusion. The expression suited him, and, being a splendid horseman, he looked so handsome as he approached Eugenia, that I thought with a qualm: "She will pity him."

"My horse is very nervous," he said, apologetically.

She glanced down at the horse's feet, and then looked straight before her without a word, her air of calm indifference being exactly the same as she had worn when Brinkhampton and I joined her after he had been stuck on the cliff, and found her watching the stones she was throwing make ducks and drakes on the water. On this occasion, her demeanour so disconcerted Brinkhampton that he lost his head, and contradicted himself as soon as he had spoken.

"I thought it was a signal to double," he said to me.

"No, it was not a signal," I answered, but a stone which my horse apparently mistook for a bit of seaweed."

We had moved on again, and were close to the water's edge by this time. The monstrous sea, oily and waveless, crawled up in great irregular curves over the shining sand. The horses kept their eyes fixed on the incoming stream in frightened anticipation, and leaned away from it as if ready to swerve if the horrid thing should touch them. Now and then, so insidious and imperceptible was its oncoming, we found ourselves surrounded, and our startled steeds strained away for the shore, prancing and splashing till they the flint-coloured shallows white with foam. A few more minutes would bring us abreast of the great overhanging cliffs, and the space between the sea and shore was narrowing always, so that presently we should be forced up under them. A certain gravity had settled upon us, there was a look of expectation on our faces, and we pulled up abreast of each other involuntarily, Baldwin and all.

"I confess I always feel awed," I said with an uneasy little laugh, but Eugenia did not appear to hear me. She was sitting straight, with her head held high, and her eyes wide open, listening intently.

"Why awed?" Brinkhampton asked.

"The ghosts, my lud," old Baldwin ejaculated.

Brinkhampton looked about him with a suspicious smile, and certainly anything more unlike a suitable setting as a preparation for ghosts than this slumberous autumn afternoon, with its stagnant tranquillity of sky and sea and shore, could not have been arranged; but the inappropriate is often as astounding as the unexpected.

And now suddenly in the distance, coming apparently from under the cliffs, there arose a dull, muffled, thudding sound. The horses noticed it as soon as we did, and pricked their ears inquiringly. They had been going at an easy canter, but in order to gratify their curiosity they relaxed their pace, and instantly the sound ceased. The sudden silence startled them as a noise might have done, and with one accord they bounded forward, Brinkhampton being nearly unseated by the unexpected move, and instantly the thudding recommenced, drew near, and swelled into the unmistakable throb of galloping horses on sand. It was as if a troop of cavalry had charged us in the rear and was just upon us to ride us down. The horses broke into a frantic gallop, and Brinkhampton rising to it, turned his head and looked back

with straining eyes, first over one shoulder and then over the other, but there was nothing to be seen even when the sound was just upon us, deafening us. It came with a rush, touching us as it were, and that instant it was over. The horses stared right and left, at the same time slackening their pace, and we realised a strange blank as of an empty space in that region of consciousness upon which the thundering hoofs had sounded.

Brinkhampton was the first to speak, after gazing up at the tall cliffs critically. "I suppose it is an echo," he said, looking hard at us each in turn as if he expected us to deny it. "And the legend was probably invented to account for the echo," he added.

"But the echo does not account for the failure of heirs-male in my family," Eugenia objected dryly.

From this point on, however, there was no time for talk.

"If we're to get round Towindard 'ead we must ride, Missie," old Baldwin decided.

"And if we don't get round?" Brinkhampton asked.

"We must climb the cliff or take our chance with the horses," Eugenia answered quietly. "Baldwin, we lead," she said, and the old man rode on with her on the off-side, beaming. Eugenia on the alert, with flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes, her excitement well contained beneath a steady calm exterior, was lovely to behold in her youth and strength as she passed on in front, and set the pace. It was racing speed now, going against the tide full-tilt. We could measure the rate at which we were going by the lumbering look of the seabirds' flight above us,

"Tis a glorious race, a race against time,
A thousand to one we win it!"⁶³

The keen salt air through which we were rushing, meeting us full in the face, had freshened us at first, but now all at once I became aware of a change in it, and quite suddenly, as it seemed to me, the sea-voice sounded muffled. The change in the air was from dry to damp. The gauze veil on my hat was dripping. I looked up to see how far we were from the headland. The headland had disappeared – no, though, that must be it up in the air yonder, up above us in the clouds – no, again. I could see now. I understood. As the tide flowed in, moisture rose to the surface of the sand, making the whole wide expanse into a mirror, and it had seemed at the first glance as if the sky had come down to look at its own reflection in this; but what had deceived me was a light white curtain of mist, drawn up by the rest⁶⁴ till it was caught in a cold current of air which condensed it into a fog that was rapidly gathering density, and would presently envelop us. I was behind Eugenia, but could see by her attitude that she also was peering into the distance intently, and as she did so she raised her heavy whip and held it suspended over her horse's flank.

Baldwin was standing up in his stirrups and keeping his sharp old eyes about him.

"Stick to the sea, Missie," he commanded in his hoarse voice, "stick to the sea for your life."

⁶³ See note 60.

⁶⁴ *the rest*: this does not make sense in context. *TB* has "heat," which is clearly the correct and intended word.

We met the mist and plunged into it. There was no fancy work about the horses' paces now. They had buckled-to in sober earnest, with ears laid back and necks stretched out, and anxious eyes that no longer glanced askance at the treacherous water, but strained on into the mist as intelligently as our own. It was the snake-sea today, swift but deceptive. The fog had gained on the headland by this time, the nearer we approached the less we saw of it.

"For your life, Missie, for your life," old Baldwin kept muttering mechanically, and the hoarse growl mingled with the mighty murmur of ocean appropriately: "For your life, Missie, for your life."

We were well mounted, but it had been a long spin and some of it was heavy going, and now the horses began to flag perceptibly. Eugenia swung her whip above her head and brought it down swish relentlessly. The horse responded with a bound, and the others, animated by the effort, followed his example.

"Surely that is the head?" Eugenia cried.

We looked up simultaneously. Something certainly loomed black above us.

"Stick to the sea, Missie, stick to the sea-side for your life," old Baldwin roared. There were ridges of rock all about here under the cliffs that would have cost us many precious minutes had we come upon them.

Eugenia went boldly on, but we were late. Splash – helter-skelter – the horses were scattering the shallow water now and inclined to balk, but down came that relentless whip again with a swish⁶⁵, we following the example, and once more the mettlesome brutes responded gallantly. And now there was less helter-skelter and less splash. The leaders were up to their knees. Were we silent? Were we shouting? That last wave washed up to our girths. That last wave was a seventh wave.⁶⁶ Count six more slowly. Supposing they are taken off their feet by the next, could they swim with us? Brinkhampton's horse staggered on the slippery bottom which was stony here, mine slipped too – ugh! What a sickening sensation! Now we went down, and the water came up cold about me. Ugh, again – splutter! What a ducking.

Silence had settled upon us – the panting silence of suspense. It was touch and go whether the horses would be washed away or not. All at once, however, I noticed a change in the tenseness of Eugenia's attitude. Surely she is bearing away to the right – she is out of the water – we are following – we are splashing through shallows again – are ceasing to splash. The horses find firm footing and start away of their own accord for a final spurt of relief. We are out of the fog, and there is the coach waiting for us. Eugenia pulled up, threw her reins on her horse's neck, dismounted, and stood smiling and satisfied, but wet through.

"We shall catch our death of cold if we have far to go in these clothes," Brinkhampton exclaimed, impatient of his discomfort.

⁶⁵ *down came that relentless whip again with a swish*: "down came that relentless whip again and again" (TB).

⁶⁶ *a seventh wave*: There is a popular belief that the seventh wave is much stronger than the others. There is some scientific evidence that this might be the case, see Stanislaw R. Massel. *Ocean Waves: Their Physics and Prediction*. NJ: World Scientific Publishing Co., 1996, 10. There is a discussion between Mrs Orton Beg and Dr Galbreith in Grand's *The Heavenly Twins* about Evadne being "a seventh wave". Dr Galbreith explains this: "It is a superstition of the fisher-folks. They say that when the tide is coming in it pauses always, and remains stationary between every seventh wave, waiting for the next, and unable to rise any higher till it comes to carry it on; and it has always seemed to me that the tide of human progress is raised at intervals to higher levels at a bound in some such way" (*The Heavenly Twins*. London: Heinemann, 1894, 98-9).

“Pooh! Salt water will do you no harm,” Eugenia rejoined.

“That was a near un, Missie,” old Baldwin observed. “Ah thowt it were all oop wi’ us twice.”

“It was one of our best, I think,” Eugenia answered, “and I was agreeably surprised, for I was afraid it was going to be tame.” She was all animation, and when we had taken our seats on the coach in the same order as before, she addressed Brinkhampton in the bantering tone they used to each other as a rule: “Now tell me,” she said, “after this do you still pretend to offer me in exchange the vitiated air of your great wicked city, and the modest pleasure of a ride in the Row, or of being driven on a coach by way of squalid Hammersmith and pretentious Chiswick, to eat without appetite at a tawdry hotel in Richmond? Or can you suggest any other wild delight of giddy Belgravia that is comparable as a nerve tonic? Oh, you people don’t know what pleasure is! You have never learnt to live.”

Brinkhampton affected to laugh. He was not a coward, although his shattered nerves might have betrayed him during the late ordeal; but the daring which delights in daring was not his, and the spirit of the race impressed him less than the risk even after it was over. He was conventional to the fraction of an idea, and thought that where bricks and mortar and smoke were, there also was life, but there only, and these accordingly he preferred to the best that Nature has to offer. Even his vices were cut and dry for him, after the fashion most approved of by his associates.

Eugenia insisted that Saxon should stay to dinner in his riding dress, which had dried on him, an arrangement which annoyed Brinkhampton considerably. “It was all very well their being intimate as children, when she required playmates and they were scarce in the neighbourhood, and of course she is right to make use of him if she wants him; but it is simply preposterous that she should treat him as an equal now that they are grown up and in such different positions.”

“Now for thoroughbred meanness commend me to one of ourselves!” I ejaculated admiringly.

“Well, mean or not, it must be put a stop to,” he rejoined with decision. “I wonder she is so forgetful as to expect *me* to sit down to dinner with a yokel in breeches.”

“Oh, the breeches, as you know, are an accident of the occasion,” I answered. “But have you observed,” I added maliciously, “how exceedingly well he looks in that dress? I call him an uncommonly fine young fellow, don’t you? And so modest of mien, in spite of his attainments – diffident, that’s the word.”

“Naturally he feels himself out of his element,” Brinkhampton haughtily rejoined.

This was said in the drawing-room after dinner. Eugenia and Saxon were standing together in one of the windows out of earshot; but just as Brinkhampton spoke, Saxon came over to the grand piano, opened it, and, sitting down, said to Eugenia, who had followed him, “This is the air,” then played a few bars and began to sing. He had a capital, well-trained baritone voice, but every note added a touch of bitterness to Brinkhampton’s disdain, and I am sure if he had been asked his views on the education of the lower orders at that moment, he would have pronounced it “a distinct impertinence for that kind of person” to be educated at all beyond his A B C, let alone accomplished; and doubtless Eugenia’s attitude, as she lolled back in an easy chair, looking up to the ceiling completely entranced, augmented his disgust.

“I shall put a stop to this tomorrow,” he muttered.⁶⁷

VIII

The next morning early I was writing in my room upstairs with the windows wide open, when I suddenly became aware of an altercation between Eugenia and Brinkhampton on the lawn below.

“But what I maintain is that we in the country develop finer perceptions and are more appreciative than you who live in crowds habitually,” Eugenia was saying with emphasis. “In London, for instance, with its wealth and its squalor and its teeming population – the people swarm there till you have no human heart left to care for them – no mind to know them. Too much is demanded of the better feelings. There is a surfeit of everything. It is all haste and crowding and no hope. Individuality is lost in the mass, and with individual traits go the recognition of individual joys and sorrows, those items of emotion of which we are always so intensely conscious in ourselves. They are the only index we have to what others experience. If we lose our perception of these in the people we meet, if we cease to feel with them or for them, our interest in them as fellow-creatures must die, just as the sense of kinship does when the interest is not kept up by personal acquaintance. I remember looking down from the gallery of the Albert Hall once when I was a child. It was full of people, all looking so small and insignificant. And I wondered if it would have hurt me to see a giant walk over those mites, crushing numbers of them like ants at every step. I didn’t think it would.”

“I don’t know whether you are aware of it, Eugenia, but the admirable expression of your sentiments ascends me here quite clearly,” I interposed at this point, looking out of the window. They were standing together just beneath. Eugenia was somewhat flushed, and Brinkhampton was gazing at her admiringly, but not listening, I am sure, for he attached little importance to anything she said. Both smiled up at me when I spoke. Eugenia carried a parasol, but was without hat or gloves as usual. This was another trick of hers to which Brinkhampton greatly objected. He said it was all very well in the grounds, but it was not the right thing in a young lady in her position to be seen on the estate not properly dressed. And the inclination to interfere in that and other matters in which he thought her “form” deficient had begun by this time to be an ache that distracted him.⁶⁸

They went off together now, however, with every evidence of cordial agreement between them, so much indeed that I sat on the window-sill long after they had crossed the lawn and disappeared among the trees, once more weighing the probabilities and wondering if she would accept him.

When they returned together to lunch, I could see that something had happened, but as they were both flushed and both looked discomfited, I fancied there had been a rather more serious dispute than usual.

Directly lunch was over, however, Brinkhampton announced that he was going to order his man to pack.

“Are you off, then?” I asked.

⁶⁷*Or can you suggest any ... he muttered:* not in TB.

⁶⁸*But what I maintain is ...an ache that distracted him:* not in TB.

“Yes, I’m off,” he answered, doggedly.

“Now, why *should* you go?” Eugenia exclaimed.

“I can only stay here on one condition,” he said, with severity.

“Well, that is the only condition on which I can’t ask you to stay,” she answered instantly. “But I do think you are stupid to give up your shooting on that account.”

“You don’t appreciate my feelings,” he said, with a hurt air.

“I hope I do,” she answered. She rose from the table as she spoke, brushed a crumb from the front of her dress, and quietly left the room.

Then Brinkhampton looked hard and inquiringly at me. “I can’t think you have prejudiced her against me,” he said.

“I should hope not,” was my dry response.

“But have you said anything about me to her?”

“As much as I have said about her to you.”

“Next to nothing, that is—Then⁶⁹ does she know?”

“If she does know anything about you, she must have arrived at it by some process of induction,” I answered, not able to imagine what she could know.

“Well, I think you might have warned me,” he exclaimed, and then began to pace the room with agitated steps.

“I am afraid I have been to blame,” I retorted ironically. “It would doubtless have pleased you better if I had told you all I know about her opinions and character while carefully concealing from her all that I know about yours.”

“A girl has no business to have opinions of any kind, she should adopt her husband’s when she marries,” Brinkhampton ejaculated. “Nothing but mischief comes of women thinking for themselves. She would have accepted me but for her opinions.” He reflected a little on this, frowning portentously, and then broke out again: “I’ve been regularly taken in! I gave her the credit of being a nice little English country-girl, quite unformed, and here I find her old in ideas already, and, worst of all, *advanced*. She didn’t tell me coarsely, in so many words to my face, that I’m not good enough for her, but, by Jove! that is what she meant. She says she always thinks of me as a sort of man out of a novel by Ouida. What on earth have you all been doing to let her read such books?”

“It was an old uncle of hers, an ex-guardsman of your own corps, by the way,” I rejoined, “who first introduced her to that kind of literature. He used to give Eugenia Ouida’s books as they came out, with the emphatic comment, ‘She shows ‘em up! She shows ‘em up!’ and Eugenia, after careful study of them, has drawn her own conclusions.”⁷⁰

He pondered upon this also for a little, and then resumed. “By jove! I *was* astounded! What do you think she said to me, right out, plump? ‘I have no taste for nursing,’ she said, ‘and you are so delicate.’ ‘Delicate!’ I exclaimed in astonishment. ‘Well, you require to begin your day on wine, you know,’ she rejoined. ‘I don’t require it; I take it because I like it,’ I said. ‘Oh, then you are self-indulgent,’ she rejoined, as quick as thought, ‘and if you are so much so now, the weakness will grow upon you to a quite dangerous extent by-and-by, and

⁶⁹Then does she know?: “then how does she know?” (TB)

⁷⁰Ouida’s books ... drawn her own conclusions: See also note 39. Today Ouida’s best known novels are *Under Two Flags* (1876) and *Moths* (1880). Her novels, very popular between the 1860s and the late 1890s, were always critical of fashionable society.

the gout and bad temper will be the order of the day.’ She said it lightly, but, by Jove! she meant it.”

“Then she has rejected you?”

“*Emphatically*; yet she doesn’t see why I shouldn’t stay and finish the shooting!”

“And why not, if it amuses her to have you here?”

He looked at me in tragic disgust, “Would you have me stay here simply for her amusement?” he thundered.

“Certainly,” I said. “It is merely a turning of the tables. You came here simply for your own benefit, and in return the least you can do is to stay if it pleases her to ask you.”

“You have a nice consideration, both of you, for my feelings,” he exclaimed.

“Your *what*, Brinkhampton?” I asked, laughing.

He stood before me a moment, trying to annihilate me with a look, and then walked straight out of the room.

IX

“So you have rejected him,” I said, when I saw Eugenia.

She was taken aback at first. “Then he has told you!” she ejaculated. “Well, I wonder if he thought I should be mean enough to betray him! I asked him to stay on simply because I didn’t want you to suspect that I had had to humiliate him by refusing him. It is hateful to hurt people’s feelings. Besides, as a guest, I like him. And further, it is good for that kind of man to be with ladies.”

“Then you are by way of elevating his tastes if possible?”

“Oh, by all means. My principle is to do anything honourable for that kind of man but marry him.”

“But, at first I thought you had a tenderness for him?”

“I have a tenderness for him still. I can’t help pitying him. He has made such a miserable mess of life.”

“But why exactly do you object to marry him?”

“It would be tedious to tell you all my reasons. But what I objected to first was his assumption – his confidence in the superiority of his own views of life – the assumption that he, whose days have been dissipated in the whirl of conventional pleasure, should know better how to live than we who have taken time to reflect. And, also, that further assumption, the outcome of crass stupidity, that if I like my life here, it is because I know no better! I could not respect him when I found him taking things for granted instead of trying manfully to understand them – taking me for granted, for instance, as he did when he concluded that because he found me here now I have never been anywhere, never met any one, never seen anything. He spoke of society always as if to me it was an unknown world of ecstatic delights, such as my youthful and undeveloped brain could not imagine, but when I came to question him as to what precisely he had to offer me in lieu of the simple invigorating pleasures of my country life, I found that to cover myself with jewels, for the ennobling purpose of attracting men’s attention and outshining other women, and to engage all night in the highly complex movements of our modern dances in the vitiated atmosphere of a crowded ball-room, was his main idea of what must be bliss to me. Now, you know, I am twenty-one.

I came out at eighteen, and have been going wherever I chose ever since, and you can understand what folly it would be for me to trust my future to the keeping of a man who has no more comprehension of my position and character, and the needs of my nature, than he has shown in these stupid conclusions.”

We were walking up and down a shady shrubbery, and she pulled pettishly at the leaves as we passed. There is no doubt that Brinkhampton had awakened the dormant possibility of passion in the girl, and she was provoked because there was not enough in him to satisfy more than one side of her nature. It is a common case, however. One man kindles the spark which is to burn for another man’s benefit.

“But of course it is not the actual mistake that offends me,” she recommenced; “it is the conceit of himself to which I object – the conceit that makes it possible for him to be so mistaken. And I object to his opinions; his mind is a rotten conglomerate of worn-out prejudices. And I object to his debility; he has to substitute alcohol for good nerve and muscle, and there is a general suspicion of taint in him that I have no word for, but feel, and it repels me. His husk is attractive, I allow, but I’m not going to marry the husk of a man.”

“He might amend,” I ventured.

“I object to an amended, a patched-up man,” she answered, laughing. “I should always have to fear that he would give way again in the weak places. I want a man without unpleasant associations of any kind about him – a whole man, and not the besmirched remnants left by scores of ignoble passions. That kind of man is so frightfully stale. I mean to begin my life with one who is beginning his with feelings as fresh as my own.”

“Most girls would have thought it romantic,” I began, but she interrupted me.

“Now, do you really think it is romantic to marry a man who has been sedulously deteriorating mentally, morally, and physically, in consequence of his weak-minded self-indulgence, from his earliest youth? – a man who requires to be propped up on alcohol as soon as he gets out of bed in the morning, and soothed with sedative tobacco for the rest of the day? No! no! I will have the best of everything, and *my* man’s physique must be self-supporting. Your friend is a neuropath. He would probably bring insanity into the family, and so far we have kept clear of that.” She stopped, frowning, broke a prickly branch from a pine-tree, and continued, rubbing the aromatic needles and inhaling their fragrance as she crushed them between her strong white teeth.

“I have thought it all out in church,” she said, “at sermon time, sitting there among my ancestors. I used to compare their epitaphs with what I knew of their characters, and the consequences of their habits, and it was always the men who brought misfortune into the family. Or rather it would be fairer to say that the women brought it upon themselves by their want of discrimination in the choice of men. Drunkenness, dissipation, extravagance and disease, all the misery-making tendencies they ignored when they chose their husbands. Women are such owls! Always ignorantly idealising when they ought to know – know exactly. When we know that the real man is satisfactory, we may hope to find the ideal in him also; but idealising a character of which we know nothing is folly. Your friend is a very old-fashioned kind of hero. His idea was that the mystery which shrouded the impropriety of his pursuits would enhance his prestige in the eyes of a little country-girl, so he began by hinting that he had much to regret in the past. ‘You mean you have done things which you knew to be wrong and ought to be ashamed of,’ I said. ‘I am afraid I have,’ he answered

complacently, as if he expected some credit for it. But he saw something in my face when he spoke which drew a kind of excuse from him: ‘I have only done as other men do, you know,’ he added. Oh, the insulting coarseness of it all!” she broke off passionately. “To think that what should be the most sacred moment of a woman’s life has come to be sullied by men with confessions like these! I am sure it never occurred to him that he was not good enough to marry me – partly, however, because he was not thinking of me at all, but of himself, and debts and difficulties probably. Debts are a symptom of weakness of the moral nature, and that kind of man is sure to be involved. I know very well that *I* was but one item of interest thrown in to embellish more serious considerations.”⁷¹

I was silent, and she reflected for a little, then broke out again: “He said I did not appreciate his feelings, but indeed I think I do – debts, difficulties, debilitated nerves, and everything else, as I have said, that went to make up his motive for marrying me. Why, when I engage a servant he has to have a character; and surely I should be imbecile to decide in a matter of this importance without acquiring the most accurate knowledge of the habits and disposition of the person with whom I have to deal. I was once tempted by the delicious smell of a dish of peaches to bite one in the dark, and it had a wasp in it; and, from what I have observed of life, it has always seemed to me that accepting a man in ignorance of everything concerning him except that his social position is satisfactory and his manners and appearance are pleasing, is like picking up a peach and eating it in the dark. Of course, it may be a very good peach, but, on the other hand, it may have a wasp in it, or be rotten.”⁷²

“Nevertheless, I think he cares for you in his own way. He told me he had found his ideal in you.”

“Very likely,” she answered. “But before one can feel flattered by such an assertion it is necessary to know what his ideal is – a nice quiet little thing, I fancy, with lots of money, and no inconvenient intellectual capacity.”

I could not help smiling, she had gauged him so exactly.

“But he is not my ideal at all,” she pursued. “I want Sir Galahad, and Society provides me with Gawain, or Lancelot at the best, when all my longing is for ‘the blameless king’.”⁷³

“I wonder where you will find your ideal!”

“In Saxon Wake,” she answered, instantly. “Bit by bit his family have been developing every quality in which my own was deficient. For hundreds of years the two have been living here side by side – ours slowly deteriorating, losing by degrees much of what they possessed; his, by their virtues, as gradually acquiring what we lost. Compare Saxon’s father with Uncle Paul, for instance! and Saxon’s career with Lord Brinkhampton’s! Not to mention their respective abilities. Give me *him* for a husband!”

“Whom?” said Saxon himself, coming round the corner.

“*You*,” she blurted out, turning crimson. “Why don’t you care for me, Saxon?” she went on desperately, on the in-for-a-penny-in-for-a-pound principle, I suppose. “Why won’t

⁷¹“But, at first I thought you had a tenderness for him? ... to embellish more serious considerations”: not in *TB*.

⁷²and surely I should be imbecile ... or be rotten: not in *TB*.

⁷³“the blameless king”: Sir Galahad is the pure, chaste knight who achieves the Holy Grail. Gawain and Lancelot, although virtuous, are not chaste. Eugenia, when referring the “the blameless king,” is quoting from Tennyson’s “*Idylls of the King*.” (*Tennyson: A Selected Edition*. Ed. Christopher Ricks. Harlow: Longman, 2007, 783; 787; 901.)

you ask me to marry you? But I know. You will leave me lonely and miserable for all my life just because I am richer than you are.”⁷⁴ She wrung her hands as she spoke, and the young man, who had stopped short, flushed and turned pale, looking from her to me in confusion.

“I hope he has more sense,” I cried, flinging the words at him as I fled.

X

When I returned to the house, there was a carriage at the door, and I found Brinkhampton ready to depart.

“I suppose there is really no chance for me?” he said, in the dubious tone of one who is still venturing to hope.

“No, none,” I answered. “Eugenia has just proposed to Saxon Wake, and I left her trying to persuade him to accept her. It seems that he has some scruples on account of the difference in wealth and position.”

“Good Lord!” Brinkhampton ejaculated, quite forgetting himself. “If this is your modern maiden, then give me a good old-fashioned *womanly* woman, who knows nothing and cares less so long as you put her in a good position and let her have lots of money. But” – he looked hard at me – “you are joking surely.”

“No, I am not,” I said.

“And you approve. I can see you do.”

“Yes, I do,” I answered, “under the circumstances.”

He was not coarse enough to say: “I despise you both,” but that I could see was the outcome of his amazement.⁷⁵

The roar of the rolling spheres, astronomers say, is so tremendous as to be beyond the hearing of our mortal ears; and so the sudden upward impulse of the human race in this our day, as shown in the attitude of women, is beyond the earthbound comprehension of many men. Brinkhampton could conceive of nothing more eligible for a husband than a man of good manners with a fine position; the further demands of the modern maiden in the way of character and constitution were beyond his comprehension.⁷⁶

He stood for some seconds looking down at his boots, after I had spoken, as if considering, but nothing came of it except another withering glance, the last token with which he favoured me.

We were standing beside a table in the hall, on which his covert-coat lay, and now he picked it up, put on his hat, took one last look round as if bidding farewell to the comfortable possessions he had been so confident of making his own, then walked straight out, got into the carriage without another word, and was driven away.

And now, I hear, he says the most unpleasant things about myself and Mrs Saxon Wake; but happily Eugenia’s maternal duties are too all-engrossing to allow her to trouble herself about idle gossip from that section of society which, as her Uncle Paul maintains, “Ouida shows up.”

⁷⁴ Unconventional Angelica also proposes marriage to a man she feels will make a suitable partner, and in an equally confrontational manner: “Marry me! ... Marry me, *and let me do as I like.*” (THT, 321).

⁷⁵ *He was not coarse enough ... outcome of his amazement:* not in TB.

⁷⁶ *the further demands of the modern maiden ... were beyond his comprehension:* not in TB.

Knowing the curious fatality which had befallen the sons of her family ever since that legendary curse was pronounced upon them, I had a horrid qualm one day as I sat watching her play with her baby-boy.

“He looks strong enough,” slipped from me inadvertently.

Eugenia smiled. “You are thinking of the curse,” she said. “I have thought a great deal about it myself since this young gentleman arrived, and I believe I see the mistake we women have all made in the choice of our husbands. It is a universal mistake. We admired mere animal courage in a man, which is only one form of courage, instead of requiring moral courage, which includes every other kind – until I came. But I chose my husband for his moral qualities.”

“Then perhaps you have ---“

“I am sure I have,” she concluded. “I have removed the curse unawares.”

Ah Man⁷⁷

First published in *Woman at Home* 1 (October 1893): 24-30. This is the first edition of the magazine, often referred to as “Annie S. Swan’s Magazine”: Grand’s story, the first in the volume, carries an illustration on each page, each of which emphasises the contrast between the British female employer and the Chinese male servants. The illustrator is not named.

The following text is transcribed from *Our Manifold Nature*. London: William Heinemann, 1894, 177-192.

A HOUSE managed by Chinese servants works as if it were subject to natural law which is inevitable rather than to human discipline that can be evaded. If you dismiss your butler at breakfast, his substitute will stand behind your chair at lunch, and go about his business from the moment he arrives as if he had been in your service all his life. Once let him know your wishes, and everything will be arranged to suit them; but woe be to you if you are not a person of regular habits, for his motive power is a kind of clockwork which resents interference, and if you would put him back or hurry him on the probability is he will stop or break down altogether – at least, this is the view of him that is generally accepted. Ordinary Europeans who come in contact with him never seem to suspect that a servant so methodical can be anything but a machine. What precisely the human nature of him is in detail, wherein exactly he resembles, or differs from us, opportunities never enabled me to decide; but once there came under my observation a profoundly interesting specimen, interesting as an enigma, the solution to which I seem to see, although I cannot find a formula in which to express it.⁷⁸

Our butler had been dismissed in the morning; and in the afternoon I was sitting alone upstairs in the verandah overlooking a grove of mango trees, the heavy foliage of which formed a screen between me and inquisitive amahs and coolies who might be loitering in the road below. The fruit shone ochre against the green in the cloudless sunshine. There were two doors to the verandah, one leading into my sitting-room, and another on to the landing. Ascending⁷⁹ to the latter was a carpetless staircase which echoed noisily to every tread, and as I sat fanning myself drowsily with a book on my lap, I became aware of the dull regular

⁷⁷ In *WAH*, the title “AH MAN” is accompanied by a subtitle “A STUDY FROM LIFE,” not in the book version. “BY SARAH GRAND” appears under the subtitle.

⁷⁸In *Notable Women Authors of the Day* (1906) Helen Black refers to Grand’s five year “tour in the East,” saying it gave her “a fine opportunity of making herself thoroughly acquainted with the various types of Oriental character, and their manner of life.” This tour encompassed Egypt, Ceylon, the Straits Settlements, Shanghai, and “the beautiful Inland Sea to Japan” (322). Although mention is made of her English maid and her Chinese cook, there is no reference to her husband, even though it was his army postings that made this travelling necessary.

⁷⁹*Ascending*: “Leading up” (*WAH*).

thud of rigid wooden soles clumping up, and knew that a Chinaman was coming⁸⁰. It was a peculiarly emphatic, doggedly determined clump clump up, not at all like the step of any of our own servants. I thought there was the stiffness of age in it, and when it stopped an undue time outside the closed door, I supposed my visitor was recovering his breath before he knocked. He omitted the latter ceremony altogether, however, as being a foolish “foreign devil” fashion, perhaps, to which a superior Chinaman could not be expected to conform, and, opening the door at his leisure, looked in. His eyes met mine in the act, but his sallow face might have been a mask worn to conceal his emotions, so perfectly blank was it of any intelligible expression.

We surveyed each other some seconds in silence, then he suggested abruptly in a gruff voice, uttering the words without emphasis, as if they had been let loose mechanically: “Wanshee butler?”

Certainly I wanted a butler, but my first thought was, “Not one with your manners, my friend, nor with such a cast of countenance.” I did not say so, however. In fact I said nothing, but sat still and stared hard at him, thereby causing his conscience to smite him without intending it, for as I continued to gaze he removed his little black silk cap, slowly unwound his long thick pigtail, which had been coiled round his head, dropped it behind him, and replaced his cap. It is disrespectful for a servant to appear with his pigtail rolled up, but I could not tell if his coming so had been insolence or inadvertence. In any case, however, I considered that he had apologised, and let it pass.

He had a bundle of what looked like foreign * letters, “chits” of character doubtless from former employers, and these he handed to me now without further preliminary. “Ah Man has asked me to write him a recommendation,” I read on the first, “and as I am convinced that he will bathe in my blood if I refuse, I write him this in self-defence.” “This is to certify,” the next ran, “that Ah Man is the most infernal old scoundrel⁸¹ in China.” “If you have courage for anything engage Ah Man, but not otherwise, as with him you never know what to expect,” I read further; and yet another was couched⁸² in similar terms.

Ah Man had watched me reading these productions. “Very good chit?” he suggested with some show of self-satisfaction when I looked up.

“Remarkable,” I answered. “There is a kind of agreement about them that is convincing.”

“My stop?” he asked.

I pursed my mouth, and shook my head.

He turned imperturbably to go, or so I should have thought had I not surprised a glance of his oblique brown eyes, a flash expressive of despair if ever an eye expressed anything, or I feared so, and I hesitated.

“Wait, Ah Man,” I said. “To-morrow I let you know.”

“Chin chin,” he responded, taking his left hand in his right and shaking it towards me Chinese fashion⁸³. “Chin chin,” he muttered again as he slowly closed the door. Clearly, it seemed to me, his courtesies depended upon my good manners; if I showed him no consideration, I need not expect any.

My next visitor was a colonial official, who arrived so soon after Ah Man had retired that I was sure they must have met on the stairs, and I was right.

⁸⁰ *was coming*: “was ascending” (WAH).

* In China everything that is not Chinese is called foreign. (Footnotes denoted like this, rather than with a numeral, appear in both *Woman at Home* and *Our Manifold Nature* and have been inserted by the author.)

⁸¹ *the most infernal old scoundrel*: “the wickedest old scoundrel” (WAH).

⁸² *couched*: “written” (WAH).

⁸³ *Chinese fashion*: not in WAH, but clearly added in OMN to reinforce the idea of the geographical and cultural difference between the narrator and her servant.

“What was that old rascal, Ah Man, doing here?” he began immediately.

“You know him, then?”

“Know him? I should think so! Everybody knows him, and no one will have him in their service. He’s notorious.”

“But what has he done?” I asked.

“Everything, I should think. He made his name and became celebrated through taking advantage of an indiscretion on the part of one of his masters. There is a certain kind of British officer, you know, who thrashes his servants. He comes from India, where the natives are weakly and cannot retaliate, and therefore it is safe to thrash them. One Captain Guthrie Brimston⁸⁴, who was quartered here, entertained the same delusion with regard to the Chinese at first. Ah Man was his servant and annoyed him one day, and he determined to thrash him. He called him in for the purpose, and gave him a fair warning of his intention. ‘All light,’* Ah Man responded cheerfully. Then he went to the door and bolted it, which, having accomplished, he squared up to Captain Guthrie Brimston, politely intimated that he was ready, begged him to come on, and offered to wipe him ‘off of a face of cleation.’ By that time, however, Captain Guthrie Brimston had changed his mind; but, unfortunately for him, Ah Man, with the tenacity for which his race is distinguished, stuck to the point; and it was a poor satisfaction which Captain Guthrie Brimston afterwards secured at the police-court.”

“Ah Man is interesting!” I exclaimed.

“Yes,” he answered, laughing; “he has distinguished himself in some equally unexpected way in every house he has entered yet.”

“He is decidedly interesting,” I repeated. “There is the charm of the unexpected in his character, which is irresistible.”

“Well, I warn you, if you have anything to do with him, you’ll repent it.”

When my visitor had gone I rang for the boy. “Go catchee Ah Man chop chop,”* I said. “My likee he for butler.”

So many original recommendations had been too much for me; I was impatient to secure him, and felt that if I failed I should have lost one of the great chances of my life.

Next day when I came down to breakfast I found beside my plate an exquisite arrangement of pinky blossom in a blue and white china jar of quaint design. Jar and flowers together were a work of art. “Where *did* they come from?” I exclaimed.

“My no seeve,” the boy answered stolidly.

A servant came round from behind and handed me a dish at the same moment, and on looking up in surprise to see who it was, for I had not noticed another in the room, I recognised the sinister visage of Ah Man, the new butler; but I never dreamt of associating him with the exquisite offering of flowers.

Beside the butler and “boy”, who answers to a footman at home, we had a Larn-pidgin in our household at that tie. Larn-pidgin (literally Learn-business) is a young boy who comes to be trained; he gives his help in return for the training, and does as much damage as he can in the time. We happened just then to have a particularly interesting Larn-pidgin. He was a Christian by profession, a thief by nature⁸⁵, devoured by curiosity, and

⁸⁴ *Captain Guthrie Brimston*: Major and Mrs Guthrie Brimston feature prominently in Book II of *The Heavenly Twins* when they are stationed in Malta and befriend Colonel and Evadne Colquhoun.

* In pidgin English *l* is substituted for *r*.

* Immediately

⁸⁵ *He was a Christian by profession, a thief by nature*: “He was a thief naturally” (*WAH*). In the *WAH* version there are no references to Christianity. The two explicit references in *OMN* (see also note 92) and the two implicit references (notes 81 and 86) suggest that Grand acknowledged the powerful presence of Christian missionaries in China in the nineteenth century of interest to the wider readership that *Our Manifold Nature* would command, rather than to the more defined “women’s interest” market for *Woman at Home*.

garrulous to a degree, his favourite *rôle* being that of chorus to cast light on all that was obscure in the conduct of the other members of the establishment. I was his audience, or rather his victim, for he never spared me the result of his observations if it pleased him to keep me informed. He did not profess to have any respect for me, but spoke of me habitually as the “foreign devil’s” wife, mimicked my manners, and laughed unaffectedly at my dress.

Larn-pidgin was privileged to be present at every meal, and took advantage of the privilege more or less regularly. As might have been expected, he had come in that morning to study Ah Man, and found the pursuit so absorbing that he did not trouble himself to wait upon us, but tacked about the room, taking observations apparently from different points of view. Suddenly there was a tremendous crash behind me, and boy and butler rolled on the floor amidst much wreckage of plates and dishes. They had been going quickly in opposite directions, but had been brought up short with a jerk, Larn-pidgin having managed, as they stood at the side-board taking things up to carry away, to tie their pigtails together. So I thought we might anticipate wild times of trouble between him and Ah Man.

The next time he had me at his mercy, being alone, he began about the dainty gift of flowers. Having been educated by the missionaries, he spoke much better English than the other servants.

“Wanshee know who kumshaw ** you them flowers?” he began. “I savee. That Ah Man.”

“Why should he give me them?”

“Lord knows!” Larn-pidgin piously ejaculated.⁸⁶ In spite of ominous predictions, all went well in the household from the time that Ah Man took charge of it. He was an excellent servant. There was the occasional hubbub of a fierce dispute down in the servants’ quarters, and on looking over the verandah one caught glimpses of Larn-pidgin fugitive, and Ah Man with a stick in hot pursuit; but these were outdoor incidents that did not affect the indoor comfort of our daily lives, or the respectable decorum of our attendants when on duty. Most of my time was spent in reading, writing, and music, and I soon noticed that Ah Man took a curious interest in my pursuits. He alarmed me at first by persistently dusting my papers, about the arrangement of which I was particular; but I soon found that although he lingered long over them, patting them as if he were petting them, he never disturbed their order. My music, too, invariably brought him upstairs, and he would loiter about listening as long as I played. Larn-pidgin had done the same at first, and I had been so glad to think I was giving the poor boy pleasure that in a weak moment I asked him what he thought of my playing.

“I tinkee awful,” he rejoined.

There come crises in life, whether of mental or physical origin, which set in with a sudden distaste for everything hitherto habitual. Interest goes out of the old pursuits, joy from the old pleasures, life is blank as a wall without windows, and the patient sinks at last utterly enervated. When one falls into this phase in the tropics the result is apt to be serious. You pass from an energetic attitude to an easy chair, from the chair to a couch, and then to bed, from whence you will not again arise unless roused by some vitalising force from without. It was the hot weather when Ah Man came to us, and soon afterwards I fell into this state of indifference. It grew upon me gradually until all the old occupations were abandoned. I was not very observant at the time, but it has since occurred to me that as my health declined I began to see more and more of Ah Man. He never spoke except in answer to some remark of mine, and then his replies consisted of a single syllable, or even a grunt if he could make that do, but he began to hover with his feather dusting-brush in his hand about my sitting-room, and especially about my writing-table, at hours that were unconscionable for dusting, and

** Present

⁸⁶ “Why should he give them to me?”... piously ejaculated: not in WAH.

now I believe that on those occasions he came to satisfy himself; he wanted to see if I had been able to work. When I could not eat my breakfast, he would appear in the middle of the morning with a cup of beef-tea, which he would set down beside me silently, and if I had not touched it when he returned he would quietly take it away, and come again later with something else. He never said a word, nor did I, except to thank him.

Larn-pidgin was naturally very much on the spot at this time, interpreting in his character of chorus. Larn-pidgin was a cynic without any conception of what we mean by disinterested affection.

“Ah Man tink you make die,” he told me one day cheerfully, “and he not get ’nother number one mississee.”

When I was in the last stage of the subtle disorder, and could no longer get up, his attentions redoubled. I had an English maid, but he came into my room as by right whenever he could frame a pretext, and watched my face furtively as I had seen him examine my writings, as if he would fain decipher the signs he could not comprehend. He was an artist in the arrangement of flowers, and would bring me fresh ones almost every day, each more exquisite than the last. It was all done, however, with a singular gravity. There was never a smile on his face, never a sign of any emotion; only his eyes showed the intelligence within, but even they said no more than we see in the eyes of animals when they are watchful.

A friend of mine had an amah,^{*} a nice woman, whom she often sent to me with messages at this time. Ah Man would show her in, but he always did it in a lordly way, as if he despised her. Larn-pidgin came continually, waiting and watching doubtless with the deepest interest for early symptoms of my dissolution. On one of these occasions I had been wondering why Ah Man was so ungracious to the comely amah, and I asked Larn-pidgin.

“Ah Man married^{*} to her,” he grunted contemptuously.

The amah brought me some unbound numbers of the *Cornhill Magazine*⁸⁷ one day, with a note from my friend entreating me to try and read the story, “Far from the Madding Crowd,”⁸⁸ that ran through them. She said it was by an anonymous writer, they thought George Eliot⁸⁹, and would revive me. I took up the first number without the slightest interest, merely to please her, and began to read. I had not looked at a book for weeks, and found it an effort at first, but by degrees all consciousness of strained attention wore off insensibly. I ceased, as it were, to read, and began to live in the book, and I found something neither visible nor definable, but perfectly perceptible to me, something vivifying, worth having, worth using, and more, worth contemplating in another, a power that wrought itself into feeling and claimed in me a humble kinship.

After the third number I sat up, and asked for strong tea and bread and butter. Next day I struggled on to a couch. At the end of a week my brain was busy again, and only the state of skin and bone to which I had been reduced remained to show that I had ever been ill.

* Woman servant

* Married.

⁸⁷ The *Cornhill Magazine* (1860-1975) was a literary journal founded by the publisher George Smith of Smith, Elder and Co. The first editor was William Makepeace Thackeray. It published work by, amongst others, Anthony Trollope, Elizabeth Gaskell, Arthur Conan Doyle, Robert Browning, Henry James, George Eliot and Wilkie Collins.

⁸⁸ Leslie Stephen, who took over as editor of the *Cornhill Magazine* in 1871, commissioned Thomas Hardy to write *Far From the Madding Crowd* in 1873. It appeared in the magazine as twelve monthly instalments, January-December, 1874.

⁸⁹ When R.H. Hutton initially reviewed *Far From the Madding Crowd* in the *Spectator* (3 January 1874) he speculated that the anonymous author was probably George Eliot. (Thomas Hardy. *Far From the Madding Crowd*. Ed. Robert C. Schweik. New York: Norton, 1986, 365)

Ah Man watched my progress with simmering excitement. When I sent for strong tea, he brought it himself, quite fussily for him. Later he tried champagne and an omelette as an experiment on his own account, and, finding it eminently successful, he redoubled his efforts; and every time he came in he eyed the orange covers of *Cornhill* with undisguised interest. At last, under an elaborate pretence of dusting, he managed to abstract one of the numbers, and retired with it to the next room. From where I was lying I could not see him through the door, but there was a mirror on the wall beside me which reflected his subsequent proceedings accurately, to my no small edification. When he thought himself out of sight, the dusting brush fell from his hand as if he had forgotten that he held it, and he sat himself down in my special easiest chair, drew a pair of huge spectacles with tortoise-shell rims from his voluminous sleeve, adjusted them, and then proceeded to turn the pages of the magazine over conscientiously from beginning to end, looking up and down each carefully as if in search of something. I could see that the pictures excited a tragic interest in him. He gazed into them close to, then held them off a little, then raised them above the level of his eyes and looked up to them, his face meanwhile intently set, and yet with a show of excitement on it, and a glow such as samshu⁹⁰ brings to a Chinaman's cheeks; it was as if he had at last obtained something deeply desired, and was revelling in the first ecstasy of possession. He was not left long in peace to enjoy it, however, for Larn-pidgin was in the neighbourhood, patiently waiting till he should be thoroughly absorbed, when he stole a march on him from behind, tied a cracker to his pigtail, which was hanging down over the back of the chair, lighted it from a taper he had brought for the purpose, and retired with cautious precipitation to a distant post of observation to await events. When the cracker exploded, Ah Man bounced out of his chair, and the episode ended, so far as I could see, in hot pursuit of the evil one.

For the next few months the heat was excessive. By day it beat down upon us from a sky bare as a lidless eye of all solace of cloud, and at night it arose from the earth and radiated upwards. It seemed each day as if we could never endure another without a breath of fresh air, but we lived on nevertheless in the hope that the monsoon might change as by a miracle earlier than usual and relieve us. The longing for fresh air became such a passion at last that always when I slept I dreamt it was snowing. One day in particular I remember, when the heat seemed to come to a climax; a dark day it was, too, with a low, grey sky, but all the more oppressive on that account. Even the servants, methodical as they were, did as little as possible, and nobody else did anything but lounge about the house, too hot to talk, too exhausted to eat, but devoured with thirst, and conscious all the time of the effort to endure. It might have been supposed, to look at us, that we were all a prey to a terrible suspense, so obviously were we waiting for something. After dark there was a slight decrease of temperature, and I took my weary self to bed early, in the hope of finding some relief in sleep. As usual I dreamt of ice and snow. I was on a great ship, approaching an iceberg. We were in imminent danger, and all was confusion. Officers and crew were making frantic efforts to keep the ship clear of the ice. She did not respond, however, but kept on her course at a fearful rate, and I held my breath, waiting for the collision. It came with a crash. The deck quivered. I started up in bed. Ah Man was standing over me, holding a little saucer of oil, in which burnt some slender strips of pith for a wick. With the feeble light flickering upon his sinister face, he looked grotesque as a bronze demon, yet it never occurred to me to be afraid of him.

“What you wanshee, Ah Man?” I demanded.

He held his head in a listening attitude, significantly, and, following his example, I became aware of a tumult in the street, with cries and trampling as of excited people.

“What is it?” I asked.

⁹⁰ *samshu*: Samshu is a Chinese alcoholic drink made from rice or millet.

“Dat earth hab catchee to muchee bad inside,” he answered.

I could not think what he meant, but he had hardly spoken before there came an appalling uproar; it was as if a mighty engine were crashing along under the house and threatening to shake it down. No need to ask another question, although it was my first experience of an earthquake. Ah Man was shivering nervously.

“What shall I do?”

“Get up,” he answered laconically, and at the same time he handed me some garments that were lying on a chair, and held the light while I scrambled into them. Ah Man never stood upon ceremony, but indeed I think it is hardly necessary when there are earthquakes about.

A great stillness succeeded the shock, and it was evident to me as we hurried downstairs that only he and I and my English maid were left in the house; every one else had deserted it⁹¹. Out in the street, among the howling Chinese, it was pandemonium let loose. The crowd was making for an open space on the hillside, and thither Ah Man piloted me safely. He found me a place among some decent amahs, and then all at once he disappeared. Two great shocks and some slighter ones succeeded each other during the night, and always after each the howls of the people were awful. In the intervals they let off fire-crackers and burnt joss-sticks* to propitiate the demons, but looked by the fitful flare and flash of these like the very worst of demons themselves. All eyes were turned towards the city as the dawn broke, and it emerged, as it were, out of darkness. There was little enough to see. Some of the buildings had slipped from the perpendicular, one here and there had collapsed altogether, great cracks appeared on others, and roofs had fallen in; but the damage looked old and accustomed already in the first glow of the sunrise.

I made my way back to our house alone. It was in the part of the town which had suffered most, and was cracked from top to bottom. I ascended the stairs nervously, and heard subdued voices muttering in my sitting-room, one wall of which had fallen forward into the verandah. There had been a heavy beam in the ceiling above my writing-table, and this had come down. Several servants were crowded together beside it, looking at something lying on the floor, but when they saw me they separated to let me see, and there, beneath the beam, face downwards, grasping a bundle of papers in his hand, but ghastly still, I recognised Ah Man. He had returned to rescue my wretched writings.

Larn-pidgin was there too, deeply interested in the details. When he saw me all overcome, he sidled up to me and explained, but less in his habitual character of chorus than in that of unctuous Christian convert⁹², improving the occasion: “He tinkee you all the same joss,” he said, “dat Ah Man! He pay you joss-pidgin.”* The obvious moral, according to Larn-pidgin, being that it would have been better for Ah Man had he kept himself from idols.

⁹¹ *only he and I and my English maid were left in the house; everyone else had deserted it: “only he and I were left in the house; everyone else had deserted me” (WAH). By adding the “English maid” in OMN Grand avoids any idea of impropriety. Her editing is not consistent, however, since she has the narrator return to her house !alone,” twelve lines later.*

* Joss is a god.

⁹² *unctuous Christian convert: “unctuous moralist” (WAH).*

* Worship.

Kane, a Soldier Servant⁹³

First published in *Temple Bar* 92 (July 1891): 365-74.

Subsequently published in *Littell's Living Age* 190, no. 2460 (22 August 1891): 465-9.

The following text is transcribed from *Our Manifold Nature*. London: Heinemann, 1894, 193-209.

HIS real name was Keene, but Cain he mispronounced it, being of Irish blood; and Society, reluctant to brand him with the accursed appellation of Adam's eldest son⁹⁴, compromised the matter by spelling it Kane. And Kane he remained to us all to the end of the chapter.

He was a reprobate, and he looked old, but was in point of fact not so well up in years as he was in wicked ways, being only about forty when he came to us. He had served in the tropics for many years, and had had a hard life in other respects both in and out of the service, and that had aged him.

He was a short man, narrow-chested for a soldier, "bad on his feet" – rather hobbling in his gait, as if his ammunition boots hurt him. His mouth was large and straight, a mere gash, hidden by a heavy moustache. His nose was broad at the nostrils, his eyes, small, bright, "peery,"⁹⁵ and quick-glancing, but expressionless, and set so deep in their sockets and so shaded by bushy eyebrows that their vivacity was not striking. His hair, innocent of parting, stood up on end all round his forehead, which was low, as it does in some monkeys. It was grey, and abundant. So also were his moustache and whiskers. The latter he chose to wear Dundreary⁹⁶ fashion, although contrary to regulation, and the consequence was a standing order to shave, which order Kane met by a standing objection to do so. At first, under compulsion, that is to say, in the presence of a non-commissioned officer told off to see the duty done, Kane had been compelled to dock his beloved whiskers. He would look ashamed of himself, and exhibit symptoms of mental depression for some time afterwards, but would appear eventually with his whiskers as big as ever, and an air of mild triumph not to be concealed. And this happened so often that at last none but new-comers ever thought of interfering with his whiskers – or, indeed, of interfering with him at all. For Kane was a privileged person. He was always being humoured and let off, and had managed by dint of perseverance to get his own way in everything. But whether his persistence was due to obtuseness or force of character, I cannot say. Only his position at the depôt was unique, and he had made it for himself somehow. He was a time-expired man, who ought to have been

⁹³In *Temple Bar*, underneath the title, the subtitle appears, "A STUDY FROM LIFE," with underneath "BY SARAH GRAND," and underneath that "AUTHOR OF 'IDEALA, A STUDY FROM LIFE,' ETC."

⁹⁴*Adam's eldest son*: Cain, first-born son of Adam and Eve, killed his brother Abel, jealously believing that God valued Abel's gift more than his (John 3.12).

⁹⁵"peery": Inquisitive or suspicious. Grand uses such terms elsewhere in her fiction, for example where she has Adalesa notice Regy Vincent's "sloping skull" in "The Yellow Leaf" (38). Here Grand uses it to reflect her interest in eugenics through the suggestion that Kane is lower down the evolutionary scale than the narrator. This is reinforced by the reference to Kane's hair two lines later, growing, "as it does in some monkeys."

⁹⁶*Dundreary fashion*: Dundreary is the name for long side whiskers worn without a beard.

retired long before, and was only kept on by the connivance of everybody – at least of all who knew him; and there was always a chance of our losing him in the event of a commanding officer coming who knew him not, and sending him about his business before he had the pleasure of making his acquaintance. He could not have marched a mile or carried a rifle to save his life, and had therefore to be returned in some capacity which would get him excused from drill, and, accordingly, before he became a soldier-servant, he was attached to the hospital, and slept there. On arriving at the depôt, his master lived in barracks for a short time, and, trained servants being scarce, Kane was appointed to wait on him as a temporary arrangement, but continued to sleep in hospital. He had never been an officer's servant before, but it was thought that his honesty would make up for his ignorance; and the latter was not such a great inconvenience after all, as he soon learnt from the other servants what was required of him. In this new billet he was also exempt from martial duties.

He proved himself from the first to be the most methodical old machine on earth. Having set himself to perform a duty at a certain time nothing short of physical force would prevent him. Lighting the fire in the morning was the first difficulty. He chose to do it at an inconveniently early hour. His master ordered him to come later, and he answered "Yes, sorr," respectfully, but appeared next day as usual. The order was repeated, but the result was the same. When asked what he meant by coming so early, he would meekly hold his peace, but would look at the clock in such a way as to make his master doubt if he had not inadvertently mentioned that time, and the result would be a lowering of the master's tone, and the eventual triumph of the man.

When we, "the family," arrived, Kane kindly came to help us settle, and I made his acquaintance among the packing cases. I was in the front kitchen, and, hearing a curious, monotonous humming, I looked about to see whence it came. At first nothing was visible but a big box in the back kitchen and a stack of straw; but on peering over this I caught the blaze of a scarlet coat, and there was old Kane on his knees, his bushy grey whiskers all powdered with sawdust, unpacking some Oriental china with a loving touch that won my heart. He was too absorbed to notice me, but that does not mean to say that he was working hard. He was merely interested in some good specimens of an art entirely new to him. He took each plate up tenderly and admired it on all sides, and then laid it on the ground and looked at it from a distance with a pleased expression of countenance; and all the time he kept up a hum as incessant as the babble of a brook.

He had come to help us also as a temporary arrangement. As a servant he was practically useless. The notion of Kane with his curious feet, in livery, or Kane with his bushy whiskers waiting at a table, was ridiculous; but before he had been a week in the house he had cast his spell upon us. A sense of humour is in the family; he amused us; and so we kept him – and got a maid to do his work.

But it must not be supposed that he did absolutely nothing. He took a certain amount on himself when he first came, and did that amount with the regularity of clockwork, but neither more nor less, however much he might be begged, prayed, conciliated, threatened, commanded, or caressed. In the early morning he brushed boots, polished some brass-work about the front door, rubbed up his master's spurs and spur-chains, and brushed his coats and hats. The latter he did with an energy and frequency that destroyed the nap very early in their existence. He must have found something morally elevating in the brushing of hats, for if he happened to be in a more than usually conscientious mood, he returned to them and did them again. The overcoats he brushed as they hung from the pegs as if he were grooming a horse – balancing himself against them with his left hand, curry-combing with his right, and looking out sharply as it were for a kick, while he kept up that buzzing noise through his puffed-out lips, which seems to be indispensable in the grooming of a horse.

In the afternoon he cleaned the knives and plate, and smoked a pipe; and I think that was all he did do. He also fed the birds and cats, but that was in the morning before breakfast. The cats he did not like, but as they were members of the family he was always polite to them. For Kane was loyal before everything.

His attachment to the youngest of our party, a little, golden-haired boy of six, was dog-like in its dumb fidelity. They were always together if Kane could manage it, and he never objected to anything he had to do for the child. He would grub about in the ditches for monsters to put in his aquarium, and bring buckets of water of his own accord for it; and he would even carry parcels up from the town for the boy, although it is against orders for a soldier to be seen carrying a parcel, and is the thing of all others that they most dislike to have to do. They were a curious pair, the bright intelligent child with his babble of innocent talk and laughter, and the wreck of a man, vice-worn, silent, and subdued. What passed through his “dim, dreaming consciousness”⁹⁷ as he listened to the boy was often a subject of speculation, but Kane could not have expressed it himself. He had not even been taught to read and write; every intellectual faculty was dormant; probably his command of language was limited to the fewest possible number of words; his powers of comprehension were purely emotional; it was through his senses that his brain was reached; but he did feel, I am sure of that. Things beautiful delighted him as they do a child, he appreciated without understanding them, as they made him “feel nice,” as his little master used to express it – “Oh, mother, do sing that song again! It makes me feel so nice!”

It was curious though to mark Kane’s limitations. Certain things which delighted us had no power whatever to move him, the songs of birds for instance. He knew that I enjoyed them. I brought up a thrush by hand one summer, and waited eagerly to hear him sing. He made no attempt for a long time, but at last one morning, when I was not thinking of him, I was disturbed by a noise which sounded like a cork being rubbed on window-pane, and Kane came hobbling in, the bearer of good news evidently. “Ma’am!” he exclaimed, “will ye haark to the meelodious throosh!” One noise from a bird’s throat was as pleasant as another to poor Kane.

Kane’s strong point was his honesty, his weak point an amorous disposition. To be good-looking was in Kane’s estimation to be virtuous, and he was consequently at the mercy of every worthless creature wearing a petticoat who chose to smile upon him. On one occasion, while he was with us, he stayed absent without leave, and, on being sought, was found in a small public-house with fourteen damsels, treating them all.

There was some depth, doubtless, in this poor man which we never plumbed, some power to care beneath that surface of quaint ways. But it was a curious, lonely life he led, such a life as would have driven most men mad. As he could not read, he had no resources in himself, and his pipe was his only solace at idle times. In the afternoon, when he returned to Barracks, his day’s work was practically done. He left our house between three and four, and did not reappear until seven next morning; and usually spent the interval in sleep. He had no relations that I ever heard of, and made no friends. There was another prematurely old reprobate, very like him in appearance, who was said to be his “chum,” but I do not know upon what authority, as they were never seen together. Perhaps it was the singular resemblance which made the men say first of all, that they ought to be “chums,” and afterwards drift into the habit of thinking that they were. They were men of kindred vices, which is always a bond of union, and of the same standing in the service, having been recruits together; but still I do not believe that they were friends, and I am inclined to think that Kane never really had a friend. The other men tried to “chum” with him, but he repelled them all,

⁹⁷ “dim, dreaming consciousness”: Grand is quoting from *The Heavenly Twins* (XV 100) where Evadne tells Mrs Orton Beg “I have been hearing voices through my dim dreaming consciousness.”

and went his own solitary way, silent and uncomplaining. I was going to say unobservant too, but those deep-sunk eyes of his looked out from under his bushy brows at times, and sparkled in a way that, taken with a slight quivering of the lips under his moustache, betrayed some change of expression disguised by that crinose⁹⁸ mask, which suggested a doubt on the subject. But, at any rate, there must have been a time when even Kane was young and ardent, full of pride and pleasure in the present, and plan and purpose for the future, a love-time when the ignorant private soldier had felt himself for the moment “equal to the god.”⁹⁹ We never heard the details of the story. All of it that we do know, is what every raw recruit was told when he came to the barracks. “Do you see that old fellow there? Well, he cut his throat once.” “Whaat for?” “Cos he was a fool.” “But *why* was he a fool?” “Oh, something about his young woman. They didn’t hit it off. Deserted him or something. At any rate, he cut his throat.” “And he didn’t die?” “Why no, ye idiot! how could he be there if he’d died?” And how, one wonders, after feeling strongly enough to do such a deed, did he drift into such passivity, taking no thought for the morrow, nor for anything else apparently?

But although the apathetic state in which we found him had become his normal condition, he had his moods like other men, and would break out occasionally – break out of barracks and disappear for two or three days at a time. On his return he would be made prisoner for being absent without leave, and let off as a rule with a fine. Then he would return to us, slink into the back kitchen, looking very much ashamed of himself, and behave as usual till the next time. We were very much troubled about these drunken bouts of his, but the difficulty was to know what to do. Should he be sent to his duty if it occurred again? Surely not, for in that case he would be discharged from the service, and then what would become of him? But wasn’t he a Roman Catholic? Why not try the priest? There was one in the town at the time, of whom we knew something, and as a forlorn hope Kane was sent to him one morniug¹⁰⁰ with a note, detailing the circumstances of the case, and begging him to use his influence to induce Kane to take the pledge¹⁰¹. The latter, not knowing the object of the visit, was surprised into compliance. The priest only induced him to take it for three months, thinking it not wise to dishearten him by trying his fortitude for too long a period to begin with. And Kane kept the pledge religiously to the day, and then he “went on the spree.” He certainly did “go on the spree.” He must have been looking forward to that “spree,” and thinking of little else during the whole three months. When he returned he was still suffering from the effects thereof, and, taking advantage of the consequent depression, we sent him again to the priest, and again he took the pledge for three months, kept it, doubtless enjoying the novelty of having something to look forward to the while; and then he had his “spree.” And this happened regularly for two years, during which time we had nothing but his periodical absences to complain of, as he never came to the house drunk. But about the end of the second year, the other servants began to find fault with him. They said he did nothing, and made himself objectionable, and they would rather do his work than have him about.

⁹⁸ *crinose*: crinose means “hairy,” from the Latin “crinis” meaning “hair.”

⁹⁹ “equal to the god”: This is a quotation from Shelley’s *Prometheus Unbound* (1820), II, v, 39-43:

All love is sweet,
Given or returned. Common as light is love,
And its familiar voice wearies not ever.
Like the wide heaven, the all-sustaining air,
It makes the reptile equal to the God. (*Selected Poetry and Prose of Shelley*. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Signet, 1966, 174.)

¹⁰⁰ *morniug*: typographical error. In *TB* the word reads “morning.”

¹⁰¹ *take the pledge*: To take an oath, promising to abstain from alcohol.

We did not listen to these hints for some time, thinking the real truth was that a younger and smarter man would please the maids better; but, unfortunately for Kane, he broke through his rule at Christmas, and came to the house one day the worse for drink. He had a black eye, too, which he said was caused by a splinter that flew in his face, when he was chopping firewood. The fault was overlooked on that occasion, it being Christmas time, and every temptation having been put in the poor man's way. But it happened again a short time afterwards, and what with that and the other servants' complaints, we felt we must get rid of him.

It would be hard to say why we were all so attached to this old good-for-nothing, but of all the household retainers we have had to part with, I think he was the one about whom we felt the heaviest-hearted when it came to the point. The quality of faithfulness which we had discerned in him from the first was, perhaps, at the bottom of it. He was a worthless old dog, but he was our own old dog, and for that we valued him! That he felt as much as we did about it I cannot say, for he made no sign, but just plodded on in his old way to the last, and then stumped out, without a word to any of us. One day, he came and did his work as usual, but he did not return on the next. That was all. We shall not forget him however. His accustomed place is still empty, and will not again be filled.

I have thought since he left us, that his apparently indifference was entirely due to a certain shyness, the kind of shyness which makes a sensitive child dumb. He had no power of expression, and was shamefaced; but he must have felt. He left the barracks, however, when he was discharged from the service a short time afterwards, as he had left us, without a word; and from the day of his departure nobody ever saw him there again. He had considerably over twenty years' service, and most men would have gone back to talk over old times, but not so Kane; nor did he leave any address behind him, so that nobody at the depôt ever heard anything about him after he took his discharge. There had been a rumour for some time before he left us, that he was "keeping company with a young woman," which meant a serious engagement, but the notion seemed so preposterous we took no notice of it, thinking it was chaff. Then it was said that the "young woman" was not young at all, but an elderly widow with five children, and this news struck us as even more objectionable than the other, for we all imagined a big coarse woman with red arms, a perfect termagant in fact, for whom old poor Kane, who was quite decrepit, would be no match. The idea of Kane in love was ridiculous, but the idea of Kane in bondage was not to be tolerated, so we dismissed it. We felt he was one of those characters round whom the myth and story collect inevitably after their disappearance, and were prepared to accept all that might be said of him in future with caution.

It was months before we heard anything, and then one of the boys burst in upon us suddenly with the startling news that Kane had gone on the stage! We received the announcement with derision, but there was some truth in it after all. A circus had been settled in the place for some time, and Kane was employed there to carry a flag in a procession at a shilling a night. This was the first positive news we had had of him, but soon afterwards I met him in the street. He was dressed in blue serge like a working man in his best things, but looked more soldier-like than he had done in his uniform. I stopped to speak to him.

"And is it true that you are married, Kane?" I asked.

"Yes, ma'am."

"I should like to go and see your wife if I may. Where do you live?"

He at once gave me an address; but Mrs. Kane did not live there, and no one in the neighbourhood had ever heard of such people.

Concluding that he had his own reasons for misleading me, we determined to respect them, and accordingly made no further inquiries; and for the next two years we lost sight of

him entirely. During the winter of the second year the Lancashire operatives¹⁰² suffered terribly from the prevalent commercial depression, and consequent want of work. Soup kitchens and clothing clubs were established, and every other effort known to the charitable was being made to prevent starvation and relieve distress, but numbers of the people died nevertheless, and quite a third of the population tramped away to other places in search of work; and as we heard nothing of Kane we thought it likely that he had drifted away with the rest. One day, however, I was told that a poor woman wanted to see me. This was an hourly occurrence, and we were all more or less worn with the constant strain. She was a delicate-looking woman, poorly but cleanly clad, with a sweet and patient face.

“I beg your pardon, ma’am,” she said, “but will ye plaze come to see me husband? Shure he’s dying, he is. He wouldn’t let me come to ask ye for nawthing, but, now he’s going, he’d like to spake wid ye, if ye’d be so good?”

“Who is your husband?” I asked.

“Kane!”

She led me up a narrow stair into a large, light garret, a poor place, furnished with a chair and table and a box or two, but little else.

On the floor in the corner nearest to the scrap of fire was a straw mattress covered with canvas, and on this the old, worn soldier lay, partially dressed, and propped with a pillow made of a sack stuffed with straw and covered with an old rug. His wife took off her shred of a shawl and spread it over his feet, which were bare. He was evidently dying, but the bushy beard which he had grown since I saw him last was neatly trimmed, so also was his hair, and there was a general air of cleanliness about him, as of discipline and order successfully struggling to the last with poverty and death.

He brought his thin right hand to his forehead when I entered, and tried to look impassive as the men do when they salute their officers, but he was too weak to conceal the gleam of satisfaction that lit his haggard countenance on seeing me.

There was a little box near the bed, and I sat down upon that. The snow was falling softly outside, and Kane was very cold, but fortunately we knew only too well what would be wanted when we were sent for in those days, and a servant had followed me with food and fuel and wine and warm blankets. When I covered Kane up with the latter, he patted them with a pleased expression, and then hid his poor benumbed hands beneath them, glad of the grateful warmth. His wife resumed her thin shawl, and stood in apathetic silence, watching the servant making up the fire. I gave her some wine, and then she sat down, staring stupidly before her, while the great tears fell at intervals unheeded on her folded hands.

“Oh, Kane!” I said, “why didn’t you send for me sooner?”

The woman roused herself upon that, and answered for him.

“He wouldn’t, ma’am, because we wasn’t married – leastways, not as you would like. I had another husband, and he bate me, and he bate the children, and he took every penny I earned, and spent it on the dhrink; and Kane ses, ses he, ‘Mary,’ ses he, ‘if you’ll marry me, I’ll pertect ye,’ ses he, and I couldn’t because of the other mon. But he went away, and it was a hard battle to keep the childer, but I did it, and got a little home about me, and had a shilling in me pocket, and me close dacent, and the childer nate and clane; and then he come back and bate me again, and druv the childer out into the street, and used language such as niver was, and sould all me things for the dhrink, and Kane ses, ses he, ‘Mary,’ ses he, ‘don’t ye be afther standing it,’ ses he. ‘Hev him up, and the magistrate ’ll separate ye, and thin ye can marry me,’ ses he. ‘I’ve got me pension, and you and the childer shan’t starve, whatever

¹⁰² *During the winter of the second year the Lancashire operatives*: This is a reference to the Lancashire Cotton Famine of the 1860’s and the hardship which resulted. In spite of the poor relief, many died of starvation and many travelled to other parts of the country seeking work.

comes,' ses he. So I had him up, and the magistrate separated us, and gave him six months; but the praste wouldn't marry me and Kane. He said I was still me other husband's wife, but Kane wouldn't believe it after all the magistrate had said about granting a separation; so we went to the Registry, and Kane tould him I hadn't a husband, and he married us his way. And Kane kep' his word by me and the childer, he did, true for ye, ma'am. But the bad times cam, and I could get no work, neither could he, and what was his pension, ma'am? a shilling a day, and three of them a week for lodgings, and five childer to keep. And I wanted him to go to you, and he wouldn't, because why, he ses, ses he, we wasn't married as you would like. And Kane got waker and waker wi' givin' his bread to the childer; and thin, ma'am, me firrst husband cam back, and they had a set-to, and Kane got the worst of it, and he's laid there iver since, three months. And I wanted to go to you, and he wouldn't let me, because, he ses, ses he, we wasn't married as you would like. But me firrst husband was killed last week, ma'am, in a street row, and then Kane ses to me, ses he, 'Fetch the praste, Mary,' ses he. And the priest cam this morning, and we was marrid again, and then Kane ses, 'Mary,' ses he, 'go for the missus now.' So I cam."

Too late. Three days afterwards I covered the straw mattress with flowers, the best to be had at that season, and stood looking down at the quiet face, pinched from privation, but placid, with the look of content upon it which it had worn from the moment I entered his room.

Poor Kane! – poor ignorant Kane! immoral old Irish reprobate; liar, drunkard, inciter to bigamy, would-be suicide – dead for want of the bread he had given to his rival's children, dead defending them and the woman he loved – faithful, honest, uncomplaining, considerate to the last; his poor decrepit body gone to its hard-earned rest, but the chivalrous soul so long concealed from the world that wants words, ah! where in Heaven's justice will it be when opportunities are considered, virtues weighted down against vices, and the award of merit meted out to prince and private like by the power which is no respecter of persons?

Janey, a Humble Administrator¹⁰³

First published in *Temple Bar* 93 (October 1891): 199-218.

Subsequently published in *Tauchnitz Magazine* (November 1891): 37-60;
Littell's Living Age 191 (19 December 1891): 721-31.

The following text is transcribed from *Our Manifold Nature*. London: William Heinemann, 1894, 211-245.

How it happened that Janey could ever have lived and not been in Dickens, I cannot imagine, unless it was that the master was cut off prematurely before he came to her¹⁰⁴. The nearest approach in his works to the type is “Miss Jenny Wren,” the doll’s dressmaker¹⁰⁵; but that small creature was mainly fantastical, whereas our Janey could under no circumstances have been anything but dignified, so simple were her manners, so direct her speech, so great her intelligence, so clear her judgement, and so exemplary her patient fortitude under circumstances of peculiar trial. She was one of the best specimens I ever met of that highly complex creature, “a true gentlewoman;” a being compounded of courage and timidity, strength and weakness, sense, delicacy, refinement, penetration, taste, tact, and a few foibles – though the latter were not innate in Janey’s case, I should say, but rather an accretion sown by circumstances, an outcome of the influence of such externals as of necessity surrounded her unusual position, and of the close contact with a number of very diverse people which it entailed.

But although I maintain that Janey was a gentlewoman, it would be misleading to call her a lady. Gentlewoman in our day is a title which must be won by estimable qualities; a lady may be any kind of a character, the term merely referring to position and means – those fine feathers which cover many contemptible birds. Janey’s position was low in the social scale – she had been a kitchen-maid. And her pedigree was certainly not exalted; it is, however, valuable in its significance to the student of human nature as showing from whence she possibly derived her own good qualities. Her father’s family were mostly tenant-farmers in a small way, or market gardeners, and had been so for generations, the girls having gone into service when they did not marry and were not wanted at home. On her mother’s side she was the descendant of a respectable line of gentleman’s servants, a race whose daily bread depended upon their moral worth. Her grandmother had been a house-keeper, grandfather stud-groom, great-grandmother lady’s maid, great-grandfather butler, and so on, all people on whose competence and honesty their employers had to rely for their comfort and safety in life. And it would appear as if her ancestors on that side had been a kind of imitative insect also, taking on the colour and characteristics of their surroundings, both of which had

¹⁰³In *TB* the title reads “Janey, a humble Administrator. A STUDY FROM LIFE. BY SARAH GRAND, AUTHOR OF ‘IDEALA, A STUDY FROM LIFE,’ ETC”. Page six of the magazine’s first section, “The Temple Bar Advertiser, is devoted to ‘New Novels at all Libraries’ and ‘New and Popular Editions at all Booksellers.’” The second title in this latter section is “IDEALA. Fourth Edition. In 1 vol., crown 8vo., 6s.”

¹⁰⁴*the master was cut off ... to her*: Charles Dickens (1812-1870), whose comparatively early death meant that his novel, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, was not completed.

¹⁰⁵*the doll’s dressmaker*: Jenny Wren, the crippled friend of Lizzie Hexam, earns her living as a dolls’ dressmaker in Dickens’s last completed novel *Our Mutual Friend* (1865).

culminated in Janey to such perfection that, had she been placed early enough among the nobility and gentry to acquire for herself the one thing wanting to her, their trick of speech, she could not have been distinguished from one of that order. Her father and mother had both struck out in a new direction for themselves. The father had gone into the service of a railway company, which employed him to drive a lorry and deliver goods; while the mother had been a strawplaiter by trade up to the time of her marriage, doing the work at home.

I made Janey's acquaintance through our good vicar, to whom I had applied for work to vary the stultifying monotony of my elegant leisure.

"What would you like to do?" he asked.

"Something for somebody,"¹⁰⁶ I answered.

"There is district visiting," he suggested dubiously.

"No, certainly not," I answered without hesitation. "You must let me go where I am sure to be welcome."

"As for instance?"

"Well, the sick poor, you know. There must surely be something to be done for them."

He considered a moment. "There is Janey," he began meditatively – "and indeed her whole family for the matter of that! The father is suffering from some brain disease, brought on by debauch; the mother is worn out by the reckless production of too large a family; and Janey herself is paralysed from the waist down. I shall pass them on my way back and," he added in his slow way, "I was thinking of going in."

"Please decide to do so then, and take me with you," I exclaimed.

We stopped at a row of squalid cottages – not country cottages, but the dreary town variety, two-storied, ugly, dingy, depressing, swarming with human beings, the children overflowing into the street, and crowding the curb, multitudinous, restless, and repulsive on the first glance in their dirt and movements as maggots on meat; but proving on closer inspection to be handsome, sturdy, and delicate of skin, the strong survivals of a race from which the weakly weeds were subtracted between the ages of one and eleven by the rough exigencies of their existence, as the little headstones in the cemetery showed, only the hardier plants being left to flourish. In front of the cottages was a broad main thoroughfare, the houses of the opposite side being those of well-to-do artisans; at the back were the great iron works where hundreds of men toiled day and night, "six hours on and six hours off," incessantly. Eighteen big chimneys towered above Janey's tiny abode, monsters whose black breath begrimed the country for miles around, and compared with which the human being is as insignificant as the coral insect is to the atoll. There was a small pretence of garden ground in front of the cottages, tiny strips of clay beaten hard by the children's feet as a rule, and with scarcely a green blade growing in any of them. These were divided from each other and from the footpath by iron railings, and little gates upon which the children swung. The vicar stopped at one of these, and entering went up to the cottage door, which was ajar. This he pushed open, then knocked at the door of the front room on the ground floor.

"Please come in, sir," was the gentle response. "I know who it is by your step, sir. I knows 'em all now pretty nearly."

The vicar looked in. "How are you to-day, Janey?" I heard him say. "I have brought a lady to see you."

"Thank you kindly, sir," was the soft response, and then the vicar stood aside to let me pass.

¹⁰⁶ Angelica rails against the boredom of a financially secure woman's existence, a life with little purpose, exclaiming "I want to do something for somebody!" (*THT*, 318)

On my right, behind the door as I entered, was a small iron bed, upon which a young girl lay on her back, with her head slightly raised. Her thick, short, dark hair was loose on the pillow. She looked at me gravely as I approached her, but a pleased expression came into her large luminous eyes when we had shaken hands. There was a striking peculiarity about her eyes. The iris, which was the grey of chinchilla in colour, had an outer edge of black.

“Sit down, miss, please,” she said. “Would you kindly give the young lady a chair, sir?”

“The young lady is a married lady,” the vicar informed her, smiling, as he complied with her request.

Janey looked at me solemnly, as if she thought it a pity, or was making an effort to alter her first impression.

“Have you been ill long?” I asked, when the vicar had left us.

“Two years,” she answered, raising her hands to catch hold of a round ruler-like stick which hung suspended above her by a rope from the ceiling, forming a handle within easy reach, by grasping which she was enabled to alter her position a little. “Me arms and ’ead is all I can move,” she explained; “but it’s a mercy I’ve got the use o’ them.”

She spoke in the mellow north-country manner, smoothing the rugged aspirates out, as it were, so that in the softened effect of her phrases their absence did not strike unpleasantly.

The head of her bed just fitted into a space beside the window, and, her back being turned to the light, she had nothing to look at but the opposite wall, from which the dingy paper, unrelieved by any picture, was dropping. Fancy, for two years lying looking at that! was my mental ejaculation.

“I’m most tired o’ countin’ the squares on it,” Janey cheerfully observed, as if she had divined my thoughts when I turned round to look at it.

Her face contracted with pain after she had spoken, and she caught at her knee with one hand. “It’s me legs,” she explained; “they’re all drowered up, and they do twitch. When I cam’ out o’ ’ospital the doctor ’e tol’ mother to keep ’em stretched out an’ not on no account to let ’em drower up; but mother she ’ad nobbut this little bed for me, an’ it ’as to be too short because o’ the door, which wouldn’t open with it any longer, so they had to drower up. It was to be, you see.”¹⁰⁷

“Why, you must be tall!” I exclaimed. “I thought you were quite a little body.”

Janey smiled. “Eh, but I’m bigger nor you are, four inches, I should think.”

This would make her between five feet eight and nine, and the bed could not have been more than five feet long.

“What did they do for you in the hospital?” I asked.

“Oh, they brought amany doctors to see me,” she answered, “an’ they put weights on me legs, to keep ’em straight. My! they did ’urt! But I was gettin’ on well enough, until one night when there was a great storm, and me bed was under a window, an’ it blowed in, an’ I called an’ called, but the nurses didn’t come an’ I couldn’t move meself, nor not another in the ward could move me, for we was all on us ’elpless. An’ the rain blew in on me all night, an’ no nurse cam’ till seven nex’ mornin’, an’ then one come for something, an’ I ses to ’er, ‘O nurse, it’s bin rainin’ on me, an’ I’m all cold an’ wet.’ ‘You just wait till your betters ’as breakfasted,’ she ses, an’ off she goes, an’ it was ’alf past eight an’ more before she comed to move me, an’ me teeth chatterin’ that ’ard you could ’ear ’em. An’ one of the women in the ward, she said it was shameful neglec’, an’ she’d tell the doctor, an’ the nurse said,

¹⁰⁷ Grand returns to the subject of a mother constricting her daughter’s physical development in *The Beth Book*. London: Heinemann, 1897: “Beth had grown too long for her crib, but still had to sleep in it, and her legs were cramped at night and often ached because she could not stretch them out, and the pain kept her awake” (29).

threatenin' like, 'You'd better!' But she did, an' oh my, 'e did go on at that nurse awful! He *was* vexed! An' she did treat that poor woman cruel afterwards. She'd do nothin' for 'er. I've 'eard 'er call an' call an' call, for she was 'elpless too, an' nurse 'ud come back an' look at 'er an' laugh, an' she in that pain; an' the nurse would say, 'You'll tell tales o' me again, will you?' They isn't lady nurses they 'as 'ere, you know, m'am," Janey broke off to explain tolerantly. "They's just common ignorant servants, an' when they gets called nurse, an' the doctors speaks to 'em confidential like, it seems to turn their 'eads, 'an they don't know 'ow nasty to be. There's gentlemen comes round every week to ask if we 'aven't no complaints, n' we said as we'd tell 'em, but we was timid of 'em; and there was one woman who'd bin there afore said it wasn't no use neither, because it 'ad been done in 'er time, an' the patient wot complained got the worst of it, because the nurses all swore she was a untruthful, troublesome person, an' the other patients i' the ward was afraid to contradict 'em for fear they'd use 'em awful afterwards."

"And did it do you no harm, that wetting?" I asked.

"Oh yes," she answered in a casual way; "I had rheumatic fever a n' inflammation of the lungs, an' it seemed as if there wasn't much to be done for me afterwards, for the doctor sent me 'ome, an' on'y tol' mother to keep me legs straight."

"And while you were so ill were the nurses good to you?"

"Well, you see," she answered temperately, "they 'adn't much to do for me, for mother she used to slip in reg'lar an' make me comfortable, 'erself, an' the nurses they'd wink at 'er comin' cos it saved 'em a deal o' trouble."

Here the door behind me opened, and some one entered with a slouching step.

"It's on'y father," Janey explained.

I turned to speak to him, and he came up to me with an imbecile smile, holding out his hand.

"For shame, father!" Janey exclaimed as if she were chiding a child; "you did oughter know better nor to offer yer 'and to a lady. Touch her 'ead now, an' be 'ave, else go away."

Father went away.

"You must ascuse 'im, m'am," Janey proceeded; "'e's got the softenin' of the brain, an' knows no more nor a child, an' 'e's very troublesome at times; it takes me all I can do to mind 'im. The neighbours says why don't we put 'im away,* but mother she say no, 'e 'ave bin a good 'usband to 'er, an' please God she'll do for 'im as long as she can do for 'im, us 'elpin' 'er, an' e'll not be put away afore 'e goes to 'is long 'ome. Ah!" she burst out on hearing the slouching steps returning, "would you now? You'll not come in an' sit down an' a lady 'ere, you know; you just go an' take a walk. See! there's the sun out. Make your bow an' be off wi' you, an' you shall 'ave summat good to eat."

Father raised the tips of his fingers to his forehead, and slouched off again obediently – out of the house this time, for I saw him pass the window, with his eyes fixed on the distant prospect of that "summat good to eat," I judged, by the idiotic smile which had remained on his lips since the bribe was held out to him. "Bless you, 'e knows ev'ry word I ses to 'im," Janey proudly declared, grasping the handle which hung from the ceiling and altering her position uneasily. "It's me legs again," she explained; "they do pain wi' them twitches. Look at 'em! I can do nothin' wi' 'em."

A series of jerks here under the bed-clothes testified to the troublesome twitches.

"You can't control them, then?" I inquired.

"Oh, no, I can't do nothin' wi' 'em," she repeated. "I can't move 'em at all, *I* can't. It do seem wonderful, don't it, 'ow they can go o' themselves?"

* The poor here never use the word asylum if they can help it; the insane are said to be "put away," like precious things "to be taken care of." (This note is supplied by the author.)

Here her mother entered, a stout woman who would still have been comely but for the deep lines which the “reckless production” of her large family had worn upon her face, marking it with a permanent expression of exhaustion.

She apologised querulously for disturbing me, but would I “ascuse” her if she spoke to Janey, because “the baker ’ad come an’ she didn’t know about the bread, there bein’ nobbut a ’eel left in the jar, them boys ate so much.”

“Well, I got three yeste’day,” Janey said, pulling a little purse out from under her pillow, “an’ two to-day’s as much as you can ’ave, let who will do wi’out.” She handed her mother some coppers as she spoke, and the latter, after curtseying to me, meekly withdrew.

“There’s a deal to think of i’ a ’ouse like this,” Janey remarked. “Father gets twelve shillin’s a week from the club, an’ the railway allows ’im another six, that’s eighteen, and two o’ the boys bring in four a week each, that’s eight, an’ eighteen – two eights six – twenty-six, an’ eight for rent out o’ that, an’ then there’s clo’s, not to mention boots, and the children do wear out amany, you’d be surprised, specially the boys. They’re thro’ ’em i’ no time, an’ repairs comes ’eavy. It takes *me* all my time lyin’ ’ere to think and contrive for ’em, for mother she can’t be axpected to do much. She gets the boy’s breakfasts at five i’ the morning, ’ an’ keeps about a bit, washin’ up an’ cleanin’, an’ doing odds an’ ends, but by the time she’s dressed me an’ father, she’s about done ’erself, an’ ’as to lie down till tea, an’ as to thinkin’, it can’t be axpected of ’er wi’ father that ’elpless, an’ that troublesome at times, an’ all, you wouldn’t believe! ‘E won’t stay in, an’ ’e won’t go out, nor do nothin’, an’ ’e can’t talk much, you know, to tell you what’s the matter. Are you going m’am? Well, thank you kindly for the visit. An’ p’raps you’ll come again. I’d be glad to see you. There are amany comed at first, ladies an’ all, but now I scarcely sees a one, an’ it do seem to do a body good like, you know, to see company. You don’t get tired o’ yer own folks, but you want a change. It’s like breathin’; you go on doin’ of it whatever the air is, but when the winder’s bin shut a long time, an’ someone comes an’ opens it, my!” – she drew a deep breath – “it’s like new life, the freshness is.”

After this first visit, I made it a rule to go and see Janey regularly every Monday afternoon, an arrangement of which she highly approved. “It gives you something to look forward to like,” she said, by which ambiguous expression she meant humbly to allude to her own feelings in the matter. But, indeed, I very soon learnt to look forward myself to the time I should spend with Janey, listening to her simple talk, and taken out of my own narrow groove by the largeness of nature which found an interest and had some sympathy for every phase of human being. It was Janey who taught me to perceive that there is no distinction of great of small in the value of details of such daily life as we discussed. The placing of the sons of a gentleman in professions may seem at a glance to be a more important matter than the finding of work for such small fry as Janey’s brothers; but as an evidence of human worth, when you come to compare the resources of the one with the poverty of the other, the position of the gentleman with that of the paralysed girl who, doubled up with pain on her short bed, thought and arranged and “fended” for her whole family, all the wonder and respect was for the latter, as it is for the skilful if less perfect work of a man as distinguished from the mechanical exactness produced without thought by machines.

My fellow sheep in society, all crowding one after the other to get through the fashionable gap of the moment together, would have stared as at an imbecility had they heard it asserted that mine was the petty existence with its dinners, dances, dresses, and all the stultifying round of accustomed inanities, and Janey’s was the larger life; but that was the fact. Janey was the human being, purposeful and versatile; I was the society machine, doing just what was expected of me exactly as the other machines did, without happiness and without heart in it. I knew this from the difference between Janey’s effect on me and that of the other machines. The latter had the power of expressing the correctest sentiments on all

occasions, and I could reply in like manner, each being the better perhaps for the exercise of politeness, but neither touching the other because neither felt. Now with Janey it was just the opposite. Her powers of expression were chiefly facial: the look in her large grey eyes, the slight smile or compression of her lips, the nod of her wise head indicated depths of feeling not to be plumbed; and without words, solely by force of feeling, she made me recognise in her a very loving loyal friend, and one who more than any lived in my interests most sincerely. The story of my life from week to week was of vital importance to her. She drew forth by dint of sympathy confessions and confidences no other woman could have wrung from me, and on many a weary day, sitting beside her little bed, I have felt my sorely contracted heart expand, and the hard burden of my own coldness melt in the warmth that came glowing with the return of the power to care – to love.

I was also indebted to Janey for many a valuable hint on the management of my household. She had made the most of her time in service, and observed just where the mistress was in fault as well as the maids; but she dealt impartially with both of us.

At first I used to shrink from telling her of walks and rides and drives, the contrast seemed so cruel; but she was too finely tempered to think of that, and soon showed me that such small share in my advantages as the description of these could give her was an enlivening pleasure to her, not a source of envy and despair. We had many a merry laugh together in that close little room, carefully smothered though for a fear of disturbing mother, who would be asleep in the room above; and we had many long silences too, listening to the intermittent regularity of the weary steam-hammer, going in the great ironworks at the back – breaking out into heavy beats that made the cottage quiver, then pausing for an appreciable time, then on again, thump, thump, thump, incessantly day and night. Poor Janey! “Sometimes it seems to shake me,” she said, “an’ when I sleep I feel it crushin’ me ’ere an’ crushin’ me there, an’ when I wake it goes in i’ me ’ead till I long not to feel nothin’ no more – if you know what I mean. I don’t want to be dead, which ’ud be wicked; but I just do want not to ’ear or know. Then there’s the men. They comes out from their work i’ their ’eavy clogs, changin’ shifts, six hours on an’ six hours off, an’ I do dread ’em comin’, for the clatter’s awful. But of course there must allus be somethin’,” she concluded, “an’ you ’ave your troubles too as keeps you wakin’ of a night¹⁰⁸ as well as me” – and so she would return to my affairs.

I had made her a picture gallery, with coloured prints from the Christmas papers, by this time, and kept her room sweet with flowers, both cut and growing. And I had also taught her how to crochet edging, and make warm woollen comforters on a frame, light work that could be done in a recumbent position, and afterwards sold. Being able to make a little money in this way was a great addition to Janey’s happiness just then, for her brothers had got out of work, and the family were in poorer circumstances than ever. A few days before Christmas I happened to ask her what they were all going to have for their Christmas dinner.

She put her hand under her pillow where she kept the family purse, and answered cheerfully: “Oh, I’ll just get mother to go out and buy some beef pieces to make a puddin’ for the childer. You don’t know what beef pieces is? The bits, you know, the butcher trims off of joints. ’E sells them cheap at night, an’ if you boil ’em long enough they’re not too ’ard.”

Neither Janey nor any of her family were beggars, and I had always felt great delicacy about offering them money; but when I went home that day it occurred to me that Santa Claus might send them a surprise at Christmas. So we got a big hamper, and filled it with Christmas fare – beer¹⁰⁹, mince-pies, a plum pudding, apples, nuts, toys for the children, a

¹⁰⁸of a night: “o’ a night” (TB).

¹⁰⁹Christmas fare – beer: “beef” (TB). It seems likely that “beer” is a typographical error since OMN makes reference to the beef contained in the hamper.

fowl for the invalids, fuel for cooking, butter, eggs, lard, and anything else we could think of; and after dark, on Christmas eve, two of the servants put it down at the door, knocked, and ran away.

I missed my regular day, and did not see Janey for some time after this, hoping that, when I did go, the hamper would be forgotten, and Janey would have excused my absence on the ground of the busy time I had had; but in this I was allowing little for Janey's discernment.

"It seems quite a long time since I saw you," I began.

"Yes," Janey answered, "but you needn't 'a' stayed away for fear we'd thank you too much for the 'amper. I know what it is meself. You feel awkward like when you've got to be thanked; an' I ses to mother, don't you go an' say too much now. Eh! it was a surprise! I jest 'appened to be readin' a story in a paper that mornin', of 'ow some poor folks 'ad a big 'amper left at their door, an' I told it to mother while she was washin' me, an' mother she ses, 'Oh, yes! them things 'appens in books, but not in real life. It's easy enough to make things come right when a scratch o' the pen can do it.' But, 'owever, that very night I was lyin' 'ere i' the dark, to save candle, an' there cam' a big knock at the door that fairly made me jump, an' then I 'eard footsteps runnin' away, an' I calls out to mother, 'Don't go, mother, it's a runaway.' But she went all the same, an' 'eard 'er exclaim, an' then there was a draggin' of summat 'eavy about, an' mother she comes in, an' I could 'ear by 'er voice she was all of a trimble like, an' she ses to me solemn, 'Janey,' she ses, 'things do 'appen sometimes in real life like as if it was a book.' An' then! if I didn't know the moment she said it what she meant; but I couldn't say nawthin', I was so took to. Then mother, she got a light, an' she an' Walter, me eldest brother, brought in the 'amper for me to see it unpacked, an' all the other childer stood around, and Tommy 'e say, 'Suppose it's a 'oax?' An' Walter told 'im it would 'a' bin if 'e 'a' 'ad anything to do wi' it, an' punched 'is 'ead to make 'im shut up; an' then mother began, an' took the things out one after the other as solemn as could be all the time, though the children shouted, on'y when she cam' to the beef she weight it i' 'er 'and like, an' ses: 'Sixteen pounds, I do believe!' An' then she puts 'er 'and into the 'amper again, an' there at the bottom was the firin' to cook it, an' at that she just throw'd 'er apron up over 'er face, an' sat 'erself down in that there chair an' rocked 'erself to an' fro, an' 'ad a good cry, an' that relieved 'er. An' little Georgie 'e say: 'Oo's 'urt mother?' An I ses: "'Ush, Georgie, no one's 'urt mother. Mother's on'y very glad, that's all.' An' it was queer to see the little chap stannin' lookin' at 'er puzzled like, you know. 'E don't cry when 'e's glad, 'e don't! An' eh! that beef m'am! It was as sweet as a nut! an' that tender I could eat it i' spite o' me teeth."

She had lost almost all her teeth, a defect which did not disfigure her because she scarcely parted her lips when she smiled. "But indeed I'm glad they're gone," she said to me, alluding to her teeth, "for they was nobbut trouble while I 'ad any. They began to go while I was in service i' London, an' my missus, as was a very good ivin' lady an' kind to us all, down to me as was nobbut scullery-maid then, she 'eard I 'ad toothache, an' she ses she'd send me to a dentist place. It's a kind o' charity. You don't pay. I think young gents goes there to learn the dentistry business, an' my! they do torture you. I didn't know what it was, else I'd not 'ave gone, not was it ever so. 'Im as did my teeth used to get me 'ead fast in a chair, an' put a thing in me mouth to 'old it open, an' then 'e'd leave me like that, an' go an' laugh an' talk wi' the other young gents' an' when 'e 'urt me an' I'd make a noise, 'e used to say: 'Now jest you shut up. You know you're a pauper an' gets all this 'endance for nothin', an' good dentistry too.' But it wasn't good dentistry," she added, "for it 'urt awful all the time, an' didn't last."

This casual glimpse of the price which the unfortunates who have to rely upon "charity" pay for the same is the kind of thing which makes one long to visit such "young

gents” with a big stick while one’s blood is boiling; but Janey was not by way of complaining. She held that to do and to suffer were an inevitable and necessary part of to be.

“Then,” she continued, “I did for ’em in ’ospital meself, for they ’urt that bad I begged ’em to give me summat, an’ they got me creasote, an’ one of the nurses she tol’ me, ‘If you use that, you’ll not ’ave a tooth left i’ your ’ead. It’ll destroy them all.’ ‘An’,’ I ses, ‘all the better,’ An’ sure enough it did destroy ’em all, axpress, but a stump or two, an’ I wish they’d go as well, I do, for they’re nowt but a bother.” She smiled as she spoke, then pulled herself up a little by the rope hanging from the ceiling, and apologised for the vagaries of her legs, “which do jump so as never was to-day.”

“How did your illness begin, Janey?” I asked.

“It was carryin’ ’eavy weights before I’d done growing begun it,” she answered. “Me aunt, me father’s sister, was cook in a gentleman’s ’ouse, an’ when I was fifteen I was a big gell, and she ses, ‘Send Janey to me an’ I’ll make ’er scullery-maid, an’ she’ll get to be kitchen-maid an’ cook in time.’ An’ me aunt was that particular it seemed like as if I’d niver no rest, for when I wasn’t workin’ ’n the kitchen, she made me sit down to sewin’, makin’ me own things – an’ eh! I did get together a good set out! But I ’ad to carry ’eavy saucepans of water an’ things, an’ likely strained meself even afore I got to be a kitchen-maid, an’ after that the work was ’arder nor ever; but I sent mother ’ome a lot of money! Then I began to feel queer i’ me legs, an’ one day I jest flopped down on me knees an’ couldn’t get up again, an’ me aunt was cross. She thought I was shammin’. But that passed off, on’y I went on gettin’ weak an’ feelin’ bad i’ me back, till at last you could see as I couldn’t drag on any more, an’ I ses, ‘Oh, aunt, you’ll not scold, for I can’t; I tol’ you I’d go on till I dropped, an’ I ’ave.’ Then she spake to missus to send me ’ome for a rest: an’ while I was at ’ome me legs lost all power on a suddent, an’ that time it didn’t come back, an’ then mother took me to a ’ospital, an’ the very first question the doctor ast me was ’ad I ’ad a fall. An’ at first I ses no, an’ then it come back to me all of a ’eap. I was ’urrying downstairs one day afraid aunt ’ud scold me for bein’ late an’ lazy, an’ I slipped an’ fell on me back; an’ when I came to think on it as sure as ennythink it was from that time I felt the pain.”

Armed with these details, I went to consult a specialist about Janey, in the forlorn hope that there might still be something to be done for her. He said, so far as he could form an opinion without seeing her, he should be inclined to suppose that it was a case of hysterical paralysis, a thing which might have been cured if properly treated in time. But he shook his head and was doubtful now when he heard about her legs being drawn up to her. The thing, however, was to arouse in her a strong desire to recover. Singularly enough I had never heard her express any wish on the subject. She had evidently been a “show case” in the hospital, a subject of peculiar interest to the medical men which led to her being made much of; and when first she returned home after she was stricken hopelessly, as it was supposed, numbers of people had come to see her, more out of curiosity than kindness – the sort of people who are collected by the excitement of a great calamity, but disappear when its effect upon themselves wears off. Janey, however, had enjoyed her little notoriety, and the being “fussed up,” too much at the time to suffer acutely from fear of the dreadful future before her. As the days wore on, however, and there was no change in her to keep the first flash of interest alive in her visitors, their visits became fewer and fewer, until at last the good vicar, his wife, the scripture reader and myself were all who ever came to vary the monotony of the long dull days. *A propos* of this falling off of her friends Janey gave me a bright instance of her patient moderation. I had been feeling indignant with those people who had only paid Janey attention while they could make capital of her case from which to draw large interest for their conversation; and I was especially angry with one lady who accepted credit for her supposed devotion to the poor girl while all the time neglecting to visit her.

“She has not been to see you yet, then?” I happened to remark one day, involuntarily implying a reproach, I am afraid.

“Ah, well, you see,” said Janey tolerantly, “she ’as amany things to do, an’ must find it ’ard to remember ’em all. When she ses she’ll come she means to right enough; but one thing crowds another out o’ ’er mind, an’ thats ’ow it ’appens she forgets me.”

Shakespeare puts it more concisely:

*“What we do determine oft we break;
Purpose is but the slave to memory.”¹¹⁰*

But Janey’s kindly wisdom only differed from his in the expression of it.

“Do you like being read to, Janey?” I asked, soon after our acquaintance began.

“Yes,” she answered, not very enthusiastically. “Scripter reader and the vicar they comes an’ reads.”

“What do they read to you?”

“The Bible, as is what they’re paid to do, you know,” she answered, with a fine appreciation of the obligation entailed to honestly earn one’s wages. “An’ Miss Hawke, she used to read to me about the martyrs till I got the ’orrors thinkin’ of ’em. Mrs. Miller used to read too, an’ Mrs. Frier, about this miserable world ’an all people ’as to bear, till I was that low-sperrited I used to lie ’ere ’an cry to meself alone. An’ they used to red about ’eaven too, an’ ’ow ’appy we should be to think o’ goin’ there, an’ ’ow all this affliction was sent to try us. I used to be thinkin’ too much about gettin’ well at first, but Mrs. Frier she tol’ me that wasn’t right, that we should bear what the Lord sends us wi’out repining, an’ be thankful when ’e doesn’t make it no ’arder for enny on us nor ’e ’as for me, black sinner as I am.”

“Then Mrs. Frier told you all wrong,” I answered boldly. “That is a demon she worships, a frightful spirit who wantonly tortures us.” Janey looked startled. “Does a father afflict his children?” I asked her. She shook her head dubiously. “He may chide and punish, but he doesn’t injure them.” I pursued – “and you *are* to think of getting well.”

After that I began to read her cheerful secular stories to fill her with a wholesome love of life, and carefully avoided all those goody-goody productions which, by preaching a stultifying resignation, would naturally tend to confirm her in her hopeless condition.

After Christmas the circumstances of the family had greatly improved, thanks to Janey, who had worked wonders from her sick bed, having, by dint of boldly sending for people to beg their help, and writing curiously spelt missives in her queer unpractised hand, succeeded in placing three of her brothers and a sister in situations – one brother as grocer’s assistant, another in a printing-office, the third in the “works,” and her sister in service; and as all four children, according to the custom of the country, contributed to the support of “the home,” the pinch of poverty was no longer felt there. Janey herself, too, not content with “minding father,” ordering his goings out and his comings in, his food and clothing, administering the funds of the family to the best advantage for everybody, and managing the household generally, had taken the child of a girl in the neighbourhood who had “’appened a misfortune” – to use her own quaint euphemism – “to tend,” by which she made a few more shillings a week herself. The child, a little girl, required a good deal of “tending,” being about a year old, very sturdy, and just able to toddle; but Janey, lying on her back in bed, only just able to move her arms, did wonders with her, keeping her amused from the time she woke till she fell asleep again, simply by talking to her, and “all the while ’aving an eye to father,” who was apt to be troublesome if Janey’s vigilance relaxed. She had a long stick with a

¹¹⁰“What we determine ... slave to memory”(Ham. 3.2.181-2). Here the Player King tells the Player Queen that sincere resolves are often forgotten.

handle now, a most useful instrument with which she could reach to any part of the room, using it like a shepherd's crook, opening and shutting the door with it, pulling the baby back to her bedside by her waistbelt when she crept out of reach, and administering condign punishment to father if she caught him "at his tricks," to which, after the arrival of the baby, he had added breaking her playthings, stealing her sweets, and slyly pinching her.

"Poor father!" Janey exclaimed tenderly. "When mother goes out an' leaves 'im for me to tend, it do seem as if 'e knew I was 'elpless, 'e do be'ave that bad. An' 'e can't abide the baby. 'E's kind o' jealous of 'er, I think, an' would do 'er a mischief if it wasn't for the stick. I catches 'im glowerin' at 'er, an' if 'e sees I sees 'im 'e pretends it's summat else 'e's looking at, for 'e's that cunning – you wouldn't believe! But I jest shakes the stick at 'im, an' ses: 'Ugh! you would, would you?' an' 'e's as meek as Mary 'ad a little lamb¹¹¹."

Now that they were more comfortably off, Janey decided at my instigation to move to a better house, where there would be room for her to have a full-sized bed and more accommodation generally, besides the relief of quiet after the thud of the steam hammer and the roar of the big ironworks at the back, and the heavy patter of the clogged feet on the petrified pats of butter of which the pavement in front appeared to be composed. The mother, helpless, querulous, fatalistic, and a chronic sufferer from extreme debility, had no energy for the move. It would upset Janey, she was sure, and disagree with father, and so on; but I overcame her opposition by showing her that she had already been to blame for allowing Janey's legs to contract so much, and it was her duty now to put herself out to any extent necessary for Janey's good. The latter was nervous herself about being moved. She had not been out of her little room for three years, and the thought of being carried through the streets "an' seein' 'em all again" excited her so much that she was prostrated for days before the event. When the ordeal was over, however, and she found herself in a, comparatively speaking, large bright room, newly papered, with plants growing in a box outside the window, pictures in frames on the walls, a big armchair for father, a delightful spring bed for herself, and a cot for baby, she said she felt as if she could sit up!

"Of course you will sit up," I answered. "It is only a matter of time."

I had been telling her this, and trying to rouse her out of the depressing state of resignation I had found her preached into, ever since I had consulted the specialist on her account. She looked at me in a shy timorous way now, as if she wanted to say something, but did not like to, and she had a cheap-looking publication in her hand which she was fingering nervously. "What is it, Janey?" I asked. "You must tell me."

She bent her head towards me, and spoke in a mysterious whisper.

"Do you believe in faith-healing¹¹²?" she asked, and then she held out the penny publication.¹¹³

There was a good deal in the papers just then about faith-healing *à propos* of the "miraculous cures" brought about by pilgrimages to Lourdes¹¹⁴ and elsewhere, and knowing that marvellous results really had followed the effects of excitement and "faith" in the minds

¹¹¹*e's as meek as Mary 'ad a little lamb*: *Mary Had a Little Lamb* is a traditional nursery rhyme, first published in America in 1830.

¹¹²*faith healing*: according to Howard W. Haggard "faith healing is a useful form of treatment," particularly for paralysis of a limb as a symptom of "hysteria" (*Devils, Drugs, and Doctors: The Story of Healing from Medicine-Man to Doctor*. London: Heinemann, 1929, 285; 260).

¹¹³*penny publication*: Although Grand does not give us the identity of this publication, it might well have been one of the *Christian Herald Penny Stories*, a weekly sister publication of the monthly *Christian Herald* which was launched by Michael Paget Baxter in 1867.

¹¹⁴*pilgrimages to Lourdes*: In 1858 Bernadette Soubirons experienced a series of visions of the Virgin Mary in a grotto close to Lourdes in Southern France. Spring water from the grotto is reputed to be responsible for healing many of the sick and disabled who visit Lourdes each year, hoping for a miracle.

of hysterical patients, I saw a possible chance for Janey, and answered without hesitation, "Yes, I do."

One of her brothers had brought in a paper on the subject published by a society then practising faith-healing in London. Many most interesting accounts were given of cures effected at prayer meetings, and on what would otherwise have been the patient's death-bed. The reports were worked up with much detail, which made them exciting reading for one in Janey's condition, and I could feel that she was watching me with great anxiety and trepidation as I perused them.

"Do you believe it?" she asked again eagerly.

"I believe you are just one of the best cases to try it on. I think you could be greatly benefited by this kind of thing," I answered. "I will write them an account of your trouble, if you like, and ask them what they would recommend."

Janey pulled herself half up by her rope hanging from the ceiling, then let herself drop on her pillow again, not knowing how to contain her eagerness and anxiety.

My letter was addressed to a lady who seemed to be one of the leaders of the faith-healing movement, and by return of post I received a gentle, courteous reply, the sum and substance of which was: "Is not this dear child committed to your care? Read —" then followed a list of texts, which, I regret to say, I have lost and forgotten. I had boldly suggested that the faith-healers should come and cure my Janey if they could, but they preferred to let me have the credit of curing her myself, it seemed — also if possible, I suppose. But allowing that "this dear child" was committed to my care, how much should I be justified in doing to enable her to apply her strength of mind to the healing of her body? I knew well what extraordinary results have been brought about by the influence of mind on matter, and also knew with what childlike confidence she would carry out any suggestion I might make; would it be right to try? But how could it be otherwise? I did think of consulting some one wiser than myself, but then I was afraid of being discouraged, and I knew the experiment could only be well made by one all enthusiasm and without doubt¹¹⁵.

I took the whole week to screw up my courage, I confess, but when my next day came for visiting Janey I went in bravely and told her I could help her to cure herself, explaining that I was not able to do it by the means which the society employed, but that I had a method of my own which was just as effectual. I told her also that I should require a piano to help me, and would send one during the week, and recommend her to begin at once to believe firmly that she was going to be cured.

Janey heard me with reverent attention, and when I left her there was a glow in her grey eyes and an expression of exaltation on her face that frightened me. Suppose I made bad worse? The thought was alarming; but I felt I must go on now and do something, otherwise I should be running the risk of making bad worse in another way, by inflicting a dreadful disappointment on Janey, and robbing her through myself of her faith in her fellow-creatures.

We had decided, between ourselves, not to mention the experiment to any one until we had tried it. Janey agreed with me that the attempt would create a disturbing amount of interest among her people, and I was afraid of the criticism, not to mention the ridicule of my own.

Janey was delicately emotional I knew, for I had read her Tennyson and Longfellow, and seen her transparent skin suffused with pale pink flushes of pleasure when I came to the passages that specially appealed to her. She would repeat such words as:

"...the woodbine spices are wafted abroad,

¹¹⁵by one all enthusiasm and without doubt: "by one without doubt and all enthusiasm" (TB).

*And the musk of the roses blown,*¹¹⁶

lovingly; and mount to an evident devotional enthusiasm on lines like:

*“Ah, Lover! Brother! Guide! Lamp of the Law!
I take my refuge in thy name and thee!
I take my refuge in thy Law of God!
I take my refuge in thine Order! OM!
The dew is on the lotus! Rise, Great Sun!
And lift my leaf and mix me with the wave.
Om mani padmi hum, the Sunrise comes!
The Dewdrop slips into the shining Sea.”*¹¹⁷

And it occurred to me that if words whose meanings she could only gather approximately had power to move her deeply chiefly by the rhythm and sound of them, then music must certainly be a most effectual adjunct to any attempt to work upon her will pleurably through her emotions; and therefore the piano.

I found her on the eventful day in a state of quiet exaltation, which contrasted favourably with the inward trepidation from which I was suffering. She was full of confidence – faith, she called it. Father and the baby had been sent out for the afternoon, that there might be no interruption. The piano had been placed by her direction so that she might see my fingers as I played, and I found she had put her best dressing-jacket on, and had herself and the room smartened up to the utmost extent, as for a festive occasion.

I dared not hesitate, so I began at once – feeling all the time as if I were doing a deed of darkness – practising a black forbidden art.

“You know what faith is, Janey?” I said, solemnly. “You must believe that there is a great power which can and will cure you, and that presently you will be able to sit up again. You must rest on that thought, as it were, and let it make you feel happy and strong.”

Janey grasped the handles of the rope suspended above her with both hands, and drew a deep breath. “Will it come all of a sudden?” she whispered.

“I cannot tell,” I replied. “But don’t look about the room. Watch my fingers as I play; listen to the music; and, above everything, *feel it*. Open your heart to it as to a great joy; let it tingle through you; and be sure that it will bring new life to you.”

I had begun to believe in it myself by this time, and sat down to the piano in nearly as great a state of exaltation as Janey was, fortunately, for otherwise I should have been nervous; but as it was I could play – better than my best, I fancied. I chose the music which “speaks to the heart alone,”¹¹⁸ and was conscious at first of how it was affecting Janey; but presently I forgot her, and, drifting off to measures that affect the imagination, I became absorbed.

¹¹⁶“*the woodbine spices ... the roses blown*”: from Alfred Tennyson (Lord Tennyson), “Maud,” 854-5. (Tennyson: A Selected Edition. Ed. Christopher Ricks. Harlow: Longman, 2007; 561.)

¹¹⁷“*Ah, Lover! ... into the shining Sea*”: the concluding lines from *The Light of Asia*, by Sir Edwin Arnold (1832-1904). (Edwin Arnold. *The Light of Asia*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964, 157.) In the poem he writes of the life and teaching of the Buddha.

¹¹⁸“*speaks to the heart alone*”: from Joseph Edwards Carpenter, *What are the Wild Waves Saying?*(Songs: Sacred and Devotional. Edited and Selected by J.E. Carpenter. London: Frederick Warne, 1866; 34)

Yes! But there’s something greater,
That speaks to the heart alone;
The voice of the great Creator,
Dwells in that mighty tone!

There was a long procession passing between high houses down a narrow street. The houses were yellow stone, and above them there was a narrow strip of sky, intensely blue, with one great white dazzling mass of sun-bright cloud upon it. It was a procession of women¹¹⁹ in flowing robes of exquisite amethyst tints. They walked in step, carrying harps, on which they played an accompaniment while they sang: - "To us! to us it is given to do great deeds!"¹²⁰ And so singing they came to the end of the long street of flat-roofed Oriental houses with tiny casements, and passed out into the open desert, where the heat radiated upwards from the yellow sand. And here they separated as water separates, spreading widely when it emerges from a narrow channel into an open space, but still flowing on in one direction; so they seemed, and floated off apart. Their dresses flashed like gems in the sunshine. Their hair shone. Their harps resounded to the touch of their milk-white hands, and their clear rich voices rang out always triumphantly: "To us! to us it is given to do great deeds!" And so singing they passed on over the desert into the wet, their voices falling fainter and fainter, their forms growing more shadowy and indistinct, till the one was invisible and the other had died away.

And as I struck the last quivering chord *arpeggio*, I turned to look at Janey. She was sitting up.

And from that day too she continued to sit up – in bed at first, but by degrees she became strong enough to be moved into a chair, and dressed. Then she got so far as to be able to get out of bed, dress herself, and hobble about the room; and I have no doubt that, but for her mother's fatal apathy in letting her legs contract, she would eventually have quite recovered. There was no stretching those stiff, shortened tendons back to their normal length, however, and poor Janey remained a cripple; but happily a very active one.

We got her a bath chair next, and her brothers by turns wheeled her out every day. The first visit she paid was to me. I had often described our house to her, and the rooms and furniture, and when she arrived she was wheeled into all the ones on the ground floor, and was loud in the expression of her amazement because she said she hadn't imagined it at all like that.

But all this time father was getting more troublesome, and was "that cunning it did seem sometimes as if 'e would 'ave to be put away." I had had a little window-garden made outside Janey's window and filled with flowers, of which she took the greatest care; but one evening, when she went as usual to trim and water them, she found they had all been pulled up by the roots, and strewn on the ground outside. I thought the rough hands from the ironworks had done it; they used to destroy our grounds when they could effect an entry; but Janey said "no," with a wise shake of her head. "Hawks dinna peck out hawk's een. The men'll not touch our flowers now Sammy's at the works. It's father; I know it's father. 'E throwed a plate at baby yesterday, 'e's that jealous or summat o' the child' an' 'e doesn't

¹¹⁹ *a procession of women*: This evokes images of the suffrage movement, strongly supported by Grand, and the suffrage 'battle hymn' copyrighted in 1911 by Ethel Smyth in *The March of the Women*. The final two lines of the song are the rallying call:

March, march – many as one,
Shoulder to shoulder and friend to friend.

¹²⁰ "To us! to us it is given to do great deeds!": an echo of a phrase in Charles Reade, *The Cloister and the Hearth* (1861), ch. 1: "Not a day passes over the earth, but men and women of no note do great deeds." (Charles Reade. *The Cloister and the Hearth: A Tale of the Middle Ages*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1901; 1.)

know what mischief to be up to next. But then, it's father, you know, an' if that wasn't that it 'ud be summat else."

I had risen to take my leave, and she looked up at me with her peculiar little smile that scarcely disturbed a feature, and held my hand a moment affectionately. A tinge of colour had come to her delicate cheeks since she was able to go out into the fresh air, and her large grey eyes were brighter. It was a most interesting face, melancholy in repose, but beaming with good feeling and clear intelligence.

"Good-bye, Janey," I said, "until next Monday, unless you can come to see me."

Good-bye, m'am," she answered, "an' thank you kindly. If the boys are either of 'em back 'i time to take me I'd like to go; but I'm afraid this week" – she heaved a little sigh, then added in her usual cheerful way – "But of course if it is to be it will be."

The following Monday I laid up a life-long regret for myself by going to see Janey much later than I had ever done before. A game of tennis was the important matter that detained me!

The cottage door stood ajar, as it always did on my visiting day, so that I might walk in without disturbing the siesta of mother upstairs by knocking. The first thing I saw on entering Janey's room was father sitting comfortably by the window in his big armchair. He greeted me with a cunning grin. Janey was prostrate on the floor, and the baby girl was sitting beside her patting her cheek. I thought it was a game at first, but Janey turned a ghastly face to me when she heard my step, and moaned. There was a horrid wound on the side of her head, and there was a heavy wooden stool lying near her with blood upon it. I called through the open window to a man who was passing. He helped me to lift Janey on to her bed, and then hurried off for a doctor, father looking on meanwhile with a self-satisfied smirk, and every now and then chuckling to himself as if hugely delighted with something. Janey held my hand convulsively. She was sensible, and looked up at me with a piteous expression in her beautiful eyes. "I don't know as 'e 'adn't better 'a' bin put away," she whispered, "for where mother an' the childer will be if ennything 'appens to me, I can't imagine." She stopped, closed her eyes for a little, then looked up again. "It seemed to come over 'im all of a minute," she said – "just afore you came. I was sittin' on the floor playin' wi' baby, an' 'e jest took up the stool, an' throwed it at me, grinnin' all the time. Oh! you bad man! see what you've done! Eh! but it 'urts, me 'ead does. I misdoubt me I'll never think for 'em all no more." Two great tears ran down her cheeks as she spoke. The blow would not have killed a robust person, but Janey had no recuperative power in her fragile body, and never rallied from the shock to her system. Dear good, gentle, loving creature! She managed "to think for 'em all" a few days longer, arranging, directing, advising to the last. She had been silent some hours before the end, and we who were sitting beside her thought we should never hear her low sweet voice again making the harsh words musical by smoothing out the rugged aspirates – when suddenly she began to murmur something about Georgie, her youngest brother, a very delicate child: – "Watch when 'e's white," she said, "an' never you mind no schoolmasters nor magistrates. Jest you keep 'im at 'ome. 'E'll niver do no 'ard work, but if you take care of 'im 'e'll be good for a light business – stationery and books –" She broke off, and looked at the piano. I had described that vision of the singing women to her, and told her how to interpret it, and we had summoned them since more than once for our encouragement, so that I knew what she meant when she said in a stronger voice, with a last little smile: "Would you play it again – very soft like – while I watch your fingers – an' maybe they'll come and 'elp me - 'elp me up – this last little bit o' the way."

I sat down to summon the singing women, and presently we heard their song – "To us! to us it is given to do great deeds!" – and down the narrow street of the Oriental city they swept in their gem-tinted garments, and floated out into the desert, and on towards the sunset. But before they faded quite from sight and hearing, some one touched me lightly on the

shoulder. The look of pain had passed from Janey's face, a tender smile lingered about her lips, and it was plain that "they" had lovingly helped her gentle spirit up – that last little bit of the way.

Boomellen¹²¹

First published in *Temple Bar* 94 (March 1892): 352-64.

Subsequently published in *The New York Times* (3 April 1892): 18; *Littell's Living Age* (23 April 1892): 207-14.

The following text is transcribed from *Our Manifold Nature*. London: Heinemann, 1894, 247-271.

"Son of a sad dog in his day, sir."

Sunshine and soft airs, scent of flowers and twitter of birds, all summer signs recall Boomellen. Where bright seas were, or burnished trout streams, or murmurous waterfalls sparkled in the heat, there was he likely to be seen loitering. Where he hid himself in murky weather it would be hard to say, but certain it is that none of us can recollect an occasion of the kind upon which he ever appeared among us.

But although associated in one's mind with warmth, brightness, and the music of moving water, he was not an ethereal being in point of appearance, such as would suggest, according to all ideal notions on the subject, a kinship with the kindly elements, a member of the family of Undine¹²²; but a big, broad-shouldered, substantial fellow, six feet high, and of a remarkably healthy aspect; with a delicate skin that never flushed, but was always pinky like that of a sleeping girl, a splendid head, thick, glossy, light brown curling hair, worn rather long and never parted, small ears, and features delicate and handsome, but of a strange immobility¹²³. The impression left by his face was always as if its impassive calm had never been ruffled by any passion of earth. No other human countenance has ever produced the same effect upon me, but while standing before the great bronze Buddha, Dai-butsum¹²⁴, as he sits, the image of contemplative calm, the passionless perfection of repose, among the trees of his grove of Karmakura, in Japan, the peculiar sensation recurred, and instantly I thought of Boomellen. But Dai-butsum felt further away than Boomellen did – he was not of the earth, while on the contrary there seemed to be something of the great spirit which pervades all inanimate nature in Boomellen, uniting him closer to that portion of it which neither wakes nor sleeps, nor thinks nor feels nor knows, but just lives and dies, than to the human race. When he spoke, his lips and eyes moved of necessity, but that did not disturb the character of that impervious mask, his face, any more than the waving of branches and whispering of leaves produces an impression of a sentient being in a tree. What was behind that mask? The question was inevitable, for his countenance was one which excited interest and expectation, and you waited anxiously when you met him first to hear him speak. With such a head, it

¹²¹ In *TB*, underneath the quotation, is printed "A STUDY FROM LIFE. BY SARAH GRAND, AUTHOR OF 'IDEALA.'"

¹²²*family of Undine*: Undine is a mythological water nymph or water spirit

¹²³*a strange immobility*: Sir Mosley Menteith in *The Heavenly Twins* is described as "having a face ... of ... singular immobility" (*THT* 161). His face is also likened to a 'mask', as is Boomellen's thirteen lines later. In Grand's fiction, these are signs of degeneracy.

¹²⁴*Dai-butsum*: The Buddha of Kamakura (Kamakura Daibutsu) is a bronze statue of Amida Buddha. The statue was cast in 1252 and stands 13.35 metres high, making it one of the tallest Buddha statues in Japan.

seemed impossible that he should not be something distinguished, or on the way, well dowered with capacity, to become so. But expectation and interest invariably went dissatisfied away, either thwarted by silence or puzzled by insignificant words. Still he always looked as if he had so much in him that no one was ever quite convinced to the contrary, perhaps because his habit was to meet any attempt to draw him out with an impressive stare, as if, although his eyes were fixed upon you, his thoughts were concentrated on something worthier of his attention, which was disconcerting.

His father's estates lay in the wild west country, running down to the rocky rugged coast, and back among the purple mountains; and it was natural to suppose that, having been born and bred upon the spot, he would have in himself an innate appreciation of the grandeur of the scenery, and a cultivated eye for the shades and colours of changeful cloud-forms, and the vast varieties of grand Atlantic seas.

The first time we saw him, I remember, we were sitting with windows wide open, looking out upon a bay into which at the moment mighty waves were rolling under a summer sun up to the beetling grey-black cliffs against which they burst like a roar like muffled thunder, casting great showers of spray upward into the air, high enough at times to sprinkle the short grass and sea-pinks which grew on the brink. Every now and then a broad-winged sea-bird would hover above the boiling cauldron, look down into the turmoil intently for a little, and then sail on with scarcely any perceptible effort, having added a curious touch of life and intelligence to the scene, a sensation in our minds, as it were, containing the involuntary comparison of the superiority of one little atom of life to all that rude irresponsible force.

Boomellen looked out with the rest of us, his big brown eyes distended, his whole face full of a dreamy intensity.

"This is a wonderful country of yours!" one of us exclaimed enthusiastically. "Is it possible to live here, and not be a painter, or a poet, or inspired in some one way to reproduce and perpetuate such beautiful wonders of sublimity and power? You must love the place."

Boomellen turned his wistful eyes from the scene, and gazed at the speaker.

"Yes," he said, slowly, after some seconds, "we like the place."

"Only like it! Why, I never saw anything so glorious as this view! Don't you think so yourself, although you are accustomed to it?"

"Yes," Boomellen repeated in measured accents, monotonously, and without the slightest show of animation; "yes, it's a nice view." Then, seeming to see that something else was expected of him, he added: "there won't be any porpoises to-day, but sometimes they come when the tide is rising."

Soon after making this last remark he rose abruptly, shook hands with us all, and withdrew, without having uttered another word. But when he had gone, and we tried to sum him up, someone said something about his "cheerful silence", and remarked that it was companionable as that of the dumb dog who looks up lovingly into your eyes.

Boomellen was of ancient and aristocratic lineage. His descent could be traced back clearly, both on his father's and mother's side, further than anybody cared to follow it.

"Eh! That's so, yer honour," an old woman on the estate, who had been descanting about the family to my father one day, informed him: "They was kings in these parts, shure enough, wonst, though now his own father's nuthin' but a common Justice of the Peace, 'deed an' he isn't. But phat cou' yer honour expect? It's the oulder the seed the warse the crop, it is, och! yes."

Boomellen had arrived at the weary end of his ancestry, being the last male representative and heir of two used-up races. His father had been "wild" in his youth, but his degrading habits were cut short by something which suspiciously resembled epilepsy. He then married, at the instigation of his spiritual director – the girl he chose being herself the

daughter of a drunken father and an arrogant, nervous, irritable, self-indulgent mother. The consequences of this combination in Boomellen's mother were markedly neurotic, her symptoms appearing in the form of an exaggerated piety. She would at any time (and she could) have upset the order of the universe had she found that it was going to check her indulgence in the religious exercises which were her favourite pastime. She had been brought up in a convent, and indifferently educated, her reasoning faculty not having been at all developed, while the emotional tendency which naturally threatened the balance of her intellect had been incessantly worked upon. In the convent she was described as of exalted piety, in the consulting room her diathesis¹²⁵ would have been pronounced hysterical¹²⁶. Training and habit had also confirmed in her a predisposition to unquestioning obedience to the priest. The latter had taught her that it is good to save souls, that the soul of a reprobate may be saved by marrying him, therefore it is good to marry a reprobate, and she had accepted Boomellen's father upon this conviction, remaining as blind as her short-sighted director himself to the conclusion that by doing so she was lending herself to the manufacture of more reprobates, descendants of the saved one. A man may change his habits when he marries, but his constitution remains the same, and it is the constitution, laden with his predominant propensities, which he most inevitably transmits. There were four children of this marriage – Boomellen, and three daughters, the eldest of whom entered a convent by way of the Divorce Court, the second did not get so far as the convent, and the third committed suicide. These troubles Boomellen's mother attributed to her Maker, it had been His will so to afflict her; but he had also been merciful in giving her Boomellen, her precious youngest child, who had never cost her an hour's anxiety in his life, and was all sweetness and goodness – too good, in her estimation, for his position; he ought to have entered the priesthood.

And no doubt Boomellen would have done so had that course been suggested to him; it not being at all his way to offer active opposition to those in authority over him.

His education had been effected in England, and there he had learnt to write a beautiful hand, clear, distinct, firm, and invariable. He was also apt at orthography, and good at mathematics. But what cultivation his mind had otherwise received only his tutors knew, for he never betrayed the slightest knowledge of any subject whatever to any one, so far as we could ascertain. His mother, alluding to his dreamy ways, and the pure simplicity of his nature, called him playfully –

“A child of the age of a man,
Whom the fairies have always in tow.”

She had all kinds of convictions on the subject of his mental attributes, and told us illustrative anecdotes which at first impressed us; but we learnt eventually to doubt her knowledge of his character, for she had evidently not observed him much since his extreme youth, the tastes and habits she still ascribed to him being those of his childhood. As he grew up, her attention had become more and more absorbed by her own pursuits, and these had gradually weaned her away from him, he going his own way, while she was rioting in pious exercises which left her unaware of the flight of time, and of certain practices which might have caused her to reflect before she again uttered her oft-repeated conviction that Boomellen was too good for anything but the priesthood.

¹²⁵ *diathesis*: a medical term which means constitutional predisposition.

¹²⁶ *hysterical*: In William Osler, *The Principles and Practice of Medicine*. New York: Appleton and Co., 1892, hysteria is defined as “[a] state in which ideas control the body and produce morbid changes in its functions” (967). For Osler “[t]he affection is most common in women ... [o]f predisposing causes, two are important – hereditary and education” (967). Sarah Grand, married to a doctor for twenty years, was, like Evadne in *The Heavenly Twins*, an enthusiastic reader of medical books and was knowledgeable about developments in medicine (see also her reference to shellshock in “The Commandant.”)

We were new to the neighbourhood, but he made himself at home with us at once, and would ride over often to see us. He was not fond of active exercise as a rule, but riding did not seem to be an accomplishment of his so much as a part of his nature, costing him as little effort as it costs a fish to swim or a bird to fly. But he was an incorrigible loiterer, and would often stay all night with us; not because there was anything special to stay for, but only because, being expected to return to dinner, he felt himself detained by an imperative disinclination to be in time. He was always late for every meal, and always the last to come down in the morning, but such breaches of etiquette in no way affected his own equanimity, and if a remark were made on the subject it only seemed to surprise him, as though he could not comprehend why habits that suited himself so perfectly should not be equally agreeable to everybody else.

His father was very impatient with him.

“Gad, gad, gad, sir!” he would exclaim in his quick, nervous, irritable way – “what are you dawdling about for? What the devil you are always thinking about I can’t imagine.”

To which Boomellen made an ox-like answer, dumbly, with big brown eyes.

But we discovered he did pay some deference to his father’s wishes – in a way that was quite his own. He began to appear with a book under his arm. Riding, driving, walking, eating or sleeping, the book was always beside him, but no one had ever seen him open it. I asked him one day what that book was. He took it slowly from under his arm, and held it out for me to read the title.

“Why, I don’t believe you know what it is yourself!” I exclaimed.

“No, I don’t,” was his candid and unexpected answer, as he returned it to its place under his arm without having had the curiosity to see what it was.

“Then, what in the world are you doing with it?” I asked.

“Well, you see,” he answered dreamily, “my father has been at me continually about books. He was always saying, ‘I should like to see you with a book, my boy.’ So at last I went to the library and took this one out because it was a comfortable size, and I carry it about so that he may see me with a book as he wishes, and be pleased. He reads books himself.”

These last words might have been uttered by an automaton, so curiously even, mechanical, and void of all emphasis were they; yet the impression they made was not impartial, but rather as if Boomellen were criticising his father for doing something which he himself found to be not worth while.

He lingered a little in his loitering way after he had spoken, and then he strolled from the room, and when next I saw him he was lounging about the lawn alone, flipping leaves from the trees with his riding-whip. Eventually he settled himself in a sunny spot, lying full length on the grass, watching the bees and butterflies, the birds skimming about, and the changeful clouds above him. As he looked up into the sky, I was painfully struck with the expression of his face – an expression of settled melancholy. I have often seen the same look since on other faces, and often found that those who wore it were the last survivors of a worn-out race. It is as if they foresaw their inevitable doom, and mourned for the extinction of their family. Some people see the same marked melancholy in the autumn season, and also recognise it as a symptom of decadence.

Boomellen spent the rest of that afternoon lying alone contentedly upon the grass, with the book beneath his head as if he were imbibing information through the pores, on Joey Ladle’s¹²⁷ principle. My father came into my room once, and, looking out at him, shook his head. “Fatal apathy!” he ejaculated, “and what a pity it seems!”

¹²⁷*Joey Ladle’s principle*: Joey Ladle is the Cellarman in the play *No Thoroughfare* by Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins. This is a reference to Joey’s line “If anything grumbles, it’s what I’ve took in through the pores; it ain’t

And I knew from the way he spoke that he thought it a hopeless case. Bummeln¹²⁸, an incorrigible loiterer, was what my father constantly called him, and the word, by mispronunciation of us children, was converted into Boomellen, which in time became our only name for him.¹²⁹

There was a long low room situated in an otherwise disused wing of our house, which had been fitted up for the boys as a workroom. It was far enough from the inhabited part of the house to prevent any one being disturbed by the noise they made, and they were constantly at liberty to amuse themselves as they pleased unrestrainedly. Double doors shut them off from the rest of the house, and their privacy was seldom invaded by the authorities. Faint sounds of hammer and saw and plane, of boxing-gloves, and fencing foils, with shouts of laughter and loud disputes would come from thence through the open doors or open windows on occasion, betokening occupations or amusements never suspected of being otherwise than honourable; so that there was no supervision, and the boys developed trustworthiness in proportion to the confidence which was placed in them.

Boomellen found his way at once to this room, and would put the gloves on himself sometimes, and make a languid show of boxing if urged thereto, or would handle the foils for a little, but without interest. He liked to look on best, and often sat by the hour together, silently watching the other boys; presenting a pathetic contrast in his quietude to the restless and noisy display of superabundant vitality which kept them going. Yet, at the first glance he, with his magnificent physique, his finely formed hands and feet, and delicate, regular, high-bred features, looked like a superior being who was sorry and sore to find himself matched with the irregular profiles and the undignified exuberance of his companions. No one would have supposed for a moment that his impressively handsome husk contained not a tithe of the immortal soul which animated their obviously inferior clay.

One evening my father, hearing that Boomellen was in the work-room, went there to look for him in order to get him to take a note back with him. On entering the room he discovered Boomellen, apparently alone, sitting at the table with his arms folded upon it, and his face resting upon them, as if he were asleep. Beside him were two huge jugs and some empty glasses.

“Where are the boys?” my father exclaimed.

Boomellen slowly raised his head, and greeted him with the besotted stare of a drunken man.

“Boomellen! how is this?” my father demanded sternly.

“You mush exsheush me, sir,” Boomellen answered with thick utterance and exaggerated formality, “but the truth ish by acshdent I’ve got myself vulgarly drunk on beer.”

That was not the worst of it, however, for presently, under the table, my father discovered one of his sons still more “vulgarly drunk” than Boomellen himself.

It seems that the other boys had gone out, leaving these two alone together, Boomellen idly sitting on the sill of an open window, in apparently rapt contemplation as was his wont, his companion quietly reading a book of adventures in which, as ill-luck would have it, he had just come upon a graphic account of an heroic drinking-bout. He was absorbed in this when Boomellen muttered something about drink, and left the room. On inquiry it was found that he had gone to one of the servants and asked him for the jugs of beer and glasses,

me.” (Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins. *The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices. No Thoroughfare. The Perils of Certain English Prisoners*. London: Chapman and Hall, 1890, 145.)

¹²⁸ *Bummeln*: the German verb, *bummeln*, can also be translated as stroll or loaf around. The German word *Bummler* is translated as “idler.”

¹²⁹ *Bummeln ... which in time became our only name for him*: not in *TB*.

and the man, supposing that they were required for the whole party, gave him as much as he wanted.

“Let us drink,” he said when he returned with the beer, and the suggestion, immediately after the vivid description he had been reading of this refined and manly sport, was too great a temptation for the other boy. He tried one glass, and then another, and so on until he collapsed. In his case, however, there was no great harm done, but rather the contrary perhaps, for the affair was a lesson to him, and he was so thoroughly ashamed of himself that he made a vow never to make a beast of himself in that particular way again, and kept it.

But with poor Boomellen it was far otherwise. He inherited a craving for drink, and from that time he had periodical attacks of it, to which he yielded without a struggle. No effort had been made to teach him to combat any propensity of the kind, and the idea of resistance never seems to have occurred to him. There were those who tried to exercise a kindly preventative influence with him in the matter when it was too late, that is to say, after the disease had declared itself, and he would listen politely to all they had to urge, but at the same time he conveyed the impression that he thought they were giving themselves most unnecessary trouble about a trivial matter, for it was evidently as natural for Boomellen to drink when the craving was on him as it was to eat when he was hungry. It was a sad and significant sight to see him drink. Alone or in company he would settle down to it as if he were doing indifferently an accustomed task that must be done. His favourite place for the purpose was at the open window, and there he would sit in an easy chair, with a little table at his elbow to hold his bottle or jug and glass; and gradually as he drank his eyes would open wider and wider on the outward prospect to begin with, as if he saw by degrees further and further beyond the range of mortal vision into the unimaginable, and was amazed. But gradually as he proceeded the brightness was overcast, the lids became swollen and heavy, his muscles relaxed, his back bowed, his lips lost their firm set, and the expression of his mouth grew weak and vacillating. Then he stretched his long legs straight out before him, and put his hands in his trouser pockets, while his head sank forward on his chest; and so he remained, with eyes staring wide open, yet seeming not to see at all, and motionless save for the regular mechanical effort to lift the fatal glass to his lips, which continued some time after all other power to move voluntarily had ceased. But during no stage of the process did he depart from his habitual manner; he neither laughed, shouted, sang, wept, became quarrelsome, affectionate, nor even excessively maudlin, but just maintained his habitual cheerful silence, and gazed into vacancy until he could see no more. If anything, he rather preferred to be alone at these times, but he never made a point of secluding himself.

When his father heard of these lapses he was extremely angry, because, he said, Boomellen did not conduct the affair like a gentleman: “Gad, gad, gad, sir!” he assured him, “a gentleman gives an entertainment – asks his friends on these occasions, and enjoys himself in good society. He doesn’t settle down alone like a hog to stupefy himself. No gentleman drinks for the sake of drinking, but to sharpen his wits and increase his conversational powers. Let me hear you have done it decently the next time.”

Boomellen did not develop this unhappy propensity until he was about nineteen, and he had not up to that time evinced any disreputable tendency; but immediately after that first sudden attack at our house, he began to shock his father’s prejudices in another way. As I have said, he was an incorrigible loiterer, but heretofore his loiterings had been solitary. Now, however, he began to appear – in the highways as a rule – accompanied by one of the peasant’s daughters – one at a time that is, but not always the same one. The peasantry themselves, good judges in these matters, said: “Och! sir, let his honour alone. Shure the girls is all right, and they’ll kape him shtraight.” And my father, knowing that *all-rightness* is the rule among Irish peasant girls, took the same view of the matter. Boomellen merely sought in their society a kind of comradeship. The sex of his companions influenced his choice only

insensibly, if at all; it was their lack of ideas and happy silence that suited him. The county, however, was naturally scandalised, and determined not to tolerate such conduct, and accordingly Boomellen was “cut” for the time being by everybody who met him anywhere in the neighbourhood in such strange company. But this did not disturb him at all. He was absolutely unaffected by public opinion, and also by the wrath of his father, who grossly misjudged him in this, his own moral nature being so constituted that he could not conceive even the possibility of such a lapse from the established order of iniquity as the innocent roaming of Boomellen with his friends implied.

“Gad, gad, gad, sir!” he said to my father, “the publicity, you know! the publicity! There’s no necessity to make a parade of that kind of thing. A gentleman never does, you know. I strongly object to his making a parade of it. It’s deuced bad form.”

He reproved Boomellen himself to this effect, but the latter merely gazed into his face with bovine stolidity, as if he sympathised with his mood much better than he understood his remarks, and went his way along the public roads with the peasant girls as before.

The drinking scandals had been carefully concealed from his mother, but some busybody made her acquainted with this new difficulty, and in consequence of her distress it was decided to send Boomellen abroad with a tutor, with a view, it was understood, to having him taught to sow his wild oats conventionally. Boomellen raised no objection. So long as he was not required to decide for himself, he was sure to acquiesce and be satisfied.

He was close upon his majority by this time, and his travels were delayed until after his birthday that he might receive the congratulations of his friends, and the honours due to him as heir to a great estate, on his coming of age. The day itself was the 29th of October, which was late in the year for open-air festivities in that climate, and it was very much feared that the preparations would be spoilt by the weather, especially after the 25th, when a dreadful storm set in, and continued to rage till far into the night of 28th. The morning itself broke brightly, however, the wind had abated, but a terrific sea still broke into the bay.

Of his own accord, and without a word to anyone, Boomellen rose early, went fasting to confession, and received the sacrament of his Church.

At twelve o’clock the tenants were to make him a presentation and read him an address, to which he would be obliged to reply. How he would comport himself on so momentous an occasion, and, above all, what he would find to say – if anything – was matter of serious conjecture and anxiety to his friends, several of whom were able and willing to coach him well had he consulted them, but he never mentioned the subject at all to any one, nor would he allow any one else to approach it. His father had attempted to do so in his nervous, fidgety way, but Boomellen simply walked off without ceremony the moment he began.

“It will come to him, dear, it will come to him. I have full faith,” his mother piously ejaculated. But nobody else was confident.

The ceremony took place out on the lawn, on the west side of the family mansion. Boomellen stood at the top of a broad flight of shallow stone steps which led down from the terrace in front of the house to the grass, upon which the tenants were crowded in rows looking up to him. Just behind him his father and mother stood, and behind them again was a goodly array of the neighbouring gentry with their ladies in bright and becoming costumes. It was a gay and beautiful scene as well as a touching and impressive one. There was a suspicion of sharpness in the air, and the wind, coming in great gusts intermittently, showered the autumn leaves down upon the spectators from the old trees that sheltered the lawn, and whirled them about sportively, while the sun shone, and the odours peculiar to the season smote the sense of smell agreeably. The sounds were soothing, too. They seemed to lie in layers upon the consciousness – first the sharp call of a bird, insistent, incessant; then the

susurrus of the breeze through the branches; and further off, yet immeasurably more impressive, the great sea-voice, swelling, lapsing, thunderous, murmurous, all-pervading, distinct from the rest yet somehow including them all.

Boomellen never looked better than at that moment. His great personal beauty showed to perfection as he stood there negligently with his hat in his hand, and the wind tossing his thick, glossy brown hair about picturesquely. It cannot be said that the strange immobility of his countenance was affected by any emotion he may have felt, but there was a bright, though rapt expression in his dark eyes as he gazed down on the nervous old man who, standing a step or two below him, made him the presentation in the name of the other tenants, and then proceeded to read the address. The tenants wished to express their affection for Boomellen. They reminded him that he had been born and bred upon the estate, and grown up amongst them to the delight of their eyes and the joy of their hearts. "It's a proud woman your mother must be the day, yer honour" – so ran in unaffected sincerity the simple language of the address – "for there's neither man nor woman, boy nor girl, in the country but has a good word for ye, for ye niver wronged a sowl in all yer life, nor gave wan any other than was their due."

There was a murmur of assent to this among the tenants. Boomellen's mother pressed her handkerchief to her eyes convulsively, and some fancied that the rapt look on his own face became intensified.

The old farmer who had read the address rolled it up as he concluded, handed it to Boomellen with a stiff obeisance, awkwardly stumbled down the steps, and took his place again with the other tenants. Then there was a pause, and many hearts began to beat to suffocation. Would he ever be able to utter a word?

Boomellen gazed before him with parted lips for some seconds before he attempted to speak, and all agreed afterwards that during the pause the look on his face was as of one who listens with pleased, though strained attention. The crisp crackle of autumn leaves, the rush and swish of a sudden gust through the branches of the trees, and the sullen roar of monstrous waves lashing themselves furiously in ineffectual might against the rocky barrier of the stupendous cliffs alone filled our ears in the interval, but it was always believed by the people that, over and above this, Boomellen had heard what was not for us, and seen that which was invisible to all but him.

He was not nervous.

"My friends – ladies and gentlemen," he began at last, gathering the words slowly and with difficulty, but composedly, "I am glad to see you here to-day. I thank you for your kind congratulations. My heart is touched." Holding his hat and the rolled-up address in front of him in his left hand, he folded the right upon it, and, looking at the ground, paused a minute as though to collect his thoughts, while those about him, strongly impressed, broke out into a low murmur of encouragement. He looked up. "You tell me that I am called to a high position," he recommenced in the same slow, difficult way – "to honours, which I should deserve – to riches, which I should dispose of to the glory of God and for the good of mankind. And that is true – I am called. It is not my choice to be here." Again he paused, but this time there was absolute silence. "I have – there is something – comes into my mind – about" – he raised his right hand and brushed the hair, which a gust of wind had blown upon his forehead, back out of his eyes, then, with bent brows, peered out into the distance over the heads of the people, as though trying to make out something he could not clearly distinguish – "about," he repeated, exactly as if he were deciphering a difficult handwriting – "about being taken from the wrath to come¹³⁰." A curious expression of intentness settled upon the upturned faces. "If I am not worthy," Boomellen pursued more fluently, "not worthy of my

¹³⁰ *taken from the wrath to come*: "from the wrath to come" (Matt. 3.7).

position – if I am not equal to the duties which, as you say, in course of time must devolve upon me; then I pray that I may be taken *from the wrath to come*. I pray that I may be removed before I lose your hearts – or – forfeit your good opinion.”

Anything more unexpected Boomellen could not have uttered, and a deep, inarticulate murmur of emotion arose from the crowd, an unintelligible murmur, for the people were at a loss to know how such sentiments should be acknowledged. A great uneasiness had gradually taken possession of us all. Everybody felt that there was something wrong, but none of us could have defined the feeling.

We held our breath while waiting for him to speak again.

He was looking beyond us now in the same strange way he had done at first; then all at once, but quietly, he put on his hat and raising his arm, pointed over the heads of the tenants, towards the sea.

“There is a ship in distress,” he said.

Those on the lawn glanced nervously over their shoulders, and everybody listened, while in the painful silence that ensued the tension became so pronounced that, on the sudden booming of a great gun, many of the ladies shrieked.

In a moment all order was over. The people on the lawn broke their ranks, and, turning from the house, made for the cliffs in haste, while those on the terrace streamed down the steps, mingled with the tenants, and all together hurried in confusion in the same direction. It was not far, but once out of the shelter of the grounds we were met and hindered by the full force that remained to the gale, which was blowing in off the sea. Petticoats became unmanageable, fluttering ribbons bound their wearers to each other in wild entanglement, hats were whirled away, but nobody heeded any inconvenience of that kind – especially when we came within sight of the sea, and stood in our gay holiday-attire, conscious of the cruelly incongruous contrast we presented to the white-faced, storm-battered wretches on the wreck, which was being driven to destruction before our eyes – with small hope of rescue – on the rocks below. There was no lifeboat on the coast at that time, and no other boat that would be likely to live in such a sea. Up at the coast-guard station, from whence the gun had been fired, rockets with life-saving apparatus were being got ready, but all too slowly, as it seemed to the horror-stricken spectators.

“Will no one do anything?” Boomellen’s mother exclaimed indignantly, wringing her hands. “Are none of you men enough to do anything?”

Boomellen was standing beside her, and she seized his arm, as if to shake him out of his apathy, for he appeared to be quite unmoved, although we were so close that we could have recognised the people on the ship had we known any of them, and their sufferings were terrible to see – and all the more terrible because we were so near, and yet so powerless to render them any assistance.

The wreck was a large brig¹³¹. One mast was gone, the other was hanging over the side, and there was a dead man entangled in the rigging. On deck a poor woman was clinging to a bit of cordage with one arm while she held a baby on the other. Her dress was open at the neck, and being saturated clung close to her gaunt figure, making her look as if she had nothing else on. Her short thin dark hair was also plastered in ragged patches about her forehead and neck by the water. She seemed to be shivering, her face was haggard and colourless, and she stared up at us with wild eyes, but her mouth was firmly set. The men beside her uttered heartrending cries for help, but she was mute, and the child hung limply on her arm as if it were dead.

From among the mountainous cumuli which fled across the sky before the wind, pitilessly bright sunbursts flashed full upon the wreck, giant waves met with a shock in her

¹³¹ *brig*: a two-masted, square-rigged ship.

wake, rose high in the air, and fell with a thud upon her, and great green foam-flecked masses of treacherous water swept her decks now and then from stem to stern, threatening to submerge her. About her, as if in ghastly anticipation, a throng of broad-winged sea-birds hovered – up and down, in and out, back and forth, up and down, *da capo*¹³², all dancing a regular, rhythmical, mocking, aerial measure, with sharp, shrill cries, to the tune of the winds and waves.

When the shrieks of the people on the wreck arose those on the cliff responded to them, and men and women here and there threw themselves down upon their knees, and lifted their hands to heaven.

In the midst of this awful scene, a tiny boat suddenly shot out from under the cliff, a toy-tub of a dingy not safe for an instant in such a sea. It was being rowed in a diagonal direction towards the wreck, and the people on the cliff with a groan recognised Boomellen. Why it should have occurred to him alone to do such a desperate thing, those who had caught the petulant reproach implied in his mother's manner never doubted; but that it was desperate he did not seem to realise, for his face was set serenely – rapt as it had been when he had stood in safety, seeming to listen, on the steps of his father's house half an hour before. His hat had gone, and the wind tumbled his hair. As he shot out from under the cliff, he looked up at us all with

*“...such a brightness in his eye!
As if the ocean and the sky
Within him had lit up and nurst
A soul God gave him not at first,
To comprehend their majesty.”*¹³³

We could not see where the waves broke beneath us for the shelving of the cliff, but from time to time a shower of blinding white spray rose high in the air above us, a lace-like veil of foam, concealing the sea, and falling back upon us in heavy showers. This occurred almost immediately after Boomellen appeared. Holding our breath in an agony of suspense, we saw him for one moment, then came the blinding spray, but when we looked again he was gone. He had vanished for ever, and as utterly as if he had never been.

Ineffectual life, ineffectual death; but yet it seemed appropriate that the shining sea should take him.¹³⁴

¹³² *da capo*: a musical term, meaning to repeat from the beginning

¹³³ *such a brightness ... majesty*: the third stanza of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's "The Sea-Mew" in *The Seraphim, and Other Poems*. London: Saunders and Otley, 1838, 294.

¹³⁴ *but yet it seemed appropriate that the shining sea should take him*: TB "but perhaps it was appropriate that the shining sea should take him."

EMOTIONAL MOMENTS

Preface

THERE is always the question of environment. This phrase is a formula which forces itself into consideration if we attempt to trace the influences which have affected our outlook upon life and determined the character of our work at various periods.

Manners are apt to adapt themselves to the social atmosphere of the moment; character, as a whole, once formed, is unaffected by it; but traits of character are certainly modified, and dormant characteristics roused to active service, by varying circumstances. Our attitude towards events is insensibly influenced by the conditions under which the events are presented to us; hence transient emotions are frequently translated by the unwary into opinions which they state to be positive, and by which they become seriously embarrassed when altered circumstances show them for what they were, phrases of feeling only. In story and poem especially may be traced the reflection, often involuntary, of the influences under which they were written, it being in works of art that phrases of feeling find permanent record. It is interesting to note in one's own case these effects of the social atmosphere; in the case of greater people, valuable contributions to our knowledge of the forces which set in motion the complicated machinery of human thought and action, might result.

Strolling about his beautiful garden one summer day with a clever lady of his acquaintance, the Master expressed contempt for the influences of environment.

"We are bottles," he said; "bottles of wine or water, as it may chance. But whether wine or water we must remain what we are no, matter where you place us."

"True," the lady rejoined. "But wine and water keep good, and even improve, in some places, but utterly deteriorate and go bad in others."

"Ah!" he exclaimed, admiring the score. "The figure was ill-chosen. Let us say that we are metals, gold or silver, not wine or water."

"But," she persisted, "gold and silver are subject to alloy; and both may be tarnished by the atmosphere."

"Right again," he admitted, his eyes twinkling. "But this I know, at all events," he resumed, after a pause, "that my own best work was produced in a little back room in London, looking out on a high brick wall."

"That was the actual moment of production," she insisted; "and for that moment the conditions were excellent. What better aid to concentration could you have than your high brick wall? But before that, during the period of incubation – the sowing of the seed, and its slow germination? You were out in the open then, surely, subject to all the influences of heaven and earth and –"

"Well, yes, I was," he said, "I had been in the thick of things. And, come to think of it, the harvest I reaped after those days – they were strenuous days – was richer than any I have since had to garner; far richer than any that I have had here" – and he glanced from the lovely garden out over the lovely land beyond – "where the influences, according to your theory, should have fertilized to heavenly purpose."

"And have they not?" she exclaimed. "How about your poem?" and she mentioned the most exquisite thing he had done. "I should say that here, for you, influences and conditions have proved equally perfect, judging by the result."

"The worst of a woman is," he observed, "that she will argue. Now, for the most part, an argument depends for acceptance upon the way it is put –"

"And you are going to say that a woman will always have the last word," she interrupted.

He let her have it with a smile and a shrug.

The ideal of some of us is to be impervious to the effects of the social atmosphere; but this is not often possible, nor is it always desirable. To the novelist, whose merit depends on his skill in collecting the truth to be embodied in fiction, it would be fatal, for sensitiveness is the eye of insight. To be subject to the influences of the social atmosphere is to have the inward eye open, to see, to feel, to know; to live the life by way of your perceptions; to enter into it as though you were of it; to have at first hand the truth of the matter, the causes as well as the effects, the why of this and the wherefore of that in the character and conduct of the people with whom you come in contact, the people who engender the constituents of the social atmosphere into which you have been absorbed for the time being. This is the only way to obtain in perfection that knowledge which makes for charity by including the extenuating circumstances. You run the risk of being scathed by it if it be a bad atmosphere; or you may be richly benefited by it if it be good; but in either case you gain in comprehension, and therein is great gain.

Good days those when the influences are all benign, but better still when they are finely varied; provided always that when the sketchy impressions made on the mind have to be worked up into shape, the conditions be right for the moulding. For conditions are not influences. The influences to which we are subject create the matter we would mould into shape; the conditions under which we do the work determine our powers of production. Our sources of inspiration may be excellent, but our surroundings for work impossible; and then again the conditions for work may be wholly right, but the influences not merely uninspiring but actually stultifying. There are people who act on one's mental energy like a wasting disease, while others stimulate and nourish it; and there are circumstances to correspond.

In the days when these stories were written, I was living in London for the first time. Until then, all that I had known of the great seething city had been gathered during visits, of longer or shorter duration, to intimate friends, times of delight, when every impression had been filtered through the happiest medium. There is only one perfect time in life, the time one spends with friends with whom one is in sympathy, congenial friends, who know all our faults, and love us none the less for them. The London I knew in those days was a pleasant dream-region, delicately tinted in healthy colours, with every beauty accentuated, and all the ugliness successfully concealed; the goodness was made apparent; the underlying misery, the cruelty, the evil, little suspected. Conversation, when it consists of an interchange of happy thoughts, the overflow of large hearts, and the expression of good natures, endowed with intelligence, is the one pleasure in life that never palls, and we had plenty of that. When we parted from our friends to-day, it was to meet again to-morrow, "just to keep up the conversation"; that was the entertainment we delighted in most. There was no haste or fatigue in that lovely life. Time was made for slaves, and we were not slaves, so why should we bother? We did things when we felt inclined, or we did nothing at all, according to the mood of the moment. We never made a business of our pleasures. Indeed, nothing in the way of amusement was of the mind of importance which made it worth troubling about, neither was anybody – on the score of his or her importance; for the merit of having no vain conceit of ourselves in those days seems to have been curiously discounted by an unaffected absence of respect for the claims of position in other people – from which observation might be deduced an altruistic argument in favour of a good conceit of ourselves, since it may be inferred that the value we put upon other people is regulated by our estimate of our own worth. Or did we fail to appreciate the greatness of the names of some of those people had already made in science, art, and literature, and the importance of the history others were even then strenuously making, because, when we met them, they shook hands with us just like everybody else? In after days, when those same people could be seen from a distance in the crowd, and compared with the rest, there was a sense of lost opportunities, as well as a shock of surprise, in the recognition of their true proportions. The feet of mankind are all pretty

much on the same level, it is their heads that rise to suck varying heights; and you cannot well judge, close to, how high they rise above each other – which is one reason why, with our contemporaries, it is the level of the feet that is so often taken.

Compared to the London in which I had visited my friends, the London in which I went to live was another world – a sadly different world; a world that knew no lovely leisure; a stifling world, reeking of full-fed humanity, of the baser passions; a terribly hustling, jostling, over-crowded world of people all intent on securing a good place for themselves, if possible, or, if that were not possible, of pushing up as near to the front, and as close to the people who had the high places, as might be; a world in which the fighting instincts of the beast in man predominated, the diviner attributes of his nobler nature were all suppressed; a world in which there was too much of everything: too many people, too many events, too much to hear and to see and to eat and to drink – too much of everything that pertains to the flesh, that is to say, but never a crumb for the spirit, and never a perfect moment to enjoy. Everything but time could be bought in that world, but of time there was never enough. The time to savour a delicate pleasure delicately, and to use those finer perceptions in the exercise of which alone is the job of life that makes life worth living, was not to be had. In the rare little world in which I had lived happily, people had been distinguished for their individuality; in this crowded world – into which I had been drawn against my better judgement, if not against my will – all individuality was obliterated. A common object had produced a common attitude; everybody was bent in the same direction, so far as one could see, like trees in a prevailing wind. Only a dreadful monotony characterized them – the monotony of a flock of sheep led by a bell-wether, or driven by a shepherd's dog. Individually how charming people can be, but in the crowd how indistinguishable are their finer traits; doubtless, because the finer traits are crushed to death in a crowd by the grosser attributes which predominate. As from the centre of a circle I saw Society, at that time, all about me, piled up into a dense mass – a mass in which the more attractive attributes of human nature were obliterated, the more repulsive features forced into prominence: which is why so little good comes of plunging into the vortex, I suppose, as young men are prone to plunge, in order to see life.

Modern ideals are low just now; this is proved by the acknowledged aim. The modern ideal of achievement is not in the quality of the work done, but in the price to be paid for it. Sympathy, generally, is with the young man who had great possessions. Society does not approve of the way he was treated. There was a time, surely, when mankind aspired to the realization of all that was best in themselves; to be and to do good was the recognized ideal. Now the most anxious striving is to possess; the most admired of all attainments is the attainment of wealth. The power to procure a glut of everything is the highest badge of success. Modern habits of life favour the fleshly lusts that war against the soul, and the final ambition of those who have obtained the means is to become centres of gluttony. Coarse feeders at life's feast, they gorge themselves, and offer, for the entertainment of others, the wherewithal to be gorged. They call this provender the best of everything, not because of its quality, but because of the excess. In their hospitality the desire to be kind is not conspicuous, but the effort to glut is in all things apparent; it is of quantity that they make display. The very flowers are bedraggled in heaps, and vulgarized by extreme profusion. Everything is provided on the most lavish scale; everything but one thing; and that inevitably the one thing needful. You seldom see a happy face amongst them.

You may object that all this is exaggerated, that certain people may answer to this description; but only a limited number. That is true. But it is not in their numbers that the danger lies. It is in their prominence, their influence, the effect of their example. These centres of extravagance are conspicuous – well advertised; from them emanates the sordid aim which lowers the standard everywhere. The desire of wealth, above all things, and for no

good motive, since no good is done with it, results in the selfish struggle to acquire it by any means, even to the snatching of it in miserable pence out of the hands of the poor and needy; and the consequence is degrading to the individual and disastrous to the general well-being of the whole community – taking that well-being in terms of high character, in the common average of comfort, and in the proper division of work and play which would assure to everybody ample leisure to be, to do, and to enjoy,

The life of the London in which I toiled and was known, as distinguished from the London in which I had played happily, being obscure, had nothing to offer me that was new to me; there was no charm of novelty in any event. I had already had my share of every sort of social pleasure, and under the most congenial auspices too. I will not say that the difference was not in the kind, but the character of the kind was different. There had been dinners and dances before, but they were not like these. No cultivated conversation in low sweet voices is audible in the crowd of which I speak. There nothing is heard but the loud self-assertive chatter of those whom it has been said that “*Quand ils sont ensemble ils aiment à s’envirer de choses basses. Ils ont je ne sais quelle peur étrange de la beauté, et plus ils sont nombreux, plus ils en ont peur.*” But the difference was also in the number; and here the horrible glut came in, the too much of everything but leisure – that loveliest and most desirable of all things. It is curious to me that people could ever have been persuaded “to relegate to worlds far distant their repose,” as a duty, in a world where the law of grace and beauty in all things is also the law of proportion; and it is pathetic too, in that there is humility at the bottom of the easy acceptance of the dictate which persuaded the lowly to believe themselves unworthy of any lot with ease and comfort in it here below. But if the cruellest wrong inflicted by the rich upon the poor has come of the exaction of incessant toils from them, they are amply revenged by the evils the rich have entailed upon themselves by making a business of pleasure. In either case the “inordinate cup is unblest’d, and the ingredient is a devil.” The highest form of happiness is also the most easily attainable. Our happiest recollections circle about hours spent in some simple way – loitering about in a garden, it may be, on a summer afternoon, with some few friends with whom we were in sympathy, friends who brought to entertainment nothing but the desire to please. The days to which we look back as beautiful days, as landmarks in life which indicate the brighter spots, come to us almost always as a reward – as the reward of work well done, of hardship nobly borne. Following on times of trial come rest and peace. Happiness is to be found in the simpler, the less expensive modes of life, if it be happiness that we desire. The simple hospitality, offered with grace and affection, gives more pleasure than those magnificent entertainments of the rich, whose indifference and whose insolence to their guests is only to be equalled, as a rule, by the chronic state of irritation of their guests towards them – that irritation which betrays itself in carping criticism, and in many other breaches of hospitality common among us at the present time. In smart society, as it is called to distinguish it from good society, there is no such thing as *noblesse oblige*.

In one way, the influences of those days were valuable; they gave me a practical insight into a kind of life with which I had had nothing but a theoretical acquaintance heretofore; but the accompanying conditions were unfavourable for the reproduction of new impressions, or, indeed, for the right moulding of any impression into shape – unfavourable for me, that is to say; another temperament might have found pleasantly stimulating all that to me was wearisome and exhausting. A plethora of material which there is no time to assimilate, when it does not paralyze the mind, acts on it like a heavy meal, hurriedly eaten, which results in indigestion and malnutrition. The people who delight in “the joy of eventful living” are not busy with their brains as a rule; for those who are “there is no joy but calm” – and for me there was no calm. My dwelling-place was in a conspicuous position, and people were always trying to look in. If I pulled down the blinds, they threw mud at the windows; if

Preface

I left the blinds up, I saw far too much myself of a world that disheartened me. For awhile I held out. "This is success," I said to myself. I said it in a tone of triumph at first. Then I said it by way of encouragement. Then the accent of question and doubt crept in. And then, finally, came the shout of derision: "So *this* is success!" Upon which, like the vulgar little street boy when he has launched his jibe, I fled.

It was during those London days of hurry and hustle that these little stories were written. All that I have to show as the fruit of that feverish time are a few Emotional Moments.

SARAH GRAND

An Emotional Moment

Prior magazine publication not traced.

The following text is transcribed from *Emotional Moments*.
London: Hurst and Blackett, 1908, 1-29.

“Do you love me?”

“I don’t know.”

“You don’t know!” he ejaculated.

“I don’t know,” she repeated disconsolately. Then pulling herself together, she sat up, and added: “I don’t know, and I’ll tell you why.”

“Are you playing with me?” he demanded.

“No, I am not playing with you,” she answered monotonously, looking straight before her. “I wish I were. But this is deadly earnest; for if you cannot explain me to myself, I may, whether I accept you or whether I reject you, make a fatal mistake. Let me tell you, however, what happened to me a few years ago, and then you will understand.”

He threw himself back in his chair, and gazed at her with a white face and a sinking heart. There was no doubt that this was deadly earnest, and his mind misgave him that it also boded ill. He said nothing, however – only sat there, waiting dumbly, but with eloquent eyes, until she should explain herself.

It was some minutes before she was sufficiently collected to begin; but when at last she spoke, it was in the same sort of weary, monotonous tone in which she had answered his first question.

“It was some years ago,” she began, “in the summer – and in the London season. I was living on the reputation of my first successful play, and was very festive so far as festivity consists in going everywhere, but very bare of all solace in myself – not actually unhappy, you understand, my life was too full for that – but unemotional. I had not been able to write anything for months – anything worth the trouble. I felt no delicious importunity of ideas seeking immediate expression. The little I did was the work of my head; the heart was silent. Yet there was nothing that I could name the matter with me – nothing pained me, nothing worried me; but at the same time, nothing pleased me, nothing interested me deeply. I was just in that negative state which is sometimes sandwiched between two fine phases of feeling. The phase which preceded it was that great glow of enthusiasm on a certain subject which was the veritable source of my first success; the second phase had yet to come, and” – her voice dropped, and the next few words were little more than muttered to herself – “and I see now, in looking back and recollecting, that I was fully ripe for it.”

She stopped short, and it was with difficulty that she resumed.

“You know,” she recommenced in a low voice, still looking straight before her, “you know how many men come here habitually – men of all ages. When one sees such numbers one begins to have the same feeling for them that one has for the men of one’s own family – a steady feeling of affection with a large admixture of indifference in it. Among the rest there was one in particular – he did not come to see me. He was a friend of my brother. I treated him exactly as I treated my brother. I took his arm familiarly when I wanted an arm. I asked him to accompany me when I wanted an escort. But I had no distinct feeling for him. I should have told you that I liked him very much, probably, had you asked me; and I should certainly have described him as good-looking and agreeable, had I ever thought of describing him at

that time; but for many months after we first met, he never cost me a thought. At last, however – one night” Her colour rose, her breath caught as if she had plunged into cold water; her voice broke on certain words, and she hurried on in gasps: “It was here. There were a good many people. We were all sitting round, not in groups, but talking together merrily. He was sitting opposite to me, and I suddenly became conscious of his presence, and knew that he was looking at me. I returned the glance, and it was as if a flash had passed between us – a flash of fire which lit up a great glow here.” She clasped her hands to her breast. “All the long night it burnt, and I was conscious of it even in the intervals when I slept with my eyes half open – conscious of it that night and the next day, and on, on for many days and nights; and I knew what it was, and was never at ease with him again. I could not take his arm familiarly now – I could not ask him to escort me. I never looked at him if I could help it; but when I did and our eyes met – oh! verily there is nothing like love! But I had to avoid him – I had to in obedience to an impulse in myself; and I could feel that he was puzzled. It is strange that I should never have had a doubt of his love for me, while he never suspected mine for him. I wanted him to speak – I ached for a word, and yet I kept him at a distance. I gave him no opportunity.

“But these passions which flash and flame in a moment burn with terrible intensity. It was an obsession that devoured me. I never lost full consciousness of it by day or night. I could not think it, if you know what that means; I only felt it; and every other interest in life was suspended. At first I just glowed and was glad. I was in a state of delicious expectation. Then I sat and sighed, then became restless and dissatisfied; then I went down all at once – shattered – a wreck, but a burning wreck. It seemed that the fire in me would only be extinguished when there was not another atom of me left to consume. And I should have waited for the consumption had I been let alone; but my friends were importunate, and I had to consult my doctor to please them.

“Well, what is the matter now?” the doctor asked in his pleasant way.

“Oh, nothing much,” I answered. “I am restless. I cannot eat. I cannot rest. Sleep is a series of dreams. My heart”

“Flutters on the slightest surprise?” he suggested, filling up the pause. “Ah!” Then he looked at me, then at his own hands as he carefully adjusted the fingers tip to tip. “And who is the man?” he asked.

“My dear doctor!” I faltered.

“Oh, never mind,” he said, waving any possible confidence away from him. “No need to go into details. Great nuisance, though, isn’t it? Well, change, you know. There is nothing like change for it.”

“I laughed irrelevantly.

“That’s all right,” he said. “Better than tears, at all events. Yet I suppose there are tears at times?”

“Doctor, you are diabolical,” I rejoined. “I shall shun you, I think.”

“That’s all right,” he repeated, beginning to write a prescription. “And, in the meantime, a little strychnine¹³⁵ – ”

Her companion made as if he would speak.

“I beg your pardon for interrupting you,” he said. “I wanted to ask if your doctor were an old friend.”

“Oh, yes,” she answered.

“He knows you very well?”

“Very well indeed,” she assured him.

¹³⁵*a little strychnine*: Although best known today as a poison, small doses of strychnine were widely prescribed in the nineteenth century as a stimulant.

“Ah! So you went abroad?”

“Yes. I travelled from one place to another, easily, so as to avoid undue fatigue; but I took the strange obsession with me, and suffered a different phase of it wherever we stopped. It was the medium through which I beheld all that interested me at that time. At first I was always moving, but little by little the changes of scene, and the separation also, I suppose, began to tranquilize me, so that I was able to rest.

“When he took leave of me, I had seen that my friend was deeply concerned, and he wrote to me from time to time – just little friendly notes, full of kind inquiries, which I answered shortly. I always professed to be better, and in a few months I became so, insensibly. The fire still burned, but it was subdued in intensity. It ceased to be a pain, and became a pleasure once more; it added a zest to life; it irradiated all things, so that I saw what I had not seen before, and understood with a great increase of comprehension.

“Then I thought I might venture back. He came to me at once. His hand was tremulous.”

She shifted restlessly in her chair with a gesture which showed better than words could have expressed it what she had felt at that moment.

“After that,” she recommenced, “he came nearly every day, yet not a word was said by either of us. We treated each other as cool and casual acquaintances. He still had no clue to the state of my mind, although I knew perfectly what he had in his. And again I glowed. I was burnt up with passion. I would lie for hours with my arms rolled up in my hair, my whole being one of great ecstasy, conscious of him as if he had been with me, and at the same time yearning for him with a great ache.

“I was not so passive then as I had been at first. The long months abroad had strengthened me physically, and the power to resist restraint made me the more impatient of it. I began to tell myself that there must be an end of this. When I was with him my heart cried to him, ‘Speak! in mercy speak!’ When he left me I felt full of reproach. Yet if, as happened once or twice, we seemed to be nearing an understanding, I led him away from the subject in hot haste; and, afterwards, when I thought about it, my whole frame would be shaken with little hot shivers.

“Oh! there is nothing like love; but love is like all other things in this, it cannot stand still. It is altering always instinctively, in expression, in form, in effect; and it was in the latter respect that it had changed most in me during our separation. The passions of men and women are identical, but in the expression of them they are the exact opposite of each other. Is it Latourneau¹³⁶ or Westmarck¹³⁷ who has been idiot enough to declare that in love the woman is passive? It is amazing the assurance with which men explain us to themselves! When it does not suit their argument to declare that there is no understanding a woman, they dogmatize on the subject with the utmost complacency, displaying the inaccuracy of their observations and the folly of their conclusions in every phrase. That man is a simple creature who believes that a woman in love is passive. Why, the simplest girl is always actively engaged in fanning the flame. She instinctively exercises a thousand little arts and wiles to draw her lover on. She ignores him one day, shows interest in him the next. She flies from him that he may follow her, dismisses him abruptly that he may be exercised in his mind while he is absent from her, puzzling himself to know what she means by it, and so thinking of her more energetically than he would otherwise have done, and returning to her with more interest, more in the alert to understand her than he would otherwise have been. Her very hesitations are active, and certainly her resistance is incompatible with a neutral state; and in

¹³⁶Latourneau: Charles Letourneau (1831-1902), French anthropologist and philosopher. His best-known work is *The Evolution of Marriage and the Family* (1891).

¹³⁷Westmarck: Edvard Westermarck (1862-1939), Finnish philosopher and sociologist. His writings included *The History of Human Marriage* (1891).

all this her love finds an outlet. She is expressing it in her own way as forcibly as her lover does in his. No! it is absurd to assert that women are passive in love. If you stand in front of an express train coming down upon you at full speed, you cannot see that it is moving; but just change your point of view, get to one side, and then you will see for yourself; you will be breathless in view of the fiery force of it, the headlong rush.

“I do not say, however, that this is the case from the first with the woman. She may be passive for a time for various reasons. Only, what I do say is that the moment she lets herself go, the moment she allows herself to love, she is all energy; she is just as active in her own way as a man would be.

“But I was going to tell you that when I came back physically stronger and saw my friend again, I found my feeling for him unaltered; but there was a change in its effect upon me. I was impatient of his self restraint. I was angry with him because he would look at me from the wrong point of view. What he felt for me was just as apparent as if he had spoken, and my imperative desire was that he should speak. Through the long nights I used to toss, rolling my arms in my hair and thinking, feeling, imagining. I scarcely slept at all, and I never dreamt about him, but I was always conscious of him, as I was of the moonlight in the room, and of the murmur of sound that ascended from the city.

“It was strange that I should never have dreamt of him until the very day – in the early morning with the daylight streaming in. It was more than a dream, however. It was a vision. I looked up and saw the daylight. He was standing beside my bed. And he stooped and kissed me, first on the forehead diffidently, then on the lips.

“All that day my spirits were an impetuous torrent. I laughed, I sang, I jested. I could see myself how well I looked. I was intoxicated.

“Towards evening he came.

“‘I am afraid you will think I come too often,’ he said.

“‘On the contrary,’ I answered, ‘I was waiting for you. I have been expecting you all day.’

“I spoke as if in jest, so that there was nothing in the words themselves, or in the way I had uttered them to betray me; but the moment I had spoken, my face flushed crimson, and in my confusion I snatched up a fan and covered it. I recovered myself quickly, however, but when I dropped the fan I knew that my cheeks were as white as they had been red. I could not look at him, but I felt how he looked at me. The position was intolerable. I jumped up and fled from the room incontinently. But, later, we were alone together again, and he would speak; he would have a hearing; he would not be put off. I respect him for that. He was a man, at all events, and not to be played with. He claimed his right to an instant hearing. He had been taken by surprise – he had never suspected – never dared to hope. I could not speak. I was shaken with emotion, as he was – I could only just look up to him – a momentary flash from a white face – and then he kissed me, first on the forehead diffidently, and then on the lips.

“We were only a little while alone together. When the rest of the party found us, I made my escape. I went to my own room. And once I was alone, a deadly feeling of fatigue came over me – natural, I suppose, after such a day. All emotion was suspended except a certain sober sense of contentment – the feeling that comes after the play when all the excitement is over – one has enjoyed it, but one must rest. I went to bed at once, and was asleep in a moment. I slept twelve hours, and awoke with a start. The day was very bright. My room looked as usual, yet there was something strange about it too. I was conscious of something wanting. I jumped out of bed, and rang for my maid. She brought me my breakfast, and I was very hungry; yet eating with appetite was but a poor satisfaction after the joy of the fasts I had been having lately for want of it. I felt that something was wrong. There was a void, a blankness I could not account for – a sense of loss. What was it? What had

happened? I thought of him. But he did not fill my consciousness involuntarily as he had done heretofore; I had to recall him deliberately; when I did, when I remembered all that had occurred the day before, three distinct things flashed through my mind. My friends would all be in opposition; my work would be spoilt, and I would be lost if I were worried, if I heard another word on the subject; and, last, strangest thought of all, it flashed into my mind that the man was in earnest. This revealed me to myself. It explained the extraordinary sense of loss from which I had suffered since I awoke. I was angry with him because he was in earnest. It complicated matters. It was embarrassing. *He* was in earnest. And certainly so had I been, but – but now – not a particle of the feeling I had had for him yesterday remained. The delicious glow of it was extinct, and I struggled in vain to revive it. I thought of his kisses, but the recollection caused no emotion. I remembered that he would come to-day, but only felt impatient at the prospect. My brain was teeming with ideas, all actively seeking expression. The impulse to write was strong upon me, stronger than it had ever been before. It was inspiration at last – inspiration lighted by love; but love had expired in the effort.

“Oh, yes! I felt for him, and I would have revived my passion for him; I would have cherished it if I could, in all its intensity. No one would cast out love of set purpose who had ever been possessed by it as I had been. I tell you there is nothing like love – nothing so ecstatic, so strong and sweet, so all-absorbing. I should have died in the darkness that followed its extinction, had it not been for the inspiration I owed to it. My mind had been fertilized by it. My next play was the child of my love.”

“And what became of your lover?”

“Ah, that was the cruel part of it,” she answered, clasping her hands. “I fled that very day. I could not face him. I wrote and told him the exact truth, but he never replied, and I hope – I hope I made him despise me – and so saved him from suffering.”

There was a long pause. Then he spoke hoarsely, putting constraint upon his voice to steady it. “And has all this been repeated in my case?” he asked.

“All this has been repeated in your case exactly up to the moment you asked me if I loved you.”

“I see,” he said. Then he rose from his seat. “I see,” he repeated. He walked with bent head to the door slowly, but turned when he reached it, and looked back at her. “You cannot expect me to take this story for an answer,” he said. She looked up at him inquiringly. “So – I shall go now. But, with your permission, I will come again this day week, at the same time – and then we can discuss it.”

When he had spoken, he bowed and left the room.

She had watched him go with a sort of expectancy in her eyes, and when the door closed, she sat a moment, as if still listening; then sprang up, and followed him a step, but stopped short, wrung her clasped hands, and, throwing herself down on her chair again, sat, staring straight before her, lost in an ecstasy of glad emotion.

The week went well with her, and the day and hour found her ready waiting, in happy expectation. She had been honest with him, and expected her meed¹³⁸ of credit for that; and she had been interesting also; at least, she seemed so to herself, although, of course, she did not formulate the feeling in words. But she was utterly content. She had never had a lover like this lover, the very lover of all her dreams, a man so strong he could crush her if he chose, yet so tender and careful of her he would not inflict the smallest hurt. She wondered how the scene would enact itself. She hoped he would just take her in his arms, and not say another word – or only those happy words that lovers whisper in their ladies' ears.

The bell rang, steps on the stairs, the servant announced him, and he entered. She saw in a moment what she expected to see – that he had gone through a great mental crisis, and

¹³⁸ *meed*: a word more usually found in poetry, meaning reward or a deserved amount of praise.

had aged in the week. But he need not have been afraid, she thought, she was as sure of herself this time as she was sure of him.

He came in with his hat in one hand, his stick in the other, and bowed to her stiffly. She was advancing to meet him, but stopped short, bewildered. How awkward of him to come in with his hands full!

He sat down, still holding his hat in one hand, while with the other he slowly traced out the pattern of the carpet with his stick.

More and more puzzled, she took a low seat opposite to him, and waited for him to speak. This was not like anything she had anticipated, not so agreeable.

“I have come,” he said at last, straightening himself in his chair, and looking down at her, “I have come, as you kindly permit me, to finish the conversation we began last week. You were good enough on that occasion to reveal yourself to me from your own point of view; and I have since been considering you by the light of that revelation from my point of view.”

She stiffened into a curious stillness. When people are absorbed in the contemplation of themselves, they are apt to forget that they may be looked at from points of view other than their own.

“Your story appealed to me aesthetically; it was exceedingly well told” – this was more encouraging – “exceedingly modern also – too modern, in point of fact, for me. My tastes agree with those of a simpler, more earnest, more manly – and I may say more womanly – age, an age when love lasted because it was held to be a sacred sentiment; because men and women cherished it from profanation, and blessed God for it on their knees.”

She changed colour.

“I have no patience,” he continued sternly, “I have no patience with those posings – those playing and coquettings of our conceit – with the noblest possibilities of our nature. We love as we allow ourselves to love, love truly or not at all; for what you miscall love is but a transient ebullition of conditions mostly physical. The love that lasts is compact of all our highest qualities; it is principle vivified by emotion. Those fever-fits of passion, such as you describe, are a disease of the moral nature – the disease of natures which have departed from the principles that would have balanced them. The mood may come to us involuntarily – may take us unawares; but it can only stay and possess us if we allow it.”

“I did not allow it,” she protested indignantly; “I fought against it.”

“On the contrary,” he replied. “By your own showing, you cherished the sensation, and revelled in it. It was all a pleasure to you – all a joy – up to the moment when you found it clashing with other interests, the moment when you were forced to face the possible consequences, and foresaw that they might be unpleasant. You did not go away with the honest intention to cure yourself of your passion until you felt it would be inconvenient to indulge it. But then you went – and went with cruel disregard of the pain which you doubtless inflicted by your inexplicable conduct. When reflection began in the morning, you profess to believe that your love had gone out like the flame of a candle; then why did you fly? If you sincerely believed that your love was dead, you would not have hesitated to put it to the proof; you would have ventured to see him again.

“I do not presume to ask what answer you had ready for me this morning. But this much I must say. Suppose you had done me the honour to accept me. What guarantee would you have had in yourself to give me that the old passion would not have revived if you met the object of it again? or that, in any case, your feeling for me would last a fortnight?”

“Ah, you are hard on me,” she cried. “I do not deserve it – I do not deserve it.”

“If I wrong you, I am sorry,” he answered.

An Emotional Moment

“I would not have changed at all if I could have helped it,” she pursued. “Love comes involuntarily, and may go involuntarily also, surely.”

“It is what we hold to be possible that happens,” he answered. “We are what we allow ourselves to be. Thoughts are things, and create in ourselves and others the conditions we expect. Love is condemned to death from the moment that an end to it is foreseen; it lasts when it is cherished, when we have never been false to our faith in its continuation.”

After he had spoken, he fixed his eyes on the floor, and there was a long pause, during which she sat rigidly still.

“Thank you,” she said at last, with a little sarcastic smile on her lips. “You have done it most delicately – almost too delicately, for I might not have understood you, and that would have necessitated coarse explanations, which would have been embarrassing. However, I do understand you, perfectly. I may also say, as you did just now, that my aesthetic sense has been gratified. And” – there was a little catching of the breath here – “I don’t think there is anything else to be said.”

He rose slowly, gave her one last hard look, bowed, and left the room, closing the door behind him. Outside he paused a moment. His face was haggard and set, yet he was satisfied in so far that he was certain that he had read her aright, and had done the only safe thing under the circumstances. But – but, oh! If only she could be swept away, this woman of the strange confession. And that other woman restored to him, the ideal woman of strong and true and noble nature, whom he had loved and respected for years!

He listened. Was he hoping to be recalled?

* * * * *

When he had gone, she sat in the same rigid attitude for some time, looking towards the door. Then suddenly she threw herself back in her chair, and laughed – a horrid, hard, hysterical laugh; but her face was contorted with pain.

He heard the laugh; but the pain – he neither saw nor suspected.

From Dusk till Daybreak

First published in *ToDay: A Weekly Magazine Journal*. 22
September 1894.

This periodical, edited by Jerome K. Jerome, ran from November
1893 until 1897. It was priced at twopence.

The following text is transcribed from *Emotional
Moments*. London: Hurst and Blackett, 1908, 30-54.

OLIVIA and I were children together, but she married young, and after that we were separated for years. We met again by accident – that is to say, we found ourselves near neighbours in a lovely, lonely spot by the sea, and there we renewed our acquaintance. Her first marriage had been a wretched one, but now she was an idolized woman, leading a life which seemed to the spectator to be a perfect poem of love and luxury. She had been a charming girl, sweet natured, high spirited, frank – altogether lovable; and in appearance she was what she had always promised to become, having passed from the angular skinniness of extreme youth into the rounder grace of mature young womanhood. In character, however, there had been a falling off, and it was sad to think what the process must have been which had wrought the kind of change I observed in her. Long ago it had been good to be with her because of her equability; now she was a creature of changeful moods; one never knew from day to day, scarcely from hour to hour, what the mood would be.

She sent me an urgent request one day to go and see her. Their house stood on the edge of a rugged cliff, a landmark for ships coming into the bay.¹³⁹ I found her alone, sitting in her favourite place, outside a high chamber, on a deep verandah overhanging the sea. The time was towards evening, and the aspect of all things was melancholy in the extreme. The atmosphere had been oppressively sultry all day and now not a breath stirred. The sky was leaden grey, shot with carmine, and the sea, which looked like molten metal, reflected the ominous tints. It was an awe-inspiring combination of colour, well calculated to call up forbidding thoughts, and fill the mind with regret and foreboding. Nature comes close to us at critical times. There are moments when the great voice speaks to us in solemn sympathy, and it is well for us then if we hear and heed.

I had not been with Olivia long before I observed that her own mood resembled that of the day in its oppressive stillness. She was sitting on a low set in a languid attitude. The costly simplicity of her airy, white, voluminous, lace-trimmed draperies was eminently characteristic, and suited her as well as it expressed her taste. She held a yellow ostrich-feather fan, which she let lie on her lap, or waved intermittently. When she raised it the wide sleeve fell back from her slender arm, which shone the colour of polished ivory, as it appeared to me, silhouetted against the grey sky. When I had settled myself she seemed satisfied, and sat silent for the most part, brooding; but the mood was congenial, so I let her be, and my own thoughts wandered where they would.

Below, the sea sobbed up heavily over the rocks, like an over-laden creature, weary of work, but driven on always pitilessly. The tide was coming in by imperceptible degrees. Far away a solitary ship in full sail loomed up out of the haze on the horizon, haunted our field of vision for awhile, and then sank back slowly whence it came. The wide expanse of waveless sea heaved like a troubled breast. There was no breeze to ruffle it, no sign of life to

¹³⁹ *the edge of a rugged cliff ... the bay*: Proximity to the sea shore is a favourite setting of several of Grand's short stories; see also "The Yellow Leaf," "Eugenia," "Boomellen" and "The Turning of the Worm."

enliven it, except, by and by, a great black-backed gull¹⁴⁰ that floated towards us on the stagnant air, and hovered so near that we could see the sheen on his outstretched wings and the brightness of his eye, and hear him when he snapped his terrible bill.

“I think, if I closed my eyes, he would come and tear the flesh from my bones,” Olivia said at last, breaking the long silence, “and I almost wish he would try. It would be a relief to have to fight him.”

“This sultry closeness depresses you,” I suggested.

“It is not that,” she answered. “I have an ache here” – she clasped her hands on her chest – “an ache that would be only accentuated by a brighter day. My head is heavy and my heart is sore.”¹⁴¹

Below, the weary sea sighed sympathetically.

“I know that bird,” she said, after another pause. “He comes often, and always when things go wrong. He is an evil spirit, lying in wait for me. I see him everywhere. Once when I was riding through the village, I saw him seize a piece of flesh from the tender arm of a little child, and I struck at him, hoping to kill him with my whip. I thought he was going to turn upon me then, and fight me, but he flew off. Next day, when I was sitting here alone, he appeared again, sailing up slowly from out of the depths, and hovered about with his horrid eye upon me as long as I stayed.”

“Olivia!” I remonstrated. “How can you be so morbid? The bird is a fine creature, and you have tamed him, as you have many another of his sex.”

“He is a bird of prey, and I attract him,” she muttered, “as I have attracted many another of his sex.”

“I think you sit too often up in this eyrie¹⁴² looking out – or as if you were looking out – for something.”

“I *am* looking out for something,” she answered drearily. “I am looking out for something that does not come.”

“But surely here, in view of the immensity, on the borders of eternity, peace of mind comes? To look out is to feel that all things human are trivial and transient, and no utterance but that of the everlasting avails.”¹⁴³

“It is peace of mind I am waiting for,” she said. “It is peace of mind that never comes. ‘In view of the immensity,’ ‘on the borders of eternity,’ ‘within sound of the voice of the everlasting’ are phrases which mean nothing to me – or to any, I feel sure, but those who have conquered the inner calm for themselves.”

“The inner calm comes to every earnest soul that wearies for it,” I answered.

“Earnest! Soul!” she ejaculated bitterly. “Yet once – once –” She covered her face with her yellow fan for a moment, then sat up energetically, and pointed to the great black-backed gull. “Look at that uncanny creature,” she said. “He has come closer, as if he were listening.”

“Let me read to you,” I said, anxious to divert her.

¹⁴⁰ *a great black-backed gull*: The Great Black-backed Gull, otherwise known as *Larus Marinus*, is the largest bird of the gull family.

¹⁴¹ “*My head is heavy and my heart is sore*”: There is an echo here of the opening to John Keats’s poem *Ode to a Nightingale*: “My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains/My sense,”. *Selected Poems and Letters of Keats*. Ed. Robert Gittings. London: Heinemann, 1966, 124.

¹⁴² *eyrie*: The nest of a bird of prey.

¹⁴³ “*I am looking out for something ... the everlasting avails*”: This exchange between Olivia and the narrator recalls “And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Jesus Christ” (Phil. 4.7). There is also an echo of *Hamlet*, here: “or that the Everlasting had not fixed His canon ‘gainst self-slaughter” (*Ham*. 2.2. 131-2).

“Oh, what is the use of reading?” she answered. “What comfort or help is there in words? They never dispel the thoughts that come to confront us in such hours as these. Shall I tell you the thought that haunts me like that vulture-bird out there? It is the thought of love not given for love received, of kindnesses which were never repaid, of the share which should have been taken, but never was, in the daily round, the common task; the thought of the one on whom the extra burden fell – of the brightness that might have been brought into other lives, the little attentions that should have been paid, the kind words that should have been spoken. There were letters that were never written because one was forgetful or idle, letters which would have made whole days happy for those who received them. What would I not give to be able to bridge the gulf of years, and go back just to be kind – just to do the trifling services I neglected for my sins. Oh! believe me, it is not by the things which we have done, but by the things which we have left undone, that we are oftenest condemned to be wretched.”¹⁴⁴

She dropped the fan on her lap, leant back, looking up at the sky for a little, and then began again: “You may say that I rose to great occasions; but what of that? Great occasions are exciting and call us into action because – because we find it a pleasure to act. I deserve no credit for rising to great occasions, and find no comfort in the recollection of them, seeing that I always fail in the common, humdrum daily-round, when most is suffered, and most might be done.”

“Olivia,” I again remonstrated, “what *is* the matter to-day? I don’t believe you ever wronged a creature in your life. And you have had much to complain of.”

“You are thinking of my old false husband,” she said. “All that is wiped out. I was thinking of my young true one. If you knew how I make him suffer! He is high-strung and sensitive – the finer soul. I am a coarse physical compound; he is pure spirit. I know the difference, that is my only redeeming point. I am just near enough to him to recognise the grace of his nature. He took me away from an odious life. He found me with every fibre jarred – found me mentally, morally, physically brutalized by that man. And he *has* been patient! You have seen something of his patience. They talk about making allowance for sick people’s moods and fancies; but how few are noble enough to make allowance for a sick soul.” Olivia paused, and the sound of the sea persisted. After an interval she began again abruptly: “He brought me here, and at first my moods were awful. Sometimes I could not bear to have him near me, and I would beg him to go and leave me alone.”

“There was nothing in that,” I interrupted. “One has to be alone sometimes.”

“But he never intruded,” she rejoined, “like the other man. He always showed me the most delicate consideration, and the slightest intimation of my wishes was enough. But I was rough, and I could see that it hurt. He would come in kindness, seeing one of my moods upon me, and try to take me out of myself, and I would drive him away on that occasion; yet on the next, if he did not come, I would weep, and wail, and wring my hands, considering myself neglected. And that hurt. He never knew what to do.”

The great bird swooped below, then rose, made a wide circle, came close, and hovered again with little or no motion of his outspread wings. Olivia paused, and appeared to watch him; but I could see it was with the inward eye she saw, and the inward eye looked back.

“But all this is only a phase,” I said, “which you will outgrow. You are outgrowing it, I think, or you would not feel it so.”

¹⁴⁴“*it is not by the things ... to be wretched*”: Olivia’s sense of regret and failing mirrors some lines in the General Confession from the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer*:

“We have left undone those things which we ought to have done;
And we have done those things which we ought not to have done
And there is no health in us.”

“Oh, but I have always felt it,” she answered in despair. “If I saw him suffer I was filled with remorse; and then he would tell me it was worth it all to have me myself again but for half an hour. In a good mood, I recognized the selfishness of keeping him tied to me in the way I did, and I would make him go out, and see him off smiling and happy, and tell him to enjoy himself, and come back refreshed. I would tell him I liked him to go because I knew how glad he would be to return. But as soon as he was gone – ? Is that the wind rising?”

We listened a little, but could hear no wind. I fancied, however, that the sea was beating on the rocks below more urgently.

“As soon as he was gone, the dark mood would come stealing back,” she continued. “Dreadful doubts would assail me. Even distrust of him – distrust, well called a demon. I would wrestle with it for hours. But all the time it would be gaining upon me, a loathsome presence which blotted out all memory of his tenderness, all appreciation of his love, so that when he returned I met him – as I used to meet the other man. I had no word, no smile for him; nothing but a cold, blank countenance. Just think what it must have been! He had merely gone to please me, and he had returned eager to be welcomed back. In his absence he had thought of me as myself again; his heart had expanded in the hope that the noble task he had set himself was accomplished; that my sick soul was restored to health at last, that I should be his in perfect love, with never another evil mood between us. Oh! it hurt! It hurt! It hurt us both. I would see him ride up the avenue, looking glad, like a boy coming home; and he would throw himself from his horse, and run up the steps, expecting me to meet him as I had parted from him; and I knew he expected me, yet I could not rise to go. I used to feel the first shock of the disappointment just as he felt it, I know. Then I would feel him recover hope. He would think that I had not heard him, and come and look for me; but when he entered my room in his bright, happy way, I had no greeting for him. I could not respond. I could not even look at him. And at first he would ask what was the matter; but, later, he began to ask what he had done now, because somehow I always made him out to be in the wrong. It was cruel – cruel. I made him intensely miserable; and it was doubly cruel, because so little sufficed to make him happy. He was never exacting.

“At first he used to remonstrate, but latterly, if I received him ill, he left the room without a word; and that was the hardest to bear of all, because then I knew that he had lost hope. What hours of agony those were when I knew it only wanted a word from me to set things right, and I could not utter it – Surely the sea sounds oddly? And that horrid bird has gone!”

“It is a good omen,” I said. “So will the sickness pass from your soul – in a moment – when you least expect it.”

“Oh, if it only would, once for all!” she exclaimed. “But listen!”

There certainly was a new sound now, a singular sound, a dull booming, long drawn out, and muffled by distance. It was intermittent and irregular, like the breaking of big waves, with longer or shorter intervals between each. The last tinge of carmine had faded from the sky, and the greyness had faltered into a heavy uniform tinge only varied by the shine of the sea, in which it was reflected with depressing effect. The water looked stagnant from above, and whence the sound came we could not tell; and this heightened the sense of something brooding over all, something threatening, something sorrowful, something untoward.

Olivia was sitting upright, looking anxiously out of strained eyes, and listening.

“You should be relieved now that that creature has gone,” I said, speaking as lightly as I could. “The ill omen is over. The demon has departed. You have had your last fight with him and conquered, and now there will be no more evil moods.”

“I know,” she said. “It is likely. But still I am haunted by a horrid dread. Suppose I am punished for my moods? They say that all things come too late. Suppose I never have a chance to atone to him? If I live a hundred years, and devote every hour of every day to his

happiness, I shall not even have repaid him one half of my debt. I am aching to make up to him for all the misery I have caused him. Suppose I never have a chance? Suppose I am left here alone, and keep my senses – and I should keep my senses for my greater torment –”

“Nonsense!” I interrupted. “I cannot even suppose that he would keep dinner waiting, lest you should be worried.”

“He – no! He would do nothing that is not entirely kind. But I drove him out this morning – all in a moment – I never meant it. If only he had returned to say good-bye I should have gone with him. But this morning he did not return. I have worn his patience out. He took the yacht. I saw him sail by, and I stretched my arms out to him, and called, and called. I was in an agony. But the yacht sailed on. If he saw me or heard me, he would have stopped. If he neither saw nor heard – he may never know –”

“Nonsense!” I repeated.

“Oh, I hope so!” she wailed. “But my heart is full of foreboding –” She broke off, listened intently, then cried in terror: “Do you hear – do you hear that strange booming? It is the sea in the other bay. It sounds so always before a storm.”

Her words gave shape to my own misgivings. Already there was a change. Seabirds began to appear in numbers, shrieking gulls and piping dotterels¹⁴⁵. The stagnant sultriness of the atmosphere was stirred by little puffs of fresh air, and far out the shining surface of the sea began to be flecked into dark patches, the first faint indication of a breeze. The level grey of the sky was somewhat broken now, and low down on the horizon ribbons of lightning leapt and played about a heavy bank of black cloud which appeared to rise slowly out of the water, and then spread itself out with only too significant rapidity. The least weatherwise could see that there was wind in it. Olivia groaned aloud.

“He will be in before the storm breaks,” I said cheerfully.

But it was gathering fearfully fast, and there was not a sail to be seen, not a speck that we could hope might be the yacht.

We had both risen, and were leaning over the verandah, looking out anxiously. The ripples had spread over the whole surface of the sea by this time, and were fast being chopped up into wavelets. Then there came a breeze which fluttered our summer frocks; but it was fitful, a bad sign. It began in little gusts, scarcely perceptible at first, which lapsed and came again in greater force, as if each in the pause had gathered strength for a fresh effort. Its first light touch was a caress, but terribly soon it was striking angry blows at the sea, which rose in its wrath to resist with big waves, on the crests of which the wild white horses presently appeared, and were lashed into fury. Terrified sea-birds came bolting by with hoarse cries, making for shelter, and having a hard fight for it. Great dark masses of cloud, fantastically formed, chased each other over the sky; and suddenly one of them, while we watched, broke up into fiery streamers, which were followed on the instant by a crash. Olivia shrieked aloud. Then there was a pause, a momentary suspension of hostilities between the elements. I tried to persuade her to come in. I would have dragged her in, but she seized the rail of the verandah, and defended her right to know the worst.

Following upon that first crash of thunder came the rain, a torrent, poured out as from a sluice, with a loud rush, an insistent sound, which dominated the importunate roaring of the sea itself, and drove it from our consciousness. It was as if all creation had resolved itself into a downpour of rain. We could see nothing but a sheet of water, and that only when the servant came up and lighted the lamps in the room behind us, for beyond all was black dark, except for an occasional flash of lightning. The lights suggested an idea to Olivia. She would illuminate the whole house. She would make it a beacon, a danger-signal. And very soon,

¹⁴⁵ *piping dotterels*: members of the plover family which have a piping call. Unusually, the female birds are more colourful than the males and the males rear the chicks.

from every window lights streamed out on to the water; and all night long, at intervals, she went from room to room, attending to them, and would take no rest. She had thrown a white shawl over her white dress; thus draped, as she went her rounds or stood peering out under her hand into the darkness, muttering, she looked like a priestess performing a strange rite, with awful consequences depending upon her incantations. One would believe that she had set her will to wrestle with the elements for the possession of the treasure which they coveted.

“If only I had been with him!” that was her one cry.

Standing out on the verandah, the racket, the swish of the rain, the rush of the wind, the roar of the water, was awful. In the circle of light cast from the windows we could see the turbulent waves chasing each other, meeting with great shocks, and casting showers of spray high up into the air. One could not conceive that any vessel could live in such a cauldron; therefore, what was our horror when suddenly from out of the black darkness beyond the illumination which fell from the house upon the waters something sounded, something shone. We drew close together in our agitation. Then came the dull detonation a second time, and the shine became a bright signal which showed us distinctly a little ship running before the gale.

I grasped Olivia’s arm, fearing for a moment she would jump over¹⁴⁶.

“No,” she said, gently disengaging herself. “That is for those who have nothing to expiate. I shall suffer so much more if I live.”

There were no more signals from the ship. It passed from our ken as it had come; and at that moment the storm seemed to culminate in one wild burst of fury; after which, as if it had exhausted itself, there came a pause. The rain stopped, the lightning became rarer, the thunder rolled away grumbling into the distance; and the wild wind rent the darkness into clouds and rifts, through one of which at last there shone forth a ghastly moon, by the light of which we strained our eyes out eagerly over the hideous turmoil of battling waves; but, alas! there was not a sign of the ship, not a rope, not a spar.

Olivia sank into a chair. Up to that moment, I think, there must have been some hope in her heart; but now she sat, with rigid features, staring straight before her, benumbed by despair.

The gale subsided as rapidly as it had come on. The great storm clouds drifted away from the desolate moon. A few stars appeared, sparsely scattered over the sky. There was less energy in the anger of the sea. The waves still roared on the rocks, but they broke at longer intervals, and with a sound that diminished in volume, as if their intemperate wrath were ebbing with the tide. Moon and stars paled gradually. The dark melted out, and greyness covered the sky. Then suddenly colour came – low down on the horizon – a faint flush at first, which spread itself out rapidly into a great golden glow. It was like a burst of gladness, and before I knew it I had uttered an exclamation.

Olivia sprang up, startled from her stupor. She looked out. She was the first to see where, round the headland, across the pathway of brightness, flashing like a jewel on an agitated breast, a little white ship drove into view, gallantly holding her own, skimming over the mountainous waves like a belated bird, eager to regain its nest.

“The yacht!” Olivia cried. “The yacht! Oh, God be thanked! I know I am cured at last. I hope I am forgiven.”

¹⁴⁶ *fearing for a moment she would jump over*: Suicide, like female depression, is a recurring idea in Grand’s short stories. The narrator of “The Yellow Leaf” is concerned that Adalesa might commit suicide by throwing herself into the sea after she has been jilted by Perceval while the narrator of “A Remarkable Experience” is tempted to throw herself out of a top floor window. Evangeline, in “The Yellow Leaf” does, however, kill herself, deliberately, through an overdose of morphia.

A New Sensation¹⁴⁷

First published in *The Saturday Evening Post* USA. (30 September 1899) (Philadelphia: Curtis Publishing Co.

Subsequently published in *Windsor Magazine: An Illustrated Monthly for Men and Women* 2 (December 1899): 144-52. In this, the Christmas edition, it appears as the final story. This story is also reproduced in *Women Who Did: Stories by Men and Women 1890-1914*. Ed. Angélique Richardson. London: Penguin, 2002, 231-43.

The following text is transcribed from *Emotional Moments*. London: Hurst and Blackett, 1908, 55-86.

IT was the night of one of her famous little dinners, and she was sitting at the head of her own table, contemplating her guests. The moment was one of those, before the ice cream comes to promote thought by checking digestion, when the conversation is merriest and most intimate; and she knew she ought to be satisfied, if not amused and pleased, yet there was no feeling of satisfaction in her heart. It was all so accustomed to her, so stale – foods, fruits, flowers, lights, harmonious colours, luxurious appointments, conventional people – all that goes to secure social success; how well she knew it! and how weary she was of the monotony – the monotony of wealth, than which nothing is more stultifying.

Mere social distinction had been her ambition. To shine in society, that had been her one aim in life; to rival women, to conquer men; and everything – money, position, personal appearance – had been in her favour. Her idea had been to perk about in new clothes and trifle with men; and the idea of the men with whom she trifled had also been to perk about in new clothes and trifle with women. She counted her conquests, boasting of them to her rivals, in satin boudoirs, while her conquests counted her in to their intimates at their clubs just in the same way. Kiss and tell was the practice of men and women alike in that set. With rare exceptions they all lived lives of treachery and intrigue, breaking the sacred vows of hospitality and otherwise betraying their friends, and there was neither love, loyalty, nor satisfaction in any of them. For fifteen years she had pursued her pitiful purpose, and had her triumphs; but now, at thirty-three, sitting there surveying her guests, she was suddenly seized upon by a great distaste for the present, a terrible dread of the future. What had it profited her: so many rivals humiliated; so many men at her feet; and her costumes described in the ladies' papers? The men in her set were too easy of conquest; the women, mere butterflies of fashion and frivolity, were not worth wasting her energies upon; and it is not history they make in the ladies' papers. Yes, certainly. She had shone in her set; but she knew well enough that her set was but a small clique, quite provincial in its narrowness, and altogether discredited by honourable people both at home and abroad. So what was the use of it all? And what would be the end of it all? She had done no good in her time, she had made no name for herself. Old age would be upon her by and by; she would have to outlive youth and beauty, which were

¹⁴⁷In *WM* the title is placed in capital letters at the top of the page. "BY SARAH GRAND," is centred underneath, with an asterisk explained at the bottom of the page "*Copyright, 1899, by Sarah Grand, in the United States of America." Underneath the author's name, at the top of the page is: "*Illustrated by Frances Ewan,*" set in italics. There are five illustrations, including a full page illustration of Lady Flora and her "market gardener" (p.151.)

her stock-in-trade; she would have to descend into joyless¹⁴⁸ oblivion, courted to the last for her money, no doubt, but ending unhonoured, unloved, and unregretted.

There was a pause in the chatter. She felt she had been remiss. She should have borne her part in the conversation as hostess and not snatched that moment for reflection.

"I've been thinking," she remarked to the man on her right, "I've been thinking that I need a new sensation."

"And how do you propose to secure¹⁴⁹ such a thing?" he asked, raising his eyebrows, and languidly perusing her face, on which her life had written some tell-tale lines that he perfectly understood.

"You think it is not possible?" she said in the gentle, well-bred way that made her manners so charming.

"I think it would be difficult," he answered without emphasis, his manner, in its easy indifference, being very much the counterpart of her own.

She turned to the man on her left. "What do you think?" she said. "Have I exhausted all the pleasures of all the spheres?"

"The pleasure of being yourself can never be exhausted," he answered gallantly.

"Fatuous ass!" she thought. "I knew he would say something to that effect. Why do men expect a woman to be pleased with empty insincerities which are an insult to her intellect?" She caught the eye of a lady opposite, who asked if she had any idea in her mind; but the question was so evidently put for the sake of saying something, that she merely smiled archly in response, and the smile carried her easily over the necessity of answering.

When her guests had gone, she strolled through the empty rooms. They were decorated to excess, and reeked of luxury of the stifling kind, reflected from France. Everywhere were hangings, everywhere was silk or satin, even on the ceilings. The house was lined like a bonbon box, and it suddenly seemed to her ridiculous. She felt the artificiality, the stuffiness of it, and her impulse was to tear down the hangings and fling the windows wide open. It would have done her good to use her idle arms, to rouse herself to action, to rise to a burst of energetic enthusiasm, even if only for a moment, and expend it on wrecking the place. But there were servants about. One of them in the hall was re-arranging a curtain which had fallen away from the pillar it should have been draping. He looked at the lady as she strolled past him, but saw no sign on her placid face of the turmoil of discontent that was raging within.

She went to her own room and caught her maid yawning.

"I suppose you would be glad to go to bed?" she said, with unwonted consideration.

The woman made an ineffectual attempt to deny her weariness.

"Well, go," said the lady. "I don't want you to-night – or, stay. Give me the 'A B C.'"¹⁵⁰

The maid brought it from an adjoining room.

Her mistress turned over the pages hurriedly, then glanced at the clock. It was too late for a train that night. "Never mind," she said. "I'm dying for a breath of fresh air. Pack up, and we'll go into the country the first thing to-morrow morning."

* * * * *

¹⁴⁸ *joyless*: "the celebrated Sylvia", the aging society woman in "Eugenia" (49) is described by the narrator as "a joyless antique."

¹⁴⁹ *to secure*: "procure"(WM).

¹⁵⁰ "Give me the 'A.B.C.'": the *ABC Alphabetical Railway Guide* was first published in 1853 and, having undergone two changes of name, finally disappeared in 2007.

The next evening saw her settled at a little country inn, looking over an old, wild common into a lovely, lonely land.

She had been there once before with a picnic party in the height of summer; but she knew that the place had not been at its best then, because summer was like her own set – full-blown, that is to say, as to all its possibilities. Now early spring, with its infinite promise, was upon the land, and she had come, expecting to find that delicious spot at its freshest and fairest, and had not been disappointed.

The evening was heavenly still. She had the long, low lattice window of her rustic parlour wide open, and was lounging on the broad window-seat, with her elbow resting on the sill, and her head on her hand, looking out. The pure air held the delicate, faint perfume of primroses. It fanned her cheek in gentle gusts intermittently, and when it subsided, it was as if it had withdrawn to renew its freshness between each gust.

The tender saffron of the sunset, shading to green, lingered low down in the west. Below, to the left, was a clump of tall trees whence there came at intervals the first sweet tentative notes of a nightingale, newly arrived, and not yet in full song. Above at the zenith, out of the clear dark indigo of the sky a few white stars shone resplendent.

The nightingale! the nightingale!

As the lady sat there, it seemed as if something evil and oppressive slipped like a cloud of cobwebs from her jaded soul, releasing it from contamination, and making way for her to come into possession of her better self.

* * * * *

The next morning the sun shone on the white wonder of cherry and pear trees all in full flower. She strolled out early. Dewdrops hung on every blade and branch; birds were building; sweetbriar scented the breeze. She took her way across the common slowly, inhaling deep draughts of the delicious air; looking, listening. Everywhere was colour, freshness, beauty; every little healthy, happy creature was active and occupied; and the birds, full-throated, sang their morning songs. She picked the fragrant flowers from the yellow gorse, handfuls of them, all wet with dew, and buried her face in them, bathing it, and felt that her youth was renewed.

At the further side of the common there was a ploughed field, surrounded by a quick-set hedge, which was all aflush with green where the young buds were bursting – the children's "bread-and-cheese."¹⁵¹ She picked some of the buds and ate them in memory of the time when she was a little child. On the other side of the hedge, in the ploughed field, the rooks were busy. Three of them rose and flew away. She saw their bright, dark, glossy wings shine iridescent against the cloud-flecked blue as they passed.

"Three for a wedding!" she said to herself blithely.

Then she turned and found herself face to face with a tall young man in a light tweed suit; and, being surprised, she flushed, and dropped her parasol from under her arm where she was carrying it to have her hands free.

"I beg your pardon," he said, raising his hat. "I am afraid I startled you."¹⁵²

Then he stared into her face with a sudden intentness, as if he were taken aback, or astonished, by something he saw there; and although she was accustomed to admiring glances, she flushed again, and smiled, and looked young.

Some little hard thing hit her face, then fell on the bosom of her dress. She looked down; it was a scarlet ladybird, sprinkled with black.

¹⁵¹ *children's "bread and cheese"*: the tender, edible buds and new leaves of the hawthorn were commonly known as "children's bread and cheese."

¹⁵² *"I'm afraid I startled you."*: "I'm afraid I startled you." He stooped and picked up her parasol for her." (WM).

“That’s for good luck,” she said.

“It’s for fine weather, I should think,” he remarked prosaically.

And she was thankful for his sober prose. One of her own men would have turned the occasion to the usual kind of account with one of the usual fatuous compliments. But he was moving off with another salute.

“Stay,” she exclaimed, “stay a moment – please. Can you tell me -?”

He paused two paces from her, and looked at her with an odd expression.

“Can you tell me where I am?” she pursued. “For I did not mark my road as I came, and now I don’t see mine hostelry, and I doubt if I can find my way back.”

“Ah,” he answered, “you must pay attention when you wander among the heights and hollows of the common.”

“Heights and hollows?” she exclaimed. “I see none! Surely it is all one long level with only shallow indentations.¹⁵³”

“Not shallow,” he said, “but deep and difficult to find your way among if you are not observant. I’ve lost myself more than once. But I’m going to the inn now. If you will follow me I’ll show you the shortest cut.”

He strode on as he spoke, leaving her to follow him or not as she chose. She did choose. And as they pursued their way in silence, she wondered mightily what manner of man this was in well-cut clothes (she was apt to measure a man’s worth by the cut of his clothes), who spoke with the accent of a gentleman, and lived not so very far from town, yet was so – unexpected. That was the word. But how refreshing it was to meet one such after the sophisticated club men whose every move and mood she could foresee accurately, whatever happened.

“I am staying here; will you come in and rest?” she said when they reached the inn, acting thoughtlessly on a hospitable impulse.

“I *am* coming in,” he answered in his slow way. “I have some business here.”

“Thank you for guiding me,” she jerked out, taken aback, and flushing hotly; and then she hurried upstairs, leaving him on the doorstep. She entered her little parlour panting, and threw herself into a chair, feeling horribly humiliated.

Presently there came a knock at the door. “Come in,” she exclaimed irritably.

“I beg your pardon.” She looked round in surprise. “You asked me in?”

“Yes.” She said shortly, “and I thought you took the invitation – oddly.”

“You had gone before I could say thank you,” he answered. “You seem to be a very – sudden – lady. Or is it that I am clownishly slow?”

She looked into his honest, serious face, and broke into a smile herself, involuntarily, to which he instantly responded. “What nice teeth he has,” she thought. The physical aspect of the man pleased her immensely. He was such a splendid young animal, so strong and healthy! But beyond the mere external man – if there were anything beyond – she was unaware of it.

“If you are clownishly slow then I am shrewishly quick,” she said. “Come in now, and sit down. Do you live in this neighbourhood?”

He crossed the room in his deliberate way and settled himself on the window seat.

“Yes,” he answered; “you pass my house on the way to the station.”

“On the way from the station – there is only one house – at least, I only saw one – a great castle sort of place on the side of a hill, with beautiful gardens all about it.”

“That *is* my house,” he said absently. He was looking at her again with queer intentness. Then, as if with an effort, recollecting himself, he turned his head and looked out over the lovely landscape.

¹⁵³ *indentations*: “undulations” (WM).

Her respect for him, which had been hovering down about zero, flew up to a hundred when she heard he was the master of a house like that. The man himself she could hardly appreciate, except in the outward aspect of him; but his commercial value, his position and house and acres – those things appealed to her. There is no more commercial-minded person in the world than your fashionable lady of good birth. She would barter her own soul if she could. This one had sold herself in marriage. Her husband, now dead, was an honest old city¹⁵⁴ man, whom she had in her heart despised; but, of the two, though his manner lacked the grace and charm of hers, he had been the pleasanter person to live with.

There was a silence after that last remark, but it was one of those silences which are strangely full of meaning; and she felt that there was that in it which was of deeper significance than anything she had ever heard expressed in words. When those to whom she had hitherto been accustomed were silent, she knew they were searching their shallow pates for more material to make up into idle chatter. They were all effervescence, and cheap at that; but this was still wine, of the rarer sort. What was he thinking of? What was he feeling? How strangely still it was! A bird below in the hazel bushes¹⁵⁵ called softly, “Sip – sip – sip.” Her companion roused himself.

“That’s the lesser whitethroat,” he remarked. “I expect he has his nest down there.”

“You must show it to me,” she answered dreamily.

A small copper butterfly and a little blue one¹⁵⁶ came fluttering into the room, fighting. The copper was buffeting the blue and spoiling its beauty.¹⁵⁷

“They fight wherever they meet, those two,” he said, watching the combat. “They have fought ever since the beginning of time, and will fight on to the end, I should think. Would you believe that two such pretty creatures could be so pugnacious?”

She only smiled, but she was thinking cynically that she knew some pretty creatures of another species who were quite as bad. The butterflies, still buffeting each other, fluttered once more out into the open.

He rose. “I must go,” he said.

“You will come again, I hope,” she answered, looking up at him without rising from her chair. The oval of her face showed to advantage in that attitude, and, in the contemplation of it, he forgot for a moment to answer her.

Then he said in his slow way, “Yes, yes. I will come again, thank you. For whom shall I ask?”

“My name is de Vigne,” she answered. “Lady Flora de Vigne¹⁵⁸. Do you think it is a pretty name?”

He considered a little, and then said “Humph!” expressively. After a while¹⁵⁹ he drew a card-case from his pocket, took out a card and laid it on the table. Then he bowed and left her.

She sat still for some time after he had gone, with her eyes shut, curiously conscious of everything – the sunshine, the sweet air, the scent of flowers, the incessant “sip – sip – sip” of the lesser whitethroat in the hazel bushes below; but, above all, of the little white card on the table. Who was he, this young Knight of the Open Countenance, lord of that castle on the hill, and those fair grounds, all dappled with spring flowers?

¹⁵⁴ *an honest old city man*: “City” (WM), so affiliating her husband with the City of London,

¹⁵⁵ *A bird below in the hazel bushes ...*: “A bird called softly” (WM).

¹⁵⁶ *little blue one*: “little blue argus:” (WM).

¹⁵⁷ *The copper... its beauty*: The copper butterfly was buffeting the argus (WM).

¹⁵⁸ “*Lady Flora de Vigne*”: The name of Grand’s protagonist has similarities with Tennyson’s character Lady Clara Vere de Vere, in his poem of the same name. (See note 164). The subject matter of both works has similarities too, insofar as both are centred on bored society ladies who flirt with men of perceived lower class.

¹⁵⁹ *after a while*: “after which” (WM).

“They are his and he is – mine,” she ventured, reasoning by induction.

A little longer she rested there with her eyes shut, giving way to ecstatic feeling. Then she rose, sighed, took up the card and read: “Adam Woven Polson, market gardener.”

Lady Flora laughed. Every time she looked at the card she laughed. But not mirthfully, for she was all ruffled. It was too absurd! And such a liberty into the bargain! Really, things socially were coming to a pretty pass when a market gardener lived in a castle, looked lordly in Scotch tweed, and spoke like a gentleman. More than anything, she resented the cut of those clothes; any gentleman might have worn them. There was no telling now what sort of person one was speaking to. It was a mistake to have asked him to call again – and call again he certainly would. That sort of person is always pushing. Well. There were two ways out of it: to let him come and then order some vegetables from him, or to pack up and go.

She rang for her maid and ordered her to pack up. They would catch the evening train after dinner.

Then she strolled out into the old inn-garden, and threw herself into a chair. Above, the sky was radiant blue with great masses of snow-white cloud that drifted across it slowly, casting their shadows on the earth, and changing their shape continually. Behind her the hill rose abruptly, covered with trees. About her were bushes budding, and beds, bright with spring flowers. In front was the long, low house, and high above it, on the other side, appeared some grand old elms. There were bronze buds on the beeches. The horse-chestnuts were well out in leaf. Tufts of purple anthers hung from the slender branches of the ash. The thick, rugged boles of the Scotch firs reflected warm, ruddy lights, and their canopies of deep blue-green showed dark against the tenderer foliage of the spring. Little blue tits¹⁶⁰ flitted in and out among the shrubs, a shy bullfinch piped unseen in an undertone, while a bold thrush on the topmost twig of an elm sang out at intervals divinely. The lady looked and listened without rendering an account of anything to herself; but by degrees the heavenly peace possessed her.

What does anything matter so that we are at ease, sitting alone, untroubled, silent and satisfied? That was the first stage.

But as the day declined, there came second, when thought was suspended, replaced by an exquisite sensation of well being, a glow as of warmth and light and colour, and at intervals little shivers to delicate delight when the bird sang – the thrush, my dear¹⁶¹, the thrush!

“Unpack again, please. I shan’t go till to-morrow.” So she announced when she went in to dinner.

But for two days after that she wandered about alone, with a set countenance, in a state of indecision, restlessly. She wanted to go, and she wanted to stay – she didn’t know what she wanted. Only when she wanted to go, the birds and the butterflies, the trees and flowers and the fresh air, the outlook over the lovely, lonely land, and the blue vaulted sky above, held her enchanted; but when she wanted to stay, the sight of that little white card, which she had left lying on the table for an object-lesson, moved her to joyless mirth, and impelled her forth. Had it but been “My knight!” But “My market gardener!” Impossible! She must go. Yet why should she go? – driven away by the market gardener? Absurd! No! she would stay. She owed it to herself to put the market gardener in his place – that clown, indeed!

“I shall stay. Unpack, please.”

¹⁶⁰ *little blue tits*: “little flycatchers” (WM).

¹⁶¹ *the thrush, my dear, the thrush*: “the thrush, the thrush” (WM).

That was the final decision, and her weary maid, accustomed to her senseless caprice, for the third time patiently unpacked.

The next morning Lady Flora awoke in the grey dawn – awoke expectant, though she knew not of what. The spring was rapidly advancing. Cherry and pear trees whitened the ground with their snowflake flowers, and the apple-trees in the orchard were tinged with a delicate pink. The little birds were trying their voices softly before they burst out into the full chorus with which they saluted the sunrise. She rose from her bed and leant out of the open window. There was new life in the air, and her pulses throbbed in response to the sweetness and joy of it.

Late in the afternoon she went out, and found a bank all blue with angel's-eyes, and there she sat, sunk in sensuous delight. She took an unwonted interest now in the world about her, the exquisite world of Nature, the healthy, happy world of tree and flower and bird and beast. It was as if her eyes had been opened to behold a new heaven and a new earth¹⁶². She had never seen such a spring before, never heard such song-birds. Every day brought its change of scene; they might have been numbered each by its own new beauty. Only yesterday the buds of the beeches blushed red against the old grey boles; to-day their branches shone in the sunshine all on a sudden bright-tinted with the tenderest green. And there were more butterflies, large white and orange-tip –

She had heard no footfall, but her day-light was darkened, and she looked up – and flushed, and forgot the vegetables.

“I saw your red parasol,” he said. “At first I thought it was a flower.”

He sat down beside her, very much at his ease, yet not more so than seemed natural. Now that she saw him again, well dressed if carelessly, and noted the intonation of his voice and the grace of his manner, she could not think of the incongruous market garden – at least, she did not find it weigh with her in her estimation of the man.

He held a book in his hand.

“What are you reading?” she asked.

He answered dreamily, gazing into the blue distance as if the words were there:-

“Far flickers the flight of the swallows,
Far flutters the weft of the grass
Spun dense over desolate hollows
More pale than the clouds as they pass:
Thick woven as the weft of a witch is
Round the heart of a thrall that has sinned,
Whose youth and the wreck of its riches
As waifs on the wind.”

There was a little pause. Then she laughed her silent, mirthless laugh: “I scent something ominous,” she said. “What is that thing?”

“Swinburne. ‘By the North Sea.’”¹⁶³

She had never even heard of the poem.

“Ah! it is beautiful!” he said, and then he broke out, and half read, half recited one wonderful passage after another; and as she listened, she glowed gradually with something like his own enthusiasm.

He made little pauses between the passages – silences full of significance

¹⁶² *a new heaven and a new earth*: “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away” (Rev. 21.1): this allusion reinforces the idea that Lady Flora has the opportunity to alter her selfish way of life.

¹⁶³ “*Far flickers the flight ... ‘By the North Sea’*”: Algernon Charles Swinburne, “By the North Sea” from *Studies in Song* (1880) in *Atalanta in Calydon and Lyric Poems*. Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1901, 192-7. The poem is, effectively, a meditation on man’s relationship with the natural world.

“It is strange,” he said at last, “how this poem gets hold of one and sets up a sudden sea-hunger. Out here on the common sometimes, I am so seized upon by it that I rush on and on, I don’t know why, I don’t know where – a sort of reindeer rush to the sea.”

“You make me feel it too,” she said.

But she deceived herself. The great yearning she had at her heart was not for the sea.

Alone in the garden late that night, listening to the nightingales now in full song, she said to herself tentatively, “Adam!” And why not – Adam? What was Adam the First himself but a gardener?

The grand old gardener and his wife
Smile at the claims of long descent.¹⁶⁴

And so would she – for the time being, at all events. She would stay and play the idyll out to the end. Exactly what the end would be she forbore to inquire of her inner self. But before it came, all the trees were out of flower, and the young green of early summer was over the land. And there was no reason why it should have come to an end even then. It might have gone on for ever, had she not become impatient of the pastime. But it lingered too long in the early stage. An idyll, to be interesting, must swell up to a climax; and the climax must not be too long delayed, else the interest flags.

She saw him – saw him continually – meeting him always in the same accidental sort of way; walking and talking with him on terms of easy intimacy; satisfied with his companionship, and yet not satisfied – always expectant of a word that was never pronounced, of the climax that did not come. When would he speak? Naturally he was diffident (my market gardener!); she must encourage him delicately. And she tried, but she did not succeed. The little fashionable artifices, which never failed of their effect in her own set, all passed unheeded. When her shoe came off he put it on again for her stolidly. When her ring stuck on her finger, he prosaically suggested soap. If she appeared in a new costume, he took not the slightest notice of it – never paid her a compliment – never alluded to her personal appearance at all. Yet she often caught him looking at her with curious intentness, just as all the others had done. What was he waiting for? Why did he not speak?

At last it occurred to her that she might startle him out of his bucolic apathy by announcing suddenly that she was going away. In the restful country people seemed indifferent to change; they were content to let themselves get into a groove and to stay there for ever, if only the groove were easy. He must be roused.

The next time he came to the inn she waylaid him. It was towards evening, and they strolled out into the garden together, and sat there, side by side, not talking or thinking, just feeling the tranquil, happy beauty of the hour.

“How exquisite it is!” she sighed suddenly. “And to think that to-morrow at this time I shall be in the whirl of the great wicked city once more! I shall think – I shall long – for – all this.”

“Are you going!” he ejaculated¹⁶⁵.

Then there was a pause – that she had expected. When he did speak, it was very slowly. “I am sorry,” he said simply. “It has been a great pleasure to me – to come and see you – to talk to you. No lady – like you – had ever come into my life before.”

She rose nervously, and they began to pace the garden path together. The nightingales answered each other in the trees above, the darkness deepened, and the stars shone out.

¹⁶⁴*The grand old gardener ... long descent*: Alfred Tennyson (Lord Tennyson), “Lady Clara Vere de Vere” (1842). (*Poems of Tennyson*. London: Henry Frowde, 1904, 88.) The “grand old gardener” is Adam in the Garden of Eden.

¹⁶⁵“Are you going!” he ejaculated’: “‘Are you going away?’ he exclaimed” (WM).

He spoke again. "Before you go I should like to tell you –" he began, then paused, greatly embarrassed. "You will not think it a liberty?"

"I shall not think anything that you may have to say to me a liberty," she answered in a low voice, plucking at the laurel leaves as she spoke.

"You must have noticed how I stare at you sometimes –"

Noticed it! Her heart leaped – *my* market gardener!

"I feel," he pursued, in his deliberate way, "I feel, now that you are going away, that I ought to apologize – I ought to explain. That first day, when I saw you on the common, it struck me – the likeness – an astonishing likeness – which made it a delight to look at you. You are exactly like the girl I am going to marry – older, of course, and with a different expression; but still wonderfully like."

She stopped short, gasping – the clown!

"What's the matter?" he asked, with concern.

"Nothing – nothing," she answered.

"But you don't seem well."

"It was nothing really – it has passed – a sudden pang – unexpected, indescribable – a new sensation, in fact. So you are going to be married? Well, I hope you will be very happy. You must introduce the lady to me. And write to me sometimes, won't you? Now I must go and dress. Good-bye! good-bye!"

She waved her hand to him gaily, and was gone.

The Condemned Cell

First published in *Norfolk Daily Standard* (22 December 1894).

Sarah Grand initially sent this story, originally written as a monologue for the American actress, Genevieve Ward, to William Blackwood in 1892 for possible inclusion in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*: he rejected it in September of that year (*SSPSG* 2: 30-1).

The following text is transcribed from *Emotional Moments*.
London: Hurst and Blackett, 1908, 87-112.

THE prisoner was the Lady Charlotte Templemore, who had been condemned to death for the murder of her husband. Extraordinary efforts were being made to have the sentence commuted, but so far without avail, although her interest was excellent; the truth being that Lady Charlotte, who was a proud and self-respecting woman, as well as a handsome one, had her enemies, and numbered amongst them was a most important person to one in her position at the time, whom she had affronted by laughing him to scorn for having ventured to make love to her. People said that her trial had been conducted with indecent haste, and an unfairly early date fixed for her execution, and there was strong feeling about it in the country; but the eve of the fatal day had arrived, and all the concession that the most strenuous efforts of her friends had as yet been able to obtain for her was the granting of her one request, that she might not be importuned with kind attentions during her last hours, but left alone in peace in the condemned cell to prepare herself to meet her fate with becoming dignity and resignation. The prison chaplain had spent some time with her during the afternoon. It had been his melancholy office to prepare her for the worst, and now, as the day was darkening down, at her express desire he had risen to go. She had risen too, pale, but perfectly composed, and courteously responded to the grave salutation he had made her as he withdrew. A warder showed him out and locked the door, and as she stood there, still in a stately attitude, drawn up to her full height, with her white hands folded in front of her, she listened to the grind of the great lock in its rusty wards, the jangle and clank of the heavy keys as they swung from the warder's girdle, and the fall and echo of irregular footsteps on the flags of the corridor without until the last faint sound of them had died in the distance. Then she sank into her chair, slowly, like an automaton, and sat still a moment, gazing before her blankly, all conscious life mercifully suspended; but not for long. For all she knew, however, it might have been instants or it might have been hours since the door closed. Then, involuntarily, thought returned, and there came the inevitable "questionings of sense and outward things,"¹⁶⁶ a stammering train at first, but acquiring precision rapidly.

"Executed to-morrow morning for the murder of my husband!" was the first fragment of a sentence that took shape in her mind. "To be hanged by the neck till I die! Till I die!" she slowly repeated to herself. "It is like a dream, and yet it is more certain than anything else in

¹⁶⁶"questioning of sense and outward things": William Wordsworth, "Ode, Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood" (144-6):

But for those obstinate questionings
Of sense and outward things,
Falling from us, vanishings;

(*William Wordsworth: Selected Poems*. Ed. Stephen Gill. London: Penguin, 2004, 162)

life I ever awaited. I have always known that I must die – been conscious of the fact – but now that I know the when and where and how, it does not seem a bit nearer or more likely than it did when I was a little child playing in the sunshine. Executed to-morrow morning! To be hanged by the neck till I die! Ah, heaven!” she broke off, wringing her hands with a great convulsive sob. “Was I ever a little child? Born to be hanged! It is so unlikely an end for my father’s daughter, for my husband’s wife, I cannot believe it possible even now. I must be dreaming! But why is the awakening so long delayed?”

Again her thoughts halted, but with an effort she roused herself a little, and looked round the cell. “I used to wonder, when I read of the condemned cell and prisoners awaiting execution, how they felt. How do they feel?” she asked herself. “Dazed? No, I am not dazed. Afraid? N-no. I have felt more dread of the dentist! And I can bear pain. Pain, yes! But the surroundings? The surroundings will be horrible, the ceremony will be degrading. To think of it makes me turn cold and shiver; my cheeks blanch, my eyes feel sunken in my head, my heart contracts; but it is not fear. I could sacrifice myself without flinching, but to be executed like a common criminal –” She started to her feet. “Oh, glad am I to be alone tonight! I shall be calm to-morrow, and no one will ever know – what? This weakness? And yet I think it comes of being alone. I have always hated to be alone. It is the abomination of desolation that affects me. But see! My step is firm and light, my brain is clear. I could walk to the scaffold as coolly as I walk to that door now.” She suited the action to the word, and then turned with a smile on her lips and swept a royal curtsy of defiance to the world. “I am health and strength personified,” she pursued, when she had recovered her balance. “Nothing disturbs me physically – nothing, at least, but this curious pain at my heart that comes and goes, and it is nothing. I am young, and beautiful as some think. I may live for sixty years – I mean,” she checked herself; then added sarcastically, “I might have lived. It seems,” she sighed, “almost a pity.”

She sauntered wearily back to her chair and sat sideways upon it, drumming on the back with her fingers, and looking up at the narrow window. A clock close at hand chimed the quarter, and others followed in the distance at perceptible intervals. “The winter’s day is closing in rapidly,” she thought. “It will be dark in half an hour. Where in the universe shall I be this time to-morrow? This time to-morrow I shall know.”

She turned to the table beside her, and asked herself, “Shall I light my candle, or shall I watch the darkness gather – for the last time? How strange it seems, the last of everything! My last day is done. My last night approaches. My last twilight is here. Oh, the twilights in days gone by! the scented summer twilights – on the lawn – at home – beside the sea – brothers, sisters, father, mother – *mother!*” she repeated, with a dry sob that shook her whole frame; and then she bowed her head upon her hands, which were clasped on the back of the chair, and remained motionless for a time. The silence about her seemed to deepen with the darkness, but presently it was broken by a faint sound of music which ascended from the crowded city, and re-aroused her. Languidly she raised her head to listen. “Music in the street,” she thought. “The lamps are lighted by this time. People are crowding to places of amusement. I, the great lady who is to be executed to-morrow – the murderess – am doubtless an item of interest to many; but the world goes on as usual, nevertheless. Why should they care? Did I ever care when others were here? But how that wretched music brings back the past! I should have been dressing for the evening now, or downstairs receiving my guests. Or going with my husband to dine elsewhere – my *husband*, Great Heaven!” she exclaimed. “I had forgotten. Oh, but surely I may think of him? He was mine then – the kindest, tenderest, best.... How lonely it is!” she broke off. “O for the touch of a vanished hand, and the sound

of a voice...”¹⁶⁷ the words ended in a whimper, but no tears came. A dull sound as of hammering muffled by distance began to be audible in the cell. “How curiously things recur to me,” she recommenced. “Scraps of verse, snatches of song.... I must light my candle. The darkness chills me. What *is* that hammering?” She listened a moment, and then proceeded to light the wax tapers that had been allowed her. This done, she folded her arms, and leant back in her chair. “Yes, let me think it out,” she resumed, clasping her hands over her heart. “It will ease this terrible ache. It is not remorse. No. I would not have killed him had I been cool, I did it in a moment of frenzy. But” – passionately – “I would rather have him dead a thousand times than living to my dishonour with her. I loved him. Yes, and I love him still... my husband, but not my own. The sting is in that. I love him, but I cannot forgive him.” She sprang up with a vehement exclamation. “How that hammering distracts me! They might have let me be at peace to-night.” Again the city clock began to strike. She had been restlessly pacing to and fro, but now she stopped to listen. “Another hour, and I have not forgiven him. I must, I must before I die. Oh, my husband! We shall meet to-morrow! Why is my heart so hard?” Once more she returned to the chair and sat down. Her face was more haggard already than it had been when the chaplain left her, but the momentary excitement soon subsided, leaving her listless. “How did it all happen? Let me think.” She rested her elbow on the table, and covered her eyes with her hand. “Let me go through it all again. We were married. No one could have been happier than I was, more devoted, more thoroughly confiding, and no one apparently truer than he. But that is *why* I cannot forgive him! I thought him true, and all the time his life was a lie. How do I know? An accident. A thing that can be told in a moment. Coming home alone from church one night I saw him on in front of me. My heart gave a great glad leap, and I hurried after him. He was walking, not in his usual deliberate way, but as if he were agitated, and when I noticed that my mind misgave me – I don’t know why – and I followed him without trying to overtake him. A woman met him. He was passing, but she stopped him. I saw her laugh. She turned back with him, and they walked on together talking excitedly, she laughing always. They entered a house, leaving the door ajar, and I followed them – followed them into a room, and then the woman faced me – an older woman than I am, and handsomer. ‘Who are you, and what do you want?’ she demanded. *He* turned pale as death. ‘I followed my husband!’ I answered. ‘*Your* husband!’ she sneered. ‘Yes, *mine!*’ I cried passionately. She laughed. ‘Don’t you know my prior claims?’ she said. ‘Prior claims?’ I repeated. ‘Who are you?’ ‘His wife,’ she answered coolly. I looked to him to deny it, but he only hung his head. ‘Then what am I?’ I cried. He gave the ghost of a shrug. It was scarcely perceptible, but it was enough. The blood of generations of honoured women boiled in my veins. There was a small dagger on the table near me, a jewelled thing, an ornament, but sharp and sheathless – I seized it on the instant – I sprang – I struck –” She had risen to deliver the gesture with all the fury of ungovernable rage, and then she sank on to the chair again, holding her hand to her heart and panting. Moments of oblivion followed, but eventually she woke again. She was in court this time – a common criminal standing in the dock, but cool, and proud and self-contained, answering the judge in an off-hand way. “Oh yes! I killed him. Guilty, my lord. I offer no defence for that.” The clock struck once more, recalling her to the present. “Do I repent?” she asked herself. “Can I forgive him? No! no! a thousand times no! He deserved to die.” When the reverberation of the bells had ceased, the sound of incessant hammering grew more distinct. “What is it?” she wondered after an interval of listening. “What are they doing at this time of night? How terribly importunate the sound is! It wearies me to death. Is it real hammering, or is it the

¹⁶⁷“*O for the touch of a vanished hand, and the sound of a voice...*”: Alfred Tennyson (Lord Tennyson), “Break, Break, Break,” written as a tribute to his friend Arthur Hallam who died in Vienna in September 1833, at the age of twenty-two. (*Tennyson: A Selected Edition*. Ed. Christopher Ricks. Harlow: Longman, 2007, 165.)

throb of a pulse in my brain? Ah, I know!" she cried aloud. "I have read it somewhere. There are prisons where you hear them. The scaffold! They are putting up the scaffold." A long pause followed upon this, during which she sat rocking herself to and fro in great mental distress; but this paroxysm passed in turn, and then her thoughts ran on again. "How the hours drag! I wish it was all over." She looked about her. "How many poor wretches have already tenanted this cell? I see something scratched on the wall there." She took the candle and went to examine a legend rudely traced. "*John Smith, may God forgive me,*" she read, and then commented bitterly, "A very proper frame of mind, John Smith. *Mary Peters, for the murder of my child. I am innocent. May God forgive you, Henry Bulter,*" was the next she discovered. "Ah, and thereby hangs a tale of the world's justice doubtless," she said, as she passed on, still examining the wall. "Did she die, I wonder? Poor little Mary Peters! *L.S. – M.B. – a cross – and – I can't make out the rest. Oh, I'm so tired!*" She took the candle back to the table and sat down again. "I wonder why they carved their names on the wall? For the same reason, I suppose, that I have read them. There was a certain interest in the act. Strange how one's interest survives to the last! I shall be interested to-morrow in everything." She thought again of her predecessors. "Some of them slept, doubtless, the night before. I wish I could sleep. I *am* so tired." She yawned and looked at the hard prison bed. "It is not inviting, and the moment I lie down, such a rush of thought besets me! I suffer less sitting here." Her head sank forward on her bosom, her eyelids dropped, and sleep was upon her all unawares; a period of darkness first, but from that she passed into the shining land of dreams, and there she met her husband, and all the past was blotted out. The pained expression of her face relaxed, and she smiled a happy welcome. "Oh, sweetheart! I am so glad you have come! I have been so anxious – I have had such frightful dreams. But now that I see you again all that vanishes. A foolish, nervous little wife, you say? Yes – but, darling, I dreamt that you were dead, and – and – and – there was something" – she grew troubled – "something horrible" – her agitation increased. "Rupert! Rupert! you don't look like yourself. Why do you frown? What have I done? Who are these men? What do they want with me? Tying me!" she began to struggle frantically. "Oh, Rupert! Oh, my husband! help me! save me! They're putting a rope round my neck – they're pulling it tight. Did *you* say hanging is too merciful? You are not going to drive nails into my heart!" With a wild shriek she sprang to her feet, wide awake, and then crouched, trembling, upon the floor. "What an awful dream! My husband standing coolly by, watching the wretches strangle me. I was going to thank heaven it was only a dream, but to-morrow – to-morrow – oh, I can't die like that," she panted. "Dragged out – one woman alone – a crowd of men – their coarse hands – pinioned – blindfolded – forced forward – body and soul wrenched asunder! No, no, no!" She sprang to her feet, and tore at the door, the window, the walls, shrieking in an agony: "Is there no way of escape? Help! help! help! Save me! Don't let me be dragged forth, and tied, and tortured." She threw herself down on her knees, and appealed to Heaven in a frenzy of supplication: "Oh, God, take me now – now – now." And then the wild burst was over, and she fell forward on the floor, face downwards; and at the same moment the hammering suddenly ceased. It was some time, however, before she recovered herself, but at last she slowly rose to her feet. "What a strange stillness. Something has happened. Something is missing – something familiar – some – sound. Ah, I know. The hammering! It wearied my brain while it lasted, but now that it has ceased there is a blank, and I am lonelier. Oh, for a kind word, for a loving look – for the touch of a hand... No! I do not mean it. I chose to be alone because the word and look and touch I loved..." She tried to rouse herself out of that vein. "How cold it is! Is there nothing I can do? Write – to whom? Read – what? Let me see what there is." She went over to a chest that stood in a corner, and, opening it, began to examine its contents. "Dresses and ornaments. The authorities have been extremely courteous. Criminals are not usually so indulged. Yet, now I think of it, the dress on the occasion is often described. Palmer, the

poisoner¹⁶⁸, was faultlessly attired, and wore lavender kid gloves – the wretch! Oh, surely there is an immeasurable distance between him and me? But I will dress, too, as becomes me, whatever the occasion. What is there here? Black velvet. Black velvet is appropriate. Mary Queen of Scots¹⁶⁹ wore black and crimson. And Mrs. Brownrigg¹⁷⁰ was hanged in black satin. That put it out of fashion for years, and puts black out of the question now, too. There are criminals and criminals. But, let me see. Here are crimson, and green, and white besides. Red for the martyr's blood, green for the martyr's crown, white for the morning of God.... I'll wear the white.”

She proceeded to change her dress “What a lovely gown! Fit for a bridal! When I was married my sisters dressed me, and our old nurse. They wouldn't let a strange hand touch me. And my mother stood by, half glad, half sad, all smiles and tears together, waiting to pin my veil, and give the finishing touch – the hangman's task tomorrow. Oh, well it is you died, mother!” She was shaken by another dry convulsive sob. “If only I could weep! Will nothing soften me? Let me try to think.” She sat down on the side of the bed. “My young husband.... how his face brightened when he came to me, how glad he was when I was happy, how sorry when I was sad.... how fearful when I was suffering... how he – *pretended* to love me! *Helove!*” She jumped up, overcome by another burst of rage, and began to walk up and down excitedly. “False, false, false!” she cried, and then stopped, overtaken by a new perception – “And yet I could have sworn.... when the child came, when it was first put into his arms, and he raised the little face to his” – imitating the gesture – “that there were tears.... But bad men weep.... and yet I could have sworn he loved the child. And when it died... Oh, my God! will nothing soften me? My eyes are dry and burning, my heart is cold; I can neither weep nor pray. All feeling is at an end. Anything but this! Anything! – an agony of remorse – rage, fierce rage – a rush of tenderness – grief to rend my soul, and a passion of tears to relieve the hell that is in my head, the horror of ice that is here” – she clasped her hands over her heart. “God has forsaken me!¹⁷¹ A wicked God! I could curse Him, curse Him, curse Him, and die.”

Once more the bells began to chime the hour, and the soft, melancholy sound of one close by, reverberating through the cell, arrested her attention. She counted the slow strokes, each one of which was fraught with such solemn significance for herself; and in the brief interval, while she was so occupied, her mood entirely changed, her heart expanded, a flood of tenderer feeling suddenly overcame her, and the rage and hate and bitterness passed from her soul. She did not melt, but the burning sense of wrong forsook her, and sinking on to the hard prison chair which stood beside the table, she found herself involuntarily exclaiming in gratitude: “Dear Lord! forgive me!”

There were some letters on the table, and after this she began to turn them over mechanically, looking at them in an absent way at first, but all at once she noticed one in particular. “I wonder how I missed that. But no great wonder under the circumstances! I have been indifferent to everything since.... A strange hand, a woman's – I wonder who it can be. Posted in London on the fifth – and this is the twenty-fifth, is it not? Time flies. What a gorgeous monogram! Too showy! Gold and silver, red and royal blue. My own initials, too; now that is singular. I wonder who it is from?”

¹⁶⁸ *Palmer the poisoner*: Dr William Palmer (1824-1856), an English doctor at the centre of one of the nineteenth century's most notorious murder cases, was hanged at Stafford prison on 14 June 1856.

¹⁶⁹ *Mary Queen of Scots*: Mary Queen of Scots (1542-1587) was executed on 8 February 1587, her death warrant having been signed by Queen Elizabeth I.

¹⁷⁰ *Mrs Brownrigg*: Elizabeth Brownrigg (1720-1767) was executed on 14 September 1767 for the torture and murder of her fourteen year old servant Mary Clifford.

¹⁷¹ “*God has forsaken me!*”: This alludes Christ calling from the Cross “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me” (Matt. 27. 45-6).

She opened it with a languid indifference and began to read it, listlessly at first, and in a dazed sort of way, but all at once with a glow of emotion. The expression of her face, her whole attitude, changed. She sprang to her feet, waving the letter. She uttered a cry of joy. "Not guilty! not guilty!" she cried. "He did not know he had wronged me – he did not know – he thought she was dead – she has written it here, she has written it herself! Oh, my husband!" She threw herself on her knees and clasped her hands: "Oh, my God! forgive me!" And then at last she burst into a passion of happy tears.

"I would not live now if I could," she began to say softly, when she had recovered herself a little. "Oh, no! I shall go to him. In a little while now we shall be together again, and he will forgive me, and we shall be very happy, and it will be for ever! What a wonderful thought! He and I, and – oh yes! and the baby-boy we lost. Both – both! What joy! I can hardly bear the anticipation of it even! Yet... a blessed sense of security steals over me. Just now I thought myself forsaken, but behold the promise and the pardon. *I will not leave you comfortless.*¹⁷² The power to pray returns. I can say 'Our Father' now, as I did when I was a little child. How beautiful death is! Lord I am wayworn and weary¹⁷³; give me rest."

She had risen, and now went to the hard, comfortless-looking pallet, and composed herself upon it with a gentle expression of content on her haggard and tear-stained face that was very touching. For a little time after she had lain down her slender frame was racked by an occasional convulsive sob; but she was smiling when she closed her eyes, and so she remained. Words, thoughts, images, thronged through her mind at first. She heard her husband's voice. He called her to come to him. She saw his face. There was something between them, an obstacle to be overcome with an effort. It was a moment of painful struggle; but at last! The oblivion of darkness tenderly enfolded her; and then the dawn broke.

A rosy dawn. It flooded the bare cell. It irradiated her quiet face. It tinted her bridal gown.

All through the night it had been the duty of one of the prison officials to look in upon her at intervals and report, and always when she heard him coming she assumed her mask of proud tranquillity, so that invariably each report had been, "Awake, but quite calm," until the last, which ran, "Sleeping very quietly."

At an early hour the bell began to toll, and sheriff, under-sheriffs, governor of the prison, warders, hangman, all the dreadful party assembled with solemn and agitated faces, and entered the cell.

"She sleeps soundly," the sheriff said. "Someone must wake her."

All seemed to shrink from the task, and while they hesitated, a breathless messenger entered, waving a paper. The sheriff took it from him, and glanced at it. "A reprieve!" he exclaimed. "Lady Charlotte! You are reprieved." The chaplain had been bending over her, and now he looked up. "Yes," he said, "and released. An angel brought her freedom and forgiveness hours ago."

¹⁷²"*I will not leave you comfortless*": "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you" (John 14.18).

¹⁷³"*I am wayworn and weary*": This has overtones of a passage from ch.5 of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's prose romance *Hyperion* (1839): "I will not prolong this journey, for I am weary and wayworn, and would fain be at Heidelberg with my readers and my hero." (Longfellow's "Hyperion," "Kavanagh," and "The Trouveres". London: Walter Scott, 1887, 22.)

The Baby's Tragedy¹⁷⁴

First published in *Lady's Realm* 3 (November 1897): 187-93.

The following text is transcribed from *Emotional Moments*.
London: Hurst and Blackett, 1908, 113-42.

"THERE is nothing that brutalizes a lady like Society," she said, with an expression of disgust in the emphasis she put upon the words¹⁷⁵ impossible to convey.

She was an old north-country nurse, and her manners, when she was angry or indignant, were also apt to be – north-country.

"Now that is sweeping, nurse," I said. "There are plenty of good, gentle, kindly women in Society."

"In it, but not of it, then," she retorted. "I'll not say that that's impossible. And perhaps I should have said there's nothing that brutalizes a lady like the ambition to shine in Society; for I was speaking of the kind that make Society their god, and live for it – and die for it, too, for the matter of that, besides killing others. Oh! they're a nice lot!"

"What do you mean about *killing others*, nurse? I asked.

She pursed up her lips, threaded her needle, for she was sitting sewing in the window, making the most of the declining daylight;¹⁷⁶ and then began to work again at express speed as if to keep up with her thoughts. "I've seen some things that would astonish you," she said at last, grimly. "And heard some things, too – lies – lies that were quite remarkable. Lies and liars are ordinary enough; you don't need to notice the common run; but for something right down extraordinary and worth observing I recommend you to a Society lady on her promotion. And I tell you I know!"

"But with regard to the killing, nurse?"

"Oh – with regard to the killing" She looked at me shrewdly over her spectacles, then went on with her work, and I could see that there was something simmering in her mind by the way she kept nodding her head, so I waited patiently for it to come to the boil and bubble up into words.

"I nursed a lady not long ago," she began, as if this subject had nothing to do with the last we discussed. "She was young, and not long married; and she and her husband aspired to select circles for all they were worth. It was a baby case – a first baby; and when it was born it showed no sign of life. The doctor looked at it as he handed it to me, and I looked at it as I took it, and the same thought was in both our minds. Was such a specimen worth preserving? Wouldn't it be better to let it go? For it was nothing but skin and bone, poor mite, the frame

¹⁷⁴ In *LR*, the story begins with a half page illustration of a romanticised grim reaper, surrounded by corn and poppies, scything a handful. The title "The Baby's Tragedy by Sarah Grand" is incorporated into this illustration and this has been hand lettered. The illustrator, who has his signature in the bottom left hand corner, is B.E. Minns (1863-1937). Although he was born in Australia, he lived in England from 1895 to 1915 and contributed to many English periodicals, including *Punch*, *The Strand Magazine* and *The Idler*. His pro-suffrage views are apparent in his 1891 cartoon *Just out of reach*, published in the *Women's Suffrage Journal*. "The Baby's Tragedy" has no other illustrations although at the end of the story an H.S. Mendelssohn photograph of Sarah Grand, with her signature underneath, is reproduced. The same photograph is used opposite the title page of *Our Manifold Nature*.

¹⁷⁵ *she put upon the words impossible to convey*: "she put upon the words, impossible to convey" (*LR*).

¹⁷⁶ *the most of the declining daylight; and then began to work again*: "the most of the declining daylight – and then began to work again" (*LR*).

of a child, just enough covered to keep it together. However, doctors and nurses don't have to exercise their discretion with regard to helping folks up to a happier world when they're better fitted for it than for this; our business is to keep them here, whether for joy or sorrow; so we took the poor little chap in hand and smacked him and rubbed him till his little lungs began to work, and he set up a feeble wail. I didn't dare to dress him, for the life in him was flickering all the while like a fire when it's near upon out, and the less you stir it the better. So I just wrapped him up in cotton wool, and laid him on a pillow, when I'd washed him; and then I stood looking at him a little, wondering why he was so emaciated, for he had the frame of a fine child, and there was no disease to account for his feebleness; his parents seemed healthy enough too, and it was just for all the world as if he hadn't had fair play.

"While I was looking at him and considering, he opened his eyes – big, soft, dark eyes they were, and strangely intelligent; but oh! so weary! You'd have thought the child was exhausted at its birth by some terrible task. He looked up at me, and seemed to see me, and to be asking me to help him.

"'You pretty thing,' I said; 'I'll do my best for you. You'll not have to complain if I can help it.'

"The doctor came up just then and looked at him too. 'What a pathetic little face,' says he; 'one would think he's had some great sorrow that's grieving him still.'

"'He's sad and sorry, then, to have been brought down here, away from the other little angels, a dear,' I says, talking baby talk to him; 'but *we'll* do our best for him; *we'll* make it up to him; and he shall grow a big, strong man, he shall, I promise him!'

"'He'll need some building up, my word!' said the doctor; 'but I think he was cut out for a healthy child. What a pity the mother won't nurse him.'

"'Isn't she going to nurse him?' I exclaimed. 'Oh, the brute!'

"'Hush!' he said. 'You just keep your tongue quiet, and be as civil as you can, for the baby's sake; and you'll make as pretty a case of it as any you've ever dealt with yet. But go easy with the milk at first, you know. Three parts barley water to one part milk.'

"'Thank you kindly for teaching me, doctor,' I said sarcastically.

"'But he went off smiling, for he knew me well. We'd brought many and many an apparently hopeless case safe through together.

"'When I'd done all I could for the baby, I turned my attention to the mother. I was bothering about what I should say to her when she began to rouse up a bit, and ask questions about the baby, as they do, for the purpose of hearing you praise it. And what do you suppose was the first question she asked, speaking in a little lisping, simpering sort of way, as if she were an infant herself: 'Nurse,' says she, 'do you think my figure will suffer at all?'

"'Why should it?' I said.

"'Some people's do, you know,' she lisped. 'But I've been *so* careful' – you'd have thought she was diffidently mentioning a highly meritorious act. 'Do you know, you could hardly have suspected there was anything the matter with me the whole time. I was very much afraid I should have to go about looking as dreadful as the poor dear Duchess of Pierrepont; but I really did manage to escape that fate.'

"'And how did you manage it?' I asked.

"'By great self-denial,' she replied, in a silly, affected, fine-lady way. 'I assure you I scarcely ate anything. I used to go all day long sometimes on a cup of black tea and a piece of dry toast.'

"'Well, you can imagine that that made me snort!

"'That accounts for it, then,' I said. 'You're a nice young woman to be a mother! But it's not yourself that's suffered, for you're as fat as pork; it's your baby. You've been starving him to death all the time to keep down your figure.'

“Oh, nurse, how can you say such *shocking* things?’ she cried. “As fat as pork” – I assure you I’m not accustomed to such coarse expressions – and the poor little baby! You know that’s not true.’

“Indeed, then, it is,’ I grumped. ‘But you can make up for it now by nursing him’
“Oh!’ she interrupted; ‘don’t *mention* such a thing! You will make me quite ill if you agitate me. Just think how I should be tied! Why, I should hardly be able to go anywhere for months. No! That is quite impossible!’

“She kept still for a little time after that, and tried to look as if she were suffering from the shock of the bare suggestion; but presently she perked up again. ‘Do you know, nurse,’ she began – ‘Do you know?’ was their word in Society just then. They only have one at a time, and it has to serve ‘em all for everything; and ‘Do you know?’ affectedly drawled, was on duty that season – ‘Do you know, nurse, my waist is only nineteen inches.’

“Well, you can’t help it, I suppose,’ I said, in as pitying a tone as I could command. ‘You might pad, though. When folks are deformed, I’d always recommend them to hide it.’

“I don’t know what you mean, nurse,’ she said in an offended tone.

“Why, you told me your waist was only nineteen inches, didn’t you?’ I says. ‘Well, for your height and build it ought to be twenty-seven; therefore, you must be deformed.’

“My husband admires a small waist,’ she said huffily.

“There’s no accounting for taste,’ I rejoined. ‘But there’s two kinds of taste, good taste and bad taste.’

“And persons in your position must rely upon us to tell them which is which, since they cannot be cultivated enough to judge for themselves,’ she interrupted in a tone of reproof.

“I laughed at that, but I said no more, for I didn’t think her worth wasting words upon. Nor her husband either! My word! They *were* a pair, those two! You should have seen him getting ready for church on¹⁷⁷ a Sunday. They were great on church, both of them, and before he went, he’d always come in to show himself.

“Am I all right?’ he would ask in the most affected drawl, and then he’d turn slowly round for her to inspect him, and shake out his shirt cuffs, and perk up his collar, and look complacent; and she would look him up and down most carefully.

“Dear, do I smell *violette*?’ she exclaimed on one occasion, pronouncing it in the French way as if to make more of it. ‘You know it has quite gone out.’

“He smelt his pocket-handkerchief. ‘By Jove!’ he said, ‘it is *violette*. That’s my man again. He must have left some in one of the bottles. It is lucky you noticed it. I’ll get another handkerchief.’

“When he returned, he drawled out: ‘Shall I do now, dear?’ and she drawled back: ‘Didn’t you wear that tie last Sunday, dear?’

“He looked at himself in the glass. ‘By Jove! I believe I did,’ he exclaimed, as if it were quite a serious matter. ‘I must go and change it. I shall be late, I’m afraid, but it can’t be helped.’

“It is white for to-day, you know,’ she reminded him. ‘Fancy, if you’d gone in a colour!’

“They were somewhat High Church, those two, I can tell you!

“You’d have thought a young father going out to worship would just have glanced at his little son before he left; but not he! His last look was at himself in the glass; and when he’d gone, Dolly Dumpy – that was my name for my lady – said to me in her little simpering way, getting on like a child: ‘Isn’t my husband a well-dressed man, nurse? Perhaps I oughtn’t

¹⁷⁷ “on a Sunday:” “of a Sunday”(LR).

to tell you, don't you know; but it has been said that we are two of the best-dressed people in Society.'

"I pursed up my mouth at that. I never could be civil when she got on with such nonsense.

"Nurse,' she said plaintively, 'do you know you are very unsympathetic?'

"No, I didn't,' I growled, for I knew if the baby could speak he'd have had a very different tale to tell, poor little chap! Day and night I'd been up with him ever since he was born, and you'd have thought he knew and appreciated all I was doing for him, for he'd fix his big, dark eyes on me for all the world as if he were thanking me every time I fed him; and he was really coming on wonderfully, considering – slowly, of course; but still, I'd managed to get him into some of his little clothes. I had to go gingerly about the dressing, though, for the tiny flame still flickered.

"Nurse,' his lady mother said to me one day quite peevishly, 'why do you never dress baby in any of his pretty dresses? I have the loveliest things for him.'

"I daresay,' I said dryly. 'You'd pay attention to that department, I'm sure.'

"I do not understand you, nurse,' she replied, annoyed. 'I really must speak to the doctor about you. You are so – so very – abrupt.'

"She was afraid to say rude, for I kept her in order, I can tell you; but rude she meant.

"He'll thank you for nothing if you do, then,' I said; 'for he knows what I am, right enough.'

"Yet he recommended you very highly!' she observed.

"Not for my manners, then, I'm sure,' I chuckled.

"But I was in rather a good humour all the same, for the baby was really doing well, and only that morning the doctor himself had said, 'So far so good.'

"Later on that day I was feeding the baby, when his father came in and looked at him, as if he had a distaste for him. Then he began to walk up and down the room, shooting out his shirt cuffs, and examining his finger nails alternately, as if they were mixed up with some trouble he seemed to have on his mind.

"That child won't do, you know, nurse,' he said at last, in a tone of disgust. 'I couldn't show a child like that to any of my friends. The Duchess of Pierrepont wished to see it only today, and I was obliged to say you had taken it out. It won't do at all, you know, like that. You must really feed it up properly, and make it get fit to be seen. Give it some good strong beef-tea, you know, and cream, and all that sort of thing to fatten it. It *must* get on quicker.'

"Did you say beef-tea, sir?' I asked very politely. 'You seem to understand a baby's diet, and it's a credit to you at your age.'

"At that he took himself off into the next room where his lady was, and I heard him say: 'That old woman is quite unendurable you really must¹⁷⁸ get rid of her.'

"Oh, but, dearest, there's nobody like her for bringing one right again,' she answered in a frightened tone. 'And what would the old doctor say? You know'

"If you don't want me to know all about it, too, please shut the door, one of you,' I interrupted, 'for I can't leave the baby.'

"Then there was a silence for a little, and then they began again, and whispered for a long time.

"The next morning my fine young gentleman father came swaggering in, and announced that he wasn't satisfied with the progress the child was making, and he and its mother had determined to have further advice, and had sent for Mr Towny-Bing.

"Oh!' I said. 'Has Dr Coleburn consented to meet him in consultation?'

¹⁷⁸*must*: italicised in LR.

"I was surprised, because Dr Coleburn had said right out that Dr Towny-Bing was an ignorant outsider, and had always refused to meet him hitherto.

"We – ah – have exercised our own discretion in the matter,' he answered grandly – which I found afterwards was another way of saying that they hadn't had the politeness to mention the matter to Dr Coleburn at all.

"Dr Towny-Bing was a youngish, flashy sort of man, much in request by Society people, and quite the fashionable doctor just then. He came in as if he had too much consideration for a delicate lady's nerves even to disturb the air about her if he could have helped it; and I could see at once that he was the sort to be much more taken up with the smart young mother than with the suffering babe.

"And what are we doing for the darling?' he asked.

"I told him – shortly.

"Then he followed me into the corner where the baby was, and his manner changed completely as soon as the door was shut. The mother was too elegantly posed on the sofa to accompany us; she was afraid of spoiling the picture if she moved, I believe.

"Oh, that's it, is it?' the doctor said, just glancing at the child. 'Hum – ha – yes. You must put it on pure milk, nurse, with a dash of cream in it, you know.'

"You're not in earnest, doctor?' I said, really thinking for a moment that he was jesting.

"Why not?' he rejoined, in a familiar, facetious sort of way he had with the nurses. 'I must prescribe something.'

"Well, I suppose you'll take the responsibility,' I said. 'The child is doing very well on his present diet, and I'll not countenance any change.'

"My good woman, you're here to hold your tongue and do as you're told,' he replied; 'and I'm here to advise, and not be dictated to.'

"Then he put his other manner on and went back to the parents, and talked to them for half an hour about Lord this and Lady that, till I thought he'd never have done.

"On the way out, he said to the father: 'You'd better see that the little man does get his milk pure. She's an obstinate old thing, that nurse you have got, I am sure.'

"At that my temper rose – all the more, perhaps, because I deserved to be suspected, for I'd just been making up my mind to disobey the doctor, which is a capital crime for a nurse to commit; if they find you out, you get no more work from 'em. But upon hearing that, I thought to myself I'd obey him right enough, and see that he got full credit for the consequence.

"When he'd gone, I noticed that my young mamma had perked up, and was uncommon lively.

"Give me the hand-glass,' she said, 'and the dressing-tray.'

"I gave them to her, and she had a happy time titivating herself with a little cold cream here and a little powder there, and fondling her curls. When she looked at herself in the glass there was love enough in her face to console half a dozen motherless bairns.

"But Dr.Towny-Bing had not long gone when Dr.Coleburn came to pay his usual visit.

"I find that you have been having other advice for the baby,' he said at once severely to the baby's father; for Dr.Towny-Bing had been cute enough to let him know that he'd been called in to see one of his patients.

"Ah – yes,' the father drawled. 'We – ah – thought you would not mind – son and heir, you know – parents naturally anxious. And the child is such an object. We – ah – wanted another opinion just to see if anything else could be suggested – two heads, you know. We meant to tell you. Dr.Towny-Bing would have preferred to have met you in consultation. He advised a more generous diet for the child.'

“Oh, indeed!” said Dr. Coleburn dryly. “Well, I merely came to tell you that I wash my hands of the case. Good-morning.”

“He came through the nursery on his way out, and stopped a minute to look at the baby; and I could see he was sore from the slight that had been put upon him, for he was the old family physician, and had done a lot for them all.

“What am I to do, sir?” I said.

“What should you do but obey?” he answered gruffly. “That’s all a nurse can do.” Then he turned to the baby. “Poor little morsel!” he said, and pursed up his mouth. “Well,” he went on, “perhaps it’s all for the best. I think I could have made a man of you, but – well, well!” Then he lifted his hat, and looked up through the window at the sky. “Good-bye, baby,” he said. “Till we meet again!”

“He was an old man, remember.

“My lady’s mother came in that afternoon. She was of the fashionable kind, too, and a stoutish person, who made great play with a scent-bottle, and wore stiff silks that rustles like a wheat-field in a breeze. And she was as tight in her clothes as a gooseberry in its skin. I used to be always wondering just where she’d burst out of them, for I never felt they were safe to contain her for long.

“They had none of them the least gratitude, these people. When the mother heard how her ‘children’ had acted with regard to the old family physician, she congratulated them on their good sense.

“Really I think you were very wise,” she said. “Dr. Coleburn is quite antiquated. I’m sure he’s worn the same hat for the last ten years. And nobody who is anybody calls him in. Now, I expect, the dear baby will begin to thrive.”

“When I took the ‘dear baby’ his first bottle of pure milk – and the grandmother stood over me the whole time to see I played no tricks with it – he looked up at me in the pretty way he had, as if he were thanking me. But a very little time after he had swallowed it he began to whimper, and when I went to him he looked up at me again, but with such a pained expression in his big, soft eyes, it went to my heart. If he had reproached me in words, I could not have felt it worse.

“The child had a bad night, and when the doctor came next day, I said as uncivilly as I could: ‘Are we to go on with the pure milk?’

“Certainly,” he replied. “It¹⁷⁹ will naturally feel the change at first. But you must persevere.”

“At the end of the week I said to the mother, her own mother being present: ‘Have you thought of having the baby christened?’

“Why, of *course*,” she said, in a shocked kind of tone. “I’ve been thinking a great deal about it – and whom to ask. He shall have the loveliest christening robe; and my own gown –

“I’d give up all idea of a party, if I were you,” I interrupted bluntly, “and a christening robe, and a gown for yourself, and just have the baby christened quietly at home; and the sooner the better.”

“Nonsense, nurse!” she exclaimed. “Did you ever hear of such a thing, mamma? Why, it will be quite the christening of the season¹⁸⁰. We couldn’t possibly give it up.”

“There is not the slightest necessity, I am sure,” the old lady said in a haughty way, as if I had taken a liberty.

¹⁷⁹*It*: “The baby” (LR). The impersonal pronoun in *EM* strengthens the idea that Dr Towny-Bing is not particularly interested in the child.

¹⁸⁰*christening of the season*: “christening of the Season” (LR).

¹⁸¹Baby no longer lifted his pretty eyes to mine as if in gratitude while I was feeding him. When I put the bottle to his lips he used to moan feebly, and move his little head away, as if to escape from something hurtful. 'Why can't you let me go in peace now that you have done your worst?' he seemed to say.

"And at last, one morning, when the doctor came, he found the little fellow lying with those eyes of his wide open and fixed; and a far-away look in them, as if he saw something beyond reach of our mortal vision – something that was full of happiness and hope; and when I saw that expression in his face, I looked up at the doctor and laughed – and I don't think I laughed agreeably, judging by the way he changed countenance.

"'We'd better have a wet nurse, I think, for this young gentleman, if we can get one,' he said to the father. 'He is not doing as well as he did at first on the change of diet. I would advise you to get a wet nurse without delay.'

"Well, that young man spent the whole day hunting for a nurse, and found one at last who consented to come as a favour for a sovereign a day, if she might bring her own child. She said she'd enough for both, as indeed she had, even if our baby could have sucked. But he was beyond that by the time she arrived. We gave him a little in a spoon, but we could scarcely rouse him to take it, and the greater part trickled out of his mouth.

"Then I called my lady's mother aside, and I said, 'Do you want the child christened or do you not?'

"'Nurse, don't speak to me like that – how dare you?' she cried, stamping her foot – she was an imperious old person. 'You are quite rude. What do you mean?'

"'I mean if you want the child christened before it dies, you'd better have it done at once,' I said.

"'Dies!' she shrieked. 'What are you saying, woman? Why, it's most important that he should live. He's heir to a great fortune. And after all we've done for him too –'

"'It does seem ungrateful,' I said.

"Then she got on in such a hysterical way, going down on her knees to implore me to save the child, I lost all patience, and just told her what I thought of her, and her Mr. Towny-Bing, and the whole lot of them. The daughter came in in the middle of it, and began to carry on too; but I stopped that by insisting that the child must be christened at once. So she went the first thing to get out the christening robe; and she was mad with me because I wouldn't put it on; but she got some comfort out of changing her own dress. She never went near the baby. It was dark night by that time, and they sent for a parson, the Highest Church parson they could get, and for flowers and candles, and the whole paraphernalia to fix up a sort of altar for a fashionable christening; and they also managed to get together a few influential friends. They were wonderful people, those. They thought of everything but the child.

"When all was ready, I carried him in myself on the cushion which had been his bed of weariness and pain ever since his birth, poor little chap! I had covered him up, all but his little face, with a white lace veil; and out of that he looked his last upon the earth¹⁸². When the ceremony was over, his big dark eyes were wide open still; but the sad little soul that had looked out of them at things beyond reach of our mortal vision had gone back again to join its little playmate – angels on the other side."

The old nurse paused for a while.

"It may be that a great man was lost to the world when that child died," she resumed; "and one for whom his lady mother would have been proud to have sacrificed herself for a few months had she known – for I never saw a child like that child, so eloquent, though it was only with his eyes he spoke; and so sweet natured, too, or I'm much mistaken. However

¹⁸¹*Baby*: "But Baby" (LR).

¹⁸²*earth*: "world" (LR).

– perhaps old Dr. Coleburn was right. He was better away from such a crew. Before the little body was cold, his father was grumbling about the sovereign he had to pay the wet nurse for nothing, as he said, and haggling with her about her travelling expenses – him that boasted he never smoked a cigar that cost less than a shilling.¹⁸³ And since I left I've been told that he and his wife have been exciting sympathy by telling their friends that they lost their darling babe in consequence of the shocking way the nurse and doctor slapped it when it was born. Oh! talk about lying and meanness – to mention nothing else¹⁸⁴,” the old lady added, with a twinkle in her shrewd, bright eyes.

¹⁸³ *less than a shilling*: “less than a shilling!” (LR).

¹⁸⁴ “Oh! talk ... *nothing else*”: not in LR.

She was Silent.

She was Silent.¹⁸⁵

First published in *Lady's Realm: An Illustrated Monthly Magazine* 1 (November 1896): 241-9.

This story appeared in the first edition of *Lady's Realm* which was published from November 1896 to October 1914.

The following text is transcribed from *Emotional Moments*. London: Hurst and Blackett, 1908, 143-70.

THEY were old friends, she and he, sitting together over the fire one afternoon in the depth of winter. Outside there was snow on the ground, and from where they sat they could see bare brown branches silhouetted against a crimson streak of sky, low down on the horizon; for the sun had set, but the colour still lingered, like a happy flush brought by a kiss to a pale cheek, and left there burning.

They had been silent a long time – she looking out from her seat by the fire, with large eyes dilated, seeing nothing; he watching her. They were not lovers; there had never been any question of love between them; but there was that sympathy without criticism, that comprehension and toleration of each other's faults and failings, that strong affection and living interest in each other's experiences without which there is no true companionship, but with which friendship is as nearly perfect as any relation between a man and a woman, short of the nearest, can be.

“What is it, Aldah?” he said at last.

“What is what?” she answered, with a faint smile, rousing herself.

“This obsession. Where were you just then, and with whom?”

“This obsession?” she repeated. “Thank you for the word. I am glad to have it. I wonder it never occurred to me. I wish it had. Then I should have understood.”

She clasped her hands round her knee, and looked into the fire, pausing a moment before she took up his questions categorically, like a practised debater; he waiting the while, knowing her habit.

“I was in more places than one – in a garden in the sunshine – then out beyond, sitting on the grass, short, soft, mossy grass, sweet with thyme; and the world was a hundred miles away, or might have been, for all that could be seen of it through the gorse. It was a heavenly solitude, and the sun was sinking. Long shadows of the trees stretched out towards the east. Two strong poplars beyond the hawthorn bushes, standing close together with arms interlaced like happy lovers, whispered their eternal tale to each other, although there was not a breath of air to stir a leaf. And a bird sang.” She shut her eyes, and smiled. “Then I was walking beneath old trees,” she resumed, “down a long aisle, and the crescent moon, the colour of burnished brass, hung in an amber sky. The sun had set by that time.”

Her friend had listened intently, with his eyes fixed on her face. He looked like one deeply engaged in solving a problem.

¹⁸⁵ In *LR*, the title is set in capitals and incorporates a picture of Aldah and her old friend, sharing the story. “BY SARAH GRAND” appears prominently beneath the title. It is illustrated by Ernest Prater.

“How long had you known him?” he asked, when she stopped again abruptly.

She laughed and changed colour, a trifle disconcerted. “I did not say that there was anyone with me,” she began.

“No,” he interrupted, “nor did you say that you were alone; therefore, I knew that you were not. And, further, I am sure that you did not obtain on a sudden this new and radiant view of Nature¹⁸⁷ under any old-accustomed influence; neither did it come to you spontaneously. It is by great joy that our eyes are opened. It is in ourselves that the spark is first fired which, when it flames, illuminates all things, and shows us the earth in its glory. We are sanctified then with a baptism of fiery feeling, and our companion is an angel.”

“Ah!” she exclaimed. “You have been there too!”

“Well,” he said slowly, “I confess – I confess that I have seen a sunset, heard the poplars whisper, heard a bird sing, and wandered beneath old trees when a crescent moon hung in an amber sky; and there I learnt the language. How long had you known him?”

A great gravity settled on Aldah’s face, the clasp of her hands tightened round her knee till the knuckles shone white; her eyes, fixed on the fire, dilated once more slowly.

“You are letting yourself go again,” he said. “Come, tear yourself away, and tell me.”

With a great effort she roused herself, folded her hands loosely on her lap, and sat up. “Ah! why have you called me back?” she sighed, “back from the sunshine to the snow.”

“It is time to return,” he said, “or you will go too far. Now pull yourself together. I want you to tell me,¹⁸⁸ you will never shake off that obsession till you do.”

There had been a faint flush on her cheek, which suddenly went out, leaving it pale with the opaque paleness of a fading flower.

“There were several of us,” she began, “staying together in a little paradise, a heavenly oasis of flowers in a lovely wilderness; and it was all, oh, so remote! the kind of place where Nature surprises us in all her strength and beauty and makes us natural. We were congenial friends, all happy in that we each had our chosen work as well as ample leisure – and he was coming to complete the party – so I understood, for I did not know him. The others did. And I heard them mention him, quote him, include him in their plans; his name was for ever upon their lips; yet never enough was said to make me feel any special interest in him. I knew there was a nice man coming, but had not speculated upon what manner of man he might be, nor asked a single question about him. He was coming, and then our party would be complete; I knew that, but never suspected how complete – to me.

“I was in a curious state just then, a state of numbness, a dull, heavy, hopeless state, without pleasure and without pain. I could see things were good or bad, ugly or beautiful, but I could not feel it. I was indifferent to everything. These phases come to me at times –”

“I know,” her companion interjected; “they come wedged in between two states of feeling.”

“Yes,” she acknowledged after a moment’s thought; “they are the reaction, perhaps.” She reflected a little, and then proceeded: “The day he came we had rowed across a little lake there was not far from the house. We were going to picnic on the other side, and sent the boat back to wait for him, in case he should arrive in time to join us. We had camped on the side of a hill in a grove of pine-trees. The air was sweet with their fragrance. Close by, a clear stream flowed over mossy rocks, descending in mimic waterfalls to the lake, and keeping up a cool murmur as it went, that mingled soothingly with the rustle of leaves and grass. I sat beside the stream, alone in my numbness, and the others kindly let me be, knowing my mood. But by and by they called me: ‘Aldah! Aldah! come to lunch – though you don’t deserve any, for you haven’t earned it by doing a thing – we bestow it in charity, merely.’”

¹⁸⁷ *Nature*: “nature” (LR).

¹⁸⁸ *to tell me, you will*: “to tell me. You will...” (LR).

“‘Then I accept it,’ I answered, ‘but only on your account. It is more blessed to give than to receive.’

“I was dabbling in the stream as I spoke, and when I had done, I strolled towards the others, wiping my hands on my handkerchief.

“They had spread the cloth on the ground, and set out a pretty luncheon upon it, and lighted a fire of sticks at a little distance to boil the kettle.

“‘Come! come! come!’ they cried impatiently, ‘and you shall display your one accomplishment, and make the coffee.’

“As I approached, a strange man, who was sitting on the ground, looked up at me – looked into my eyes intently.

“‘This is Strawne,’ someone said by way of introduction. I think we neither of us bowed, but just prolonged that look another instant. Then I sat down and the party was complete. We were two and two now. I had been the odd one before.

“He was a short man, and close shaven, with a good, strong face when you came to know it, yet not striking in any feature at the first glance, except the eyes, which were between blue and grey in colour, and not large, but bright and magnetic. And his voice was remarkable. There is so much in a voice. Some people come into a crowd and nobody notices them until they speak; but then, at their most trivial utterance, everyone looks up with interest. His was that kind of voice, and it not only compelled attention; it pleased. It had that sympathetic ring in it without which there can be no great charm or beauty in a voice. He was silent at first, but when at last he spoke, I looked up at him again involuntarily; and then I saw something in his face that – that irritated me. Yes, it is very curious. That first feeling I experienced was one of resentment. But even that was better than numbness.

“The next day it rained, and the damp made it chilly, so we had a wood fire in the drawing-room, and I was sitting over it alone before luncheon when he came and found me; he took a seat on one side of the fireplace, and faced me as I sat right in front of the fire.

“‘Are we the only fire-worshippers?’ he said. I smiled. But words and smile meant nothing. They were the mere conventions of the situation. Emotion at the outset is written in hieroglyphics, difficult to decipher, on the lines of the face; and it is only when it culminates that the tongue is loosened. As we talked we gazed at each other, searching for something we had no word to express, no time to define; pleased, interested, baffled. I do not know what we talked about, but I began to feel at a disadvantage with him¹⁸⁹, and became embarrassed, so that it was a relief when the rest of the party joined us, and I could turn away from him; but although I talked to someone else, and without looking at him, I was more conscious of his presence than of the person I addressed. We were the subjects of the picture, as it were, the others were the details, each of which had a special interest for me, but the interest was subordinate.

“That night in my own room, when I opened the lattice wide to have a last look at the stars, I was smiling. The numbness had vanished as if by magic, and now I was in the first stage of a delicious stupor, sensible enough to know it, yet too far gone to question the why and wherefore, or to care.

“Next day the sun shone, and the green bosom of the earth, refreshed by the rain, rose in response; bees buried themselves deep in the scented petals of flowers; butterflies, rich in metallic tints, hovered around, and the birds sang – the birds sang divinely. I never knew what liquid music was until the blackbird warbled down in the little wood at sunrise, and the lark dropped pearls of sound from the sky; but it was the thrush that seemed to say things, only I could not catch the words.

¹⁸⁹ *a disadvantage with him: “a disadvantage, somehow” (LR).*

“Through the heat of the day we all of us loitered about the lawn lying in hammocks, reclining in long chairs, smoking cigarettes, conversing fitfully, easily, delightfully. Books were brought out to read a poem, to look up a date, to find a fact, to finish a quotation, and were left lying about on the grass, the chairs, the little tables, ready to be referred to at any moment, as you see them wherever books are read and loved, not merely looked at. But after tea, when the sun was declining, we began to be more energetic, and some went walking, and some went riding, and he and I were left together.

“‘Let me row you across the lake,’ he said.

“So I got into the boat, and he took me to the other side, where the wooded hill is steep, and the stream comes babbling down over the moss-grown stones in mimic waterfalls, and the air is sweet with the balsamic fragrance of the firs; and there we sat.

“All day long we had said little to each other; but our friends had grown more and more blurred in outline, until at last they were only as shadows in the picture, and we alone were distinct. But here, in this lovely, lonely spot, we felt a fellowship with the babbling water, the bird-voices, the radiant atmosphere, the precious odours of earth, all balm and healing, and the healthy, happy creatures; being near to Nature¹⁹⁰ at that moment these things counted for much, and are not to be forgotten.

“But what we talked about I cannot tell you, only I know that each in turn struck the personal note which is called egotism in the uncongenial, but confidence between friends.

“Next day we wandered off together again, but in a different direction, and when we had seated ourselves on the grass in a shady nook, he looked at me a little with smiling intentness.

“‘Did you sleep last night?’ he asked.

“‘No,’ I answered, and reddened at the confession.

“‘Neither did I,’ he said, with a little laugh, as if he were satisfied.

“Then suddenly there seemed to come a change in our relations. The delicious stupor had remained upon me until now, but that was a transition state. Now he was rousing me; he was calling me back to life, and oh! the return was painful! I ceased to be at ease with him. It was as if I were posing all the time, and could not help it. I told him so once, and he smiled enigmatically, and said something about a struggle with myself, which put me to shame and silenced me. At first¹⁹¹ the days were a dream, the nights a passionate protest; but that changed by degrees to a vague, delightful longing – an ache still; but the struggle was almost over. I had been captured by a generous force that heals when it wounds, and gives to the utterly vanquished the greatest joy.

“I cannot honestly say that no word had been spoken, but although nothing definite had been said, I understood him¹⁹². He was skilled in that playful warfare of words which leads to an understanding, but commits you to nothing. When he attacked me in that way, however, I always defended myself, and when I began to think, I ceased to feel; and then he lost ground. Once or twice – but he missed the moment – or had hesitated.

“The day before his departure I never saw him except with other people present. He was to go very early next morning, and we separated at night with a conventional farewell.

“‘If I am in your neighbourhood may I call?’ he said.

“‘Certainly,’ I answered. ‘I shall be glad to see you.’

“That was an interminable night. I heard every hour strike. I heard the carriage come and go¹⁹³. And when I went down to breakfast, his room was already arranged for another

¹⁹⁰ *Nature*: “nature” (LR).

¹⁹¹ *At first ... passionate protest*: “passionate protest at first” (LR).

¹⁹² “I cannot honestly say ... understood him”: “I cannot honestly say that no word had been spoken, but nothing definite had been said; yet I understood him.” (LR).

¹⁹³ “come and go”: “come am go in the early morning” (LR).

guest. His friends, who had been glad of his coming, declared that they should miss him; but if they did, it made no difference to their pleasure in life. For them, the episode of his visit was over, and they turned to other interests. With me it was different. There was a blank. I could do nothing the whole day through, but long¹⁹⁴ for the numbness, which had been better, at all events, than this sense of loss. I was disappointed. It was all unsatisfactory. There was something wrong, something I could not understand.

“For many nights I had not been able to sleep, and I had got up once or twice and gone out into the garden. I did so again the night after he had left. It was exquisite out there under the quiet stars. The air was deliciously sweet; I breathed it with pleasure; and the freshness and beneficent stillness soothed me. I went to a corner of the garden, where we had sat together often in the sunshine, and looked down at the empty chairs, standing just as we had left them last – senseless things, yet how significant! But was that to be all, I wondered?¹⁹⁵ Then I strolled on. The path I was following passed beneath the window of my room. As I approached – you guess? He had returned.

“Naturally I was startled;¹⁹⁶ I was also displeased, but I cannot tell you why.

“‘You seem to be an erratic person,’ I said coolly.

“‘Forgive me,’ he answered. ‘I could not help it. I was seized with a great yearning for a word. I had to come’. He held out both hands to me –” She stopped abruptly.

“Then, I suppose, you threw yourself into his arms,” her companion said.

“No, I did not,” she answered slowly. “I was indignant that he should take so much for granted.”

Her friend reflected a little.

“There I think you were right,” he said at last. “The man had not spoken, and that was hardly complimentary, although there was a sort of understanding between you. But still I cannot see that missing that moment made anything final.”

She changed her position uneasily, and looked out at the snow, at the bare brown branches, at the red and grey of the sombre sky. There was an answer in her attitude.

“I would not even talk to him there,” she resumed. “I hurried him away. But when he had gone, I rejoiced because he had come. I went to bed after that and slept soundly.”

There was another long pause, during which her friend remained with brows still bent upon the problem.

“You have not told me all¹⁹⁷,” he said at last.

“I have,” she answered, “all that occurred in that land of dreams where he and I alone were alive and nothing else mattered.”

“But there were intervals when the people about you took shape – when they signified,” he suggested.

“Yes,” she answered, “only I did not understand what they signified until afterwards. There was one lady – she came to spend a day and night with us, a charming woman, an intimate friend of the others, but a stranger to me. Strawne went to meet her, and drove her from the station, and was with her a good deal all day. After tea, however, he came and asked me to go for a walk with him. I was talking to her at the moment, and suggested that she should come too. ‘No, no; two are company, you know,’ she answered lightly, and, turning, left us.

“It was late when we returned that evening. We had lingered long, loving a daffodil sunset, and afterwards – that was the day when the crescent moon, the colour of burnished brass, swam in an amber sky. I ran upstairs the moment I got in, there was scarcely time to

¹⁹⁴ “*but long*”: “and longed” (LR).

¹⁹⁵ “*was that to be all, I wondered?*”: “was that to be all?” (LR).

¹⁹⁶ “*Naturally I was startled*”; “Naturally I was startled.” (LR).

¹⁹⁷ “*You have not told me all*,”: “You have not told me all?” (LR).

dress for dinner. She was standing at the top of the stairs¹⁹⁸ ready, as if she were waiting for me. She seemed relieved when she saw me.

“‘You have no time at all,’ she said; ‘let me come and help you.’

“‘And I was glad that she should come, although our acquaintance was only a few hours old. We took hands familiarly, and ran down the corridor like school-girls.

“‘How cool you are!’ she exclaimed. ‘My hands are hot, and my pulse is throbbing. I feel as if there were something dreadful hanging over me. But you – you are not at all agitated.’

“‘The calm, cool certainty of evening has settled on my spirit; I have nothing to fear,’ I answered, not knowing what I meant myself.

“‘Next day she left us, but promised to return, and it was for her that his room had been prepared. From the first we were friends, I think, she and I. We were constantly together. I admired her and loved her, and she clung to me. She was not happy.

“‘Then I went home, and you know what that is! No more loitering among the flowers, under the trees, by waterfalls. No more balmy air and radiant skies; little poetry, in fact, but much prose. Fortunately for me, however, I had brought some of the poetry back in myself. He would come. He was coming. He came. I wondered why my life had seemed so¹⁹⁹ prosaic!

“‘And she came too, that was part of the pleasure. I was the earth, and he was my sun and she my moon. When the one was not with me, the other was; but they never met. And I never told her that he came; I don’t know why. We spoke of him often. She had known him for years.

“‘One evening he²⁰⁰ was with me – he had been the previous day, and I was all aglow, for we had come closer than ever before. That strange something in myself which had come between us from the first, imposing a rigorous limit, had given way for a moment just enough to make me think that he was right and I was wrong.’”

Her companion raised his eyebrows.

“‘Oh!’ he said; ‘then the merits of the case had been discussed between you?’”

“‘By that time, yes,’ she answered, ‘but in a veiled way. My cause of complaint was always that he would not speak out. I wanted to talk of the past, but he argued that the past does not suffer when we live in the present, that no one is injured. But I feel that we are under obligations to the past, and that life should not jerk along in stages; it should be a consistent whole, a long stairway up which we climb with all our friends, helped and helping, as our need and power is. He agreed to that, but said that there were landings where we should rest and refresh ourselves; and then he took my hand, and I forgot to answer him.

“‘So now, when my lady came, I was all aglow, and she sang to me, and my heart sang too, and the joy of life filled me to overflowing. And I wanted to talk about him, and tried to introduce his name, but I could not, and it was she who mentioned him at last.

“‘Tell me what you think of him exactly,’ she said.

“‘Think,’ I answered, hesitatingly. ‘Is there anything to think about him?’

“‘He has been my one thought for years,’ she replied, with a happy smile. ‘He and I think only of each other. I want to tell you, because I did you a horrid wrong. I did not know the kind of woman you are. And that day, when I saw you two go off together, it reminded me of our early days. For hours we never spoke to each other. The happy consciousness of each other’s presence was enough while others were by; but sooner or later he would come to me as he came to you that day. And all the time you were out together, it was as if I heard

¹⁹⁸“of the stairs”: not in LR.

¹⁹⁹“so prosaic”: “prosaic” (LR).

²⁰⁰“One evening he was with me”: “she” (LR). “She” is clearly the correct pronoun.

him saying to you the things he had said to me; and I was in a fever when you returned; but you were not agitated, which reassured me, until you said, "The cool, calm certainty of evening has settled upon me; I have nothing to fear." Then my heart sank. I thought you had taken my place. But I looked at you, and saw you were sweet, and so I gave him up to you. You had taken him from me, not knowing; I could not feel any resentment. When I knew you better, however, it came to me that I must have been mistaken. He was never with you, nor was he in any way changed to me. It is not with us now as it used to be at first, alas! We see less of each other; but it is circumstances that separate us; and, always, when we meet, he is the same.' She insisted on this until I thought that she still had her doubts and was trying to stifle them. A man may be all things to all men²⁰¹, but not to two women at a time satisfactorily.

"The roses on my right that smelt so sweet an hour before suddenly sickened me. I sent them away. I shut the piano. I drew down the blinds that the moonlight might not stream in, and lit the gas²⁰²; and in the act I tore that page of poetry out of my life."

Her friend reflected for a little, and then he said thoughtfully, "When two women are at war for a man, and both are noble, whichever wins loses; neither can be happy if the other suffers."

"But this was not a case of war and winning," she answered. "I did not know, and now *she* does not know."

"Sometimes we are aware of things that we do not know," he said. "What was the invisible barrier between you two? How did she arrive at the truth the moment she saw you together?"

"I wonder," she sighed. "Perhaps you are right, for now, although she knows nothing, and believes in him, she is always uneasy. I gather that from odd phrases. She feels the barrier that I felt, the deceit in him, but does not understand. That evening she told me her story. My own was a sickening repetition of it. It was the same at the outset, the same in its progress and development."

"But the end of it?" her companion asked when she paused.

"Oh, the end was different," she answered slowly. "I would not see him again."

"Humph!" he ejaculated meditatively. "And was that the end?"

She was silent.

²⁰¹"all things to all men": 1 Cor. 9.22.

²⁰²"lit the gas": "garish gas" (LR).

When the Door Opened...?²⁰³

First published in *The Idler* 12 (January 1898): 708-14.

Reprinted in *Women Who Did: Stories by Men and Women 1890-1914*.

Ed. Angelique Richardson. London: Penguin, 2002, 217-24.

The following text is transcribed from *Emotional Moments*. London:
Hurst and Blackett, 1908, 171-91.

WHAT curious glimpses of life one catches sometimes unawares, scenes that flash forth distinctly from the tangled mass of movement, the crowded details, the inextricable confusion of human affairs as they appear to the looker-on in a great city. Seen amidst all the turmoil, from a hansom cab, from the top of an omnibus, from the platform of an underground station in a train that stops for a minute, from the pavement in a carriage blocked in by the stream of traffic, by day and night; from out of the routine, the commonplace doings of people in the commonplace moods and phases which weave themselves into the weft²⁰⁴ of wholesome lives, they stand out to the view, these intervals of intensity, the beginnings of episodes – tragic, heroic, amorous, abject; or the conclusions which mark the turning-point, the crisis of a life. If it be the beginning, how one aches to know what the end will be; and if it be the end, what would one not give for the first part! Yet, tantalizing as these fragments are, they possess a charm which is not in the finished story, and are recollected with vivid interest long after many a tale, begun at the beginning and rounded to a satisfactory conclusion, has lapsed from the mind like a thing that is done with and forgotten.²⁰⁵

For instance: I was coming home alone late one night by train from a distant suburb, and happened to get into a carriage with three other people. One of them was a man about forty, with dark hair going grey, and a pleasant, clear-cut, well-disciplined face. The other two were husband and wife, the husband being a good deal older than the wife. There seemed to have been some disagreement between the pair before I got into the carriage, for the lady looked sulky and dejected, while the gentleman was a good deal ruffled. He spoke a word or two to the other passenger, however, in a way which showed that they were acquainted, and also, as it seemed to me, for the purpose of keeping up appearances. The lady, on the contrary, made no attempt to disguise her feelings, but sat silent and rigid, staring into the darkness, until the train stopped, when her husband grimly handed her out, and I was left alone with the third passenger.

We watched the pair walk off together, and it was obvious that the quarrel recommenced before they had taken many steps. My solitary fellow-passenger sat opposite to

²⁰³ The title appears on p.708 of *The Idler* as “WHEN THE DOOR OPENED---.” There is no question mark after this, whereas the book version includes a question mark, thereby inviting the readers to speculate about what happened next. Underneath the title in the magazine, centred, and in smaller type, is “BY SARAH GRAND.” Centred underneath this and in the same sized type is “ILLUSTRATED BY SIDNEY COWELL.” A half page illustration appears on p.709 captioned “Her husband grimly handed her out.” There is another half page illustration on page 711, captioned “Showed me the way to the refreshment rooms.” The third and final illustration comprises a full page picture of the disguised husband confronted by a much younger, angelic-looking wife with the caption ““I gazed, I gasped, I fell into a chair!””

²⁰⁴ *weave themselves into the weft*: “weave themselves into the length” (*TI*).

²⁰⁵ *Yet tantalizing ... and forgotten*: These words do not appear in *TI*.

me, and when the two had passed out of sight, our eyes met in an involuntary glance of intelligence, and he shrugged his shoulders slightly.

“I should like to give that pair a piece of advice,” slipped from me unawares.

“Ah!” he said, sighing, “so should I; but it is an impossible thing to do in such cases.”

“I suppose you are thinking that people know their own business best,” I rejoined.

“No, I am not,” he answered. “The lookers-on see most of the game, you know. But, nevertheless, it is worse than useless to offer advice to a married pair – especially when they are both wrong-headed,” he added. “But even right-headed people, with the best intentions, make terrible mistakes; and in their own cases, too, when they might be expected to know what they are about. Now, that man who was here just now watches his wife and keeps her shut up, or only allows her out under escort, as if he thought that she would certainly misconduct herself if ever she had an opportunity. The consequence is, she growing to dislike and despise him, and he may drive her in the end to do the very thing he dreads and²⁰⁶ is guarding against. I cannot understand how a man can care to have a bond-slave, always under orders, for a wife. Personally, I prefer a free woman; and I should be sorry to think that liberty means licence in any but exceptional cases.”

“But there, it seems to me, that a difficulty arises,” I observed. “How is a man to tell which will prove an exceptional case?”

“Oh, I should think there is no difficulty about that,” he answered. “Girls give indication of character early enough. And, at any rate, if they are not trustworthy, dogging them about won’t make them so. I don’t say, however, that a young and thoughtless girl should be cast entirely upon her own resources; only what she wants is a companion, not a keeper. However, as I said just now, the right ordering of married lives is a matter in which even the best-intentioned people may make mistakes. I married a girl somewhat younger than myself – about ten years – not that I think that makes any difference if people agree in their tastes. It so happened, however, that we did not agree. I am fond of a quiet life, with full leisure for art and literature, and dislike nothing so much as killing time in idle chatter at entertainments where one is not entertained. My wife, on the contrary, as I found out very soon after we were married, is positively bored by books and pictures, and is never so happy as when she is in the full whirl of the social maelstrom. Well, I thought the matter out, and the justice of the case seemed to me to demand that she should not require me to go into Society, and that I should not require her to stay at home. We were fond of each other, but I could not see why, on that account, either of us should have our life spoilt by being made to conform to the uncongenial tastes and habits of the other. Marriage must be a perfect institution when there is entire similarity of interests; but if there is not, I cannot see why people should be miserable. There is time enough for each of the pair to occupy themselves in their own way during the twenty-four hours, and meet often enough to be happy together as well. In fact, I don’t know that it isn’t the only chance of happiness in such a case for them to order their lives in that way. They keep in touch better by drifting apart and meeting again with minds refreshed and something to say to each other.²⁰⁷ So I let me wife go her way and I went mine, and the plan seemed to be answering capitally. There were times when she would have liked me to go out with her, and there were times when I should have been glad if she had stayed at home with me; and occasionally we conformed to one another’s secret wishes in these respects, but I cannot say that the self-sacrifice was much of a success. There was one fancy-dress ball – a public affair – that she particularly wanted to go to, and I thought she

²⁰⁶ “dreads and”: not in *TI*.

²⁰⁷ “There is time ... say to each other”: not in *TI*.

half hinted that I should accompany her; if so, I did not take the hint, because I knew I should be bored²⁰⁸.

“She went to that ball rather conspicuously dressed²⁰⁹ in a silver-grey domino, lined with pale pink²¹⁰, and trimmed with white lace. Her fan was white ostrich feathers, and her mask was fringed with lace, which concealed her mouth. She had been quite excited about going, but when it came to the point, she didn’t seem to be so very eager, after all. She was to be met by some friends at the ball. I said I would sit up for her, and she promised not to be late.

“After she had gone, I felt depressed somehow. I got a book and a cigar, but did not find either of them in the least absorbing. My mind wandered when I tried to read, and I had to give it up at last, and just settled myself to smoke and think things out.

“I began to wonder what my wife was doing at the ball, and if she had found her friends all right. Then it occurred to me that it would be very awkward if they did not meet by some mistake²¹¹. All kinds of people go to these public balls, and manners are apt to be free-and-easy when masks are worn. My wife, even in her domino, gave the impression of youth and good looks. She might be subjected to some annoyance by the bounders who haunt such places. At that minute she might be dancing with some very undesirable partner. Had I done right to let her go alone? I threw my cigar into the fireplace and got up, but without any distinct idea. In fact, I stood for a little, as one does sometimes in a difficulty, with all thought suspended. Then I recollected a fancy dress I had had for a ball I went to before I met my wife. It was the black velvet costume of a Spanish Don²¹² of the period of Philip IV., the Velasquez period²¹³, a handsome dress copied from a picture, and well made. I had liked myself in it when I wore it, and I wondered what I had done with it – if it were among the costumes I used to paint from.²¹⁴ I went to my studio, and there I found it in an old chest, and the mask I had worn along with it.

“It was still early in the night, why not dress and go to the ball also? My wife had taken the carriage, but there were some livery stables near, and I could easily get a brougham. I rang for my man, and sent him to fetch me one.

“The ball was in full swing when I arrived, but by great good luck almost the first person I saw was my wife. The silver-grey, pale pink, white lace and white ostrich-feather fan made an easily-distinguished costume, and I recognized her at once, and made my way through the crowd towards her. But as I approached, I realized that she could not possibly recognize me. She had never seen me in that dress, she probably didn’t even know that I had it; yet, although I was walking straight up to her, and she saw that I was, she made no sign of objecting. Was it possible that she would let a strange man speak to her, and even encourage him to do so by her attitude? The horrible doubt shot such a pang through my heart that I determined to set it at rest for ever by making the experiment. Without waiting to ask myself whether it was a fair or an unfair thing to do, I addressed her in a feigned voice, familiarly.

“‘I fancy that you are waiting for me,’ I said. ‘Please say that you are.’”

“‘Well, I am waiting for something exciting to happen,’ she answered, also disguising her voice, and speaking with the easy assurance of one who is accustomed to such encounters; ‘for standing here alone is not lively.’”

²⁰⁸“be bored”: The text in *TI* reads, after a semi-colon “I knew I should be so bored.”

²⁰⁹“dressed”: “well-dressed” (*TI*).

²¹⁰“pale pink”: “pink silk” (*TI*)

²¹¹“if they did not ... some mistake”: “if, by some mistake, they did not meet” (*TI*).

²¹²Spanish Don: a Spanish nobleman.

²¹³Philip IV ... Velasquez period: Diego Velasquez (1599-1660) was the court painter to King Philip IV of Spain.

²¹⁴“I had liked ... to paint from.”: not in *TI*. This insertion links the text of this story with “The Undefinable: A Fantasia,” where the artist at the centre of the story keeps a large old chest of costumes in his studio.

“For a moment the tawdry splendour of the scene was blotted out. I could neither see nor hear. I recovered myself, however, just as the band struck up, and asked her mechanically if I might have the pleasure of a dance.

“I shall be delighted,” she replied, taking my arm at once, and leading me, rather than waiting to be led, through the motley crew about us to the ball-room, in a free-and-easy way that filled me with consternation. In her right mind, she had always seemed to be reserved with strangers, and I should never have imagined that a mask would have made such a difference.

“She danced with the abandonment of a ballet girl, and when the music ceased, she asked me for ice and liqueur, and showed me the way to the refreshment room. When she had had all she wanted, and it was a good deal, she took my arm again, and we began to walk about. She seemed to know all the ins and outs of the place, which surprised me, for I didn’t suppose she had ever been there before. I asked her, however.

“‘Have I ever been here before!’ she ejaculated. ‘I should just think so! I come whenever I can.’

“‘Do you tell your husband?’ I ventured.

“‘Oh, my husband!’ she exclaimed. ‘But who told you that I had a husband, by the way?’

“‘I feel sure that a lady of your personal attractions and charms of manner cannot fail to have a husband’ I answered.

“‘Ah, courtier,’ she said. ‘Heigho! What a difference there is between husbands and lovers! Aren’t women fools to marry if they can make love for a livelihood?’

“She clasped her hands around my arm as she spoke, and looked into my face alluringly. Was this the true woman, I wondered, and was that other to whom I was accustomed only an actress earning her living? No, I could not believe it. I argued with myself that the manner and sentiments were assumed with the dress, that they were part of the masquerade. But she could not have done it so well without much experience, and she confessed that she came here often, which argued deceit, for I had never had a hint of it. Indeed, the reason she gave me for going that night was that she had never been to a mask ball. Oh, thrice accursed fool that I was to let her come alone! Yet perhaps it was just as well. I knew that she was frivolous, but had never suspected that she was fast. Indeed, I would have wagered my soul that she was to be trusted anywhere. She had taken me in finely, and it was just as well that I should know it. Doubtless my friends had known it all along, and pitied me for a blind, weak fool. But it was a shock, I can tell you, and I was in two minds the whole time. In the one I condemned her utterly, in the other I was trying to excuse her. Appearances were all against her certainly; but the habit of love and respect is not to be changed in a moment. And, after all, what had she done that could not be excused? She had talked in a vulgar way certainly, but I had not presumed upon it. If I had taken the slightest liberty, doubtless she would have resented it promptly. Would she?

“Her hand was resting on my arm. I hesitated a moment, then I took it and pressed it. To my horror, she laughed and returned the pressure.

“‘You are waking up, Don Sombre,’ she said. ‘I was beginning to fear that you were one of the doomed-to-the-dumps, you were so cold and dull. But the dumps don’t last long when I’m about. I’ll soon cheer you up, and put some life in you.’

“I felt a horrid emotion at these words, and it was some time before I could master my voice. I was a broken man, and longed to sit down and cry like a child. It was sorrow that had come upon me, not anger. One is not angry when there is no hope; one is crushed. And yet, although I knew there was no hope, I was like a gambler who must stake again. I determined to go a little further just to give her a last chance.

“You have cheered me to such good purpose that I do not feel inclined to part with you,” I said; “but this crowd is distracting. Let us get out of it. I have a carriage waiting; will you come home with me?”

“Why, he’s quite nervous,” she said, laughing. “Now that *is* nice; for I could swear, Don Sombre, that you’re not accustomed to “no” from a lady.”

“Why is it nice?” I asked.

“Well, you wouldn’t be nervous if you were indifferent, you know,” she said archly. “I can’t stand your cold-blooded creatures, who don’t care a button either way.”

“Then I ought to please you,” I answered grimly; “for, as you rightly perceive, I do care greatly. Will you come?”

“She laughed again. Good heavens! Was that acquiescence? I drew her towards the main entrance with the impetuosity of a young lover, and she did not demur. She remarked that I seemed to be impatient, and impatient I was. Every moment was an hour of pain now until the ghastly farce was over. But I could not end it there and then. It was too serious. I must get her home. I went down the street myself to fetch my hired brougham, so that my name might not be called out, and I told the man to go back before I returned to hand her in. I was afraid of a scene in that public place if she suddenly discovered who I was, and it seemed an interminable time until we started. We were clear of the crowd, and off at last, however, but for the first few minutes I sat beside her unable to utter a word, and she began to rally me again on the subject of my gloom. Then she fell up against me, but whether because the carriage lurched or out of mere wantonness, I could not tell. However, I put my arm round her, and she did not object.

“Where do you live?” she asked, as we neared the house. “These streets are all alike, and I cannot tell in the least where I am.”

“Well, we are there, at any rate,” I answered, as the carriage stopped. I handed her out, and opened the door with my latch-key. The light was so low in the hall, I had to take her hand to lead her up to the drawing-room. There was all darkness, but I had matches in my pocket, and lit the gas. Then I turned to her. She was giggling at something, but did not seem to see where she was.

“Now, madam,” I said sternly, “we will unmask.”

“In a moment she had taken hers off and slipped out of the domino.

“I gazed. I gasped. I fell into a chair. For the woman before me was a perfect stranger – a creature with dyed hair, blackened eyelids, and painted cheeks – not the sort of person to be seen with anywhere if one valued one’s reputation; and yet I could have gone down on my knees and kissed the hem of her garment, so great was my relief. I shall never forget it! For the first few minutes I could think of nothing, do nothing, but just sit there gazing at her, and smiling idiotically. She was flattered by my attitude, which she mistook for speechless admiration, and she stood still, posing in a theatrical manner, with an affectation of coyness, until I recovered myself.

“My first clear idea was that I must get rid of her; but how to do it without offering her any indignity? I was casting about in my mind for a plausible excuse; but before anything occurred to me, a carriage stopped at the door below. I heard a key turned in the lock, then the rustle of silk, and a light step on the staircase. My wife had returned early as she had promised, and was coming straight up to the drawing-room. Her hand was already on the handle of the door –”

He broke off at this point and looked out of the window. The train had stopped, but we had not noticed it at the moment.

“Hello!” he exclaimed, “this is my station!” and out he jumped, just as we were moving off again.

When the Door Opened...?

I have never seen him since; I do not suppose that I ever shall; so I expect that all my life long I shall be tormented with conjectures as to what happened when the door opened.

The Rector's Bane

Prior magazine publication not traced.

The galley proof of 'The Rector's Bane' by Sarah Grand is contained within 66 undated pages of galley proofs, with handwritten corrections, for the unpublished *Christmas Annual Scrapbook* by George Moore and others. (See Robert Lee Wolff Collection of Victorian Fiction, purchased by the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas (1984).)

The following text is transcribed from *Emotional Moments*. London: Hurst and Blackett, 1908, 192-214.

THE Rectory was in a flutter from earliest dawn. It was like a tree full of sparrows in the spring, all twitter and chirp and bustle. For the only daughter of the house was to be married that day by the Bishop, to the only son of the wealthiest landowner in the neighbourhood.

When the bride awoke in the morning her mind was filled with the words: "For whither thou goest, I will go, and where thou lodgest, I will lodge."²¹⁵ No more. But she told her mother, and her mother thought it a good omen, most appropriate and very beautiful, and told the Rector, who smiled benignly, being just as much elated as the ladies, although he thought it becoming to hide the fact. But he blessed his daughter, and melted when he thanked God for the happy and brilliant prospect in store for her.

"Marriage is the most sacred of all institutions," he said unctuously. "Those whom God has joined together, let no man put asunder."²¹⁶ It has been my earnest endeavour all my life to walk in God's way. To be a humble follower of Christ was all I asked. And the Lord has amply rewarded me."

At noon the joy-bells rang out from the square church tower, and the sun, shining on bare brown branches, struck sparkles from the delicate silvering of frost with which they were appropriately bedecked, as for the occasion.

Two toil-worn women passed the church as the bridegroom handed the bride into the carriage. One of them, a dark-skinned, black-haired, vivacious woman, with gipsy blood in her probably, and the disposition to be easily amused that goes with it, held back to see the sight, and the other stopped too, as if constrained, and looked on a moment in evident resentment.

"My! them flowers!" the dark one cried in admiration.

"Eh, lass!" the other answered bitterly. "They must cost fifty pound, if they cost a penny, them flowers."

"Fifty pound!" the other ejaculated.

"Ay, fifty pound. As 'ud keep a poor man's fam'ly in comfort fur a year."

All pleasure in the pageant went out of the dark face, and, with one accord, the two women turned their backs upon it, and continued their way to where, on the other side of the church, and in the shadow of it, but half turned from it, as one in despair turns from a powerful person who could help but will not, was a small, clean, poverty-stricken cottage. The women knocked and entered. At that time of day they might have expected to find the

²¹⁵"For whither ... I will lodge" (Ruth 1.16). The bride, however, is applying this biblical reference to her husband-to-be rather than to Christ's teaching.

²¹⁶"Those whom ... put asunder": (Mark 10.9).

good wife getting the dinner; but, alas! no; there was no sign of cheerful preparation here. The fire, which should mean to man all that this world can know of love and comfort; the fire by which husband and wife sit in their young love-days, to which the children come by degrees in after years, and from which they go again with tears and blessings, leaving their hearts, however, at anchor beside it; the sacred fire which holds the home together, which is the due of every honest man and woman – the fire was out, and only the ashes of it remained on the cold hearth. Yet even the ashes were tidily swept up, so inveterate is orderly habit among the decent poor. The clear, crisp, frosty morning which had waked the happy bride at the Rectory, had broken with cold comfort for the old pair in the cottage. All the long night they had held each other's hands, for it was the last, in all human probability, they would ever spend together on earth.

They were an old roadmaker and his wife. He had done his last day's work. Wet or fine, ill or well, week in, week out, he had toiled for a mere pittance, which the thrifty wife at home had made the most of uncomplainingly. A sober, industrious, long-enduring, law-abiding pair, such as any country should claim for its own with pride; married forty years, and parents of three soldier sons; there the neighbours found them, sitting on an old trunk, almost the only thing left in the cottage, still hand in hand; those whom God had joined together, according to the Rector in the character of humble follower of Christ, waiting to be turned out of their little home and driven off like cattle to the workhouse, where they would be separated for want of proper accommodation for them, with the full approval of the Rector in the character of man and guardian of the poor.

When the two women entered, the old pair looked up at them by way of greeting, as a dumb dog looks when in pain if human help is at hand. The woman who had turned resentfully from the waste of wealth at the wedding, carried a little bundle in which she had brought a bottle of cold tea and some scraps of bread and bacon. The old people had tasted nothing that day, and she tried to persuade them to eat. They did their best, out of pure, kindly courtesy; but it was easy to see that the dry morsels choked them.

The old woman begged her friends to be seated on the brick window-place, but after that no one spoke for a little. Indeed, there was nothing to be said, nothing to be done, only sympathy to be shown; and of that the big occasional teardrop which fell from an old eye on to a wrinkled hand was more eloquent than any word could be, and it also showed a hopeless resignation.

The old pair sat on hand in hand – or, rather, the old woman held the other man's hand, and patted it every now and then pathetically. She was the elder of the two, and much the more robust; and it was evident that she was bearing up bravely on his account, and doing her best to sustain him. But every now and again her lips trembled, and her withered cheeks were puckered in a brave effort not to give way.

Meanwhile the bells rang jubilantly overhead, filling the tiny tenement with long reverberations, and the wintry sun shone beyond the shadow of the church, silvering the shining frost on bare brown branches.

"I mind me when we was married," slipped from the woman unawares. She stopped short, afraid of any reminiscence that would make the moment worse for the more worn partner of her life; but she need not have hesitated. He sat with his chin on his chest, and his eyes fixed on the rugged red-brick floor, sunk in a state of apathy. When she looked and saw him so, she broke down utterly, and throwing her apron up over her face, rocked herself to and fro.

"Oh, my man, my man, my man!" she groaned. "You was allus one to want a woman about. You'd never no notion of tending yerself. But God 'E knows you've done yer best for me." She grasped his hand tighter and wrung it. "You've done yer best. An' now you're worn

out – an' it's – the 'Ouse –" Disgrace and imprisonment – that is what she felt it was; but she had no words to express it.²¹⁷

The two neighbours wiped their eyes. Then the old man roused himself a bit. "D'ye mind when I came coortin' ye, Martha?" he said.

"Ay, an' one day ye 'ad a flower i' yer 'and," she answered eagerly, overjoyed to hear him speak – "a daly, fur it were autumn. An' ye'd brought it fur me, an' I knowed ye 'ad, and ye didn't like to give it, but kep' on twistin' an' twirlin' it till its 'ead dropped off i' the dust, an' I couldn't 'elpyer. An' we jest walked on together, but 'adn't a word to say, on'y jest lookin' at one another; an' every time you looked at me, I laughed silly; and then you laughed. Ah! I mind me – I mind me well."

The cottage had had its modest comforts in the way of furniture once, but all it contained that was worth a penny had gone by degrees to avert the evil day – all but two treasures, two white china dogs with brown patches on their backs, which stood on the chimney-piece, and looked oddly out of place, as being unnecessary luxuries of ornament, in such surroundings.

The old man's eyes, wandering about the bare abode, lighted upon these. "What'll ye do wi' the dogs, lass?" he said.

Martha looked up. "I told you I'd keep 'em, Dick, so long's I'd last, an' I 'ev. I couldn't sell 'em. I mind me when you got 'em – at the fair, the year arter we was married." She turned to her two friends in the window-place. "Dick went off alone, as I couldn't go," she said; "an' sore enough I was about 'is goin'. I thought 'e might 'a' stayed at 'omewi' me an' me near my time. An' I was feared 'e'd get drunk, as t'other men did a many of 'em, an' not come 'ome all night. But before sunset I seed 'imcomin' round the church, an' 'e looked at me kind o' proud, an' 'e'd a passel in 'is 'and. 'E'd saved the money unbeknown to me, an' bought them dogs." She patted his hard hand and covered her face again. "An' 'e was allus like that," she added, in a voice muffled with tears.

Then she got up, and, reaching the dogs down, gave them to the elder of the two women, the one who had spoken bitterly.

"You'll keep 'em for my sake," she said.

"I will, Martha," the woman answered, receiving the humble treasures as a solemn trust.

The two old people were benumbed, for the cold was penetrating, there, under the shadow of the church, in that fireless abode. Martha sat down again beside her husband, and tried to chafe the life back into his hands. The few remaining minutes were flying now, and each came crowded with reminiscences of happy days.

The old man glanced towards the hearth. "I mind you sittin' there wi' the boy," he said. "Eh! I did work. I was allusafeared there wouldn't be enough."

"I mind, I mind," she answered, rocking herself to and fro. "An' you'd bring a bit o' summat good 'ome, i' yer pocket, an' feign you wasn't 'ungry; an' I known all the while 't were as there was on'y enough fur me." She patted his hand once more. "Eh! but you bin a good man to me, Dick," she added.

They were expecting their landlord, whose son had been married that morning to the Rector's daughter, to send a man to turn them out. Carts and carriages had passed the door at intervals all day, and many a time they had started, thinking that one had stopped. But now at last it came. A man jumped down, and entered the cottage, filling it in a moment with bluster and self-assertion, as if to cover a want of pride in the job.

²¹⁷ *Disgrace and imprisonment ... no words to express it*: In Grand's 1911 story "One of the Olden Time," Josepha also laments the fate of the impoverished elderly, the "worn old men": "The only rest their affluent country offered them was imprisonment in the workhouse with the stigma of pauper attached" (276).

"Now, off with you!" he exclaimed. "They're expecting you up yonder at the House. They've got a fine fire for you, and lots of company." He glanced round the bare abode. "They might as well have kept you here," he added. "It wouldn't have cost them more – nor as much, maybe. Are you going? I must lock up the place."

The old pair rose, docile, obedient, law-abiding to the end. At the door they turned back for a last look. Then the woman broke down.

"Oh, Dick! Oh, my man!" she cried aloud, throwing her arms about him.

The Rector was taking the Bishop back to the palace just then, after the wedding festivities; but the carriage was stopped in the narrow lane till the agent's cart could be pulled up out of the way.

"What is the matter?" the Bishop asked, hearing the woman's heart-broken cry.

The Rector looked out of the window, then drew in his head. "It is a good-for-nothing old pair who have had to be turned out of their cottage for not paying their rent," he explained. "That kind of thing is on the increase in the neighbourhood, and must be put a stop to."

"But what will become of them?" the Bishop asked uneasily, having caught a glimpse of the miserable group.

"They will go off grumbling to the workhouse, where arrangements have been made to receive them. They have, in fact, been given the only two beds left unoccupied, and will be quite comfortable, although, of course, they won't confess it. The paupers are an ungrateful class, difficult to deal with, and always unsatisfactory."

"Have you good accommodation for them here?" the Bishop wanted to know.

"No," said the Rector, "not at all. Ours is an old-fashioned workhouse and inconvenient." He had gone off on another tack now, and was thinking that it would be a credit to him to get it rebuilt.

The Bishop pursed up his mouth.

Perhaps he saw some inconsistency.

On entering the ward where the other old women were, Martha Jordan was recognized by Peggy Byles, once a lady's-maid, with the manners she had picked up from her mistresses, and a biting tongue, which she owed to them also, perhaps.

"Welcome to our 'umble 'ome," she said, making a mock curtsy to Martha.

"'Ome!" said Alice Grieves, another gentleman's servant. "I call it prison."

"Well," Peggy Byles observed ironically, "it's the reward of merit."

"It's punishment for poverty," Alice retorted. "They'll forgive you anything but that, the parsons will."

"What 'ev the parsons to do with it?"

"Why, everythink. Aren't they there to preach Christ, and 'Im crucified, and love one another? And 'ow the Bishops on the bench do love us, to be sure!"

Martha Jordan sat on a hard form, rocking herself to and fro in tearless misery, not apparently heeding anything. Another old woman, with a gentle, refined, intelligent face, was sitting near, and now reached out her wrinkled hand, and laid it sympathetically on Martha's arm. "Eh! missis, I knows what you're feelin'," she said. "The fust days an' the fust nights – after that – it isn't to say as you don't care, but you don't cry. You seem all in a mist, and you think o' nothing but what happened long ago; and things you said, and things you did, pertic'ler if it was a nasty thing ye're sorry fur. An' you see the sunshine too, and you smell the flowers; yet all the time it isn't like being alive."

Martha looked up at her. "Thet's it," she said. "It isn't like bein' alive. It's like arter death the judgement. You know ther's nothing to hope. It'll never be no different."

Several other worn women, all past work, had gathered round the new-comer by this time, and each made some sign of assent to this. Not one had a word of comfort.

The week that followed was one incessant ache of anguish to Martha Jordan. All that first long, lonely night in the ward with the other women she lay awake, a prey to anxiety about her man. Then the ways of the place, the comfortless bareness, the continual wrangle and fret among the inmates, the inexorable discipline to which, at her age, it was hard to conform; the separation from every person and everything she cared for, and, above all, the insistent sense of unmerited disgrace – the injustice of it all made it a martyrdom to her. And it so happened that she did not see her husband once, not till the week was out, although perhaps that was just as well, as it gave her something to look forward to which sustained her.

She was to go out with him on the Sunday, and there was a pale pink flush of excitement on her face when the moment arrived to put on her bonnet and go to meet him, which Peggy Byles observed.

“Jest look at ’er ladyship tittivating ’erself up fur ’er young man!” she said. “My! in’t she fine! ’E’ll be wantin’ you to elope wi’ ’im, mistress.”

It was not unkindly meant, and Martha smiled. “’E were a rare man o’ muscle in ’is time,” she answered proudly; “as fine a man as ever stepped. An’ ’is sons is fine men, too – three on ’em, all soldiers.”

“I wonder they don’t do somethin’ fur ye,” Peggy exclaimed.

“’Ow can a soldier ’elp ’is folk?” Martha answered dispassionately. “What wi’ stoppages fur this an’ stoppages fur that, it’s little enough they ’ev fur theirselves.”

“You’ve give yer country three men, mistress,” Peggy rejoined; “an’ this is ’ow it pays you back!”

“’Old yer tongue, you ’ussy,” said the sharp voice of the matron, who had come in behind unobserved. “It’s the likes of you as gives the place a bad name. You’re jest dirt, that’s what you are, and you’d better know it. Get out,” she scolded, “you as are goin’, and if I catch you at this kind of talk again, complainin’, I’ll let you know it!”

Martha slunk off. On the way she caught a glimpse of herself in a glass door, and stopped, glancing about her apprehensively, while she tied her bonnet strings a bit better and altered the set of her kerchief. But with all her care she was caught, and loudly jeered at for an old fool.

She expected to find her man in the yard, but he was not there, so she went out into the road. There were two or three old men hanging about the gate, and at first she feared he was not among them, which damped her elation; but presently she recognized him in his workhouse dress, and her heart beat high as a girl’s with joy. She hurried up to him, holding out her work-worn hands, ugly in their shrivelled leanness, but none the less tender for that.

“Dicky, boy,” she cried, her eyes hot where the tears of relief would not well, her voice choked with emotion. “Eh, my man, but I’m glad to see you! But I bin thinkin’ long o’ you all this week –”

He gazed at her a moment blankly, and then his watery eyes wandered away without interest, without intelligence, without a spark of recognition in them.

She stopped short in bewilderment, and the flush faded from her withered cheeks.

“My man!” she faltered – “Dicky!”

He turned at the exclamation and looked at her again, then moved away a little as if annoyed by her importunity.

“Dicky!” she gasped. “Dicky, don’t you –” She could not pronounce the words..

“’E doan’t know ’ee, misses,” one of the old paupers, who stood by leaning on a stick, said with philosophical deliberation; “an’ I much misdoubt me if ’e ever will again.”

“What – what ’ev they done to ’im?” she demanded hoarsely. “’E were an ’ale man for ’is years - ’ale i’ the ’ead – one week ago – an’ ’e’d not go daft fawnawthin’.”

"Naw," the old man answered dispassionately. "It's likely a cloud on the 'ead he got fur not 'urrying up wi' summat."

Jordan had moved off a little, and now stood staring about him vacantly. She ran up to him with some vague idea of helping or perhaps protecting him, when she heard those dreadful words; and, clasping her hands tight round his arm, she fairly shook him in her misery.

"Look at me, Dick, look at me," she cried, "on'y once – as if you know'd me – call me fur everything, but, but – My man!"

He turned the same blank gaze upon her once more; then, with an impatient gesture, disengaged his arm from her clinging hands and moved away.

"'E doan't know 'ee, missis," the old pauper repeated persuasively, as if it would do her good to be sure of the fact.

Her face became distorted as with acute physical pain, she raised her clasped hands high above her head, and dropped down on her knees, cursing – cursing those who were responsible; then sank, a huddled heap, all in the dust.

The Rectory grounds abutted on the road at this spot, and just as the scandalous scene occurred, it so happened that the genial Rector, who was out with his wife enjoying the Sabbath calm and the fresh air after an ample meal between the services, came up to the low boundary hedge and looked over. The two had begun by discussing the diamonds given to their daughter on her marriage, which naturally brought them to consider how very much they had to be thankful for, especially in that they had been so long spared to each other, spared to pass on imperceptibly from youth to age, in perfect companionship, solaced by the happiest memories. They had reached this point in their talk when they were startled and shocked by the coarse cursing of the pauper woman.

"How very unseemly!" the Rector exclaimed. "I must inquire into this. What a pest these paupers are at one's very gates!"

The Wrong Road.

First published in *The English Illustrated Magazine* 147
(December 1895): 221-8.

Illustrated by Bertha Newcombe.

Also published in *Cosmopolitan* XX (December 1895): 169-76
as "A Momentary Indiscretion" (illustrated by F.O. Small)

The following text is transcribed from *Emotional Moments*
London: Hurst and Blackett, 1908, 215-42.

SHE was a charming looking woman, with hair prematurely grey, and a tender, pathetic face. Her manner was very gentle, but firm and decided; what she said she meant, and would act up to. Her complexion was as delicate as a girl's, and her beautiful dark eyes, which were keen and bright when she looked at you, had in them at other times a strange, far-away expression. They were the eyes of one who has lived the inner life of contemplation, and looked long on the quiet trees, the grass, the sky; on tranquil water, and the perennial wonder of the rainbow flowers. When she spoke, her voice harmonized with her appearance in sweetness and refinement; it had something of Nature²¹⁸ in it too, like her eyes; something of the soothing that comes²¹⁹ to us from the murmur of the breeze among the branches, the rustle of leaves, the babble of running water, and the drowsy droning of insects under the heavy foliage and among the flowers in early summer when the heat begins to tell. All girls loved her. They called her Lady Grace, and came to consult her, especially about their love affairs. They were too pre-occupied with their own emotions, as a rule, to wonder how it was she understood them so well, and, although a single woman, was so much more sympathetic than most of the married ladies of their acquaintance; but sometimes they asked, and sometimes she told them by way of warning. "Never trifle with affection," she would say, "and never let the sun set upon a misunderstanding. I will tell you what happened to one who was too proud to explain."

She said this one day to a girl who had come to consult her.

It was in Kensington Square, where she lived, and in her quaint drawing-room, looking out on the trees in front and out on more trees at the back, which made it appear to be as much in the country still as it was when the quality stayed there to be near their majesties at Kensington Palace, and fine gentlemen of the Court gambled and drank at the "Greyhound."²²⁰

"But he *ought* to believe in me," the girl protested.

"Well, yes," Lady Grace replied. "Still, appearance are very much against you, and, on that account, I should give him the fullest explanation."

"Oh, how can I humble myself to do such a thing?" the girl exclaimed petulantly.

Lady Grace sighed. "Your story is very like another I could tell you," she said – "very like numbers of others. It is an old, old story. But the case I am thinking of was not quite an ordinary case of the kind, and it may interest you on that account. It was here – in this very room – years ago. A young girl was waiting with her hat on for her lover who had promised

²¹⁸ *Nature*: "nature" (*EIM*).

²¹⁹ *the soothing that comes*: "the soothing influence that comes" (*EIM*).

²²⁰ "*The Greyhound*": "The Greyhound" is still a public house today, situated at 1 Kensington Square, London. Established in 1697, it was rebuilt in 1899.

to come and take her for a walk. It was an autumn afternoon like this, and she was impatient to go out, for she had been shut up indoors all day. The time passed, however; he was five minutes late – ten minutes – a quarter of an hour – half an hour; what could he mean by it? She became indignant. He had no business to keep her waiting like that.

“Then there came a knock at the door. Ah, there he was at last! And it was such a relief that she forgave him on that instant, and was ready to accept an excuse he had to offer.

“The door opened, but her heart sank, for it was another young man who appeared.

“‘You are just going out, I see,’ he said.

“‘I *was* just going out – with Gregory – but he hasn’t come for me,’ she answered, pouting.

“‘What a shame!’ he exclaimed, laughing. ‘He’s forgotten, I expect. But if he does that now, what will he do when you’re married? And keeping you in, too, such a lovely afternoon. But don’t stay in. Come out with me.’

“She looked at the clock. An hour and a quarter late. Decidedly, it was too bad, and she would go out with Grey just to mark her displeasure.

“They went into Kensington Gardens.²²¹ Grey was in high spirits, and she affected to be so in order to hide her pique.

“Grey was a harum-scarum sort of young fellow, seldom in earnest, and not caring to be thought so; one of those whom a young girl may play with, but never things of seriously.

“They entered the gardens by the first gate here in Kensington, and went on to the right under the old trees, elm, lime and horse-chestnut, which, like people who live long together, have grown so much alike in character that you do not at first see any difference between them. After passing the next gate on the one hand and the Broad Walk on the other, the path branches right and left into two which run nearly parallel as far as the Albert Memorial. They took the one to the left – the South Flower Walk – and loitered along, looking at the old-fashioned borders where dahlias and heliotrope, petunias, calceolaria and fuchsias, gay nasturtium and white tobacco-flower still made a brave display, though the season was well advanced. It was late in the evening, and the walk was deserted. The air was heavy but dry, and the clouds were low and grey. The continuous rumble of the traffic in the high road sounded afar off, and did not importune them. In the gardens themselves all was still.

“‘I feel strangely oppressed,’ the girl said at last. ‘I wish we had not come. Let us go back. Perhaps Gregory has arrived – or something untoward may have happened. I am anxious. Let us go in.’

“‘Oh, nonsense,’ Grey rejoined. ‘If Gregory has come, let him wait. He kept you in long enough.’

“They had been standing looking down at the flowers, but now Grey waltzed off by himself a little way up the path.

“‘Do you know the new step?’ he said, returning to her. ‘It is quite delightful. You feel like a bird. Let me show you. See!’

“She began to watch him with interest.

“‘I think I see. Look! is this it?’ she said at last, trying the step herself.

“‘No, not quite,’ he answered. ‘Just let me show you. You’ll get into it in a minute.’

“He put his arm round her, took her hand, and began to tell her what to do. ‘You begin on the left foot, see – no, hang it! you begin on the right –’

²²¹ *Kensington Gardens*: One of eight royal parks in London. Kensington Palace, birthplace of Queen Victoria and her home until she became Queen in 1837, is situated in Kensington Gardens. The Albert Memorial, South Flower Walk, Broad Walk, Lancaster Walk, Long Water and Round Pond, each mentioned in the story, are still features of the park, today.

“The gravel crunched behind them; they both started and looked round, then fell apart in consternation – not because they had been doing anything wrong, but because it was Gregory, and he evidently thought they had.

“He gave them one look, that was all, slightly raised his hat, and passed on.

“They were both so astonished that they stood there staring after him until he was out of sight.

“Then Grey exclaimed: ‘Oh, I say! This is nonsense, you know. I’ll go after him and bring him back.’

“But the girl was hurt and angry. ‘No, no,’ she cried. ‘If he cannot trust me, let him go.’

“‘Oh, but I say – do let me go and explain?’

“‘No, certainly not,’ she rejoined emphatically. ‘Promise me – the least you can do is to promise me that you will not offer him any explanation whatever. That is my business. Promise!’

“‘Of course, I must if you make a point of it.’

“‘You will not explain now or at any other time, unless I release you from your promise?’

“‘Certainly, I will not, if that is what you wish. I have no option but to promise if you wish it, seeing that I got you into the difficulty. But, all the same, I think you are making a mistake.’

“‘That is my business, she repeated coldly.

“‘Oh, quite so,’ he replied. ‘But I cannot see how *I* have deserved your displeasure. Shall I see you home?’

“‘No – no, thank you. Oh, I wish I had never come!’

“She walked away as she spoke, and left him wondering at her.

“She hurried home, half hoping to find Gregory there, waiting for an explanation; but he had not been. Her first impulse was to write to him, but here her foolish pride stepped in, and she could not do it. So she suffered through the long night of suspense, alone, without a word, and weighed down by a cruel sense of injustice.

“But surely he would come next day – not in the morning, for he was busy then, but in the evening, on his way from work. That was always their hour together.

“Evening came, however. Every minute of it was a separate throb of pain. It came and passed, and the night wore on to another day, and another, and another, but Gregory made no sign.

“The girl was distracted. She felt herself condemned without a hearing, and raged at the thought. Once she wrote to reproach him, but tore the letter up. Her pride would not let her make the first advance. Certainly, appearances were against her, but he should have suspended judgement until he knew the truth, and not gone off like that without a word. No; she could not make the first advance. Could any girl under such circumstances?

“Towards the end of the month she went away with her friends for an autumn tour.

“When they returned, the branches were bare and brown, and winter was upon them. The girl had become sadly subdued in the interval. It was as if all the life had been taken out of her, but she never complained. Her pride stood her in good stead here; no one should know what she suffered. The little trivial occupations, which are all that a girl in her situation of life has to fritter away her time upon, were punctually performed. Books and music were laid aside; intellectual pursuits no longer interested her. Her mind was for ever occupied with the one thought: her heart ached on always with the one great yearning. If only she could see him, and tell him! Long hours she sat and sewed, there, in that window. She was never idle a moment, and she was always outwardly tranquil, and ready with a cheerful reply if anyone

spoke to her; but oh! if the thoughts within had been traced by her busy hand on that weary work, what a picture they would have made!

“And ever the longing to see him again grew and grew, until at last, to ease the ache, she devised a plan. Every day on his way from work, when it was fine, he had been accustomed to walk home through Kensington Gardens by the path between the old-fashioned flower-borders, where he had surprised her on that fatal occasion practising the step of a new waltz with Grey. Ah, heaven! should she ever have the heart to waltz again? Her plan was to wait for him there, in the walk, and when they met – when they met? she would ask herself doubtfully. There is so little a girl can say until she is questioned; but surely, surely he would ask?”

“Towards evening she put on her things and slipped out.

“The old trees in the gardens, chestnuts, and elms, poplars, sycamores and limes, tossed their branches about, swaying and creaking and groaning in a rising gale. She was glad to pass from under them into the walk between the flower-borders, which were well protected at the back by thick screens of trees and shrubs. She had hesitated a moment as to which path she should take, there where they branch; but the traffic sounded obtrusively from the road, and the wind whistled through the railings on the right, so she went to the left for shelter and quiet. Not that there was much quiet anywhere that evening, for the storm increased, and the wind, rising higher and higher, swished through the bare, brown branches with a continuous roar, like the shock of bursting seas; while beyond, in the road, heavy vehicles rumbled thunderously, and there were hoarse cries as of men clamouring for help.

“The girl fled up the walk. The short day closed in rapidly, and darkness came dropping down upon her like a curtain. Where was he? Would he come? Gregory! Gregory!

“She reached the Albert Memorial without having seen a soul, save a park-keeper, who warned her to keep away from the trees, for a man had just been badly hurt by a branch which the wind snapped off like a piece of barley-sugar.

“Gregory did not come that evening; nor the next, which was as still as the first had been stormy; but she persevered. She went again – went regularly, until it became the habit of her life to go every day. Sometimes there fell a drizzling rain, and sometimes she could not see for the fog, while often there was frost and snow, and bitter winds that pinched her. But winter wore itself out at last, and spring set in, bringing, in a long procession, the flowers! Crocus and snowdrop in purple and orange and white, and heavy-headed yellow daffodils, shone in the grass or brightened the borders, and crimson told when the tulips came. There were rifts of blue in the sky, and the birds rejoiced. Wood-pigeons began to coo, blackbirds to warble, and, all in an ecstasy, the thrushes sang.

“After the long disappointment of the winter, the girl looked up enlivened. ‘I would rather he came now,’ she thought. ‘This will be a better welcome for him than fog, and snow, and sleet.’

“The first faint flush of green appeared on the trees; buds were bursting. Then, a little while, and the leaves were out in full, and a riot of happy life began in the gardens. Nurses, in their white dresses, sat together in groups, sewing and chatting, with watchful eyes that wandered off continually to their children, their charges, who prattled and played on the grass. Chairs were brought out, and quickly sorted themselves into pairs beneath the trees, and young lovers came and took them, and because it didn’t suit them to see, they seemed to fancy themselves unseen. There were lovers, too, who were not so young, but who were all the more ardent on that account, perhaps, knowing that their time was short. And all the time the procession of the flowers flowed on in a continuous stream of colour and perfume. Wisteria and horse-chestnut bloomed, lilac, laburnum and may. In the South Flower Walk the borders were aglow, wallflowers scented the air, and then the syringa came, and the rose; and the honey-sweet scent of the limes dealt death to the bee.

“Across the Long Water, under the trees, the peacocks spread their gorgeous tails, and strutted and mewed. Ducks flew in pairs to their nesting grounds, and at sunset the coo of the wild pigeon sounded with soothing after the long hot day. The merry, mad season came to its height. Streams of carriages, gay as flower-beds with summer dresses and parasols, added to the importunate rumble of the unseen traffic. The air was full of music, of drum and band, and wandering organ. It was an ideal love-time²²², and the girl throbbed and ached to be in perfect accord with all the glad young life about her, but throbbed and ached in vain. He never came. Other lovers there were who offered themselves in plenty, but were firmly refused. In the whole wide world there was only one for the girl.

“The summer glory of the full foliage passed. Leaves were shredded by a storm or two, then grew russet and reddened to their fall. The nests were deserted, and the songs were hushed. A few flowers lingered in the South Flower Walk, but were all bedraggled. The breeze was apt to be chilly in the evening now, and only lovers lingered in the gardens. Autumn was on the earth again, and winter was nearing. And presently winter was with them once more, all bare and black, and after that again, the green and golden glory of the spring. And still the girl waited, and still he did not come. By this time, however, she had somehow ceased to ache with expectation. Her heart no longer stood still when she saw a young man in the distance, nor sank with disappointment when one approached, and passed, and proved to be a stranger. The pain was no longer acute; time had deadened it. Yet she waited for him because she *must* tell him, and she knew he *would* come; but whether it were sooner or later no longer mattered so much.

“She used to sit by the hour together on one particular seat in the South Flower Walk – there where the weeping birch reaches across to embrace the hawthorn opposite; and, in the spring, the splendid wisteria covers them both with purple and green. On wet days it was dry there, and so she could sit in shelter, keeping her vigil, and dreamily watching the raindrops fall from the leaves and sink in the sandy soil. When it was fine, she interested herself in the life about her, in the trees and the flowers, and in the people who came and sat beside her, and chatted freely of their own affairs, unmindful of the motionless girl on whose impassive face they detected no expression, nothing but the settled calm which comes of contemplation. The rumble on the road beyond sounded like the sea when she was conscious of it, but the ear becomes accustomed to continuous sound, and, for the most part, she was not conscious of it. Yet her mind was always occupied. She was nearer to Nature now than she had ever been, nearer to knowing what it was that moved her when she heard the rustle of the breeze in the silver birches, and nearer to finding a word for the strange sensation that came of seeing the level limbs of the cedar show dark and clear against a bright clear sky. She was no longer a trivial girl, but a woman now.

“It is not in the crowds that we learn to live. All her life she had been surrounded by people, and they had not helped her. It was out in the green gardens that she found her better self.²²³ Wandering about them, alone, a mere onlooker with an aching heart, had taught her to appreciate the dignity of life as nothing else could have done. She had perceived that storms of feeling do damage; that nothing excessive in the way of emotion is worth the reaction; that life is worth living when it can be lived without haste and calmly, up to a high ideal – not otherwise. Such thoughts, borne in upon her in her solitude, were often the outcome of incidents she witnessed, such as the waxing and waning of love affairs, the misunderstandings of uncongenial couples, and the jarring which might be so easily avoided

²²² *an ideal love-time*: Grand uses the same phrase in “Eugenia” (58).

²²³ “*It was out in ... better self*”: Grand regularly refers to the beneficial effects of the natural world on her characters. In “A New Sensation,” Lady Flora finds that being surrounded by the countryside helps her “to come into possession of her better self” (143).

by ordinary good manners, not to mention good feeling, the fear of wounding, and the will to please.

“Sometimes she sat the whole evening on the seat beneath the weeping birch, and sometimes she wandered off under the horse-chestnuts which border the open grassy space behind the South Flower Walk, until she came to the Lancaster Walk, where she would linger, looking at the sunset. She watched it for a long time one evening in particular, a lovely evening. The whole western sky glowed like burnished copper, then gradually melted into the tenderest tints of daffodil, green and grey. The trunks of the old trees, standing out in sharp relief against the brightness, cast long violet shadows; and in the last slanting rays of the sun the grass shone iridescent. But every minute modified the colours, until at last all were absorbed in the gradual grey. The girl watched till a filmy vein of mist, rising from the Round Pond, slowly enwrapped the trees; then she sighed as if satisfied, and returned to her accustomed seat, where she sat, idly seeing, without caring to note, the little brown sparrows taking a dust-bath on the path before her, and the little black cat that came creeping out from under the railings, stealthily stalking them. They were too wary for her, however, and escaped. Then the little black cat came and made friends with the girl, and with two ladies who were also sitting on the seat.

“One of the ladies said: ‘A black cat brings good luck,’ and the words set themselves like a refrain to the girl’s reflections. Good luck! good luck! What is good luck, and could it come to her?

“She sat with her eyes on the ground, so lost in thought that all but her own inner consciousness was blotted out, and when at last she looked up, she was surprised to find herself alone. Sparrows, ladies, little black cat, all had disappeared. Night was coming on apace. There was no one in sight but one solitary man with a paper in his hand, who approached in a leisurely way, reading as he came. The girl watched him without interest until he was close beside her, and then she recognized him with a start. What she waited for had happened, and there she sat, staring stupidly, unable to articulate a word. For a moment it seemed as if he would pass on without seeing her, but he happened to look at the seat – just gave a glance, and was passing on, when something in her attitude struck him as familiar, and he looked again.

“‘Oh!’ he exclaimed, returning a step, and stopping in front of her. ‘I beg your pardon. I thought I knew you. How do you do?’

“There was no emotion in his voice. It was as if he had met some casual acquaintance and greeted her pleasantly.

“‘I am quite well, thank you,’ she answered in the same tone.

“‘That’s right,’ he said, folding up his paper. ‘There is nothing like health – and after health, wealth. Do you take any interest in stocks and shares – the money market?’

“‘None whatever,’ she replied.

“‘Ah!’ he observed. ‘Ladies don’t, as a rule. All that is done for them. It is very interesting, though, when you get well into the way of it.’

“He put the paper into his pocket as he spoke, and raised his hat to cool his head. His hair had grown thin on the temples, and he was otherwise altered and aged, curiously aged in the time. His figure had thickened, and his face was that of a well-fed professional man who finds sufficient satisfaction in his day’s work and his dinner without troubling about anything else.

“‘Do you often come here?’ he asked, but quite evidently merely by way of something to say.

“‘Yes, almost every day,’ she answered.

“‘Ah, so do I,’ he said. ‘I walk back this way from my work. The exercise does me good. But I generally take the other road,’ he added, waving his stick in that

direction. ‘Well, good-bye. I mustn’t be late for dinner. Glad to see you looking so well.’ With which he raised his hat, and walked on briskly.

“It would have been ten times better for the girl if he had never come at all – if she had gone on watching and waiting, leading a life of happy contemplation, in communion with Nature²²⁴, in charity with all men, finding what happiness there is in hope. Now all that was over. In the interval, while her trivial girl’s minds had been expanding, growing in strength and beauty, she that she had begun to reach up to the highest ideal of life and conduct, his mind had contracted. It had been set on sordid business concerns, until her image had faded from his consciousness, and with it every higher aspiration, leaving him one of those men who care for nothing but mere worldly success and animal well-being.

“She had taken the wrong road, you see – the girl I tell you of – in every sense of the word,” Lady Grace concluded.

“And did she die?” the other girl asked.

“No,” Lady Grace replied, smiling. “She didn’t even have a long illness, as they do in the story books. When he was out of sight, she just got up and went home dispirited. Next day she returned to the gardens, but all that had hitherto been hope in her was now a blank.

“But that was all?” the girl exclaimed.

“Yes, that was all. He never married, and she lived alone.”

“But that might have happened in any case.”

“True. And he ought not to have suspected her. But if she had done the right thing to begin with, if she had given him the explanation to which he was entitled, instead of waiting until it was too late, all might have ended otherwise. I think I know what happened. He was a sensitive man and obstinate, and had expected her to summon him. As she did not do so, he concluded she had cast him off, and set himself to forget her. A word would have made it all right at first, but, in her foolish pride, she would not utter it. She preferred to wait in that romantic manner until they met by chance – but when at last they met, his heart had hardened.”

The girl rose to go. She was very grave. “Good-bye, Lady Grace; I will write to him,” she said.

“You will do well,” Lady Grace replied. “When one is in the wrong, it is always best to acknowledge it.”

²²⁴ *Nature*: “nature” (EIM).

The Butcher's Wife²²⁵

First published in *The London Magazine: A Magazine of Human Interest* XV (October 1905): 283-9, as 'The Triumph of Mrs Trapp'.

The following text is transcribed from *Emotional Moments*. London: Hurst and Blackett, 1908, 243-73.

THE butcher's wife was down on her knees scrubbing the floor, when a customer entered the shop.

"Good morning, Mrs. Barny²²⁶," she said, getting up and wiping her hands on her apron. "What can I do fur yew?"

"Good morning, Mrs. Durham²²⁷," Mrs Barny rejoined, then glanced round the shop superciliously.

"Monday's none too good a day fur choice," said Mrs. Durham apologetically – there being but little meat displayed. "My man 'e doesn't 'old wi' 'aving only the best up 'ere, the pick, as you may say, so we're soon sold out. At the other shop down the town 'e's got to 'ave all sorts."

She fixed her eyes on a particular loin of mutton as she spoke, and set her mind on getting rid of it; and involuntarily the customer turned her attention to that piece, although it was beef she had come to purchase.

"What might mutton be this morning?" she asked at last.

"Well, there's a nice line," said Mrs. Durham, unhooking it and throwing it on the block. "It's in prime condition fur cooking, and 'ud be fust rate either biledwi' mashed turnips or roast wi' onion sauce and browned pertatoes. Or you might 'ave currant jelly. There's some as likes currant jelly best; and it do go nice wi' well-browned pertatoes."

Mrs. Barny's mouth began to water.

"I did think o' doing this 'ere line fur my man's dinner to-day," the butcher's wife pursued dispassionately; "but we 'ad mutton yesterday. It were the other end o' this werry piece, so I don't deceive you when I ses it's good."

The butcher had entered the shop from the back while his wife was speaking, and now joined in the discussion. He was a large, bland man, with a fat voice, and an air of opulence²²⁸ that impressed his customers favourably. "Morning," he said, speaking shortly, like one with no time to waste upon words. "You needn't put my name i' the pot tidday, wife, fur I'll not be 'ere. Business is business, Mrs. Barny. There's no more rest fur the good nor fur the wicked²²⁹, wotever the passons may say – i' this world, a'tall events."

Mrs. Barny shook her head in acquiescence, then looked stolidly at the meat, as though, with regard to that part of the argument, she was still unconvinced.

²²⁵ At the bottom of the first page, the information "Copyright by Sarah Grand in U.S.A., 1905" is given. The two illustrations are by W.D. Almond. William Douglas Almond (1866-1916) was a well-known artist and illustrator whose work featured prominently in books and magazines during the 1890s. In the same issue of the magazine is an article by James Barr, "The Fighting Life of Nelson" and Chapter X of E. Nesbit's *The Railway Children*. Each issue of *TLM* comprised 120 pages and was priced at 4 1/2d.

²²⁶ Mrs. Barny: "Barney" (*TLM*).

²²⁷ Mrs. Durham: "Mrs. Trapp" (*TLM*).

²²⁸ opulence: "affluence" (*TLM*)

²²⁹ "rest ... fur the wicked": Isa. 48.22; Isa. 57.21.

But the butcher's wife persisted. "Meat's going up," she said. "But I could let yer 'ave this 'ere line fur" – she held up her head as though in calculation – "well, as it's Monday, let's say tenpence-'apenny. It 'ud be elevenpence to anybody else."

Mrs. Barny glanced round as though un-allured, then seemed to return to the subject for want of a better. "Wot's it weigh, that line?" she asked.

The butcher's wife slapped it on to the scales. "Fiv' pounds all but two ounces," she said. "Say four and three-quarters, and I'll let yew 'ave it for tenpence."

"Well, thank yew, I'll take it, then," the other rejoined, and the onlooker might have seen signs of complacency overspread the countenance of each party to the bargain on its conclusion.

The butcher hastened to turn attention into another channel. "And 'ow 'your good man?" he asked. "I 'eard 'e was at the poll, woting fur the member²³⁰ fur Woman's Suffrage."²³¹

"Then you wasn't misinformed," said Mrs. Barny, looking him straight in the face defiantly.

The butcher shook his head. "Well," he rejoined deliberately, "wot/allusses is a man's a right to 'is own opinion –"

"And a woman, too, I 'ope," Mrs. Barny interjected.

"And a woman too, if yew like," the butcher allowed, but dubiously. "Fur myself, I don't 'old wi' no women's rights – no, nor any on 'em new-fangled ideas. Give me a woman as stays at 'ome, and looks after 'er man and the children. That's 'erspere. And I allusses, if she does 'er dooty there, I ses, she'll 'ave enough to do, I ses; and any decent man 'ud give me the right on it."

The butcher's wife took the meat from the scales, threw it on the block, picked up the chopper, and began to joint the loin emphatically; the butcher looked on with approval.

"And 'ow about the women as 'as no 'usbandsnor children?" Mrs. Barny asked, fixing him with her keen, dark eyes.

"Ah," said the butcher largely, "that's argyment."

Mrs. Barny took the meat and put it into her market basket, and the butcher's wife went back to her scrubbing.

"You may be right, and you may be wrong," Mrs. Barny observed temperately. "But what *I* ses is give *me* a woman as won't be put upon."

"Oh, there I'm with yew," said the butcher. "I ses that too." And he beamed encouragement on his wife at her scrubbing.

"But I don't 'old wi' no woman making 'erself the laughing-stock o' the place wi' these 'ere women's rights trash. I'd not like to see no wife o' mine 'emeaning of 'erself that way. I likes a woman to be a woman, *I* does. What I ses is, a woman's a woman and a man's a man. There's no argying round *that* fact." He ran his fingers up and down the steel which he held in his hand. Mrs. Barny hitched her basket up on to her arm. The butcher's wife kept on scrubbing.

"You've 'it it there," Mrs. Barny agreed. "But w'en things don't work out right, 'ow are yew going to settle 'em? There's women as wants to do men's work, you say – for my own part, I wonder at 'em. But I don't know any sich. What I do know is as there's women as *hes* to do men's work, 'cos the men ain't man enough to do it theirselves – men in a big way

²³⁰"*member*": George Lansbury MP (1859-1940): prominent supporter of women's rights throughout his career and leader of the Labour Party, 1932-35.

²³¹"*Woman's Suffrage*": Woman's Suffrage was a hotly debated topic in the late 1890s and early 1900s. In 1897 the National Union of Woman's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) was formed with Millicent Fawcett at the helm and in 1903 the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) was founded under the leadership of Emmeline Pankhurst. Sarah Grand was a founder member of the Women Writer's Suffrage League, formed in 1908.

o' business, too. They go about spendin' the money on thelselfes which their wives, pore things, 'as to stay at 'ome to make. 'Ow are yew going to manage about that?"

The butcher laughed constrainedly. "I guess it's more fools they, then," he observed, as though that settled it.

His wife kept on scrubbing.

Mrs. Barny pursed up her lips and departed.

"Well," said the butcher, "if she ain't 'ad enough o' argyfyng fur one day, I 'ave. And that's a woman all over, their tongues are nivver²³² at rest."

His wife went on scrubbing.

He seemed to hesitated a little, then he rolled up his apron, tucked it in round him, and took himself off.

His wife took no notice of his going; but when she had finished her scrubbing, and got up off her knees, her face was set firmly; and it was not the face of a woman who would waste words in futile discussion if there were anything else to be done.

For the rest of the day she toiled, seeing to her house, her children, the books, and such customers as came; but they were few, for the people, as they passed, just glanced at her scanty show of meat, and then went to the well-furnished butcher's opposite. And always, as she observed them, the set of Mrs. Durham's²³³ face grew harder.

It was late when her husband returned, and he was evidently the worse for drink. The tea-things still awaited him, spread out in the little parlour behind the shop.

"Shillern in bed?" he hiccupped genially. "Thash right! Ishsomethin' like 'omew'ena 'ard-worked man comish in an' finsh tea ready an' chil-chillerni' bed. ThashwotI shay. Gimme a woman ash stays at 'ome. That's womansh sphere. I allussay , Mary, you're shummat like a woman."

He had lurched heavily into a seat beside the table while he spoke.

She turned round on him, and set her arms akimbo. "Now, look 'ere, 'Enery," she flashed forth, "I give yew fair warnin', once fur all. I don't 'old wi' no argyfyng no more nor yew do. So I tell yew now straight. I may be summat of a woman, as yew say, but if yew don't mend yer ways, you'll find I can be summat of a man to."

She gave a determined nod, compressed her lips, and began to make him some tea. He stared at her stupidly.

"Yes, that's what you'll drive me to," she pursued. "Mrs. Barny 'ad a right of it, whether she meant it fur yew or not. But I guess there isn't a soul in the place as doesn't know that we're on the border o' ruin all along o' yew. I don't knew wot yew mean by women's rights and that, but if women's rights consist in not lettin' a man go wrong, then I 'olds wi' 'em; an' I'll mak' yew 'old wi' 'em too, afore I've done, now I tell yew – for the sake of the children."

There was a catch in her breath, and she paused. Then she flashed forth again: "Shame on yew, 'Enery Durham, to carry on as yerdoin', an' yew the father of a family. *But*" – she brought her clenched right hand down smack on the palm of her left – "But I'll not 'ave it no longer. So I give yew fair warnin'. Yew've got to be 'ome, day in, day out, fur yer meals, reg'lar; and no more public 'ouses²³⁴ in between times; but yer business done, or I'll know the reason why!"

"Oh! soyew'll know the reason why, will yew?" he mocked morosely. "Well, we'll see. We'll see 'oo's²³⁵ master."

²³²"niver": "never" (TLM). Grand clearly edited this for inclusion in *EM* to keep it consistent with the rest of the colloquial speech.

²³³Mrs Durham's: "her" (TLM).

²³⁴"public 'ouses": "public-'ouse" (TLM).

²³⁵"'oo's": "who's" (TLM). See note 232.

"Yes," she said, standing over him and fixing him with her determined eyes. "We'll see."

He glowered at her. "Yew 'old yer tongue!" he roared. "Yer plash is to love, honour, and obey – obey, I shay. Yew're²³⁶ a nice un, yew are! toshtan there, jawin' yer lawful 'usband! Gimme a woman as don't gi' a man no lip, I shay – no lip, d'ye 'ear? That's wot I shay, an' I sticks to it."

A customer came into the shop at that moment, and she went to serve him. When Mrs. Durham came back she took up her sewing. There was no sign of disturbance on her countenance, but her needle flew.

Her husband sat watching her for a little, as if he had just discovered something specially interesting in her; then he fell to cogitating, with his eyes fixed on the floor.

At last he looked up and said solemnly: "I'd like to see the woman as 'ud come a-domineerin' over²³⁷ me! Now, I'd jest like to see that female!" He seemed to expect an answer, but his wife sewed on steadily as though she had not heard.

During the evening the butcher continued to repeat the phrase, muttering it to himself again and again, and then bursting out with it – hurling it at her, as it were.

"I'd jest like to see the woman as 'ud come a-domineerin' over me! Now, I'd jest like to see that female!"

But the butcher's wife said nothing.

* * * * *

Things did not mend, however. Day after day the butcher's wife did all the work, while the butcher did all the play; the hard-earned money melted, and all the business that did not go to the dogs went to the butcher opposite.

In the principal public-houses in the town the butcher's was one of the most familiar figures. He might be seen in one or another at any hour of the day, and often late into the night, standing beside the counter, or leaning up against it, with a glass beside him, laying down the law; and he had one of those big voices that boom. Everybody else was shouted down when he began. If people contradicted him he roared at them, and silenced them as satisfactorily to himself as if he had convinced them with honest argument. His favourite theme was the monstrous pretension of the women of the present day, and the refrain to all that he said was always the same: "I'd jest like to see the woman as 'ud come a-domineerin' over me! Now, I'd jest like to see that female!"

And the sentiment was extremely popular in public-houses, where, however often it might be repeated, it never failed to be cordially received, and acclaimed by those present with deep "'ear, 'ears," as though it had been "Rule Britannia," or "The Queen, God bless 'er!"

Reports of the butcher's doings were continually brought by customers to the butcher's shop, but the butcher's wife said nothing. Only her lips became ever more tightly compressed, and she went about her business with the air of one who must make haste. Whether she chopped, scrubbed, or sewed, she did it with emphasis, and expressed determination in the way she put the kettle on the fire or shut the door. Anyone who watched her might have known that something was coming; but no one watched her. People admired her, pitied her, or blamed her, according to the size of their own hearts; but none of them saw what was brewing. In fact, it is probable that she did not foresee it herself – that she acted when the time arrived on what we understand by impulse – I say what *we understand*,

²³⁶"Yew're": "you're" (TLM). See note 232.

²³⁷"over": "ower" (TLM).

because I suspect that if we did but know, we should find that law underlies even the most apparently isolated of our impulses, which would appear as the outcome of connected circumstances, could we but see the circumstances consecutively; so that we only do what we must, whether we like it or not, when we act decisively.²³⁸

At any rate, although the butcher's wife grew more and more desperate, after that first threat she never opened her lips on the subject of her husband's misdeeds, nor did she make any other move to reclaim him, until at last –

It was one summer evening, and everybody who was at leisure in the place was out and about – that is to say, everybody who was anybody to the butcher and his wife, the whole of their little world.

The butcher's wife had had a hard day. The weather had been stifling, much meat went wrong beyond the power of pickle to cover its defects; customers were scarce, and the few who came were carping. Some people's tempers are as bad as the meat in hot weather; strive as they may to keep them, their owners inevitably lose them sooner or later.

Towards evening Mrs. Barny came into the shop.

"Well, Mrs. Durham," she said, glancing round, "an' 'ow's business?"

"Nicely, thank you, Mrs. Barny," the butcher's wife rejoined – speaking, of course, from the point of view of business, not of truth; trade convention, like many other conventions with which we are acquainted, prohibiting truth when it does not tend to encourage a customer.

Mrs. Barny sniffed suspiciously, and put her basket down on the counter with a slap that set the bluebottles buzzing about the shop. She always dealt with Mrs. Durham, because she conceived she could drive a better bargain with her than with most; but all Mrs. Durham's customers left the shop under that delusion. She was an excellent business woman.

"I shouldn't 'ave thought meself it was a good time – not fur meat," Mrs. Barny remarked, glancing significantly at an iridescent leg of mutton.

"Well, it is and it isn't," the butcher's wife answered dispassionately. "There are bits 'ere and there that goes, of course; but them as stands the 'eat becomes that tender, my word! they *are* a treat! You don't get nothin' like 'em not w'en the weather's cold, you don't; and I always says, customers' profits²³⁹, wotever we lose."

Her glance had wandered to some nice looking pieces of sirloin while she was speaking, and her shrewd little customer noted the bit upon which it rested. She looked in another direction, however, when she spoke again.

"Is there anything in pertic'lar you'd recommend to-day?" she inquired.

The butcher's wife surveyed the meat as though fastidiously anxious to answer conscientiously. "Well, there are a many nice pieces," she said slowly, "'Ow much would you be wantin'?"

"Oh, a goodish bit," said Mrs. Barny. Then she looked at the little sirloin covetously. "About that much," she added.

"That's sold," said the butcher's wife, with a languid air, as if it really didn't matter to her whether it was or not. Mrs. Barny's countenance dropped. "Leastways," said the butcher's wife, rousing herself up to her conscientious manner again – "leastways, I think –" She consulted one of the books. "No, I'm wrong," she said. "Mrs. Pentreath wanted it cheap, but I don't let a bit like that go cheap. It doesn't pay."

"Not even to a customer?" Mrs. Barny asked, with an insinuating smile.

"Oh, well, of course, we do make a little difference to a reg'lar customer. That's business. I'll say a 'apenny a pound less to yew, for instance."

²³⁸ *In fact ... when we act decisively*: not in in *TLM*.

²³⁹ "customers' profits": "they profits" (*TLM*).

"Not a penny!"

"No, I couldn't, really – not fur a prime bit like that. Even a 'apenny takes a big chip out of the profits, takin' the 'ot weather an' losses into consideration."

Mrs. Barny hesitated. "Well, I'll 'ave it," she said at last, with a sigh. She was not so sure of her bargain on this occasion as she usually was, and her discomfiture was increased, moreover, by what she interpreted as a sign of relief in the manner of the butcher's wife as she weighed the meat and put it into the basket, and also by the pleasant, unofficial way in which she spoke when she remarked while so engaged: "The weather seems to be a-tempting many²⁴⁰ people out."

"Yes," said Mrs. Barny, and malice came into her head as she spoke. "Yes. A'most the 'ole town. I saw *your* good man as I came up the street. But, lor! when doesn't one see 'im! 'E's always out an' about, enjoyin' 'imself like a retired gentleman. But why shouldn't 'e, w'en 'e 'as a wife like you to work fur 'im! 'E's layin' down the law at the 'King and Country' by this time, I reckon. 'E's generally there by now, the most reg'lar of any."

"Oh, indeed," said the butcher's wife.

"Yes, indeed," said Mrs. Barny, somewhat tartly. Then, as that first shot seemed to have failed of its effect, she changed her tactics. "Well, 'e do seem to enjoy 'imself, *your* man, 'e do, an' there's a many as ses 'e's a right of it. But what *Ises* is, if the woman's spere is 'ome, the mansspere is not the public-'ouse; leastways, w'en 'e's got a wife an' children, fur that's the game at which the money melts. I tells *my* man *I'd* not stan' it tame if 'e jined in sech carryings-on, an' the 'old town talkin' and cryin' shame on 'im, *I'd* not. That's wot/*ses*."

"Oh, indeed!" said the butcher's wife dispassionately.

But when her customer had gone, she stiffened into an attitude of deep thought and stood still for some time with her eyes fixed on the ground, and all her attention concentrated on what she had in her mind; so that the world without vanished from her consciousness, and she neither heard the footsteps nor voices of the people passing in the street, nor the buzz of the bluebottles close at hand, nor saw the green boughs of the great trees uplifted, above the low roofs of the houses opposite, to the bright sky, where the sunset colours lingered.

Then all at once she roused herself. The boy came in from the back premises, and she told him to mind the shop awhile, speaking peremptorily. After which she went up stairs, but returned in a very short time, dressed in her best, and took what little money there was in the till. She glanced round the shop before she left it, repeated her order to the boy to look after the place, and then walked off down the street, but not hurriedly. Her air was rather that of a person who is out on accustomed business than of one who is either perturbed or distracted; and the loiterers made way for her, just as lazy loiterers will make way good-naturedly for one who seems for the moment to be better employed than themselves. Most of the people she met knew her by sight, but nobody noticed anything in the least peculiar about her. So may any one of us on occasion wend our wilful way unsuspected through happy, careless crowds of people, who, if they could but see what we had in our minds, would be electrified into such interest as should secure us the most important place in their estimation for the time being.²⁴¹

But the butcher's wife passed on unheeded into the saddler's shop.

And just at that moment the butcher himself was engaged in murdering the English language with much emphasis and to his entire satisfaction at the top of his big voice, to a considerable audience of his fellow-townsmen at the "King and Country."

The "King and Country" was the most brilliant public in the place; you saw there the largest plate-glass windows, the finest row of gas-jets reflected in the many mirrors, the

²⁴⁰"many": "a-many" (TLM).

²⁴¹So may any one of us ... for the time being: not in TLM.

biggest bar, and the best company. You had to pay, of course, for the gas and the glass, the mirrors, the bar and the company; but the extra price, being tacked on to what you consumed, went down easily; besides, what is money to a man when the mood to spend it is upon him? On market days the principal farmers collected at the "King and Country"; but on summer evenings, such as this, when little business was doing in the shops, it was patronized by the principal tradesmen, who used the place, for want of a better, perhaps, for the respectable purpose of conversation rather than for the beverages there to be obtained, of which, as a rule, they partook quite moderately. To this rule, however, there were some unfortunate exceptions, among whom the most notable was undoubtedly the butcher; but that evening he was more intoxicated with his own eloquence than with his potations, as it happened, for he had been holding his audience in agreement on his favourite subject for a considerable time, and was now winding up his speech with the accustomed formula amid much encouragement: "I should jest like to see the woman as 'ud come a-domineerin' over me! I'd jest like to see that female. An' wot I ses I sticks to."

As he uttered the last word, and before it could be acclaimed with the usual "'ear, 'ears," the swing-door was drawn back, and there entered in her Sunday clothes the butcher's wife.

The company at the "King and Country" was struck motionless, stiffened by sheer astonishment. Hands were suspended in the act of raising glasses. Some who held mugs to their mouths kept them there, although they were empty. A barmaid, who was holding a tankard to a tap, let the beer overflow as it listed, while she stared. One man who had a lighted match in his hand did not perceive it when it burnt his fingers; and mouths that had been opened to speak remained open, set immovably.

But after the first surprised glance of recognition, all eyes were turned from the butcher's wife to the butcher. He, like the rest, had stiffened into the attitude in which he stood when the door opened – the attitude into which he had thrown himself in order to give all possible effect to his peroration. His fist, which had rebounded from the thump he gave the counter in order to emphasize those last words, "An' wot I ses I sticks to,"²⁴² remained in the air. But the colour left his face, the alcohol fumes cleared from his brain, and he was suddenly seized upon by a terrible dread.

"Somethin' 'as 'appened!" he ejaculated with dry lips, in a husky voice.

"No, my man," said his wife; "but something is goin' to 'appen. I gave yew fair warnin', but yew wouldn't bewarned, and now you'll suffer the consequences. 'Ere you air and 'ere yew is from mornin' till night, day in, day out, drink, drink, drink – and jaw – an' if yew're not broke this minnit²⁴³ it isn't yer²⁴⁴ fault, and, at any rate, it'll not be long before yew are²⁴⁵ broke if miracles don't 'appen. I've done all that mortal woman can do, both for yew and the business, and I've done yew no good by it. I've argued²⁴⁶ wi' yew and I've let yew alone. I've made yew comfortable, and I've neglected yew. I've done all as I ought, as fur as I know, an' I've maybe done some things as I oughtn't. But be that 'ow it may, it can't be 'elped now. All I know is, I've done everything as I could think of but one thing; and that one thing I've come to do now afore it's too late. I'm 'ere to put the sense of sin in yew through sufferin' by workin' on yerfeelin's in the one way as is left to me. It was borne in upon me this very evenin' that ever is, standin' there in the shop, after I'd 'ad to listen to some remarks on the subject of yer conduct which it wasn't a pleasant thing not fur yer wife to 'ear. I was fair put to after that woman had gone, to think what I should do to save yer, and

²⁴²"An' wot I ses I sticks to": not in TLM.

²⁴³"minnit": "minute" (TLM).

²⁴⁴"yer": "your" (TLM).

²⁴⁵"are": "air" (TLM).

²⁴⁶"argued": "argied" (TLM).

as I cast about in my own mind, these words come to me all of a sudden, an' they're the words of Scripture. An' the moment they come to me I knew it was the Lord 'isself as sent 'em fur a prescription as 'ud cure yew: *'A whip fur the 'orse, a bridle fur the ass, and a rod fur the fool's back!'*²⁴⁷

She had kept her right hand behind her from the moment that she entered, but now she slowly brought it forward,²⁴⁸ and the paralyzed people discovered that she was grasping a heavy brand-new dog-whip.

The butcher fixed his eyes upon it, and his jaw dropped; if it had been a serpent it could not have magnetized him more effectually. And²⁴⁹ his wife gave him no time to recover himself. When she had spoken, she went swiftly up to him, caught him behind by the collar, *jerked him away from the counter, and began to thrash him. All the force which her arm had found by doing his work, by scrubbing, and chopping, and lifting, she put into that thrashing, and nobody interfered. Emphatically the strokes fell, and the butcher wriggled in her determined grasp in a helpless sort of way, but offered no real resistance. He was a man of slow parts, and the onslaught had been so sudden, he was stunned by it. Fissle, fissle, fissle went their feet upon the floor as the lash descended; but that was the only sound. The company looked on with strained attention, and shifted their ground involuntarily to see better or to keep clear of the lash²⁵⁰; but not a single exclamation was uttered, so tense was the moment.²⁵¹*

"There!" said the butcher's wife at last, giving her husband a final shake and push, which settled him in a heap on the floor at her feet. "There! ye miserable drunken wisp²⁵²," she panted, "there yew are, shamed in the eyes of every man as calls 'isself a man in this 'ere town! An' there's nothin' fur yew to do but to sneak off out of the place, or else to stay²⁵³ an' pull yerself together *like* a man, an' get up mornin's, an' set to work, an' earn by industry and thrift all the respect yew've lost by idleness an' extravagance. *If* yer a man, that's wotyew'll do. An' I ask every gentleman 'ere if I 'aven't a right of it!"

"Ear! 'ear!" fell solemnly from all sides as the "Amens" fall in church.

* * * * *

Well, what followed?

Just what one wouldn't have expected.²⁵⁴ The prescription had the desired effect. The butcher did pull himself together, and he went to work with such good purpose, that they made him mayor of the town twice running. But to the end of his days he stuck to his favourite formula, only in a slightly altered form, and he was always a boastful man.

"Well," he would say, "what I've allus said is, I'd like to see the woman as 'ud come a-domineerin' over me. Now, I ses, I'd jest like to see that female. And, praise the Lord, I *do* see that female. There's on'y one woman in this 'ere place as could 'a' done it, an' that woman me own lawful wife. An' if yew'll shew me 'er equal anywhere 'ereabouts, or any other woman as could 'a' done what she did, I'd be greatly obliged to yew."

²⁴⁷ "'A whip fur ... the fool's back!': Prov. 26.3.

²⁴⁸ *She had kept her right hand ... brought it forward*: "She brought her right hand from behind her back" (TLM).

²⁴⁹ *And*: "But" (TLM).

²⁵⁰ *or to keep clear of the lash*: "and to keep clear of the lashes" (TLM).

²⁵¹ *but not a single ... the moment*: not in TLM.

²⁵² "wisp": "swipe" (TLM).

²⁵³ "stay": "stop" (TLM).

²⁵⁴ *Well, what followed? ... have expected*: not in TLM.

The Man in the Scented Coat²⁵⁵

First published in *The Lady's World* VI, no 69 (June 1904): 941-48.

Reprinted in *Dreams, Visions and Realities*. Ed. Stephanie Forward. Birmingham: University of Birmingham Press, 2003, 76-84.

The following text is transcribed from *Emotional Moments*. London: Hurst and Blackett, 1908, 274-302.

JOSEPHA, well known for her talents, much loved for her charming personality, a little alarming to her friends on account of her occasional eccentricities, but always interesting, was having tea late one winter's afternoon with a lady who lived in one of those great sarcophagus houses in Portland Place, a gloomy region, suggestive of merry microbes seeking whom they may devour. Several times Josepha had risen to go, but her friend was loath to lose her, and darkness had descended upon them, the lamps had been lighted and the curtains drawn long before they finally shook hands.²⁵⁶

"How do you mean to get back?" her friend asked.

"By train," Josepha rejoined; "the quickest and warmest way. It is only a step to the station."

They parted at the head of the stairs, her hostess returned to the drawing-room, and Josepha ran down into the hall.

"There is a dense fog, madam," the footman said, standing with his hand on the latch of the door, but hesitating to open it. "Shall I call a cab?"

"Let me see the fog?" she answered.

He opened the door, and the light in the hall fell upon²⁵⁷ what looked like a thunder cloud filling up the aperture. She could see nothing through it, not the twinkle of the nearest lamps²⁵⁸, nor could she hear a sound. For a moment the mist seemed solid as a wall, but the heat of the house meeting it melted its density, frayed it at the edges, and released it, so that it came streaming into the hall, fast filling it with vapour, which rapidly spread itself over everything, gauzily, like a veil, bedimming the brilliant lamps, shrouding the luxurious furnishings, and adding to all that touch of mystery which dignifies commonplace ordinary elegance with interest.

"I never saw anything like it!" she exclaimed, stepping out into the portico.

"You'll surely not attempt to walk, madam," the man remonstrated. "You'll lose yourself the first few yards."

²⁵⁵ On the front cover of the magazine, at the top, appear the words "GRAND SUMMER DOUBLE NUMBER." Although some of the stories are illustrated by named illustrators (Katherine Tynan's story "Children in the Wood" is illustrated by W. Lynt and Violet Hunt's story "Rival Room Mates" is illustrated by S. Webley), Sarah Grand's story is prolifically illustrated by an unnamed artist. It begins on page 940 with a full page illustration of Josepha removing an elaborate hat in front of 'the man in a scented coat' and "Colonel Perturbation," with the caption "Josepha walked up to him proudly, and took off her hat and veil."

²⁵⁶ *Several times Josepha had risen to go ... they finally shook hands*: "Several times Josepha rose to go, but the lady was loath to lose her, and darkness had descended upon them, the lamps had been lighted and the curtains drawn along before they finally shook hands" (TLW).

²⁵⁷ *fell upon*: "streamed out on to" (TLW).

²⁵⁸ *lamps*: "light" (TLW).

“Oh, impossible!” she said. “I know the way so well. And I never was out in anything like this before.”

With the words on her lips, she ran down the steps, and it was as if she had plunged into space, she was so instantly engulfed. In reality she was only a few yards from the door, clinging to an area railing, gasping and giddy, trying to collect herself. The first few breaths of the sulphur-laden fog were²⁵⁹ like pure smoke; she thought for a moment she should suffocate. She was inclined to return to the house, but hesitated, and walked on a little way, guiding herself by the railing. Then she decided that she would go back, and turned about to do so. It was a fatal move, for she had no sooner let go of the railing than she lost it; and at the same time, she discovered that it was impossible to see any houses at all, let alone find a particular one. Whether she had gone round twice in her bewilderment, or come to a turn in the street, she could not tell; but the railing ought to have been on her left, and, with outstretched hand, she moved cautiously sideways, expecting to come in contact with it. The next thing she did, however²⁶⁰, was to stumble off the curb into the roadway. The house she had left in Portland Place was close to a turn, and she now supposed that she had somehow rounded the corner, and was going down another street. If so, it would lead her into Portland Road, and, once there, she thought she should easily find the station, or someone to direct her. So far she had not encountered a soul or heard a sound of traffic, and this silence in a neighbourhood usually teeming with life and movement, had a strange effect upon her – an effect, not exactly exhilarating, but certainly exciting. She found herself being rapidly wound up into the mood for adventures. Her quick imagination began to present possibilities to her. She might easily have to wander on all night, Heaven knew whither; and she might encounter people, desirable or undesirable, but interesting, at all events. She might be run over too – and just as she realized the danger a great thing like a mountain moving loomed up over her, coming down upon her, but at a foot’s pace, fortunately. It was probably an omnibus which had strayed on to the pavement.

“You’d better pull up, John,” a voice shouted hoarsely. “We’re all out on it.”

Josepha was about to address the voice when another vehicle came into her consciousness. This is the only way to express it, for she could neither hear nor see it properly; she just perceived it. Two bright lamps from it made two illuminated circles in the yellow mist, which did not, however, render anything the more distinct²⁶¹.

“Sheer off,” said someone up in the air. “Sheer off if there’s any pusson or thing there, fur I’m dashed if I can either ’old my ’orse still or drive ’im on.”

“Where are we?” Josepha shrieked up to him.

“Blowed if I know, my dear,” he answered. “If it isn’t Peckham it’s Piccadilly, or may be Portland Place.”

“That’s a p-posterous statement,” said the driver of the other vehicle.

“’Old on, mate,” said the first speaker. “You’ll knock me off my box if you do that again.”

Then they both laughed loudly, the horses began to prance on the pavement, making a hideous clattering with their iron hoofs, and Josepha, moving with outstretched hands, got hastily out of the way.

The next thing she realized was greater darkness, if possible, and a current of fresh air. She must have come into a more open space. The fog had affected the gas, and the lamps were either out altogether or reduced to ineffectual sparks. Josepha had stumbled up against a lamp-post, and now stood holding on to it. All about her was absolute silence. Nothing

²⁵⁹ *sulphur-laden fog were*: “sulphur beladen air was” (TLW).

²⁶⁰ *however*: not in TLW.

²⁶¹ *distinct*: “distinct in the fog” (TLW).

moved that she could perceive. It was as if she herself were the centre of a universe of frightful fog.

As she stood there, not knowing what to do next, she suddenly found herself thinking of growing flowers – flowers in a warm garden, with the summer sun on them. It was the perfume of flowers which made her think of them, a heavy perfume, of which she was distinctly conscious for some time before it struck her as strange that there should be an actual perfume in such an atmosphere. She looked round to discover from whence it came – looked, that is to say, if it could be called looking when there was nothing to be seen but a sort of shine through a thick cloud. The perfume had been quite strong when she first noticed it, but now she found that it was growing gradually fainter, and, without any formed intention, she began to walk on, following the direction from which it seemed to come, and guiding herself by the sense of smell instead of the sense of sight. She went on pretty rapidly, moving her arms in front of her, as if she were swimming, to save herself from coming into collision with things; and as she advanced, the perfume became more distinct, so that she knew that she was on the right track. Who was the perfumed person? she wondered, and what should she do when she came up with her – or him? Ask the way, she supposed; and even as she determined to do so, she found in front of her what seemed to be two shadows of unequal height moving in the mist – shadows of men, she concluded, but more by their voices than from what she could see of them as she overtook them. Whether they were the voices of gentlemen or not she had no time to decide, for just as she came abreast of them, a band of roughs, carrying links, rushed out upon them from somewhere, howling a discordant chorus. By the light of the links Josepha now saw, with relief, that they were well-dressed men, and presumably²⁶² gentlemen, whom she had overtaken, and she would have claimed their protection could she have made herself heard; but this was impossible because of the din kept up by the roughs, who had surrounded all three, and were dancing about them, howling and jeering like fiends. The gentlemen seemed singularly alarmed for their own safety, and tried to break through the circle, now on this side and now on that, to the great delight of the louts, who separated as if to let them pass, but when they made for the gap, closed up again with shouts of derision.

Josepha, afraid that if they made their escape she would be left alone in the hands of the enemy, kept close behind them.

One of the gentlemen was tall and thin, the other short and stout. The latter had a white silk muffler wound round his throat, so as to conceal the lower part of his face; and it was from his coat that the strong perfume proceeded.

“My, ain’t ’e a rosebud!” yelled one of the roughs. “You could smell ’im a mile off.”

“I know ’im! I know ’oo the little fat un is,” another shouted excitedly. “I see ’im in the percession, bowin’ like this, wi’ ’is ’at off.”

“It is!” “It is!” “It’s ’im!”

“E’s mufflin’ up ’is ole face.”

“E’s got a beard under ’is muffler.”

“Let’s give ’im three cheers.”

“Let’s duck ’im. We don’t want to support no more blamed²⁶³ expensive royal aristocrats, we don’t.”

“Ere’s a princess, too!”

“Ow much fur a kiss, yer ’ighness?”

The roughs pressed closer and closer. Both gentlemen were too anxious to make their own escape to think of Josepha; but the latter was watching her opportunity. It came of the

²⁶²were well-dressed, and presumably: not in TLW.

²⁶³“blamed”: “blowed” (TLW).

recklessness of their tormentors, who hurried them on, heedless of where they might be going, till finally they ran into a heavy dray, drawn by two huge horses, which had been pulled up close to the curb, and compelled to stop there, fog-bound, waiting for the air to clear. When the lights of the links flared in their eyes, the horses became unmanageable, swerved, plunged, and finally bolted right through the roughs, scattering them. Josepha saw the man in the scented coat wrest a link from one of the lads, and hand it to his companion. Then both set off as hard as they could go, and Josepha followed them. The link was not enough to light them, but they must have known where they were pretty well, for they pursued their way without hesitation, and at such a rate that Josepha could not catch up with them. She called to them, but if they heard, they only hurried on the faster. There was not a soul to be seen but themselves, and not a cab or a carriage. The air was less stagnant now, happily. A breeze had arisen, and was swirling the fog about, and Josepha could both breathe and see better.

The gentlemen turned into what appeared to be a long, wide street, with shops on both sides of it, all of which were shut. Half way up, they dashed at a narrow black door, which seemed to be pinched for room between the shutters of two great shop windows. The man in the scented coat hurriedly thumped on the door in a peculiar manner. It was instantly opened, and he and his companion passed in. Josepha arrived in time to prevent the door being shut again, and entered also, without ceremony. The door must have been worked from above, for there was no one near it. It shut of itself when Josepha let it go. A dim lamp burning on a bracket showed that it opened directly on to a narrow, steep staircase between two walls. The gentlemen had disappeared by this time, and Josepha ran up after them intrepidly. At the top she found herself in a very ordinary sort of parlour, the furniture of which belonged to the green rep period. A round table, with a lamp upon it, stood in the middle of the room, and there were some cheap engravings on the walls. The fireplace was at the end on her left as she entered, and in the recess on the left-hand side of it there stood a tall mahogany bookcase full of books. The tall gentleman had extinguished the link, and now stood fumbling with the bookcase, which presently revolved as if on a pivot, disclosing an inner room beyond. The gentlemen were passing through the aperture when Josepha called, "Stop! Wait for me!" The man in the scented coat turned round in consternation. His face was still half hidden by the muffler, and he spoke through it, with a slight intonation as of a foreigner whose English is excellent, or an Englishman very much accustomed to speak foreign languages.

"May I ask whom I have the honour to address, madam?" he said stiffly.

"Alice in Wonderland," Josepha rejoined. "Oh! I am out of breath! Why didn't you stop when I called to you?"

Both gentlemen stood looking at her much embarrassed. At last the tall one said to the other, "A spy, I suppose, sir. This is extremely unfortunate."

Josepha walked up to him and took off her hat and veil. She was one of the best-known women of the day, her portraits were everywhere, and the man in the scented coat recognized her face the moment he saw it.

"Surely I have the honour to address —," he said, with a bow.²⁶⁴

"That is my name," Josepha answered, curtsying to the pair.²⁶⁵

Then there was an awkward pause. The bookcase had revolved end on to her, leaving an aperture on either side, in which the gentlemen remained standing, the tall one on the right, the short one on the left, looking, from Josepha's point of view, like the little figures

²⁶⁴"Surely I have the honour to address —," he said with a bow: "'Surely I have the honour to address'— he said. His manner was courteous in the extreme" (TLW).

²⁶⁵"That is my name," Josepha answered, curtsying to the pair: not in TLW.

that live in pasteboard castles on cottage mantelpieces, and pop in and out to tell the weather. To her own astonishment, she burst out laughing.

“May I ask, madam,” said the man in the scented coat, very stiffly, “if there is anything we can do to oblige you.”

“Thank you, yes,” Josepha answered, still unable to control her countenance. It was one of her weaknesses that she dearly loved a joke, and never could resist the temptation to indulge in one whatever it might cost her. “I shall be greatly obliged if you will kindly give me food, rest, and shelter till the fog is over, and then see me safe home.”

“*Madam!*—” the tall man began²⁶⁶.

“No, really,” Josepha interrupted him, raising her hand and speaking in a tone of remonstrance; “I could not think of imposing on your good nature to any greater extent. I lost myself in the fog, and don’t in the least know where I am; but I place myself under your protection with confidence, and rely altogether upon your discretion.”

The man in the scented coat bowed profoundly, then stepped out of his aperture as if to make way for her to pass. “I thank you, madam, for your confidence,” he said, “and I promise you that it shall not be misplaced. And to prove that *I* also rely upon *your* discretion, I venture to ask you to come this way –”

“*Sir!*” the tall man remonstrated, popping out of his aperture.

The other waved him back impatiently, and Josepha passed into the inner room; the gentlemen followed her. Then the bookcase, answering to a touch, noiselessly revolved upon its pivot, closing the apertures. They were now in a good-sized apartment, furnished in heavy, costly, hotel fashion, with saddlebag chairs, gilt consoles, and engravings; but no mirrors. In the centre of the room was a table covered with green baize, and on one of the consoles were piles of packs of cards. A large lamp stood in the middle of the table, so shaded that the light fell only on the cloth, the faces of those who might sit round being left in comparative obscurity. Josepha drew her own conclusions from these arrangements, but her countenance remained immovable. She threw herself into an easy chair, pillowed her head on the back of it, and looked up at the ceiling.

“Oh, I am so glad to sit down!” she exclaimed.

The perfectly unaffected, simple, cheerful human nature of her began to delight the man in the scented coat. He took off his muffler, drew up a chair, and sat down to talk to her. Finding him so good-natured, she felt some compunction for imposing her presence upon him. “I do hope my intrusion is not causing you any serious inconvenience,” she said.

“Not at all,” he answered. “I have merely changed a pleasant arrangement for a still pleasanter one. My – eh – that gentleman –”

“Shall we call him Colonel Perturbation for convenience sake?” Josepha suggested.

“By all means; and do me the favour to call me –”

“The Man in the Scented Coat,”²⁶⁷ Josepha ventured, seeing him hesitated.

“Capital!” he said. “Colonel Perturbation will put off the guests I expected in order to leave me full liberty to do my best to entertain the – eh – charming guest I did not expect.”

Colonel Perturbation had been busying himself about the room, and now Josepha saw to her surprise that there was another person present, a sort of waiter-man, of furtive appearance, with a chronic curve in his back as if he were saving himself the trouble of bowing incessantly by holding himself always in the attitude of a bow. He was laying a table, and Josepha observed that everything was being sent up from below on a lift, the shaft of which was on the wall outside, the dishes being taken in through a window, which was

²⁶⁶*The tall man began*: “the tall man began, drawing himself up haughtily” (TLW).

²⁶⁷*The Man in the Scented Coat*: “Mr Edwards” (TLW).

obscured by thick opaque glass, and, when shut, fitted closely. This arrangement prevented any sound being conducted by the shaft. It was also evident that the lift was strong enough to be used on occasion for heavier weights than dishes. Colonel Perturbation busied himself in superintending the arrangements. He had a fair skin tanned to a sandy colour, his hair and moustache being of much the same shade, which gave him that curiously dried-up look fair men sometimes have in middle life. He wore rings up to the first joint of the third finger of either hand, with a variety of stones in them, the different colours of which produced a tawdry effect. The deference which he paid to his stout companion was somewhat intermittent, like that of an inferior who forgets himself every now and then, and presumes.²⁶⁸ While they waited, the Man in the Scented Coat²⁶⁹ kept up an animated conversation with Josepha; but, in spite of the utmost effort to be polite, he could not keep his eyes from wandering to the packs of cards piled upon the console. They were within reach, and at last, as if the temptation were too strong for him, he possessed himself of one of them, stripped off the outside wrapper, and began to stay his hunger to be handling them, by slowly shuffling them, until Josepha, not able to stand it any longer, took pity on him.

“Shall we have a game?” she said.

The change that came over him, the lightening and brightening of his whole being, was extraordinary; but it was pitiable also, and pathetic.

They sat down at the card-table, and began a childish game of betting on the card that should turn up. The luck fluctuated at first from one to the other, but finally set in steadily in favour of the Man in the Scented Coat, and by the time supper was ready he had won all Josepha’s money, and every ornament she had on. The effect of his success was interesting. Beaming about him during the meal, he described, with much animation to Colonel Perturbation, the unexpected runs which had come upon various suits, the curious way in which certain cards had turned up again in pack after pack, proving how impossible it would be to use the same pack twice satisfactorily, as Josepha, to his horror, had suggested that they should. His recollection of the details was extraordinary. Only once was he at fault, and then he called for a fresh pack, and recovered the clue when he had cleared a space, and spread out the cards on the table before him. Josepha watched him as he sat there (they were still at the supper-table) in a high-backed armchair, which he filled to overflowing, holding his bearded chin in his left hand, a part of the pack in his right, and gazing, with absorbed concentration in his large, full eyes, at the cards he had laid out before him on the white cloth; and she could not help thinking of the part such a man might play in life if only he devoted himself with the same conscientious intelligence to nobler pursuits.

Colonel Perturbation having offered Josepha a cigarette, which she accepted, they continued to sit there, smoking and chatting. One subject of interest led on to another, and the time went well enough to be forgotten; and the fog had cleared; and still they sat and talked, and might have continued to sit and talk much longer, too, but for another interruption.

Without warning, the window of the lift flew open, and the waiter-man appeared in a state of breathless agitation.

“Gentlemen —” he gasped.

The gentlemen jumped to their feet.

“Must we take to the lift?” the Man in the Scented Coat demanded.

The waiter-man signified that they must. Colonel Perturbation made for the lift incontinently, but the Man in the Scented Coat waited to secure his silk muffler, and to gather up his winnings from the card-table and pocket them.

²⁶⁸*The deference which he paid to his stout companion was somewhat intermittent ... and presumes:*“The deference which he paid to his stout companion was offensively obsequious” (TLW).

²⁶⁹*The Man in the Scented Coat:* “Mr Edwards” (TLW).

Only one at a time could descend. The Man in the Scented Coat suggested politely that Josepha should go first; but Josepha objected. She did not know what might await her at the bottom – well-water, or a rope, or a dagger being among the possibilities which she rapidly foresaw.

“You’d better go first yourself, sir,” Colonel Perturbation urged in an agitated manner. The Man in the Scented Coat stepped on to the lift, and descended into darkness. There was what seemed to be a long interval before the machine reappeared. When it stopped, Colonel Perturbation almost pushed Josepha on to it. The waiter-man showed her how to work the apparatus, and warned her that it was a goodish way down, but someone would “holler” when it was time to stop. She went on and on so long, however, and at such a rapid rate, that she thought she must be in the bottomless put by the time she heard the shout. There was no light in the lift, and none where she stopped; but the Man in the Scented Coat announced that he was there, awaiting her.

“Hold out your hand to me,” he said, “and don’t be alarmed. I will see you safely home.”

She gave him her left hand, and he hurried her on and on in the dark, all she knew of it being that they were walking on some soft substance, probably clay. She did not see Colonel Perturbation or the waiter-man again, nor did she ask any questions. When at last they stopped, her companion opened a door. It led into a quiet street, and when shut looked like an innocent garden gate in a high brick wall, over which branches of trees showed reassuringly. A close carriage was drawn up to the curb; the door was held open by a servant in black, and Josepha entered at the request of her companion, who followed her, having first asked where she wished to be put down, and repeated to the coachman the address she gave.

“You are a cool-headed lady,” he remarked, as they drove off rapidly.

“Yes, I *am* cool headed,” she answered. “I am fond of life, and devote myself to the study of it in all its phases; and this leads to occasional adventures; but I am prepared for anything. I have a little companion here which I always carry in case of accidents.” As she spoke, she touched his hand for a moment with something hard and cold. “I know that that is a melodramatic touch,” she said. “But the boundary between melodrama and true tragedy is ill-defined; the one passes on to the other often, unexpectedly.”

Her companion sat still for some time, reflecting.

“What shall you say about this adventure?” he asked at last in an easy manner, which, however, did not conceal a very real anxiety from Josepha’s quick intuition. It was still pitch dark outside, but they could see each other distinctly enough by the light of the carriage lamps.

“How do you mean?” she asked blandly.

“Well,” he began, with embarrassment, “will you think it necessary to tell – eh – shall you think our conversation sufficiently interesting to repeat?”

She gave him that smiling look-direct which makes the meaning of an answer somewhat uncertain. “In matters of this kind, I hope I shall always answer to expectation,” she said. This diplomatic reply was as unsatisfactory as she could make it, to punish him for the doubt implied in his question.

He smiled, however, and bowed; then, after a little pause, which she felt to be tentative, he said, “I trust you utterly.”

“Just in so far as you trust me you will find me loyal,” she assured him.

“I hope you will remember this evening not unpleasantly,” he said.

“It will be associated in my mind with many interesting impressions,” she replied.

“May I venture to hope that we shall meet again?” he asked.

She answered slowly, “In that your wishes must be consulted.”

The Man in the Scented Coat

* * * * *

Months passed, and not a single soul had received a hint of that night's adventure – not even a hint that there had been an adventure. Then one day Colonel Perturbation appeared before Josepha carrying a costly present.

“I have been sent,” he said, “to offer this as a tribute of respect to a woman who can hold her tongue.”

“Take back your tribute,” Josepha answered with royal scorn. “It would not have been accepted at any time. But this offer of it to me now means that I have been on my trial all these months. I should have been trusted, not tried. That is my message to your master.”

The Undefinable²⁷⁰

First published in *The New Review*, in two parts, 11 (September 1894): 320-30;
11 (October 1894): 433-42.

Also published in *Cosmopolitan* 17 (October 1894): 745-57.

Reprinted in *Daughters of Decadence: Women Writers of the Fin-de-Siècle*. Ed. Elaine Showalter. London: Virago, 1993, 262-87; *A New Woman Reader: Fiction, Articles and Drama of the 1890s*. Ed. Carolyn Christensen Nelson. Toronto: Broadview Press, 2000, 35-51; *Women Who Did: Stories by Men and Women 1890-1914*. Ed. Angelique Richardson. London: Penguin, 2002, 115-36.

The following text is transcribed from *Emotional Moments*. London: Hurst and Blackett, 1908, 303-58.

A FANTASIA

That certain Something.

RUSKIN.

IT was a hot summer evening, and I had gone into the studio after dinner to sit opposite my last-accomplished work, and smoke a cigarette to add to my joy in the contemplation thereof. It is a great moment even for a great artist when he can sit and sigh in solitary satisfaction before a finished picture. I had looked at it while I was waiting for dinner, and even in that empty hour it had seemed most masterly; so that now, when I may perhaps – if I apologize in advance for the unacademical vulgarism of the idea – be allowed to say that I was comfortably replete, I expected to feel in it that which surpasses the merely masterly of talent (to which degree of excellence ordinary painters, undowered by the divine afflatus, may attain by eminent industry) and approaches the superb – ecstatic. Well, in a word, if I may venture – with all becoming diffidence, and only, it will be understood, for the good-natured purpose of making myself intelligible to the general reader – if I may venture to quote a remarkable critic of mine, a most far-seeing fellow, who, in recognizing the early promise of my work, in the early days when I was still struggling to scale those heights to which I afterwards so successfully attained, aptly described whatever of merit I had then displayed as “the undefinable of genius” – this was what I had come to recognize on the great canvas before me, to feel, to revel in, to *know* in the utmost significance of the term as something all-comprehensive enough to be evident to the meanest man’s capacity in its power to make him feel, while yet remaining beyond the range of language to convey. I had sat some time, however; my cigarette was half finished; the enjoyable sensation of having dined was uninterrupted by any feeling of regret on the subject of what I had eaten. I had, in fact, forgotten what I had eaten, which, when the doctor has put us under stoppages, as the military phrase is, and we have, nevertheless, ventured upon forbidden fruit, I take to be a proof that we have done so with impunity. The balmy summer air blew in upon me freshly from the garden through the south lattice of the studio; blackbird and thrush no longer lilted their love-

²⁷⁰ In *Cosmopolitan* the story is subtitled “A Story of an Artist’s Model.” It was illustrated by W.T. Smedley. William Thomas Smedley (1858-1920) was an American artist, best known for his book and magazine illustrations.

songs – it was late; but a nightingale from the top of a tall tree, unseen, filled the innermost recesses of audition with inimitable sound. The hour, the scene – and the man, I may say – were all that is best calculated to induce the proper appreciation of a noble work of art; and the pale grey shades of evening had been dispelled by the radiant intensity of the electric light; but, although I had reclined in a deep easy-chair long enough to finish a cigarette, not a single fibre of feeling had responded to the call of the canvas upon it. I felt the freshness, the nightingale's note in the stillness; that luxurious something of kinship which comes from the near neighbourhood of a great city with companionable effect when one is well disposed. But the work of art before me moved me no more than a fresh canvas standing ready stretched upon the easel, with paints and palette lying ready for use beside it would have done – not so much, in fact, for such preparations were only made when a new idea was burning in my being to be expressed; I should have been feeling it then; but now I was conscious of nothing more entrancing than the cold ashes of an old one. Yes! cold ashes. Quite extinct, they were, and I found myself forced to acknowledge it, although, of course, I assured myself at the same time that the fault was in my mood of the moment, not in the picture. If I went out into the streets and brought in a varied multitude to gaze, I never doubted but that I should hear them shout again those paeans of praise to which I had long become accustomed – accustomed, too, as we are to the daily bread which we eat without much thought or appetite, but cannot do without. But certainly on this particular evening, while I gazed, persistent thoughts obtruded themselves instead of refined sensations. As I rounded that exquisite arm I remembered now that I had had in my mind the pleasurable certainty that the smiles of the Lady Catherine Claridge, her little invitations to “come when you have nothing better to do – but not on my regular day, you know. *You* will always find me at home,” and her careless-seeming hint of a convenient hour, meant as much as I cared to claim. There had been in her blush, I knew, the material for my little romance of that season. And then, as I flecked in those floating clouds, I had been calculating the cost of these little romances, and deciding the sum it would be necessary to set upon this picture, in order to cover the more than usually extravagant outlay which would be entailed by her gentle ladyship's idea of my princely habits. When I was engaged upon those love-limpid eyes, it had occurred to me to calculate how much a year I should lose by spending the price of this picture, instead of reserving it as capital to be invested; and here I had asked myself, was it wise to lavish so much on one caprice? Then suddenly my mind had glanced off to the last *Levéé*²⁷¹. I had certainly been slighted on that occasion – obviously neglected – allowed to pass with the kind of nod of recognition which does for a faithful lackey. At the recollection of it my forehead contracted with anger, the pride of performance forsook me, my effect had not come to those eyes, and I threw down my brush in disgust. I had gone over all that ground afterwards, for it is well known that I am nothing if not painstaking, and, indeed, my work is everywhere quoted in proof of the assertion that genius obviously *is* an infinite capacity for taking pains. But now again, as I gazed, the effect that I had tried for was absent; the whole work answered no more to my expectation than if it had been altogether stale, flat, and unprofitable; and there gradually took possession of me a great amazement, not to say alarm, as I forced myself to acknowledge that there must be some blunting of my faculties to account for the powerlessness of the picture to move me as it ought. What could be the matter with me? Loss of nerve-power? Visions of delicate artistic susceptibilities injured when not actually wiped out by the coarse influences of indigestion, horrid possibilities, had begun to assail me rudely, when the ringing of the studio bell suddenly startled me back to my normal state of mind. It rang once sharply, and, although it is not my habit to answer bells for myself, I arose on some

²⁷¹ *Levéé*: A formal reception.

unaccountable impulse, and, going to the outer door of the studio, which opened on to a flight of steps leading down into the road, did so on this occasion.

A young woman was waiting without. The electric light from behind me fell full upon her face. I did not think her particularly attractive in appearance, and the direct look of her eyes into mine was positively distasteful. It was the kind of glance which either fascinates or creates a feeling of repulsion. Coming from a creature whose exterior does not please, such a glance inevitably repels, especially if there is anything commanding in it, and more particularly the command of a strong nature in an inferior position, when it is likely to cause a degree of irritation which would, amongst unrefined people, result in an outburst of rough hostility; but with us, of course, only expresses itself in a courtly coldness.

“Do you want a model?” the young woman asked, speaking without a particle of respect or apology, as if to an equal.

I would have answered in the negative shortly, and shut the door, but for – I had it just now, but for the moment it has escaped me. However, I shall remember it by and by, and for the present it is only necessary to state that I did not say “No,” and shut the door. I hesitated.

“You can’t tell, of course, until you see me,” the applicant pursued in a confident tone. “I had better come in and show myself.”

And involuntarily I stood aside to let her pass, conscious at the same time that I was bending my body from the waist, although I certainly never meant to bow to a model. My position necessitates so many bows, however, that it has really become more natural for me to acknowledge the approach of a fellow-creature so, than in any other posture.

Ah! now I recall what it was that had made me hesitate – her voice. It was not the voice of a common model. And as she passed into the studio before me now, she struck me as not being a common person of any kind. Someone in distress, I thought, driven to earn an honest penny. All sorts of people come in this way to us artists, and we do what we can for them without asking questions. Sometimes we get an invaluable model with distinct marks of superior breeding, in this way; a king’s daughter, displaying in every lineament the glory of race, which inspires. Oftener it is a pretty “young lady” out of a situation. The latter appears in every academy by the name of some classical celebrity. But then, again, we have applicants like the present, not attractive, whom it would be a folly to engage to sit, however willing we may be to oblige them by employing them. In such cases a sovereign or so is gratefully accepted, as a rule, and there the matter ends; and I had put my hand in my pocket now as I followed my visitor in, thinking for a moment that I could satisfy her with such substantial proof of sympathy, and get rid of her; but directly she stopped and turned to me, I felt an unaccountable delicacy about doing so. “This is no beggar, no ordinary object of charity,” I thought; “it would be an insult to offer her anything that she has not earned.”

She had placed herself full in the light for my inspection, with her back to my picture, and I looked at her attentively, gauging the possibility of making anything out of such a face, and the rather tall bundle of loose, light wraps which was the figure she presented.

“Hopeless!” was my first impression; “I’m not sure,” the second; and the third, “Skin delicate, features regular, eyes” – but there the fault was, I discovered, not in the shape or colour, but in the expression of them. They were the mocking eyes of that creature most abhorrent to the soul of man, a woman who claims to rule and does not care to please; eyes out of which an imperious spirit shone independently, not looking up, but meeting mine on the same level. Now, a really attractive, womanly woman looks up, clings, depends, so that a man can never forget his own superiority in her presence.

“Well?” she broke in upon my reflections, prolonging the word melodiously.

And instantly it occurred to me that as I had not yet begun another serious work, I might as well do a good deed, and keep my hand in at the same time, by making a study of her. Certainly, the type was uncommon.

“Yes,” I replied, speaking, as if I were receiving instead of conferring a favour, although I cannot understand why I should have done so. “You may come tomorrow and give me some sittings. Be here at ten.”

She was turning away without a word, and she had not ventured to look at the picture; but this I thought was natural diffidence, so I called her back, feeling that a man in my position might, without loss of dignity, give the poor creature a treat.

“You may look at the picture if you like,” I said, speaking involuntarily very much as I should have done to – well, to the Lady Catherine Claridge herself!

She glanced at the picture over her shoulder. “Pooh!” she said. “Do you call that a picture?” And then she looked up in my face and laughed.

When next I found myself thinking coherently, it was about her teeth. “What wonderful white ones she has!” I was saying to myself. But the studio door was shut, and all echo of her departing footsteps had died away long before I arrived at that reflection.

The next morning I was in the studio before ten o’clock, and the first thing I did was to cover my new work with a curtain, and then I set my palette. But a quarter past ten arrived and no model. Half-past – this was hardly respectful. Eleven, twelve, luncheon, light literature, a drive, the whole day – what could the woman mean? I had intended to take tea with Lady Catherine, but just as I approached the house, I was suddenly seized with a curious dislike of the visit, an unaccountable distaste for herself and everything about her, which impelled me to drive on past the place without casting a glance in that direction. I wondered afterwards if she had seen me, but I did not care in the least whether she had or not.

After dinner, as on the previous evening, I retired to the studio to enjoy a cigarette; but this time I sat with my back to the picture, before which the curtain still remained drawn, and looked out of the lattice at the lights which leaves take when fluttering in the moonlight; and listened to the nightingale – until there stole upon my senses something – that something which did not come to me out of my picture the night before. I found myself in a moment drinking in the beauty of the night with long, deep sighs, and thinking thoughts – thoughts like the thoughts of youth, which are “long, long thoughts.”²⁷² I had even felt the first thrill of a great aspiration, when I was disturbed again by the ringing of the studio bell. Again, involuntarily, I hastened to open the door, and there she stood in exactly the same position at the foot of the steps, looking up at me with her eyes that repelled – but no! I was mistaken. How could I have thought her eyes repellent? They were merrily-dancing, mischievous eyes, that made you smile in spite of yourself.

“Well, I didn’t come, you see,” she said in a casual way. “I knew you wouldn’t be ready for me.”

“Not ready for you?” I exclaimed, without thinking whether I ought to condescend to parley with a model. “Why, I waited for you the whole morning.”

“Oh, that is nothing,” she answered cheerfully – “nothing, at least, if nothing comes of it. You must wait, you know, to recover yourself. You’ve lost such a lot. What is the use of having paint on your palette if the rage to apply it is not *here*?” She looked up at me with big, bright, earnest eyes as she spoke, and clasped her hands over her chest. Then she stooped and peeped unceremoniously under my arm into the studio. “Ah!” she said, “you have covered that thing up” – meaning my picture! “That’s right. And you’ve been sitting by the lattice – there’s your chair. Last night it was in front of the easel. Well! I will look in to-morrow, just to see how you are getting on. No trouble, I assure you. There! you can shut the door. If you stand there when I am gone, staring at the spot where I stood as you did last night, you’ll be

²⁷²“*long, long thoughts*”: From Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, “My Lost Youth” (1856). Each of the ten stanzas ends with the refrain: “A boy’s will is the wind’s will,

And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts.”
The Poetical Works of Longfellow. London: Peacock, Mansfield & Co.: 322-3.

in a draught and catch cold, which is risky for a middle-aged man, just now especially, with so much influenza about²⁷³. Good-night!”

She turned to walk away as she spoke, and her gait was like music in motion, she moved so rhythmically.

“What an extraordinary person!” I exclaimed, when she was out of sight. While she was with me, however, she did not seem extraordinary, and it was only after she had gone that I even recognized the utter incongruity of my own attitude towards her when under the immediate influence of her singular personality.

But what was it that set me thinking of Martha troubled about many things²⁷⁴ when she mentioned the draught and influenza? And also reminded me that to be a great artist one must be a great man in the sense of being a good one?

Now, somehow, next morning I knew better than to expect her at ten o’clock. I noticed that the paint had dried on my palette, and ordered my man to clean it, but I did not set it afresh, for what, I asked myself, is the use of paint on a palette if one has nothing to express?

The day was devoted to social duties. I went in and out several times, asking always on my return if anyone had been, to which my man, an old and faithful servant, invariably replied as if he understood me, “Not even a model, sir.”

I had had to attend a *Levée* in the afternoon, and when it was over, one of the dukes, a noted connoisseur, asked me if I would “be so good” as to show him my new picture – the exact expression was: “Your last great work.” Other gentlemen came up while he was speaking to me, and it ended in several of them returning with me forthwith to view the picture.

I had not looked at it myself since I had covered it up, and now that I was forced to draw the curtain from before it, I felt it to be a distasteful duty.

“Well, that *is* a picture!” the duke exclaimed, and all the other gentlemen praised the work in a choice variety of elegantly selected phrases. They even looked as if they liked it, a fact which clearly proved to me they had not one of them got further than I had myself before dinner on the eventful evening when *she* first appeared.

I was to have dined out that day, but just as I was about to step into my carriage, I saw a figure in loose, light draperies, charmingly disposed, approaching. (What was it made me think of Lot’s wife²⁷⁵?) I turned back into the house on the instant, and retired to the studio, the outer door of which I opened at once for her convenience.

She walked straight in without ceremony.

“You were going to some feeding function to-night, I suppose,” she observed. Then she looked round, chose a chair, and sat herself down deliberately.

I remained standing myself with my hands folded, regarding her with an expression in which I hoped she would see good-natured tolerance of one of the whimsical sex struggling with a certain amount of impatience carefully controlled. And she did study my face and attitude critically for some seconds; then she shook her head.

“Don’t like it!” she exclaimed. “No native dignity in it, because anybody could see that you are posing.”

Involuntarily I altered my position, planting myself more firmly on my feet.

“That’s better,” she said, and then she looked at me again, frowning intently, and once more shook her head. “You live too well, you know,” she admonished me. “There is a certain largeness in your very utterance which bespeaks high feeding, and an oleosaccharine quality

²⁷³ “so much influenza about”: 1889-1894 saw a deadly flu pandemic sweep Britain and Europe. Known as the “Russian influenza,” it was responsible for the deaths of more than one million people.

²⁷⁴ *Martha troubled about many things*: Luke 10. 41-2.

²⁷⁵ *Lot’s wife*: Gen. 19. 15-17, 24-6.

in the courtly urbanity even of your every-day manner which comes of constant repletion. One is obliged to fall into it oneself to express it properly," she added apologetically. "But you are a prince now, you know; you're not an artist. You've eaten all that out of yourself."

"I am not a great eater," I protested, in a tone which should have shown her that I was gravely offended by the liberty of language she allowed herself.

"Well, don't be huffy," she said. "It is not so much in the matter of meat and drink that your appetite is gross, I allow; it was the Tree of Life²⁷⁶ to which I alluded. You cannot pretend that you only nibble at that! You know you deny yourself none of it, so long as what you reach is sufficiently refined to please you. You have fed your senses to such a monstrous girth that they have crowded the soul out of you. What you put into your pictures now is knowledge, not inspiration. But that is the way with all of you artist-princes at present. Inspiration is extinct at Hampstead and in St. John's Wood, and even here, on Melbury Hill, there is scarcely a flicker." She slowly removed her outer wrap, and as she put the long pin with a black glass head which had held it together carefully back in it, she added emphatically: "People may look at your pictures to their heads' content, but their hearts you never touch."

She sat still, looking gravely at the ground, for a few seconds after this last utterance; then she rose in her deliberate, languid way, and went, with her long wrap depending from her left arm and gracefully trailing after her, up to the picture, and drew aside the curtain that concealed it.

"Now, look at that!" she exclaimed. "Your flesh is flesh, and your form is form; likewise your colour is colour, and your draperies are drapery – although too luxuriant, as a rule; you riot in fullness and folds with an effect that is wormy – but there isn't a scrap of human interest in the whole composition, and the consequence is a notable flatness and insipidity, as of soup without salt." She looked close into the picture, then drew back and contemplated it from a little distance, with her head on one side, and then she carefully covered it up with the curtain, remarking as she did so contemptuously, "There is not a scrap of 'that certain something' in it, you know; it is merely a clever contrivance of paint upon canvas."

"But here is pleasure in the contemplation of a coat of colour laid on with a master's hand," I modestly observed, changing my balance from one leg to the other, and crisping the fingers of my left hand as they lay upon the right.

"For some people," she replied; "there is an order of mind, mind in its infancy, which can be so diverted. We have a pet frame-maker at home [*Who can she be?*], and one day when he brought back a new picture we thought we would give him a treat, so we took him into the picture gallery [*A picture gallery argues a mansion*], and invited him to look at the pictures, and then we watched him walking down the long length of it slowly, passing in review a whole sequence of art, ancient and modern. [*She must belong to considerable people, there are not many such private collections*] But not a muscle of his face moved until he came to an exquisite little modern gem – it was not one of yours," she hastened to assure me. I made a deprecating gesture to show her I had not the egotism to suppose it might be. "Gems by you are exceedingly difficult to procure," she proceeded, in a tone which suggested something sarcastical, but I failed to comprehend. "Well," she pursued, "our good frame-maker stopped opposite to that gem. His countenance, which had been sombre as that of one who patiently accomplishes a task, now cleared, his eyes brightened intelligently, his cheeks flushed, his lips parted to exclaim, and I thought to myself, 'Now for a genuine glimpse of the soul of a working man! He looked again, as if to make sure before he committed himself, then, turning to me, he exclaimed triumphantly, '*I made that frame!*'"

²⁷⁶*Tree of Life*: Gen. 2.9; 3.22.

“Ah – yes,” I was conscious of murmuring politely. “Extremely good! But we were talking about paint.”

“Oh, well, of course, if you can’t see the point –” She shrugged her shoulders and turned the palms of her hands outwards. Then she sat down again and looked at my feed. I shifted them uneasily.

“I was going out to dinner,” I ventured at last, breaking in upon her meditations tentatively.

“I know,” she responded, with a sigh, as if she were wearied in mind. “It would be just as well to send the carriage back. There is no use keeping the coachman and horses at the door. I daresay the cook has some cutlets that will do for us.”

“I am sure I shall be delighted if you will do me the honour –” I was beginning, when again she laughed in my face, showing much of her magnificent set of strong white teeth. Why did I never dream of opposing her?

“Oh, come now!” she exclaimed, apparently much amused; “you are not at Court you know. Here in the studio you should be artistic, not artificial; and what you don’t feel you shouldn’t pretend to feel. Shall we dine here? Put that thing back,” – pointing to the picture – “pull out the throne – it will make a capital low table – and order in two easy chairs for us to recline upon opposite to each other. You are nothing if not classical in appearance. Fancy you in a frock-coat, with spats upon your boots! and you in modern evening dress! It is absurd! You should wear a toga.”

I was going to say something about the incongruity of such a costume, but she would not let me speak. “Just wait a moment,” she said: “it is my innings. And nobody knows better than I do that High Street, Kensington, would be more amazed than edified by the apparition of yourself in a toga, or, better still – for I take you to be more Greek than Roman – clad in the majestic folds of the *himation* and without a cravat – admirably as either would set off your attractive personal appearance. Here on the hill, however, it is different. I tell you, you are nothing if not classical, both in your person and your work; but a modern man must add of the enlightenment of to-day that which was wanting to the glory of the Greeks. Your work at present is purely Greek – form without character, passionless perfection, imperfectly perfect, wanting the spirit part, which was not in Greece, but is, or ought to be, in you; without which the choicest masterpiece of old was merely ‘icily regular, splendidly null,’²⁷⁷ with which the veriest street arab put upon canvas is ‘equal to the god!’ I tell you, you are a true Greek, but you must be something more, for this is not Athens in Greece, but Melbury Hill, Kensington, London, W. – coming whence we will accept nothing but positive perfection, which is form *and* character, flesh and blood, body and soul, the divine in the human – But there!” she broke off. “That is as much as you must have at present. And I am fatigued. Do get the room arranged and order in dinner, while I retire to refresh myself by indulging in the comfort of a bath. I suppose I shall find one somewhere, with hot and cold water laid on.”

She walked with easy grace out of the studio into the house when she had spoken, leaving me gravely perplexed. And again I wonder why, at the time, it never occurred to me to oppose her; but certainly it never did.

My difficulty now was how to make the arrangements she required without taking the whole establishment into my confidence; but while I still stood in the attitude in which she had left me – an attitude, I believe, of considerable dignity, the right foot being a little in advance, at right angles to the left, and the left elbow supported on the back of the right hand, so that the fingers caressed the left cheek – my faithful old confidential servant entered.

²⁷⁷“icily regular, splendidly nul”: Alfred Tennyson (Lord Tennyson), “Maud” (1855), 82. *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*. Ed. Christopher Ricks. Harlow: Longman, 2007, 524.

“Beg pardon, sir,” he began – and I could see that he was perturbed and anxious, like one in dread lest he shall not perform the duty exacted of him satisfactorily – “but the lady said you wanted me to arrange the scene for the new picture.”

Instantly I understood her delicate manner of getting me out of my difficulty, and having given my man full directions, I stood looking on while the necessary arrangements were being completed, making a suggestion now and then as to the disposition of table decorations, and myself choosing the draperies that were to decorate the lounges upon which we were to recline. While so engaged, I, as it were – if I may venture to use such an expression – warmed to the work. At first I had looked on as a grown-up person might do when viewing with pleased toleration the preparations for some childish frolic; but as the arrangements neared completion, and I gradually beheld one end of my studio transformed with the help of rare ancient vessels, statues, and furniture of the most antique design, which I had collected for the purposes of my art, into such a scene as Apelles²⁷⁸ himself might have countenanced, I felt an unwonted glow of enthusiasm, and fell to adjusting hangings and dragging lounges about myself. It was a close evening, and the extraordinary exertion made me so hot, that, without a thought of my dignity, I dashed my coat and vest on the floor, and worked in my shirt-sleeves.

“That’s right!” said in a tuneful voice at last, and upon looking round, I saw my model – or guest of the evening, shall I say? She was standing between two heavy curtains which screened off one side of the studio from an outer apartment. Her right hand was raised high in the act of holding one of the curtains back, and her bare, round arm shone ivory-white against the dark folds of the curtains. It was a striking attitude, instinct with a singular grace and charm, both of which, on looking back, I now recognise as having been eminently characteristic; and their immediate effect upon me was to make me entreat her not to move for a moment until I had caught the pose in a rapid sketch. She signified her consent by standing quiescent as a statue, while I hastily got out my materials, choosing charcoal for my medium, and set to work. And so great was my eagerness that I actually remained in my shirt-sleeves without being aware of the fact – a statement which will, I know, astonish my friends, and appear to them to be incredible, even upon my own authority. But there must have been something powerfully – what shall I say? – demoralizing? – about this extraordinary woman. And yet it was not at all that, but elevating rather; even my model manservant, to judge by his countenance, felt her effect. Her mere presence seemed to be making him, “the reptile equal” – for the moment in his own estimation – “to the god,” that is to say, to me. Under the strange, benign influence of her appearance as she stood there, I could see that he had suddenly ceased to be an impassive serving-machine, and had become an emotional human being. There was interest in his eyes, and admiration, besides an all-devouring anxiety to be equal to the occasion – a disinterested trepidation on my account, as well as on his own. He was fearful that I should not answer to expectation, as was evident from the way that he, hitherto the most respectful of fellows, forgot himself, and ventured upon the liberty of looking on, first at the model and then at my sketch as it progressed. He came and peeped over my shoulder, went up to the model for a nearer view, then stepped off again to see her from another point, as we do when studying a fascinating object; and so inevitable did it seem even for a manservant to think and feel in her presence, that I allowed his demonstrations to pass un-reproved, as though it were part of the natural order of things for a lackey so to comport himself.

But in the meantime the attention to my subject which the making of the sketch necessitated brought about a revelation. As I rapidly read each lineament for the purpose of fixing it on my paper, I asked myself involuntarily how I could possibly have supposed for a

²⁷⁸ *Apelles*: A Greek painter of the fourth century BC.

moment that this magnificent creature was unattractive? Why, from the crown of her head to the sole of her foot – what expression! There was a volume of verse in her glance – Oh, Sappho! – a bounteous vitality in her whole person – Oh, Ceres! – an atmosphere of life, of love, surrounded her – Oh, Venus! – a modest reserve of womanhood – Diana!²⁷⁹ – a –

“Get on, do!” she broke in upon my fervid analysis.

An *aplomb*, I concluded, a confidence of intellect; decision, intelligence, and force of fine feeling combined in her which brought her up to date.

“Yes,” she observed, dropping the curtain. And coming forward when I had finished my sketch – in which, by the way, she took not the slightest interest, for she did not cast so much as a glance upon it. “Yes,” she repeated, as if in answer to my thoughts – I wonder if perchance I had uttered them aloud? “Yes, you are right. I commend you. I *am* a woman with all the latest improvements. The creature the world wants. Nothing can now be done without me.” She silently surveyed me after this with critical eyes. “But hop out of that ridiculous dress, *do*,” she said at last, “and get into something suitable for summer, for a man of your type, and for the occasion.”

I instantly unbuttoned a brace.

“Hold on a moment,” she said rather hastily. “Where is your classical wardrobe?”

My man, who had been waiting on her words, as it were, ran to a large carved chest at the further end of the studio²⁸⁰, and threw up the lid for answer.

“Johnson²⁸¹, as he appears in St. Paul’s Cathedral, may be all very well for people at church to contemplate; but that isn’t my idea of a dinner dress,” she proceeded.

She was walking towards the chest as she spoke, and I noticed that her own dress, which had struck me at first as purely classical, was not really of any form with which I was acquainted, ancient or modern; but was of a design which I believe to be perfectly new, or, at all events, a most original variation upon already-known designs. It was made of several exquisitely harmonized tints of soft silk.

When she reached the great chest, she stood a moment looking into it, and then began to pull the things out and throw them on the floor behind her, diving down deeper and deeper into the chest, till she had to stand on tip-toe to reach in at all, and the upper part of her body disappeared at every plunge. Near the bottom she found what she wanted. This proved to be a short-sleeved tunic, reaching to the knees, with a handsome Greek border embroidered upon it; some massive gold bracelets; a pair of sandals; and a small harp, such as we associate with Homer.

She gathered all these things up in her arms, brought them to me, and threw them down at my feet. “There!” she exclaimed; “be quick! I want my dinner.”

With which she delicately withdrew until my toilette was complete.

When she returned, she held in her hand a laurel wreath, tied at the back with a bow of ribbon, and with the leaves lying symmetrically towards the front, where they met in a point. It was the form which appears in ancient portraits crowning the heads of distinguished men.

I had placed myself near a pedestal, with the harp in my hand, and, as she approached, felt conscious of nothing but my bare legs. My man, who had helped to attire me, also stood by, with deprecating glances entreatingly bespeaking her approval.

Having crowned me, she stepped back to consider the effect, and instantly she became convulsed with laughter. My servant assumed a dejected attitude upon this, and silently slunk away.

²⁷⁹ *O Sappho! ... Diana!*: Sappho is a fifth century BC love poet, while Ceres is goddess of agriculture, Venus of love and Diana of chastity.

²⁸⁰ The male protagonist of “When the Door Opened...?” also has a large, old chest of costumes in his studio.

²⁸¹ *Johnson*: Samuel Johnson (1709-1784), the celebrated essayist and lexicographer.

“Oh, dear! Oh, dear!” she exclaimed. “If Society could only see you now! It isn’t that you don’t look well,” she hastened to reassure me – “and I trust you will kindly excuse my inopportune mirth. It is a disease of the mind which I inherit from an ancestor of mine, who was a funny man. He worked for a comic paper, and was expected to make new jokes every week on the three same subjects: somebody drunk, somebody’s mother-in-law, something unhappy – or low for preference – in married life; a consequence of which strain upon his mind was the setting up of the deplorable disease of inopportune mirth, which has unfortunately been transmitted to me. But I am altogether an outcome of the age, you will perceive, an impossible mixture of incongruous qualities, which are all in a ferment at present, but will eventually resolve themselves, as chemical combinations do, into an altogether unexpected, and, seeing that already the good is outweighing the bad and indifferent ingredients, admirable composition, we will hope. But, as I was going to say, those ambrosial locks and that classic jowl of yours, not to mention your manly arms embraceleted, and – ” But here she hesitated, apparently not liking to mention my legs, although she looked at them. “Well,” she hurriedly summed up, “I always said you would look lovely in a toga, and the short tunic is also artistic in its own way. But now let us dine; I am mortal hungry.”

I was about to hasten, harp in hand, across the studio to ring for dinner, but the moment I moved she went off again into convulsions of laughter.

“Excuse me,” she imported, drying her eyes, “but it *is* so classical! I can’t help it, really! Just to see you go gives me little electric shocks all over! But don’t be huffy. You never looked nicer, I declare. And you can put on a toga, you know, if the tunic isn’t enough. It *is* somewhat skimpy, I confess, for a man of your girth.”

When she had spoken, she went to the chest and obligingly looked me out some yards of stuff, which she said, when properly draped, would do for a toga; and having arranged it upon my shoulders to please herself, she conducted me to one of the couches, remarking that dinner would be sure to come all in good time, and recommending me to employ the interval in cultivating a cheerful frame of mind, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 – a copy-book precept, good for the digestion when practised, she insisted, as she thoughtfully adjusted my harp; after which she begged me to assume a classical attitude, and then proceed to dispose herself in like manner on the other couch opposite.

“This is delicious,” she said, sighing luxuriously as she sank upon it. “I guess the Greeks and Romans never really knew what comfort was. Imagine an age without springs!”

Dinner was now served by my man, who was, I could see, still shaking in his shoes with anxiety lest everything should not be to her mind. He had donned a red gown, similar to that worn by attendants at the Royal Academy²⁸² on state occasions, and was suffering a good deal from the heat in consequence. But the dinner was all that could be desired, as my guest herself observed. And she should have known, too, for she ate with a will. “I must tell you,” she explained, “Æsculapius²⁸³ prescribed a tonic for me on one occasion, and I have been taking it, off and on, ever since, so that I am almost all appetite.

What was it that made me think at that moment of Venus’s visit to Æsculapius?²⁸⁴

We were now at dessert, nibbling fruit and sipping wine, and my face was suffused with smiles, but my companion looked grave, and I thought that her mood was resolving itself into something serious by the sober way she studied my face.

²⁸² Sir Edward Poynter (1836-1919), President of the Royal Academy 1896-1918. Grand refers to his painting a few lines later (see note 283).

²⁸³ Aesculapius was the Greek God of Healing and Medicine.

²⁸⁴ This is a reference to the painting “A Visit to Aesculapius” (1880) by Sir Edward Poynter. In it Poynter shows Aesculapius being consulted by Venus who has a thorn in her foot. She is accompanied by the three Graces: Venus and the three Graces are all completely naked and very beautiful.

“Excuse me, but your wreath is all on one side,” she remarked at last – quite by the way, however.

I rose hastily to readjust the wreath at a mirror, and then returned and leisurely resumed my seat. I had been about to speak, but something new in the demeanour of the lady opposite caused me to forget my intention. There was an indescribable grace in her attitude, a perfect *abandon* to the repose of the moment which was in itself an evidence of strength in reserve, and fascinating to a degree. But the curious thing about the impression that she was now making upon me is that she had not moved. She had been reclining in an easy manner since the servant left the room, with her arm resting on the back of her couch, twirling a flower in her fingers, and hadn’t swerved from the pose a fraction; only a certain quietude had settled upon her, and was emanating from her forcibly, as I felt. And with this quietude there came to me quite suddenly a new and solemn sense of responsibility, something grave and glad which I cannot explain, something which caused me an exquisite sense of pleasurable emotion, and made me feel the richer for the experience. My first thought was of England and America, of the glorious womanhood of this age of enlightenment, compared with the creature as she existed merely for man’s use and pleasure of old; the toy-woman, drudge, degraded domestic animal, beast of intolerable burdens. How could the sons of slaves ever be anything but slaves themselves? slaves of various vices, the most execrable form of bondage. To paint – to paint this woman as she is! – in her youth, in her strength, in her beauty – in her insolence, even! in the fearless candour of her perfect virtue; the trifler of an idle hour, the strong, true spirit of an arduous day – to paint her so that man may feel her divinity and worship that!

I had covered my eyes with my hands, so as the better to control my emotions and collect my thoughts; but now a current of cold air playing upon my limbs, and the faint sith of silk, aroused me. I looked up. The couch was empty.

* * * * *

The next morning she arrived by ten o’clock in a very ugly old grey cloak. I was engaged at the moment in reading a report in a morning paper of the dinner at which I ought to have appeared on the previous evening, and the letter of apology for my unavoidable absence which I forgot to mention that my guest had induced me to send. She came and read the report over my shoulder.

“That is graceful,” was her comment upon my letter. “You are a charming phrasemaker. Such neatness of expression is not common. But,” she added severely, “it is also disgraceful, because you didn’t mean a word of it. And an artist should be an honest, earnest man, incapable of petty subterfuge; otherwise, however great he may be, he falls short of the glory, just as you do. But there!” she added plaintively, “you know all that – or, at all events, you used to know it.”

““He is the greatest artist who has the greatest number”” – I was beginning, when she interrupted me abruptly.

“Oh, I know! You have it all off by heart so pat!” she exclaimed. “But what good do precepts do you? Why, if maxims could make an artist, I should be one myself, for I know them all; and I am no artist!”

“I don’t know that,” slipped from me unawares.

“That is because you have become a mere appraiser of words,” she declared. “You, as an artist, would have divined that if I could paint myself I should not be here. I should be doing what I want for myself, instead of using my peculiar power to raise you to the necessary altitude.”

“Oh, of course!” I hastened to agree, apologetically, feeling myself on familiar ground at last. “The delicate, subtly-inspiring presence is the woman’s part; the rough work is for man, the interpreter. No woman has ever truly distinguished herself except in her own sphere.”

“Now, no can’t, *please*,” she exclaimed. “You are not a pauper priest, afraid that the offertory will fall off if he doesn’t keep the upper hand of all the women in the parish.”

“But,” I protested, “few women have ever –”

“Now just reflect,” she interrupted, “and you will remember that in the days of our slavery there were more great women than there have ever been great men who were also slaves; so that now that our full emancipation is imminent, why, you shall see what you shall see.”

“Then why don’t you paint?” I asked her blandly.

“All in good time,” she answered suavely. “But I have not come to bandy words with you, nor to be irritated by hearing nonsensical questions asked by a man of your age and standing. I am here to be painted. Just set your palette while I see to my attire. You seem to have forgotten lately that a woman is a creature of clothes in these days – and there never were more delightful days, by the way, since the world began.”

When she returned, she ascended the throne, but before falling into a set attitude, she addressed me: “The great stories of the world are deathless and ageless, because of the human nature that is in them, and you know that in your head, but your heart does not feel it a bit. Your sentiments are irreproachable, but they have survived the vivifying flush of feeling, parent of sympathetic insight, upon which you formed them, and the mere dry knowledge that remains is no use for creative purposes. All through Nature strong emotion is the motive of creation, and in art, also, the power to create is invariably the outcome of an ardent impulse. But there you stand, in full conceit beside your canvas, with your palette and brushes in your hand, a mere cool, calculating workman, without an atom of love or reverence, not to mention inspiration, to warm your higher faculties into life and action; and in that mood you have the assurance to believe that you have only to choose to paint me as I am, and you will be able to do so – able to paint, not merely a creature of a certain shape, but a creature of boundless possibilities, instinct with soul – no, though, I wrong you,” she broke off scornfully. “The soul of me, the part that an artist should specially crave to render through the medium of this outer shell, which of itself alone is hardly worth the trouble of copying on to the canvas, has never cost you a thought. Rounded form, healthy flesh, and lively glances are all that appeal to you now.”

I bent my head, considering if this were true; but even while I asked myself the question I was conscious of a curious shock – a shock of awakening, as it were, a thrill that traversed my body in warm, swift currents, making me tingle. I knew what it was in a moment – her enthusiasm. She had communicated it to me occultly, a mere spark of it at first, but even that was animating to a degree that was delicious.

“Don’t put anything on canvas that you cannot glorify,” she resumed. “The mere outer husk of me is nothing, I repeat; you must interpret – you must reveal the beyond of that – the grace, I mean, all resplendent within.” She clasped her hands upon her breast, and looked into my eyes. “You remember your first impression when I offered myself as a model?” she pursued. I felt ashamed of my own lack of thought, and hung my head. “Compare your present idea of my attractions with that, and see for yourself how far you have lapsed. You have descended from art to artificiality, I tell you. You have ceased to see and render like a sentient being; you are nothing now but a painting machine. *Now!*” she exclaimed, clapping her hands together, “stand straight and look at me!”

Like one electrified, I obeyed.

“I am the woman who stood at the outer door of your studio and summoned you to judge me; the same whom, in your spiritual obscurity, you then found wanting. Rend now that veil of flesh, and look! Who was at fault?”

“I was,” burst from me involuntarily.

When I had spoken, I clasped my palette, and hastily selected a brush. Her exaltation had rapidly gained upon me. I was consumed with the rage to paint her – or, rather, to paint that in her which I suddenly saw and could reproduce upon canvas, but could not otherwise express.

Slowly, without another word, she lapsed into an easy attitude, fixing her wonderful eyes upon mine. For a moment my vision was clouded; I saw nothing but mist. As that cleared, however, there penetrated to the inner recesses of my being – there was revealed to me – But the tone-poets must find the audible expression of it. My limit is to make it visible.

But never again, I said to myself as I painted, shall mortal stand before a work of mine unmoved; never again shall it be said: “Well, it may be ignorance, which it would be bad taste for me to display in the presence of a picture by so great a man; but, all the same, I must say I can’t see anything in it.” No, never again! if I have to sacrifice every delight of the body to keep my spiritual vision unobscured; for there is no joy like this joy, nothing else which is human which so nearly approaches the divine as the exercise of this power.

“For heaven’s sake don’t move!” I implored.

She had not moved, but the whole expression of her face had changed with an even more disastrous effect. The glorious light which had illuminated such enthusiasm in me had passed out of her eyes, giving place to that cold, critical expression which repelled, and she smiled enigmatically.

“I can’t stand here all day,” she said, stepping down from the throne. “You know now what you want.”

She was at the outer door as she pronounced those words, and the instant after she had uttered them she was gone, absolutely gone, before I could remonstrate.

I had thrown myself on my knees to beg for another hour, and now, when I realized the cruelty of her callous desertion of me at such a juncture, I sank beside the easel utterly overcome, and remained for I cannot tell how long in a kind of stupor, from which, however, I was at length aroused by a deep-drawn sigh.

I looked up, and then I rose to my feet.

It was my faithful servant who had sighed. He was standing at gaze before the all-unfinished work. I looked at it myself.

“It is wonderful, sir,” he said, speaking in an undertone, as if in the presence of something sacred.

Yes, it was wonderful, even then, and what would it be when it was finished? Finished! How could I finish it without a model – without that model in particular? I recognized her now – a free woman, a new creature, a source of inspiration the like of which no man hitherto has even imagined in art or literature. Why had she deserved me? – for she had, and I knew it at once. I felt she would not return, and she never did; although I have been searching for her ever since. You may see me frequently in the corner of an open carriage, with my man seated on the box beside the coachman; and as we drive through the streets, we gaze up at the windows, and into the faces of the people we pass, in the hope that some day we shall see her; but never a glimpse, as yet, have we obtained.

My man says that such capricious conduct is just what you might expect of a woman, old-fashioned or new; but I cannot help thinking myself that both in her coming and her going, her insolence and her ideality, her gravity and her levity, there was a kind of allegory. “With all my faults, nothing uncommonly great can be done without my countenance,” this

The Undefinable

was what she seemed to have said to me; “but my countenance you shall not have to perfection until the conceit of you is conquered, and you acknowledge all you owe me. Give me my due; and when *you* help *me*, I will help *you!*”

VARIETY

The Turning Of The Worm

This story was first published in *Cassell's Magazine*,
50, 1910, 325-50.

The following text is transcribed from *Variety*.
London: Heinemann, 1922, 3-63.

I

UNCLE OSCAR WILBRAHAM stood in the summer sunshine on the edge of the cliff, looking out to sea; and I, his faithful satellite, sat on a seat nearby gazing at Uncle Oscar.

Every girl has at heart a visionary hero, an ideal of whom she dreams. I was luckier than most girls in that I had always had a real live hero with whom I walked and talked. My hero was Uncle Oscar. I do not pretend that he was a hero by right of great deeds done; or that I knew him for a hero in my girlhood. It was only by very slow degrees that I realised that he was heroic at all. But he was. He was great in self-sacrifice; in the cheerful endurance of a life which was not a man's life, although Uncle Oscar was very much of a man.

We mourn the lot of women whose sad fate it is to be sacrificed by selfish men; women who have never had a chance to follow any single important bent of their nature; women who, for their individuality, are made to suffer a martyrdom in the cruel grip of those who care only to have them moulded to their own uses, valuing their tender affection chiefly because it makes them plastic. And we think such a fate is peculiar to women; but occasionally a man is made to suffer so; occasionally a man is so caught by women and constrained. This was the case with Uncle Oscar. He was my guardian, and I had been brought up in his house as one of the family, the family being Grandmamma and Aunt Lucretia, for Uncle Oscar had not married. I was an orphan, rich in property but poor in relations. My mother died at my birth, my father when I was two years old. Uncle Oscar became my guardian then. My parents had been his dearest friends, and he had accepted the trust from my father on his death-bed, promising that, in so far as it lay in his power to be father and mother to me himself, he would be father and mother, and he had been.

The first thing I remember in this world is sunshine and Uncle Oscar's finger, to which I was clinging. It was he who helped me to toddle about the gardens, and waited patiently on my snail's pace, ready to catch me if I slipped when it pleased me to climb upstairs on my hands and knees. It was he who came to the nursery two or three times a day just to see how I was getting on, or to fetch me when there were visitors, and carry me downstairs, all ribbons and lace, to be admired. And when I was in bed once, all hot and horrid, and didn't want to get up, it was Uncle Oscar, looking very grave, who brought another man to see me, and took him away again, and then came back himself and sat beside me till I went to sleep. And when I awoke in the night, and was afraid and screamed because the room looked strange in the lamplight, he was there beside me, and took my little handie and stroked it and made me feel all nice at once. I always loved his touch.

He taught me to ride, too, and trusted me on a thoroughbred in spite of Grandmamma, who said the animal was too valuable to be risked in that way – to which he replied that so long as I ran no risk and was happy the animal must take its chance.

Yielding in many respects, Uncle Oscar was always firm where I was concerned. Whatever he considered it right for me to have or to do, I had and I did. There had been a battle about it at first, I believe, and Uncle Oscar must have routed the enemy once and for

all, for, within my recollection none of the family had ever ventured to interfere when my interests were in question. When Uncle Oscar chose to fight with the family he was sure to win; but the trouble was to rouse him to fight. The atmosphere of Seascape was enervating for a man. By the time I grew up and began to understand, Uncle Oscar had grown apathetic, and was inclined for the most part to let things go.

Seascape, the only beautiful old family mansion by the sea, the only home I can remember, was his house nominally, his prison virtually, for he was tied to it by Grandmamma, his mother, and Aunt Lucretia, his eldest sister; tied by the bonds of natural affection, as people said admiringly; tied and bound for their own selfish purposes, as I now know, by women in whom self-interest was the pre-dominant passion. To live with Grandmamma and Aunt Lucretia was daily to suffer a yoke that was not easy, to bear a burden that was not light – the yoke of their wishes, the burden of their petty exactions. There is no time within my recollection when they did not make me feel the yoke and the burden, and, had it not been for Uncle Oscar, I never could have endured the galling harness in which it was their will to drive me whither they pleased, which was seldom, if ever, in the direction in which it would have pleased me to go. But from the first, in small things as well as in great, Uncle Oscar made life as easy and pleasant for me as it could be made. He was certainly everything to me that the most devoted father could have been. Never did I find him wanting in any respect; never did he fail me.

Healthy, happy people are not keenly sensitive to the sufferings of others. You may endure a martyrdom of acute mental misery under their eyes, and, so long as you do not complain, they will never perceive that you are suffering. This was my case with regard to Uncle Oscar. It was not until I was quite grown up that I realised that all was not well with him. I know the very moment when I first began to suspect that his life was not all that he would have made of it had he lived for his own happiness. Up to that moment it had not occurred to me that he also was under the yoke. He seemed to have everything that heart of a man could desire, and it was not for a thoughtless young girl to perceive that, although nominally he possessed so much, in reality he had very little that he could feel to be quite his own to make free with; all that he possessed being so clogged and encumbered by these exacting women.

I can tell the story now consecutively, but I have had to work back from the end to the beginning to piece it together. It began for me with a flash of insight, one of those flashes that are lit up by a casual remark.

But let me tell you how it was with Uncle Oscar up to the moment when he made that remark. He has told me himself since – everything – many times; so I know.

We had been wandering about the grounds together that morning, as we often did, after he had attended to his correspondence, been to the stables, and gone his usual round of inspection about the place. It was early summer, but somewhat too hot for walking, and I was glad to sit down when we came to that seat on the cliff which commanded the loveliest view of the bay. It was here that we used often to station ourselves on fine mornings – I lazily content to do nothing; he usually smoking a cigarette. He had lit one that day, but was holding it between his finger and thumb as if he had forgotten it.

From an opaline sky the sun beamed down on the sea, and the sea flashed back a smile of delight to the sun. Uncle Oscar, standing on the edge of the cliff, was looking down at the long reach of buff sand up which the little waves came tumbling and bursting, with merry murmurs, as though they were glad to get back to the land. He might have been there to welcome the rising tide, or intent was his gaze at the progress it was making, so absorbed he seemed; or he might have been watching and waiting for something to come – some expected gift, floating in on the bosom of the sea. So a fanciful person might have supposed, who saw him standing there, standing at ease, with observant eyes and an expectant face, full of

thought. But here again, as usual, appearances would have deceived the fanciful. For Uncle Oscar consciously saw neither sky nor sea nor shore. He was waiting, it is true, but he was merely waiting, as was his wont at that hour on fine days, until it was time to go in to lunch; and he was thinking, but of nothing more romantic than the projected doings of the day in so far as they concerned the claims of his family upon his time. And his family made great claims upon his time because he was the only man in it. Wife and children would hardly have been so exacting as the mother and sister within his gates, and the rest of his female relations in his immediate neighbourhood, who insisted on their right to claim him upon every occasion when a man's company was essential, whether as an escort, a protection, a help, or for the general purpose of varying the monotony of the feminine point of view. Uncle Oscar was a bachelor of fifty, with seven thousand a year, unencumbered by land; a charming old house, and beautiful pleasure grounds, beautifully tended; a fine position in the county; and the respect and affection of all who knew him. For he was an attractive man, attractive both to men and women, but especially to women for his unfailing courtesy and kindness. He was a small, well made man, always well dressed; indeed, he only escaped a reproach of dapper by a certain grace of virility in his character which made every outward expression of himself, whether in dress or manner, right with the rightness of manliness. As a baby his nurse had dubbed him "the Little Gentleman" he remained to the end of his days – having inches enough to make the appellation inoffensive.

It was upon this quality of gentlehood that the ladies of his family habitually imposed, exacting him from every sort of service, as though he were theirs by right of purchase to be disposed of as should best suit their convenience at any time. Besides his mother and sister Lucretia, he had a widowed sister living near, and sundry nieces and cousins who, as they grew up, were taught to depend upon Uncle Oscar's good nature and Uncle Oscar's purse in every emergency. And it was also understood that Uncle Oscar's fortune was for the family, inalienably; but whether it was to be shared amongst them or left in a mass to some one lucky favourite remained uncertain – which was a good thing for him in one way, the one thing that made his position pleasant, since it kept all of them alive to the necessity of making themselves agreeable to him to the best of their ability. But in another way it had not been good for him. It never is good for a man to find himself always the centre of everything, continually plied with delicate attentions, in an atmosphere dangerously charged with demonstrations of affection, an atmosphere of feminine cajoleries, far too sweet to be wholesome.

The little waves, tumbling over each other, gambolled up across the last narrow stretch of hard sand, and broke at the foot of the cliff with a shout of laughter. Uncle Oscar threw them the end of his cigarette, twirled the tips of his grey moustache, and, with a last comprehensive glance seaward, turned to go home.

"Come," he said, and I jumped up at once and hurried to his side.

On every hand the prospect, bathed in brilliant sunshine, was pleasing, and so also should have been the prospect of luncheon, yet there was a shade on Uncle Oscar's face as we slowly strolled back to the house, not a shade of ill-humour but of depression. There was no sunshine in Uncle Oscar himself that day, no exhilaration. The weather in his heart was fine, perhaps, but grey, very grey.

"Homeward, which always makes the spirit tame,"²⁸⁵ slipped from me involuntarily.

Uncle Oscar acknowledged the aptness of the quotation by flicking the head from a thistle with his stick.

²⁸⁵"Homeward, which always makes the spirit tame": From "Julian and Maddalo: A Conversation" by Percy Bysshe Shelley. *The Complete Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*. Ed. Thomas Hutchinson. London: Henry Frowde, 1909, 187.

We both knew pretty well what the day had in store for us. There was nothing in the prospect to which we objected, but at the same time there was nothing in prospect to which we looked forward with pleasure; nothing that promised any change from the usual round of little happenings; the dead level of dull monotony only made endurable by habit or a sense of duty. It was habit in Uncle Oscar's case, the habit of acquiescence; but that is not a habit that is bound to persist. To most people there come times of staleness to all accustomed things; times when our impulse is to break away, to fly, to do something desperate; times which are a preparation for change – if not actual harbingers of some change near at hand. I knew now that it was so with Uncle Oscar just then. He could not have told anyone, because he did not himself realise what was the matter with him. He had come to a loose end suddenly. It was as if he had gone to bed one night a contented man, and had arisen next day dissatisfied with himself and everything else, and what he wanted now, to enable him to take up the dropped threads of life again satisfactorily, was a radical change.

This was the moment when he made the remark to which I have referred.

There had been intoxication for me in the exquisite air, the lovely peaceful scene, the sense of silence which was in no way disturbed by the incessant murmur of the sea, and I had to give expression to it. At twenty-one our spirits clamour for expression, our moods urgently claim a response.

“Oh!” I burst out at last; “what a heavenly day! Uncle Oscar, don't you love your life?”

“Love just to be alive,” was what I meant; but I seized upon the first phrase that occurred to me, and he gave me no time to correct myself.

“Love my life?” he repeated. “Isn't it rather a lap-dog sort of life for a man?”

I was taken aback. He was wont to talk a good deal to me, and of many things, but never before had he said anything so intimate with regard to himself personally, and I was at a loss for something to say in reply.

We walked on for a little in silence, then at last I ventured to ask: “Why do you call it a lap-dog life? What should you say was a better life for a man in your position? Are you not doing your duty in the state to which it has pleased God to call you?”

“Candidly, no,” he answered. “A man of means, with ample leisure, should be public-spirited –”

“But what could you do?” I broke in. “You might be on the Bench. Why are you not on the Bench, Uncle Oscar?”

“Oh, well – my mother, you see,” he replied. “She objects. She says it would bring disreputable people about the place at all hours, tramps, and policemen, and that sort of thing. And then she thinks I should be sure to be drawn into municipal work²⁸⁶, and help to spoil the place by doing things which would make it attractive and bring crowds of visitors to it in the summer. She fears, too, that I should have fads about the housing of the poor, the treatment of paupers and criminals, the water supply, and especially the drainage, and that it would all end in my being made mayor and having no time to attend to her at all.”

He spoke playfully, but there was a shade of apology in his tone as if he were excusing his mother.

“But surely that would have been the very thing for you?” I said.

“That would have been the very thing for me,” he answered, the lightness of his tone discounted by a smothered sigh.

²⁸⁶ During the course of Grand's writing career, her fictional interests expanded to include adequate state provision for the poor and elderly. The reformed butcher in “The Butcher's Wife” is made mayor “twice running” (197).

II

THE sound of the gong rolled out as we crossed the lawn, and we hurried straight into the dining-room by one of the French windows opening on to the terrace, which ran the whole length of the house. We were just two minutes late and Grandmamma had begun luncheon. She was a severely punctual person, and never waited a moment even for the master of the house, nor did Aunt Lucretia. Regular habits meant more to them than Christian principles. But neither of them ever expressed disapproval or found fault; a hurt expression or a resigned smile were their favourite weapons. It was the resigned smile they used on this occasion, and Uncle Oscar and I, oppressed with the sense of guilt, would have slunk apologetically to our places had it not been that there was a third person present whom we were obliged to greet.

This third person was Cecily Carey. She was connected with the family by her late husband's will, he having made Uncle Oscar sole trustee for the property he left her. The two families had been near neighbours for generations, and Uncle Oscar had known Cecily all her life. At fifteen he had despised her as a baby in long clothes; at twenty he had patronised her as a little girl; at thirty-five he had seen her unhappily married to the most notorious scamp in the county; at forty he had had the pleasure of attending the scamp's funeral; and for the last ten years he had managed all her affairs for her. And generally befriended her like an elder brother. Under the circumstances their intimacy was so natural and inevitable that everybody countenanced it as a matter of course, and Cecily came and went like one of the family. Grandmamma and Aunt Lucretia shed sweetness mingled with pity upon her lavishly. The sweetness bore witness to their oft-expressed opinion that she was genuinely nice; the pity they poured upon certain defects, not of character so much as of manner, as they generously allowed – defects which they would probably never have discovered had it not been that her maiden name of Brand, with other obvious reasons, had drawn upon her in childhood the inevitable sobriquet of Monkey, and Monkey to her intimates she had remained. Not that she was monkey at all in appearance, for her milk-white face was of flower-like delicacy, and in the steady sapphire eyes that shone under her cloudy dark hair a depth of character was foreshadowed much at variance with her reputation for monkey tricks; a depth which, to sympathetic insight, would have portended that the thing to expect of her would be the unexpected. It was always a wonder to me how she set at night the terrible cloying sweetness from which Uncle Oscar and I suffered so helplessly, and said what she thought and did as she intended whatever the opposition. But she did; and her coming acted as a tonic upon both of us. Uncle Oscar's countenance brightened as he saw her now.

"Money again, I suppose," he said in mock despair, but with some earnestness in the mockery. She had to draw on her resources through him, and he would have had her careful of her money, as he was with his own, and she was not careful. "What a plague you are!"

"It isn't my fault if I am made a whip to scourge you with," she protested.

"Why should I be scourged at all?" he asked, plaintively.

"For leading an idle, useless, purposeless existence," she hit back, not dreaming that she was hitting hard. She was looking straight at him, too, yet did not see that he winced. I should not have seen it either, I suppose, had it not been for the glimpse I had just had of that raw place in his feelings.

He helped himself carefully from a dish a servant handed to him at the moment, and went on with his luncheon as if he had not heard. She looked at him a little more keenly when he made no attempt to retort, for they usually kept up a lively banter between them from the moment they met. This banter was a source of sorrow to Grandmamma and Aunt Lucretia. They thought levity in a woman who had had her troubles was unbecoming, and they

wondered that Uncle Oscar could countenance levity – poor Uncle Oscar, to whom a chance to unbend came so rarely!

Grandmamma had resumed her expression of resignation when the little rally began. She looked very sweet and benevolent, sitting at the end of the table in silver grey satin and fine old lace. She wore her beautiful white hair arranged in those rolls the French call *anglaise* on each side of her forehead, and had a trick of patting them gently to gain time to find a reply, or to give a touch of finality to some decree which she had just pronounced. Aunt Lucretia was something like her mother in appearance, but it was the likeness of a bad imitation. Where Grandmamma was graceful in figure, Aunt Lucretia was gaunt. Her hair was of a lifeless sandy colour which produced no effect of beauty in spite of its abundance; and, however costly her clothes, there was always something wrong about them, so that she never looked well dressed. Grandmamma, on the contrary, never looked anything else.

As Uncle Oscar let that little impertinence of Monkey's pass in silence, Grandmamma took off her resigned expression and put on her look of peace; and Aunt Lucretia ceased to study the contents of her plate as if, by concentration thereupon, she could keep herself unspotted from the world. But the silence was becoming oppressive, so I broke it.

"What are we going to do this afternoon?" I asked generally.

"What would you like to do?" Uncle Oscar replied, with a flash of animation.

"Drive us somewhere," I said. "It is such a lovely day! I should like to be out the whole afternoon. Monkey, wouldn't it be nice if Uncle Oscar drove us on to the wolds? Let us take a tea-basket and have a good time."

"Yes, let us," she said. "Oscar, it would be delightful."

"So it would," he agreed. "What time –"

But Grandmamma caught Aunt Lucretia's eye and patted her *anglaises*.²⁸⁷

"You cannot take them this afternoon, dear," she interrupted. "I am sorry, but I want to call on the Merryons, and you must please come too. If Cecily and Beatrice must drive, let Kemp take them."

"Are you going to the Merryons?" Uncle Oscar asked Aunt Lucretia.

"I am," she said solemnly, as if she were taking an oath.

"Then won't my cards do, mother?" he suggested.

"I want you to come yourself," Grandmamma insisted, as if terrible things depended on it.

Uncle Oscar said no more, but the brightness had gone from his face, and Monkey blurted out: "You're a model son, dear! What a loss you are to the married profession – if it be true that a good son makes a good husband."

Grandmamma looked pained at that, as though the doubt suggested were a reproach to Oscar, and Aunt Lucretia, after giving Monkey a rapid glance, set herself hard to reflect; but I had no clue at the moment to the sudden suspicion which had obviously occurred to her.

"Mamma is so nervous in the carriage, you know, dear, when you are not there," she said to Uncle Oscar, with an affectionate smile.

This clinched the matter in the usual way. Uncle Oscar was condemned to spend the lovely afternoon doubled up on the back seat of the brougham, with one window a little way open, and we might go to — for anything those gentle ladies cared so long as we did not trouble them. Oh, that terrible cloying sweetness! If only they had done things disagreeably, it would have roused him, stung him into opposition, and been the making of him. But they always managed so cleverly to make him feel that anything but acquiescence would be boorish and brutal.

²⁸⁷ *anglaises*: a youthful hairstyle - tight curls or ringlets.

Monkey and I gave up the expedition as he could not come, and she immediately took her leave. She was walking and Uncle Oscar went with her, bare-headed, down the drive.

“Shall you be coming home this evening at the usual time?” he had asked her at the door, as he opened her parasol.

I did not hear her reply. But the question satisfied a little piece of curiosity I had sometimes felt. Uncle Oscar often went out immediately after dinner, and I used to wonder where he spent his evenings, but had not asked, of course, or tried to discover. Had he wished me to know he would have told me. And he did tell me, too, eventually. He made me understand how, after a long day of Grandmamma’s incessant little exactions, enforced by Aunt Lucretia’s tender cajoleries, he had looked to an evening spent in Cecily’s bracing atmosphere as to a means of escape, a safety valve. Without the relief of it he must have exploded long before he did. If things had been allowed to go on as they were, without interference, he would probably never have exploded at all.

III

THE power of quiet endurance is more apparent in women than in men, although, like every other attribute, it is common to both sexes. The distinguishing difference lies, not in the possession, but in the way men and women exercise their common attributes. A long-suffering woman makes no pretence of cheerfulness as a rule; a man when he makes up his mind to endure does it pleasantly. This was the case with Uncle Oscar. Heredity had been unkind to him by robbing him of the means of self-defence. Sweetness of manner in the other members of his family cloaked hardness of heart; in him it was a true index of character, which left him open to the assaults of those who did not scruple to impose upon his good nature. Up to this time I had never seen him show impatience, and I used to think that he did not realise the extent to which he was imposed upon. His manner to his mother was perfect whatever she exacted, and the other members of his family he treated with unvarying kindness. Now, however, I began to perceive that something in his habitual courtesy, which at times had seemed to me a little exaggerated, was the outcome of suppressed irritation, I suppose, that gave me the clue to his. It seemed to me monstrous of Grandmamma and Aunt Lucretia calmly to set aside our plans, as they had done at luncheon, and to carry him off, regardless of his own expressed wishes, to pay an unnecessary call – monstrous selfishness; and I had not recovered my temper when we sat down to dinner that evening.

Aunt Constance with Cousin Maud, her daughter, and another distant elderly cousin, Grace, were dining with us. Their company meant much melancholy talk about missions, mother’s meetings, bazaars, and the incorrigible improvidence of the poor. The conduct of one starving woman in particular was worrying them just then. She had been given a liberal supply of soup and bread when she first applied for help, but she had had the assurance to return again the following week as hungry as ever. And they couldn’t get over it. Good women they were, and charitable, but the kindness which encourages people to be happy in their own way was not in them. They were for ever interfering and advising people who were doing well enough in their own way to do something else and do to it differently. They insisted that it was the duty of the poor to be satisfied with what their betters thought good enough for them; and tried to make them believe that the power to work long hours for the rich, only eating and sleeping in order to keep up their strength for work, was the highest privilege to which they had any right to aspire.

I was well accustomed to this kind of talk, but it got upon my nerves that evening, and drove me to break in at last with the double purpose of causing a diversion and making myself as disagreeable to them as they were making themselves to me.

My usual seat was next to Uncle Oscar, and we used to talk to each other happily whoever was there, but latterly this had not been allowed. When Aunt Lucretia saw two people happy together she seemed to suspect that something was wrong, and never rested until she had had the pleasure of making them both miserable. For this reason I had been moved away from Uncle Oscar. But that sort of thing, in those days, only made me the more irrepensible.

“You must have been bored to death in that horrible close carriage this afternoon, Uncle Oscar,” I exclaimed across the distance. “I did pity you! Especially as there was no necessity for you to go at all. Weren’t you just longing to be out with us all the time in the fresh air?”

“I hope Uncle Oscar did not suffer more than your dear Grandmamma and myself,” Aunt Lucretia put in, with gentle deprecation.

“Must have,” I said. “You went because you wanted to go. He was dragged off against his will. You don’t suppose he liked it – especially when the alternative was Monkey.”

This last shot hit home, I could see. Aunt Lucretia’s set smile went out suddenly and was only recaptured with an effort. Grandmamma patted her white rolls, first on one side and then on the other, with quite an agitated touch. Grim Cousin Grace sniffed, and Aunt Constance compressed her lips as if she had something in her mouth that wanted to get out. I did not in the least know what I had hit, and I looked at Uncle Oscar to see if he were better informed, but there was not a hint in the expression of his face to help me.

“I suppose they were out, and you got no tea,” I went on, making another bull’s eye by accident.

“We had a happy sense of having done the right thing to sustain us,” Grandmamma assured me, with her most seraphic smile.

“I expect Uncle Oscar would have found more stimulant in a cup of tea,” I observed.

There was a momentary faint flicker of amusement on Uncle Oscar’s face. Aunt Lucretia detected it and blew it out at once.

“Be yourself, Beatrice dearest,” she said. “The original Monkey leaves much to be desired, but a bad imitation of her, poor dear, is unendurable.”

“Indeed, yes, poor dear child,” said Grandmamma. “She is much to be pitied. But you have had every advantage, Beatrice, and you really do know better.”

“Better than what?” I wanted to know.

“Never mind, dearest,” said Grandmamma. “It is not a profitable subject.”

She smiled at Uncle Oscar maternally, and rose from the table as she spoke. He hurried to the door to open it for her and the other ladies. As they left the room his face brightened for the first time that evening.

I was the last to go, and as I passed him he whispered: “Good-night, Bee. I shall make my escape.”

“Thank goodness for you,” I said. “Good night!”

When I went into the drawing-room the three elder ladies had got their heads together, and Cousin Maud was looking all out of it, so I took charge of her to the best of my ability, for she was of an intellectual weight that bowed my spirits to the ground. The only way to entertain her was to set her going on a subject in which she was deeply interested, and then to give her her head. After that one could let one’s mind wander at will so long as one looked her in the face and seemed to be listening. By a stroke of luck I hit upon the resurrection of the body, and got her safely off to ancient Egypt, where she enjoyed herself thoroughly among the tombs with the mummies until it was time to go home.

The confab at the other side of the room was being carried on in undertones, but every now and then a distinct phrase caught my wandering attention – if you can call it attention

which takes no interest in what is being said and would rather not be caught. But Aunt Lucretia, who had been talking hard, as if in an effort to persuade the others to something, all at once wound herself up to a climax on a high note which reached me in spite of myself.

"Dearest Constance, I am afraid I am right," she exclaimed. "Mother dear, *you* remember what she said about him at luncheon? She said that he was a loss to the married profession. That was what opened my eyes."

"Not at all a nice thing to say," grim cousin Grace observed.

"She is often not nice in her sayings," Aunt Lucretia sighed; "and one is forced to remember *qui peut tout dire arrive á tout faire*. We give her the run of the house and every opportunity."

"You will have to be careful," Aunt Constance warned her. "All that is necessary is to keep them apart. With a little tact you need never have her here when he is at home."

"Where *is* Oscar?" Grandmamma broke in plaintively. "Beatrice, dearest, where is your Uncle Oscar?"

I turned out my pocket to show that he wasn't in it, and was reproved for treating a question of Grandmamma's with unbecoming levity. But I wasn't going to give Uncle Oscar away – or Monkey either.

Aunt Lucretia left the room to look for him and returned without him.

"I am afraid he has gone out, Mother dearest," she said, mitigating the blow with a tender kiss.

"It really is a little inconsiderate," Grandmamma complained. "He must have known I should want him this evening."

"Never mind, dear," Aunt Constance said soothingly; "we all know what men are."

"It's that horrid smoking," Cousin Grace declared. "I don't believe they would be half so selfish if it were not for that. Once they get together smoking and talking they forget everything. I can't think how they can waste precious time as they do."

"If only men could be taught to work as you do, Cousin Grace, they would have the same profitable topics of conversation, and then how different they would be!" I ventured. (Hideous little bits of wool-work for bazaars represented the extent of her labours and interests.)

"They would indeed!" sighed Cousin Grace complacently.

I hurried back with Maud to ancient Egypt for safety, and was resigned to stay there for the rest of the evening, but my heart was with Uncle Oscar. I was glad to think that he was happy with Cecily; but that kind of gladness does not cheer one, and my spirits went down and down. Then, suddenly, just as they had dropped to the lowest depths, I heard something and up again they flushed to the zenith. It was Uncle Oscar's step in the hall. In a moment, to my inexpressible pleasure, he appeared at the drawing-room door.

"Beatrice, I want you," he called to me.

His tone was peremptory, so I knew that he had come to the rescue with something nice in store for me by way of a diversion, for that was the only tone to assume in order to get me way without opposition. When Uncle Oscar was peremptory the dear ladies always supposed that I had been up to some mischief and was in for a lecture, a treat of which they would not have deprived me for money, much as they loved it.

Uncle Oscar withdrew when he had spoken and I ran out to him in the hall.

"It's a pity to be shut up in that stuffy room this lovely evening," he said. "Put something on, and we'll go and see Cecily. Grandmamma has enough of the family to entertain her without us. We shall not be missed."

The dear had returned on purpose to rescue me.

IV

UNCLE OSCAR had never taken me out with him alone before in the evening; but everything had been different that day and I was not surprised. New departures were in the air, so to speak.

We made for a little side door in the wall that fenced the grounds from the high road. It was a short cut across a grassy space, thick-set with fine old trees, beneath which we walked in the soft deep shadows so noiselessly that we might have been imponderable spirits. I slipped my hand through Uncle Oscar's arm, a trick of mine when we were alone together which he kindly allowed but did not encourage. It was my wont to do all the caressing and his to endure it, kindly but stolidly – so stolidly that it was hard to suppose that he was even aware of my customary demonstrations of affection. I loved to hang on his arm and lean my head against his shoulder. I used to wear low-heeled walking shoes for the purpose, for, with high heels, I was taller than he was; and it hurt me, somehow, to be taller than Uncle Oscar.

In those days it was easy enough for me to understand what attracted Uncle Oscar to Cecily, for I felt the same attraction myself. Hers was an atmosphere in which any heart not hopelessly dried and shrivelled was bound to expand. She was so genuinely sympathetic, so tolerant, so free of all taint of that poison of the mind which blossoms into carping criticism. I never remember to have heard her hard on anybody, and yet she did not shut her eyes. She was too intelligent for that, too keenly interested in life in all its phases; but she never sat in judgement. What she did was to take conduct of all kinds into consideration, and then she tried to account for the different varieties. Kindly accounting for was her speciality. She could account for Grandmamma and Aunt Lucretia and excuse them on occasions when I had been worked up into a frenzy of impotent rage. But those were occasions, as I afterwards came to observe, when nothing affecting her own dignity and pride had occurred.

It was during the first year of her widowhood that Uncle Oscar had formed the habit of spending his evenings with her. The settlement of her husband's affairs, which had been left in disorder, and the trusteeship of her money had necessitated many consultations which it had often suited them both best to hold in the evening. Monkey frankly said that it varied the monotony for her to have him come then, and, when business was done, she would beguile him to stay and talk – if you can call that beguiling which was too openly proclaimed to leave a doubt of her intention.

"I'm bored to death, Oscar," she would say. "I'm sick of myself. Do stay and talk to me and make me feel human. I do so hate to be alone in the evening."

And Uncle Oscar had stayed at first with the kindly desire to cheer her. So the habit had been formed. He had not thought of these evenings as of any particular pleasure to himself, or discovered that they were, until her mourning was over, when she shut up her house and went abroad. Then he knew, by the melancholy blank from which he suffered after her departure, what a pleasant difference her society as a means of escape from his own family had meant for him.

That was ten years ago, and their close intimacy, coming about, as it had done, insensibly, and as the result of circumstances, had roused neither question nor comment among their friends. Everybody had taken it for granted that it should be so, themselves included.

Uncle Oscar had looked depressed when we left home, but the balmy coolness of the summer night was refreshing, and by the time we reached the old red-brick Georgian house, fronting the street, in which Cecily lived, he was whistling to himself softly, a sure sign in him of rising spirits.

Blackwell, the staid old servant who let us in, honoured me with a stare of inquiry, but she smiled a cordial welcome to Uncle Oscar, and it was as if, when she relieved him of his

cap and coat she relieved him also of the last of his depression and some of his years, for his step was buoyant as he mounted the broad shallow stairs, and the smile with which he responded to Cecily's greeting was the smile of a happy man.

"I've brought Bee," he said.

Cecily was sitting beside a solid little ebony table on which stood a shaded lamp. A book lay open on her lap. She put it down when we entered and rose to receive us, smiling on us both impartially.

"Bee is welcome," she said. Then she glanced at the clock. "I was beginning to be afraid you could not come," she said to Uncle Oscar.

"Then you knew I should come if I could," he answered, catching at the admission. "We had an interminable dinner to-night. I made my escape the moment I could, and I was half way here when I thought of Bee and went back for her.

"And, oh, but I was glad to be rescued!" I exclaimed. "You can imagine what it was with Aunt Constance, Cousin Maud and Cousin Grace added to Grandmamma and Aunt Lucretia! And the talk!"

"Mother's meetings, I suppose," she interpreted. "Do sit down."

When we were seated she observed that they were dear, good, kind, charitable women. We were always reminding each other that they were dear, good, kind, charitable women; it made them easier to bear.

"Yes, they're all that," he broke out to my surprise, it was so unlike what I knew of him to criticise his own people harshly; "and enough to make any man shun dear, good, kind, charitable women like the plague. Why can't they leave their dear, good, kind, charitableness at home, or keep it for those who care for no other subject, and show us an interest in something outside their own petty concerns. The duties of life must be attended to, of course, but they are none the better done for being discussed *ad nauseam*. But that is the way with women. They make a man dyspeptic."

"Sir," she said, "I am a woman."

"I don't believe it," he rejoined. "You're a freak – at least I don't know another like you."

There was a faint momentary quiver about her lips, as of a smile suppressed. She rose, and he made to rise also, but she stopped him: "At your peril," she said. "You know I like to do things myself."

Then she fetched a small table and put it beside him. There were cigarettes and matches on it. "Smoke," she said.

He took a cigarette and struck a match aggressively. The recollection of his grievances had ruffled him again; but I could see how grateful were her little unobtrusive feminine ministrations, coming, as they did, after a day of fetching and carrying incessantly for selfish, exacting women. After a few whiffs of the cigarette the tension was released, and he leant back in his chair his equanimity restored.

"You do as much as they do, but you never talk mother's meetings, why should they?" he asked at last, but in an easy interested tone, not carping.

"I don't talk anything much, do I?" she asked.

"N – no," he replied, considering; "yet you are never dull. There is always an atmosphere of pleasant thoughts about you. I feel it the moment I enter the house."

"That is good to hear," she said, looking pleased. "But I Have always thought it was you who filled my house with a happy atmosphere when you come."

He let this pass, and smoked for a little in silence, thoughtfully. Afterwards he told me that he was thinking of what she had just said about not talking much, and that it was true of her in her own house. When she came to us she was apt to be very much Monkey; but at home alone with him she was grave and quiet, not to say subdued – a nicer, more dignified

woman that she ever showed herself to any of his family – why? He suspected that the answer was to be found in the faults of his family.

I wondered. Cecily as two different women gave me for the first time a feeling of uncertainty about her that made me uneasy. It was as if I had awakened to the discovery that I did not know my dearest friend at all. Uncle Oscar laughed at the suggestion: “You must not confound tricks of manner with permanent characteristics,” he said. “Our manners, like our moods, are often determined for the moment by the company we are in. Sensitive people of one kind betray involuntarily the feeling set up in them by the person they are with; and there is another sort of sensitive who detects and reflects the feelings of others.”

“Which is Cecily?” I asked.

“Cecily is a mixture,” he answered.

“That is what I feared,” I said.

“But a good mixture,” he maintained.

“Do you know all the ingredients?” I persisted.

“I think so,” he said.

* * * * *

Cecily had rung the bell while he was thinking, and Blackwell had brought in a tray of eatables and drinkables. Uncle Oscar looked at the clock in alarm.

“Is that a hint to go?” he asked.

“No,” Cecily answered. “It is a hint to stay late if you like. I want you to play to me. And I don’t want to keep Blackwell up this evening. She has had a rather long, hard day.”

Uncle Oscar’s face had clouded, but it cleared again at this. He went to the tray and helped himself to something-and-soda-water; then, sitting on the arm of a chair, he finished his cigarette deliberately, as a man does who is contented and at his ease. There was a very much at-home air about all that he did that night which it was good to see. In his own family he was usually kept too much on the alert to have time for pleasurable relaxation.

When he had finished his cigarette he went to the piano.

Cecily leant back in her chair and closed her eyes.

Uncle Oscar struck a chord here and there, considering, then ran his fingers lightly over the keys. “What shall I play?” he asked.

“Something – something uplifting,” she said. “Take me right away up – out of all of this –”

It was not a thing that I should have thought that he had it in him to do, although I knew what he played well; and the request gave me another uneasy feeling – I don’t know why uneasy, but it was; the feeling that Cecily knew more of him than I did. I told myself that it was natural that she should, and right, and good for him; but all the same I did not like it. And when he began to play as I had never heard him play before, I was not uplifted, whatever Cecily was; on the contrary I was deeply depressed.

He played on, wandering from one thing to another, apparently without requiring from her any “Thank you!” or “How lovely!” or “What is that?” for his encouragement; for she never once interrupted him, but her countenance, while he was playing, expressed all and more than could have been said; and in her sigh, when at last he closed the piano, there was the best praise and thanks.

“One more cigarette if I may, before we go,” he said, returning to his untouched something-and-soda-water.

“By all means,” she replied. “Come, Bee, come and have something to eat.” She rose as she spoke, and held out her hand to pull me up out of my chair. “What is the programme for tomorrow?” she asked, when we had joined him at the tray.

“The usual thing in the morning, I suppose,” he said with a shrug. “I shall have to act as an escort to that horrible bazaar in the afternoon. Shall you be there?” She nodded. “I don’t know about the evening. What are you going to do? Can’t you come to dinner?”

“If I’m wanted.”

“What do you mean by that?” he said, sharply. “You are always wanted.” She laughed. “Tell me what you mean?” he urged.

But she put the question by with another little laugh.

Uncle Oscar had no clue to what was in her mind, but I had, for I had become aware of a difference in her reception at Seascapely lately, a something indefinable, but enough, if she noticed it, to make her feel that it was no longer possible to run in and out, as she had always been accustomed to do, just when she liked, without any special invitation from the ladies of the family.

Uncle Oscar did not press her again to explain, and she left him go with his thoughts in a tangle of puzzled conjecture.

V

THERE was that big, boring charity bazaar next day to which we were dragged, Uncle Oscar and I. He made no objection. He never did. If a thing had to be done he did it pleasantly. But I grumbled and sulked, with my usual bad taste, as Aunt Lucretia said.

“I don’t see why we should have to go to a beastly bazaar,” I had protested.

“It is right that we should go, dearest child,” Grandmamma admonished me.

“But why can’t you and Aunt Lucretia go and do what is right for the whole family?” I had persisted. “You think it right because you want to go —”

“That will do, dear,” Aunt Lucretia interrupted.

* * * * *

The carriage was pulling up at the Public Hall, and Uncle Oscar hastily alighted and gave his arm to his mother.

For half an hour he patiently piloted her from stall to stall, and at each she made liberal purchases for which he paid. She had quite a high reputation for the generous support she gave to all deserving charities, and this was the way she earned it. People said it was such a charming sight to see her, with her beautiful white hair and fascinating smile, sacrificing herself on a hot afternoon by setting such an example for the benefit of the cause. But she was not sacrificing herself at all. She enjoyed every moment of such occasions, and sacrificed us that her goodness might be vouched for by the devotion of her family, the public display of which was needed to heighten the illusion.

Uncle Oscar not only had to complete Grandmamma’s purchases by paying for them, but he had also to do the portage. I helped him with that, and we were soon covered with all sorts of horrors, chiefly woolly, which Grandmamma and Aunt Lucretia declared would be just the thing to send to some other bazaar.

Aunt Constance and a sheaf of cousins had joined us, so that we formed quite an imposing family procession. At last, however, Grandmamma proclaimed herself exhausted and sat down. I pitched the things I was carrying on the floor beside her and snatched Uncle Oscar’s load to throw on the heap, but was not reproved, for the collection made a godly pile in full view of the whole assembly, and could not help but redound to the credit of Grandmamma’s generosity.

I wanted to secure Uncle Oscar for myself and get away with him, but he was immediately despatched by Aunt Lucretia to get tea for their dear mother. "And Oscar dear," she added, as an after-thought, "you had better get some for us all. It will help the good work."

While he was away Cecily came up to speak to us for a minute, with a big doll in her arms and a little child by the hand.

"I have charge of these two pretty things," she said, "and I must take them to a place of safety out of the crowd. I shan't see you again, probably, but I'll come and dine with you this evening or to-morrow, if I may."

The proposition was received in dead silence. Cecily thought they had not heard. "I want to come and dine with you this evening, or to-morrow, if I may," she repeated.

Not a word. She looked in surprise from one to the other. Then a faint flush appeared on her sensitive white-rose face. Grandmamma patted her *anglaises*, Aunt Lucretia stooped on the pretence of re-arranging the heap of purchases. Aunt Constance was apparently in difficulties with her glove buttons. I would have said something, but like Cecily herself I was taken aback, and before I could recover myself she had gone. Immediately afterwards Uncle Oscar returned, carrying a table and followed by sundry damsels with cups and saucers and cakes and tea. Then other people joined us and general chitter-chatter became the next distraction. When at last we departed and Uncle Oscar had put us in the carriage, he excused himself and sent us home alone, and I did not see him again until we met in the drawing-room just before dinner, so that I had no opportunity of saying a word to him in private. Not that I had a word to say, for I did not understand what was going on at all.

He came down just before the gong sounded and glanced round the drawing-room.

"Where is Cecily?" he asked.

"I'm sure I don't know," Grandmamma answered, looking vaguely as if Cecily had been there and had suddenly concealed herself.

"I had no time to talk to her at the bazaar," he said, "but I understood that she was coming tonight."

"So did we," said Aunt Lucretia, "but we only saw her for a moment."

"She had time enough to say that she would come to dinner to-night or to-morrow night if she might," I put in, maliciously.

"And what did you say?" Uncle Oscar asked Aunt Lucretia, with a shade of suspicion in his voice.

"We left it to her," Aunt Lucretia replied, sweet as ever. "It makes no difference to us, you know, dear. She always comes and goes as she likes."

Uncle Oscar gave his arm to his mother and took her in to dinner. There was a fifth cover laid which Aunt Lucretia ordered to be removed when we had taken our seats.

"She won't come now, I'm sure," she said. "We must expect her to-morrow."

Uncle Oscar made no remark upon this, but all through the meal, although he talked as usual, I could see that his thoughts were elsewhere.

I hoped he would escape after dinner, but Grandmamma captured him for cribbage before we left the table and kept him prisoner for the rest of the evening.

Uncle Oscar was in good spirits when we met next day, but I did not see much of him, for Grandmamma and Aunt Lucretia had a ladies luncheon party, from which he was saved by his sex and so set free to make off for a reviving day on some distant golf links. He would have saved me, too, if I had been by way of taking advantage of his good-nature; but I knew that his day would have been spoilt by the jar attendant on the inevitable struggle he would have had to go through in order to rescue me, and I refused. If I had not, Grandmamma and Aunt Lucretia would not have let him go in peace, for they were bound to have at least one victim – especially after a bazaar. The bad air, general discomfort, and crowding at bazaars,

which exhaust most people, only stimulated these admirable women and made them more actively exacting than usual; so that the release of one of us by the blessed accident of the luncheon party happening the next day was an exhilarating relief, even to me, who had, for a holiday task, to help to entertain a party of ladies all suffering from a chronic sniff brought on by the habit of disparaging everybody. But it did me good to think of Uncle Oscar out on the breezy links with nothing to trouble him and something to look forward to. For I knew that he would be thinking, as I was, of Cecily and this evening, which must surely bring her back to us.

Evening came and Uncle Oscar returned. I heard him go to his room, whistling to himself softly. And dinner-time came – but no Cecily. When dinner was announced Grandmamma and Aunt Lucretia would have gone in to the moment as usual, but Uncle Oscar stopped them. “Stay a minute,” he said to old Johns, our butler.

Johns stayed by the door.

Then Uncle Oscar turned to his mother, and there was enough in his face to set her patting her *anglaises* quickly, first on one side and then on the other.

“Where is Cecily?” he said.

“Really, Oscar dear –” Aunt Lucretia interposed.

“It was my mother to whom I spoke,” he said, silencing her.

Then he waited, and Johns waited, and I waited, all looking at Grandmamma; and Grandmamma rose to the occasion, calm and smiling.

“You were asking about Cecily, dear?” she said. “Do you know if she is coming, Lucretia?”

“I do not,” Aunt Lucretia said, speaking as usual in times of trial as if she were answering upon oath.

“What did Cecily say yesterday?” Uncle Oscar asked me.

“Cecily said: ‘I’ll come and dine with you this evening or to-morrow, if I may?’” I answered, speaking also, involuntarily, as if I were upon oath, and devoutly thankful that I was not one of the culprits.

“Well?”

The meaning Uncle Oscar put into that word made me quail, although I had nothing to fear. I had no idea that he could speak like that. But those two sweet women met the attack with innocent, uncomprehending smiles.

“That was all, dear,” Grandmamma said. “That was all, I think?” she added, turning to Aunt Lucretia.

“Yes, that was all,” Aunt Lucretia declared.

“Nothing else was said?” Uncle Oscar asked, looking from one to the other suspiciously.

“No, nothing,” Grandmamma answered instantly, not seeing, in her haste, all that the answer implied, but Uncle Oscar saw.

“I understand,” he said. “Cecily asked if she might come to dinner, and neither of you said a word.”

But Grandmamma was one of the dear, good, sweet, womanly women of a by-gone day, who made a fine living by managing men. Those that are left of her way of thinking nowadays are anti-suffragists. Uncle Oscar, with his simple directness, was no match for one so well versed in the art of cajolery; gave her time and she would wriggle out of anything.

“No, dear,” she replied, still smiling, but sighing at the same time wearily, “we neither of us said anything. There was no need. Silence gives consent, you know. A nod and a smile is enough for a child of the house like Cecily. You would not have us begin to treat her formally, now, surely! It would quite alter our relations.” Her voice was flagging.

“You are exhausted, mother dear,” Aunt Lucretia exclaimed. “Oscar, how can you keep her here waiting for dinner until she faints! Cecily asked herself to dinner and she has not come, nor has she been polite enough to send an excuse. This is the second evening I told Johns to expect her. She is really too casual. She has forgotten all about us probably and gone off somewhere else. We might drop the subject now, I think, and go in to dinner.”

Uncle Oscar gave his arm to his mother. He had not looked either at her or Aunt Lucretia while they were speaking, but at me, keenly. It was not possible for him to cast a doubt upon the veracity of his mother and sister by asking for my version of the story, nor for very shame could I speak and show them both disingenuous; but he must have seen enough in my face to be sure that he was being cajoled, for although he did let the subject drop he was evidently not satisfied.

During dinner Grandmamma said that she would like him to play cribbage with her when he had had his cigarette.

“I am sorry I cannot,” he answered shortly. “Lucretia must play with you to-night. I am going out.”

“But I play so badly,” Aunt Lucretia remonstrated plaintively.

“You will improve if you practise,” he said.

Grandmamma and Aunt Lucretia exchanged disconcerted glances.

“But I would rather play with you, dear,” Grandmamma persisted.

“I am sorry, mother,” he answered with decision. “I am going out directly after dinner.”

The shock of this announcement silenced them and I also was surprised; but I was glad, too, very glad. The worm had turned. Uncle Oscar was for going his own way at last.

In the drawing-room after dinner there was no question of cribbage. Grandmamma patted an intermittent accompaniment to her thoughts on the arms of her chair. Aunt Lucretia knitted fiercely. She was in the habit of putting the energy into her work which, in other people, would have resulted in a display of anger or agitation very damaging to a reputation for sweetness and self-control. Their few remarks to each other bore reference to something that had been already well discussed. They spoke out before me, not caring, as I thought, whether I overheard them or not. Afterwards, however, it appeared that they had forgotten me. It was easy enough to do so in that big room, for I was sitting apart, beyond their circle of light, in the seat I preferred when I wanted to be quiet and read in the evening. Not that I was reading. I had tried but I could not concentrate my attention. The scene before dinner had been unprecedented in my experience, and I still felt that there was agitation in the atmosphere. For the first time since I had lived with them there seemed to be a difference of opinion between Grandmamma and Aunt Lucretia, and presently something like an altercation began, a thing startling enough in itself to attract my shocked attention even if I had had no special interest in the subject.

“It is quite possible,” Grandmamma was saying, “that you and Constance are mistaken. You neither of you pretend to be infallible, I suppose. And certainly the result of your diplomacy was far from happy this evening.”

“I am not mistaken,” Aunt Lucretia answered, emphatically. “Surely there was proof enough of that in what happened this evening. Would he have been so put out if it had been anybody else? She is not nice, and I have always said so. And I have always said that she was designing, but you would not listen to me.”

“I have always heard you tell everybody that she is delightful, charming – I don’t know what,” Grandmamma querulously objected.

“To other people, yes,” snapped Aunt Lucretia, unabashed. “So she is in a way. But that only makes her all the more dangerous. She has set herself to fascinate him, and she will do it if we let her have the opportunity.”

“But if this had been going to happen it would have happened long ago,” Grandmamma argued.

“Not necessarily,” Aunt Lucretia maintained. “And at any rate it did not happen long ago. It is only lately that there has been any change in their attitude towards each other. And the thing must be stopped” – her knitting needles flew – “or, just think what the loss will be to the family!”

“But his happiness,” Grandmamma feebly protested.

“Bother his happiness,” Aunt Lucretia burst out, forgetting herself completely for once. “I mean –” she pulled herself up short. “He is happy enough. And certainly she would not make him any happier. It would be altogether a most unsuitable thing –”

At this moment I thought I heard Uncle Oscar come in and jumped up to go and meet him.

Aunt Lucretia and Grandmamma started guiltily. “Is that you, Bee?” Aunt Lucretia exclaimed, “What are you doing there?”

“Attending to the conversation,” I replied.

“It was not intended for your ears,” she said. “We did not know that you were there.”

“I am sorry I did not know that you did not know. I came in after you as usual,” I explained.

“You are not speaking to your aunt in at all a proper tone,” said Grandmamma. “You heard what we were talking about? Well, I must request you not to repeat the conversation.”

“There is a great deal at stake,” Aunt Lucretia supplemented, “and the loss may be as much yours as anybody’s.”

“If you mean money by that, Aunt Lucretia,” I answered, “I have enough of my own, thank you. And if I hadn’t I should not intrigue that against the happiness of anybody in the hope of securing some of theirs.”

“Intrigue, what do you mean?” Aunt Lucretia demanded.

But I would not answer. I just gave her a look and stalked out of the room.

In the hall I met Uncle Oscar.

“Have you seen Cecily?” I whispered.

“No,” he answered, “Blackwell said that she was not at home.”

“She refused to see you!” I exclaimed.

He shrugged his shoulders and went on into the library. I followed him and he shut the door.

“What does all this mean, Bee?” he demanded, in a disheartened voice. “Why doesn’t Cecily come as usual? Why did she refuse to see me to-night?”

“If you had seen the family at the bazaar, you’d know!” I exclaimed. “The way they looked at her! And the dead silence in which they received her suggestion that she should come to dinner! I don’t believe she’ll ever come into your house again. *I wouldn’t!*”

“But why, in God’s name, should they insult Cecily? Why should she be driven out of my house?”

“They’ve got it into their heads that you’re in love with each other,” I blurted out.

Uncle Oscar looked stunned. Such a notion had evidently never suggested itself to him for a moment.

“That – we are – in love – with each other,” he repeated. “Cecily – in love – with *me!*”

He looked in my face for a moment in his bewilderment, and then he began to walk up and down the room; and as he did so his countenance gradually changed. The trouble passed from his face and was succeeded by an expression which was new to me, an expression that wiped out years of his age, and changed him for the better to an extent that I could not have believed possible had I not seen the change occur.

“But why should they object?” he said, stopping at last in his walk and looking at me with a queer, embarrassed smile.

“Oh, your money, of course,” I answered, flatly. “They don’t want to lose your money. And Grandmamma and Aunt Lucretia would hate to turn out for Cecily. They’ve a fine position at Seascap so long as you’re a bachelor, you know.”

“My happiness doesn’t count then, I suppose,” he said bitterly.

“Aunt Lucretia says you’re happy enough.”

“Damn Aunt Lucretia – I beg your pardon, Bee.” He laughed. “There’s one little person in the house, at all events, upon whom I can count to be disinterested,” he said. “You don’t know what you’ve done for me, Bee, you don’t know what it means to me –”

His voice broke, and I ran out of the room for fear of seeing more of his emotion.

VI

UNCLE OSCAR was up and out as usual early next morning, exercising his thoroughbreds. We all breakfasted at different times, which meant breakfasting alone, a privilege which Uncle Oscar and I valued dearly. He was always up and had breakfasted and gone out to exercise his horses before anybody else was down. Grandmamma breakfasted in bed, I in my own sitting-room, and Aunt Lucretia downstairs in the breakfast-room. “Not for my own pleasure, dearest, but that discipline may be maintained in the household,” as she explained to me.

That was to make me feel ignoble, because I had just been clamouring for a sitting-room and the right to as much privacy in my life as I required. Those two dear women did give us a time about that sitting-room, but that was nothing new, for they were always in opposition to everything and they never played fair. They knew it would make Uncle Oscar feel mean if they drove him to put down his foot as master of the house for my benefit, yet they did drive him to it, and I not only got a sitting-room but *the* one I wanted with the right to furnish it as I chose. Why they should have objected I cannot imagine. There was room enough in the house for us all to camp apart with a separate retinue. It was change of any kind, I suppose, that they dreaded. They made me feel quite uncomfortable when I had to have my hair done up and my dresses lengthened, they so evidently disapproved of my growing up at all.

We all met at luncheon for the first time that day. Uncle Oscar looked so well that Grandmamma commented upon it and thought that his ride must have done him good.

“And oh, by the way, Oscar dear,” said Aunt Lucretia, with the air of one who is frothing up things in general to take the flatness out of them, “I have seen Cecily. It was as I thought. But she is coming to dinner to-night.”

“What was as you thought, Aunt Lucretia,” I asked, demurely.

But Aunt Lucretia had a fine flare for an impertinence, especially when to reply would have been to give herself away. She had mastered the useful art of ignoring anything inconvenient that might be said, and she put it in practice now. I longed to look at Uncle Oscar, but forbore, lest she should suspect that there was an understanding between us on the subject.

“I shall miss Cecily this evening,” he said, in his usual quiet way. “I am sorry. I am dining out.”

“Oh, what a pity!” Aunt Lucretia exclaimed – as if she had forgotten!

So that was to be their tactics. Cecily was to be encouraged to come to the house as much as possible when Uncle Oscar was out, and skilfully kept away at other times. And the plan was well worked – so well that Uncle Oscar himself became uneasy. Things were so arranged that he and I seldom had an opportunity of speaking to Cecily for a moment alone at

Seascape, and our visits to her house were made formal by the presence of an invalid friend, a new importation who seemed likely to become a fixture.

“Why don’t you come as usual?” I heard him question her in an undertone at dinner, on one of the now rare occasions when she was with us and he was at home.

“Don’t I?” she said. “I am constantly here.”

He was not satisfied, I could see, but conversation flagged round the table at the moment and he could say no more.

On another occasion, when he was putting on her cloak in the hall, he said: “I suppose you will avoid me to-morrow by not coming to our picnic.”

“I never avoid you, Oscar,” she answered.

“It is odd then that I should see so little of you,” he said drily.

“I can’t bear to hurt people,” she pleaded rather piteously, “people who have been kind to me. I only want to keep the peace. Do understand.”

There was no time for more, for Aunt Lucretia swooped down upon them at that moment and saw Cecily safely shut up alone and off in the carriage herself.

But Cecily had said enough to ease Uncle Oscar’s mind. He believed that he understood at last, fully, and after that he was content to wait for a propitious moment. He could not bear to hurt people either, and his hope was that the family attitude would change of itself for some good reason if he waited.

Things went on like this for some few weeks, but it was a happy time for Uncle Oscar. It was delightful to see him, he looked so young, his step was so buoyant, and he became so keen to do things. The dull apathetic indifference with which he had been wont to acquiesce in the arrangements made for him by his mother and sister was superseded by a lively disposition to resist their incessant exactions. He managed to evade them by making engagements for himself, and at unexpected times he caused consternation by interfering peremptorily in the ordering of his own house. Grandmamma and Aunt Lucretia were alarmed by these strange departures at first, but before long they gathered hope from the change and encouraged him to take up new interests. If his mind were occupied with things in general, they reasoned, it would probably lead to the exclusion of the one thing in particular which they dreaded.

Cecily’s inconvenient invalid left her at last and Uncle Oscar hoped to be asked to resume his evening visits, but she excused herself – in such a way, however, as to encourage his hopes. She wrote to him on the subject:–

“I have not changed,” she said, “but your mother and sister have. You must see that yourself. They would not approve now of your coming to see me at irregular hours, and I cannot allow *anything* of which they do not approve; so make it easy for me, Oscar dear, as you have always made everything easy for me for so many years, by agreeing that it is better that you should not come. I shall miss you dreadfully in the evenings, more than I could bear if you did not cordially agree that there is nothing else for it, that it is best for us all that it should be so.”

Uncle Oscar showed me the note with his new young smile of content and happiness: “You see what she says, Bee, that she will miss me dreadfully,” he repeated several times. “But it won’t be for long.”

He went off whistling to himself softly. He was always either singing or whistling now when he was moving about the house. He made me think of the birds when their songs come back in the spring. Pursuits that he had dropped he took up again at this time – his piano for one thing. Latterly we could scarcely persuade him to touch it, but now he needed no persuasion. He played incessantly, and with such expressions I had only once (that night at Cecily’s) heard him put into his music. Yet those ostrich women neither heard nor saw anything of the difference in him. The symptoms of what was threatening were sufficiently

marked, one would have thought, but they remained blind to them for the most part, and the rest mistook them. Their self-complacency at this time was sickening. They gave the dear Lord the discredit of having favoured their heartless manœuvres and blessed Him on their knees. They talked about healthy natural affection always prevailing in the long run over unwholesome fancies, provided wise friends interfered in time to prevent such fancies going too far; and they congratulated themselves upon being wise friends. What is called natural affection seldom suffices to fill the heart and round a life with a satisfying sense of fullness and completion, and no one could say that Uncle Oscar's life had been so rounded by his relations; but that they ignored. What was his happiness to them compared to the run of his beautiful place in the present, and the hope of a share of his fortune eventually?

An obvious change in Cecily's attitude towards the family also helped to confirm their delusion. She was so often "not at home" when they went to see her, so often "engaged" when they sent her invitations, that it became evident that she was avoiding both them and the house. Gradually, therefore, they concluded that she had given up what they coarsely called "the attempt," and their suspicions subsided. Thus they left themselves quite unprepared for the blow when it did come, and the effect was crushing – crushing to all of us, for we were all hard hit, and equally unexpectedly, although in different ways. It was a bolt from the blue with a vengeance. One day Uncle Oscar lunched with us in the highest spirits; the next he was gone – without warning, without explanation. A curt note to his mother merely to inform her that he would be away for some time being all the news we had of him for a fortnight. He was the most open of men and had never left home before, even for a day, without saying where he was going and why; so that the effect of this new departure upon us all was startling. Aunt Lucretia boldly declared that "that woman had succeeded in her wicked designs and had carried him off." She had the carriage out at once and went to see for herself; and she found Cecily quietly presiding at a committee meeting in her own dining-room, and was promptly routed for putting in an appearance, as she was not even a member of the society which was holding its session, "The Society for the Suppression of Silent Smiles of Slow Disparagement," a sub-society which had been formed to carry to completion the work begun by "The Society for the Prevention of Evil Speaking."

Uncle Oscar put an end to our suspense at last by walking in to dinner one evening, after we were seated, and taking his own seat with an apology for being late as if he had never been away. But it was a different Uncle Oscar – an Uncle Oscar whom even Grandmamma knew better than to question. The Uncle Oscar to whom we were accustomed had been genial, good-natured, easy-going to a fault; this was a hard, cold man, against whose stern decision it was plain that it would be useless to appeal.

I cannot remember how we got through that terrible meal, except that very little was said, and Grandmamma's fluttering little hand patted her white *anglaises*, first on one side and then on the other, incessantly. Aunt Lucretia sat pale and rigid, but made a gallant attempt to eat and talk as usual.

Before we left the table Uncle Oscar signalled the final extinction of their tyrannical sway over me and the establishment of his own new dispensation.

"Go and get your things on, Beatrice," he said, "I want you to come out for a walk with me."

At any previous time such a proposal would have thrown Aunt Lucretia and Grandmamma into immediate opposition; but that night, although they exchanged glances expressive of disapproval, they did not dare to say a word.

Once we were out of doors and alone together there was no need to tell me that Uncle Oscar was in trouble. I slipped my hand through his arm and he pressed it to his side; but he did not speak, and I could not. After the strain of the tension at dinner I was near to tears.

It was a moonlight night, soft and balmy as the one on which we had gone together to finish the evening with Cecily; and he started off at once in the same direction. What was his object, I wondered, but I did not care so long as he let me be with him to share it. A sensation of unreality began to lay hold of me as we crossed under the shadowy trees to the little gate in the wall, like shadows ourselves, our steps inaudible on the springy turf.

Uncle Oscar unlocked the gate and we passed out on to the high road. He drew my hand through his arm again, and we walked on together into the town the silence still unbroken. So we passed through the quiet streets until we came to Cecily's house, opposite to which we stopped. We were on the opposite side of the road.

"Look!" he said.

I looked up at the drawing-room windows which were lighted. On the blind of the centre window of the three there was a shadow, a clear, black silhouette of a woman with heaving shoulders and face covered with both hands, a woman sobbing in an agony of grief.

"Oh, come away," I cried, clasping Uncle Oscar's arm.

"It has been like that every night since," he groaned – "since she refused me. I've seen her so ... I rode in ... I've been staying at the Links Hotel. ... She refused me because of some cursed intrigue that has been going on lately at Seascape to prevent our meeting. She's too proud to enter my family under the circumstances. And that's what she's paying for her pride."

"Oh, but isn't there something to be done?" I cried. "Let us go to her. Surely she loves you."

"Surely she loves me," he said, "but she won't marry me. They've treated her like a vulgar adventuress, and she resents it, naturally. Their whole attitude towards her lately has been an insult. She won't marry me and she refuses ever to see me again."

"That's nonsense," I exclaimed.

And then I broke away from him and ran across the road and rang the door-bell, and pushed past Blackwell when she opened the door and rushed upstairs.

The drawing-room was empty.

"Cecily!Cecily!" I called up to her from the landing outside the drawing-room.

But Blackwell interfered. She had followed me upstairs and spoke with the directness of anger.

"You've no call to come forcing your way in like this," she said; "and me ordered to keep you all out, and quite right too. We don't want any of you. We've money enough and to spare."

"Oh, Blackwell, you know I'm not like that!" I said. "And poor Uncle Oscar, he's broken-hearted."

"He didn't ought to have let himself be domineered over then," she answered tartly. "A man what's not master of his own house isn't the man for us. And you can tell 'im so –"

She stopped short and looked beyond me. I turned and found that Cecily had come downstairs from her room. Her face was haggard and white, but she was quite collected.

"Blackwell, you forget yourself" she said, severely. "And you forget yourself, too, Beatrice. You are intruding. Your family has insulted me grossly and I will not see any of you again."

"It is Uncle Oscar you are punishing then," I said, "and you are either a mad woman or a wicked one to do it. He has always been an angel of goodness to you. But you are all alike, you women, every one of you that he has ever wasted his kindness upon. You've sacrificed him, all of you, in one way or other, for your own petty purposes, your own contemptible pride."

"I hope he may be more fortunate in your affection," she said, nastily.

“I hope he may. And Cecily,” I blurted out, “when you indulge your feelings in future, don’t do it between the lamp and the window blind.”

I had intended to warn her decently to save her from making a public exhibition of herself, but this was the way it came out in my exasperation.

She coloured crimson: “Blackwell,” she ordered, “open the door for this young lady and show her out.”

And I went without another word, convinced that a stone wall was as likely to be softened by stroking as her wrong-headed determination to be altered by anything that anybody could say.

VII

UNCLE OSCAR did not ask me how I had fared. He had walked on, and I had to run after him to overtake him.

“You are out of breath,” he said. “I am sorry. I didn’t know that I was walking so fast.”

He spoke like himself again to my great relief. In the short time since I left him he had pulled himself together. He meant to bury his trouble in his own breast so that I might not be grieved by the sight of it.

“I must ask you to speak to your Grandmother and Aunt Lucretia,” he said, “and then this must all be forgotten. Nothing will ever be the same again for any of us, but it is best that they should know at once what the change is to be. They will adapt themselves the more easily.”

Many a man would have turned the mischief-makers out of his house, but Uncle Oscar could not do a thing like that. He was above all pettiness. He would not even leave his mother any longer in doubt as to what had happened lest the suspense should try her. When we got in we went straight to the drawing-room. I had to be present at the interview. He insisted.

Grandmamma and Aunt Lucretia looked up at us apprehensively as we entered the room. I sat down. Uncle Oscar remained standing. He began at once. Preliminaries were never much in his line if there were things to be said. All his dealings were characterised by simple directness.

“Mother,” he said, “I wish you to know that I asked Cecily to marry me. She has refused me, not because she does not care for me, but because she is too proud to enter a family which is hostile to the match.”

Grandmamma and Aunt Lucretia tried in vain to conceal their relief under an affectation of concern, but their meek Christian spirits were not powerful enough to suppress the symptoms. There was no smile on their lips, but triumph shone in their eyes.

“Dear Oscar,” Grandmamma said sympathetically, “I am sincerely grieved at your disappointment. But I cannot pretend to be sorry for anything else. Women know each other’s true characters better than any man can know them, and, believe me, Cicely* has no heart. It grieves me to say it, and you know I always treated her like a daughter of the house until her obvious design to marry you gave me no choice but to discountenance her.”

“How do you reconcile this accusation of a ‘design’ to marry me with the fact that she has refused me?” Uncle Oscar asked.

“I cannot pretend to fathom her motive for that, but, at any rate, my dear son, such a union would have meant nothing but misery for you. Cicely* is mercenary. She cares for nothing but money. I have heard you tell her so yourself again and again.”

* appears to be a misprint

“Then she shall have money,” Uncle Oscar declared –

“Wait, wait,” Grandmamma interrupted, lifting her delicate old hand to pat her white hair nervously, “time and change –”

Uncle Oscar caught up the word: “Change, that is what I came to tell you about – the change I intend to make in my life. I shall travel for a time – go round the world for a change –”

“Yes, do,” Grandmamma said cordially; “go at once. It would do you more good than anything to travel for a time. A change of scene and new ideas will make a different man of you.”

“I shall go at once,” he said, “but I shall not return to live at Seascapè. You and Lucretia can stay here if you like. You have ample means to keep up the place. I shall spend no more money upon it. I have lived the life of a gentleman-lackey here, dancing attendance upon women. For the future I shall live elsewhere and differently. And before I go I shall alter my will. I mean to leave all that I have to Cecily unconditionally.”

“That’s no use,” I exclaimed, “Cecily* would not take what you left her. She doesn’t want your money.”

Uncle Oscar looked blank upon this. Grandmamma and Aunt Lucretia smiled discreetly.

“And what about me, Uncle Oscar?” I went on, passionately. “You’re making all your arrangements without making any reference to my happiness at all. What is to become of me here alone when you are gone? It is cowardly of you to desert me.”

“My dear Beatrice,” Grandmamma exclaimed, with great dignity, “are we nothing to you?”

“Nothing to speak of,” I said sincerely. “Nobody is but Uncle Oscar.” I jumped up and clasped my hands round his arm. “You can’t go away and leave me here alone,” I pleaded. “Take me with you. Let us make a home together.”

“My dear Beatrice,” Grandmamma put in again, with her little air of finality, as of one who lays down the winning card, “you cannot go away alone with Uncle Oscar, You are a grown up young woman now, and he is not related to you in any way.”

I dropped his arm and recoiled. I had lived in the house since I was two years old. I knew that we were not blood relations, of course, but the fact had lapsed from my consciousness. This was the only time that it had ever been mentioned in my hearing.

My first feeling was consternation. I looked at him. The colour had mounted to his forehead as if he too had been taken by surprise, and he was looking at me earnestly, looking at me, I could see, from quite a new point of view.

Suddenly I saw a way out of the difficulty. I was shaken with happy laughter.

“Oscar!” I burst out.

Grandmamma and Aunt Lucretia jumped in their chairs.

“I shall never call him Uncle again,” I cried, defiantly, “I don’t want him – for an Uncle. Oscar –” again I was seized with happy, idiotic laughter.

He was smiling, too, in sympathy. He was more than smiling. My thought had reached him. New love, new life.

“Why not?” I hurled at them all. “You must take me,” I said to him, “I cannot live without you.”

And then I ran out of the room.

I took refuge in my own sitting-room, and sat on the edge of the sofa, listening. At first I feared he would follow me; then, as the moments passed, I feared he would not. How awful if – ! I covered. I covered my eyes and ears with my hands to keep off the dreadful thought. How could I? How could I? I writhed in an agony of shame.

Then my hands were gently drawn from before my face. I had to look up.

“Oh, Oscar,” I cried, “what must you think of me?”

“Pride and you have never been friends,” he said. He was laughing at me. “When you wanted a thing, from a child, you always asked for it.”

“And I always got it, too,” I cried hopefully.

He sat down beside me, laughed again, and shook his head at me. Then some thought suddenly saddened him.

“I am many years older than you are, Bee,” he said.

“Twenty-nine exactly. Is that your only objection?” I demanded.

I was in deadly earnest, but everything I said seemed to amuse him. He hesitated a moment now, smiling, then he put his arm round me. I nestled up to him and laid my head on his shoulder. I was so happy!

“I do love to be near you,” I said. “But Oscar – Cecily?”

He took my hand, and began to play with my fingers, looking at them one by one.

“Shall you feel yourself false to your love?” I asked, with a pang.

“Do I love her?” he asked himself seriously. The shock of her pride and cruelty was beginning to tell. He sat for a while, playing with my fingers absently, and soberly thinking. At last he said: “There was never such a woman as the Cecily* I thought her. The woman I saw was the woman you were always making her out to be. That woman was not Cecily. That woman was yourself, Beatrice.”

“Then don’t let us lose any more precious time,” I burst out, eagerly.

At that he laughed, and laughed again, and held me close.

It was late and he rose to go, and I jumped up too and kicked off my high-heeled shoes, that I might not be taller than he was when he kissed me good-night.

“What do they say downstairs?” I asked, with my arms round his neck.

“What does it matter?” he answered. “They will never have any more say in our lives.”

Vanity And Vexation

First published in *Nash's Magazine* 7 (9 October 1909): 993.

The following text is transcribed from *Variety*.
London: Heinemann, 1922, 67-95.

SHE was lady-like enough in her manners – her manners in society, that is to say. Manners were an important part of her stock in trade, of the wares upon which she expected to reap a large profit in social success. And perhaps it was for this reason that she economised in manners in her private life, saving the graciousness, of which it is to be presumed that she had no very large supply, for occasions when there was something to be gained by displaying it. She put on graciousness with her gloves, and doubtless had all the more to assume because of the amount she accumulated by habitually stinting her maid. Such manners are an attitude as easy for an observant imitative woman to strike and maintain at will as any merely physical attitude likewise assumed for convenience, and equally without moral significance beyond their obvious propriety. They became instinctive by practice like steps in dancing, the right manner for the moment being adopted without thought as the feet respond to the measure of the music, gliding off smoothly to the one, two, three of the waltz, or flung free to the beat of the polka mazurka. So might you see her on different occasions conducting herself appropriately. On Sundays in church, for instance, she punctuated the proper places with deep curtses, as in a minuet, and otherwise bore herself throughout the service with a requisite outward aspect of stately decorum, then, having made her final reverence, passed on – it might be to an anything but decorous luncheon party, with bridge to follow, whereat she easily accommodated herself to the social variety of dance peculiar to the company. Or circumstances might perchance place her for the time being in the set which

“...manners are not idle, but the fruit
Of loyal nature, and of noble mind.”²⁸⁸

These were proud occasions to look back upon, but trying at the time, for here her footing was insecure. Clever and cautious as she was, her Brummagem²⁸⁹ breeding was apt to play her false in a phrase which exposed the artificial pretence of her attempt to adapt herself to a measure with which, since it must be lived to be learnt, she was of necessity unacquainted, and betrayed her whole attitude for the diplomatic pose that it was.

Still, it was not in her manners that she was wont to fail. The fundamental flaw of her character was in her habits of mind, and these she would display at critical moments with disastrous effect, not because she was powerless to conceal them, for she had plenty of power, but because she did not know what to conceal. She had not been taught to discriminate between right and wrong in well-bred social life, and so she committed sundry social sins unwittingly. For she was a woman of the class not born but made, an American – but when one says American one does not mean that she might not just as well have been an Englishwoman of the same type; only she happened to be an American, with hereditary

²⁸⁸“... manners are not idle ... noble mind”: Alfred Tennyson (Lord Tennyson) *Idylls of the King: Guinevere*, 333-4. Tennyson: A Selected Edition. Ed. Christopher Ricks. Harlow: Longman, 2007, 950.

²⁸⁹*Brummagem*: cheap, showy or meretricious. Brummagem is “a local form of the name Birmingham, formerly noted for its output of cheap trinkets.” *Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*. London: Cassell, 1970, 156.

commercial instincts, in whom for *noblesse oblige*²⁹⁰ was substituted the baser conviction that *profits prevail*.

She had married an English gentleman, in whom, by long inheritance, the sense of honour had culminated in a rooted distrust of self-interest, even in such trifling particulars as personal comfort, when the best place could only have been secured by blotting out another person's view. Social success was her ambition, and to the attainment of social success she had nothing to apply but the mean tricks of trade. Her wealth and her beauty she displayed with the taste of the shopman, who fails in his effort to attract because he fills his window so full that the effect is to glut the beholder, who, satiated at a glance, walks on, thankful to feel himself unencumbered by too much of anything.

Her maiden name was Jobb, and perhaps she was not to be blamed for dropping it when she married a Fitzalbin of Albin, although the custom of her countrywomen is to honour their fathers and assert themselves by retaining their patronymics. Yet there was just enough grace of gratitude in her to save her from being altogether false to her father in this matter, for, although she dropped the Jobb, she compromised by signing herself Eustacia J. In her husband's family, however, she was always known as "the Jobb." The family had welcomed her money with pleasure, but you can appreciate the use of wealth without respecting the possessor, and they owed it to society to show that there was no democratic taint in their prejudices. And society approved of the distinction and excused itself when it flocked to her parties by following the family lead. In fact the somebodies felt that it was no discredit to enjoy the wealth of a nobody so long as they expressed a proper contempt for the way she displayed it; and this they did in the one word "jobbery". Her parties were called "jobberies," yet somehow to go to a "jobbery" became quite the thing. It was as if the word gave the all excusing sanction of wit to the enterprise.

When EustaciaJobb came to England she intended to marry an Englishman of position, and it was by her beauty that she succeeded in this design. Her beauty had dawned upon Mr. Fitzalbin in a fine old country mansion, a setting dignified by historical associations and rich in happy home traditions. Had he seen her first with nothing more romantic about her than money's worth can suggest the effect would probably have been different. As it was he began by associating her in his mind with the noble women who looked down upon her from the family portraits, and being by nature conservative of first impressions, as in all else, he continued to see her so even when surrounded by modern upholstery in the meaningless profusion which she loved, though that in itself outraged his innate sense of proportion and of beauty made true by usefulness – saw her so to the last. For he loved the woman, and loved her all the more, perhaps, because pity is akin to love, and it was pity he felt for the faults which soon became apparent, pity, not blame. Generous natures do not blame, they excuse; and he held that certain graces of nature in EustaciaJobb had been tarnished by an unfortunate early environment, but not otherwise injured. In fact, he respected her more for having preserved any grace of nature at all in the circumstances than he would have done had her full endowment survived because she had had nothing to contend against. Being perfectly simple and honest himself he was not prone to distrust; and, although he was too strong and sincere to blame anyone for his own mistakes, by a not uncommon paradox of character he never questioned her right to ascribe her every shortcoming to the evil influence of others, so that, acting on the information received, when he found her out in a fib he accused her mother; or if she appeared over-dressed he thought of fashion as arbitrary and blamed it.

Her attitude towards him was exactly the same as her attitude towards the world at large. She valued him for what he could contribute towards her success and pleasure. Any other attribute he might have she ignored, because, as she would have phrased it in the

²⁹⁰ *noblesse oblige*: privilege entails responsibility

national manner, on a commercial estimate of profit and loss, she had no use for it. She saw the world, including her husband, in its relation to herself; of her relation to the world she had no conception. It was for the world, including her husband, to minister to her necessities, to conform to her wishes; but to any need that the world and her husband might have she never expected to be required to minister, unless, of course, there was something to be gained by it. Not that she was exceptional in this; most of the people she knew had the same outlook upon life exactly, particularly the husbands. The instinct of self-preservation is strong in women of her type; hence they reverse the *rôle* of husbands and wives in this particular. Their own identity is everything to them, and they will fight to preserve it at any sacrifice of other people. In this they show their curious adaptability. They protect themselves by assuming the masculine means of defence; assuming such means as inevitably as the *mantis religiosa*²⁹¹, for quite other purposes, drops into the attitude of prayer.

The American woman in her own country is not keen on politics as a rule. There the prevailing interest is business. The first great object in life is to make money or to procure it, and, having done so, to display the fact in lavish expenditure. Money in America will place you in any position you like. Here it is much the same, except that money as money places you no higher than the source from which it is obtained, position being accorded not to the money itself but to a discreet use of it. Eustacia, on her arrival, hastened to conform to usage in this matter. Finding everything that savoured of commercial enterprise socially ignored, and the subject of money itself taboo in the set to which she aspired, she ceased to tell what she paid for things, and never after her first season showed her appreciation of beautiful possessions as a matter of money's worth by asking the cost. That was as far as she got, however, towards the cultivation of discretion in regard to asking point blank questions.

She married rather precipitately and before she understood the rules of precedence, a mistake which she regretted afterwards, for there is no doubt that by waiting she might have done much better for herself in the way of position. However, a clever young man, with a rich wife and a strong family connection, had possibilities which she was not slow to perceive and to turn to account. She had to make her mark socially and the question was what to do? She soon discovered that, for her purpose, it was no use whatever to patronise literature and art; the British crowd cares nothing for literature and art in the abstract. Personality is better appreciated than genius, unless the genius dies of starvation; in that case the public is roused from its apathy for a moment and is obliged to genius for the novel sensation. But personality, especially the blatant personality which is for ever giving you starts and thrills, that is the thing to cultivate in England! It matters little to what the starts and thrills are due so long as they are as well as anything. As a nation we have no appreciation of the beautiful, therefore we cannot rise to the exquisite delicate delight of the sensation which is roused by the recognition of beauty in word and work and thought and deed. We fatten our feelings on coarse excitement. The papers will teem with the details of a brutal crime, and dismiss in a paragraph the description of an immortal work of art, to make room for them.

Nor was Eustacia more successful when she devoted her money to charitable purposes. In this direction she found that there was even less distinction to be purchased, because everybody in England is expected to subscribe to the charities or do charitable work of some kind, and nobody thinks anything of it. She found, in fact, that there was only one direction in which wealth would successfully carve her way up. For political purposes funds are always in request, and good positions may be purchased from parties by punctual contributions. Both the Lords and the Commons delight in a generous giver. It was to politics, therefore, that Eustacia finally devoted herself – on the conservative side, of course; and here her fine hereditary business capacity made for success from the first. With admirable tact she

²⁹¹ *Mantis religiosa*: the insect known as the European Mantis, or, more commonly, the Praying Mantis.

soon managed to convert her house into a recognised centre for the party, and, in a shorter space of time than she had dared to hope, she succeeded in pushing her husband up into office. Society called this feat “jobbery,” as was inevitable, seeing that the word answered the double purpose of indicating both the operator and the nature of the operation.

It was an anxious, arduous post in the Government of the day into which she had contrived to push him; a post, however, for which he would have been well qualified if, unfortunately, his intellectual capacity had not been discounted by physical unfitness. He came of a degenerate stock and was heavily handicapped by chronic debility; but he did his best conscientiously, as became a gentleman. The well-bred man, like the well-bred horse, goes till he drops, and patient endurance was his by right of birth; while, for any special effort, he found the force necessary for a spurt in strength of will. But in public life the race is to the strong. Courage can only keep up for a time and then comes the collapse. He was wearing himself to death, a fact patent enough to himself and to anyone interested in him for himself, amongst whom, however, his wife was not. Her world was a circle of which she was the centre whatever happened. Events were only interesting to her in their relation to herself. She was not in the least sensitive on the subject of what other people might feel. It had never occurred to her that it might be painful to break a limb until she learnt the fact practically by breaking one of her own. After that, if she heard of a fracture, it made her happy to think that the limb was not hers – and that was all she did think about it. Sick people were unpleasant to her, and she avoided them, because the sight of suffering reminded her that she might have to suffer herself some day. For, although she could bear the sufferings of others with heroic composure, she was a dreadful coward when her own turn came. She had no comprehension of the fine power of endurance which kept her husband silent when suffering; and this accounts for, if it does not excuse, her blindness to all that he had to endure. “He should do more,” that was the perpetual thought in her mind, however much he might do, or however unfit he might be to do anything at all. Her standard of comparison was with the great brutal force of commercialism which makes machines of men in her own country; for the delicate refinement of his sensitive organism she had nothing but contempt.

He surprised her busy with such thoughts one evening on his return from the House. She was in her own sitting-room, ready dressed for a great political dinner and reception they were to have that night. Dressing was a serious function, which took time and tired her; so she always contrived, if she could, to have a good rest after it in an easy chair before the business of the moment began. Her husband had a smile for her when he came in, a very tired smile, but she merely glanced round to see who it was and remained unresponsive. Some flowers he had in his hand peeped out of the paper in which they were wrapped.

“I have brought you a spray of orchid,” he said, laying the packet on a little table beside her. It was a habit of his to bring her flowers, such a regular habit that she accepted the attention as a matter of course and acknowledged it without any show of appreciation.

“Thank you,” she answered, curtly. She took up the spray and glanced at it without removing the paper. “You are late,” she pursued. “You’ll have to hurry.”

He had thrown himself into a chair with a weary sigh.

“This will be the last of these functions, I hope,” he said.

“Why?” she snapped.

“Well, the expenditure –”

“It’s my own money,” she interposed sharply.

He winced. He always did wince when the Jobb appeared, but he said nothing as a rule. What would have been the use? The taint was in her blood and ineradicable.

“I was going to say the expenditure of strength,” he recommenced –

“Oh, you would be equal to that if only you would think yourself so,” she again interrupted, her sharp American voice at its hardest.

He took up the flowers and looked into their exquisite depths, smiling one of those half deprecating enigmatical smiles that suggest helplessness and fatigue, even more eloquently than a sigh: "I hope I shall feel myself so – after a good rest," he answered gently.

He rose to go as he spoke, and in his whole attitude and action a sympathetic observer would have recognised a brave attempt to conceal the exhaustion from which he was suffering. But Eustacia was not a sympathetic observer. She saw nothing pathetic in his patient endurance. She felt no pity, no concern; nothing but exasperation. It exasperated her to see him weak when her own social position depended so entirely upon his strength and staying power.

She left the costly spray of orchid he had brought her on the little table in her sitting-room when she went to receive her guests. She had not even unpinned the paper in which it was wrapped. If she had known that he had gone far out of his way coming home to get it for her she would not have been touched. She would only have thought it a waste of time. These private attentions did not contribute to her success in life so what was the good of them? The house was full of flowers, and she could have bought more for herself and saved him the trouble had she wanted them. Like Thyri the Fair, she was emphatically of opinion that

"Better things are jewels
Than Angelica stalks
For a queen to wear."²⁹²

* * * * *

It was late when she went to bed but she awoke unduly early nevertheless. She had done so of late. In the small hours of the morning her eyes would open wide on a new day and she could not close them again in sleep. There were none of those last easy delicious moments for her, when her whole being should have rejoiced drowsily in the satisfying appreciation of her luxurious bed; in that realisation of comfort which is the first experience of a healthy frame well rested after pleasant fatigue, and of a mind well stored with wholesome thoughts. It was in miserable fancies that her jaded nerves expressed their resentment of the hard usage to which they were habitually subjected. She awoke with a general sense of dissatisfaction. No pleasant memories of the past came crowding to help her, no happy anticipations for the future. The drawback which had marred every old success was the thing she thought of, the difficulties in the way of any new one. Fear was the foremost feeling she experienced as she tossed in bed, and exasperation because the oblivion she sought with obstinately closed eyes to recapture evaded her efforts. She had to reconcile herself to be wide awake. She had to find some distraction, some anodyne, to fill up the interval which the traitor sleep had made by forsaking her. And she was so weary! The tired brain, the limbs that ached yet could not rest, the nerves racked by the life of feverish excitement she led, all made their reproach, to her utter disheartenment; aches, mental and physical, depressed her to tears and wrung her to temper. Her nerves clamoured for the relief of rest yet spurred her to exertion.

But she was not yet forsaken by the inward monitor which warns and counsels to the last in the breast of all but the irretrievably doomed: "Vanity and vexation of spirit"²⁹³ flashed into her mind as she awoke. "Vanity and vexation of spirit" recurred when she gave up the

²⁹²"Better things ... queen to wear": Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *Tales of a Wayside Inn*. Part First. "The Musician's Tale: The Saga of King Olaf. XVI Queen Thyri and the Angelica Stalks." *Tales of a Wayside Inn*. London: Routledge, Warne and Routledge, 1864, 157.

²⁹³"Vanity and vexation of spirit": "I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit" (Eccles. 1.14). In this Bible passage, King Solomon is reflecting upon the fact that no amount of material success can truly make a person happy.

effort to sleep and rose from her bed impatiently. "Vanity and vexation of spirit" looked out from the haggard eyes that met her own in the mirror. Yet the phrase had no special significance for her. She did not stop to reflect that there are possibilities in life neither prompted by vanity nor punished by vexation of spirit. The stupid involuntary reiteration of the words in her mind was wearisome and must be stopped; that was all she thought. "I must take something," she said to herself.

Beside her bed, on a tray, were tea-things and a spirit lamp. She made tea, nibbled biscuits, and forgot her grievances for a moment in the occupation. The stimulant raised her spirits. She returned to bed, switched on her reading light and opened a book. While the effect of the tea lasted she could read with interest; but as the reaction set in her mind began to wander; unquiet thoughts came crowding back, as insects, flicked off with a momentary energy, return to buzz and sting. That haggard face in the glass, those lines on the forehead and about the eyes, the deep shadows which put the mouth in parenthesis – these she recalled with a sinking heart. Massage! That was the remedy. She resolved to be firm, but she determined to have it done now, regularly. It was only an hour or so a day, a tedious hour or so; but, still, as a duty – and then the reward! She made up her mind to go regularly to the dreadful beauty shop as though she were making up her mind to do a good deed. Hope in her own case discounted experience in the case of others, for she was quick to observe, and could have told you that there is no more deplorable spectacle in society than an elderly woman disguised in the trappings of youth.

She returned to her book but could not fix her attention upon it. Again and again she glanced at the clock, and as often resolved not to do so, flattering herself that time would fly the faster if she ceased to mark its passage. Her thoughts were all of herself. It seems strange that she did not try to change the direction of them, since the subject was far from agreeable as it presented itself. She could hear through the open window a fretful child of one of the neighbours crying piteously, and was irritated by the fear that the noise would get on her nerves; what might be the matter with the child did not trouble her. Then her husband, in the next room, began to cough, a hard dry intermittent cough, which annoyed her extremely. Why couldn't he take something? *She* always took something when she had that sort of tickling in her throat. She jumped up at last, snatched some tabloids from her dressing-table and went to him. She found him sitting up in bed, coughing hard.

"Here, take one of these," she said.

"Oh, my dear," he gasped, "how very good of you to get up. I'm sorry I've disturbed you. I've tried to keep quiet, but it's got the better of me. It's a bad chill, I think." He was interrupted by another fit of coughing. "I'm afraid I'll have to give up – can't stand the strain."

"Oh, no! not in the height of the season," she remonstrated, "and the State ball is to-night."

He lay back on his pillow exhausted. He would have given anything for a hot drink, and he knew that she could have made tea for him, but she did not offer and he did not like to trouble her.

She stood there looking down at him; angry because he had not instantly reassured her on the subject of the State ball, but not at all concerned about him.

"You'd better go to bed," he said at last. "You'll be getting a chill too."

She went without a word, shutting the door after her with a slam. It was just like him to give way for nothing. Strain, indeed! wasn't she suffering from strain herself all the time? And did she give in just when it was necessary to show herself everywhere? How selfish men are! Their own idle ease is all they care about. At this moving thought her irritation culminated. She rang her bell violently to relieve her mind, and received her agitated maid,

who appeared after some delay, with a scowl because the weary woman had not been ready to attend upon her hours before she was usually expected.

On the subject of the State ball she might have been reassured. Her husband knew himself doomed to attend it when she slammed the door and groaned at the prospect. He was really ill.

Her breakfast was brought to her in her bedroom, and her letters, which she opened, fortifying herself at the same time with sips of strong coffee. Notes from unimportant people she tossed aside; her heart did not warm to their attentions; the bore of having to respond discounted all that sort of thing effectually. Having ascertained who were the subscribers, she determined to send a handsome cheque towards a testimonial to be presented to a distinguished person; the list was one in which it would look well to have her name appear; but a piteous appeal from an old servant on behalf of a dying husband and a sick child she tore up; she really could not help everybody, and people of that kind were incorrigible – so improvident! besides, she had given the woman a pound only a year ago.

As she opened her last letter something unpleasant occurred to her. There was still no invitation to an important function at the house of a certain great lady, and there was no hope of one now, the time was so short. This particular great lady had always held out against the invasion of society by “jobbery,” and it was evident that a fresh slight was intended. As she realised the fact she suffered a shock which could not have been more acute had she suddenly been robbed of every advantage she possessed, social, physical, and material. Mortification set up a species of mental agony which resulted in a momentary fit of frenzy. She could have killed the author of that slight. In her unavoidable absence she dashed to the ground a vase of flowers, which had only offended by being at hand, and stamped it to pieces. Then she proceeded to harry a houseful of scowling servants. She had a fault to find with each, and found it with the customary grossness of the parvenu²⁹⁴. Making things unpleasant for the servants she called attending to her domestic duties.

At the fashionable hour she was to be seen driving in the park, where she attracted a considerable amount of admiring attention. For this purpose she had in the interval endured a small martyrdom. She had had a horrible time at the beauty shop, where sticky little rollers had been promenaded up and down her poor face, and backwards and forwards, and along and across, until it was sore. She had been greased and fingered and perfumed and powdered to the artistic content of the young lady who operated, and had paid her guineas and driven off to her dressmakers feeling a wreck, but sustained by a last inspection of herself in a most becoming glass. But something was wrong with the fit of her dress and she must have it set right. The dressmaker decided that “Moddum’s” corsets were at fault. “Moddum” could bear them a little tighter; so she laced them up a little tighter and “Moddum” bore it, and was ready at last for the park and the reward of admiring glances. She had neglected no detail that might contribute to the success of the moment. She put her trust in artificiality, firmly convinced that artificiality could not betray her. As a girl she had been told that her great charm was in the expression of her mouth, which had, in those days, a delightful little tilt-up at the corners like the mouth of a happy child. She knew the value of that little tilt. It was not now a natural adornment; the attitude of her mind had long ceased to be friendly to any expression that charms in the face of a happy child; but she could still put it on, and she always did so, at the glass, before she went out. And the strength of her will is made evident by the fact that she never forgot to keep it on so long as there was anyone worth the winning to be beguiled by it. She wore it in the park that day, and should have been content with the result; but somehow admiring glances failed of their effect for once. She did not feel herself at all repaid for all her pains and trouble. A sickening sense of dissatisfaction seized upon her.

²⁹⁴ *parvenu*: an upstart, someone who has gained wealth or position from lowly origins.

Time wasted is always on the watch to be avenged, and attacks of dissatisfaction were becoming chronic. She attributed them to the physical fatigue, the result of conscientious devotion to her social duties, and took a little something.

“I am certainly not up to the mark to-day,” she said to herself on the drive home. “I must take something to keep myself up,” as if keeping herself up in this way were a part of her duty.

Being encouraged by the immediate effect of little somethings, she had by this time resigned herself to chronic dissatisfaction as to an incurable disease, which justifies the habitual use of palliatives.

* * * * *

That evening she dined out, and she did not see her husband again until they met at the State ball, where he had come to attend her, obedient to her wish. She was looking her best that night and he told her so. He delighted in her beauty, and he had preserved that best grace of a good husband, the habit of telling her so. She slightly accentuated the little tilt at the corners of her mouth my way of acknowledgement, but her heart did not warm to his greeting. His compliment and her smile were merely items to her of their respective parts in the social play. Had he failed of his tribute she must have failed of her smile; and in that case she would have blamed him for not giving her the necessary cue. She had, as usual, no thought or care for him or for anyone but herself. This absorption in herself, accompanied, as it was, by an exaggerated sense of her own importance, had a curious dual effect; on the one hand, it blinded her to much in the attitude of society towards her which would have enraged her had she perceived it; and, on the other hand, it rendered her morbidly sensitive to anything unflattering that she did happen to observe. As a rule, however, she was proud in the delusion that she was as great a lady in the eyes of the world as she was in her own estimation. She would not have believed it had she been told that she was called by her servants “the old girl” and known to society generally as “the Jobb.” But she was doomed that night to suffer the cruel enlightenment.

To begin with all went well. Courted, flattered, observed, she sparkled about to the tune of assured success. She saw herself commented upon, and filled in to her own satisfaction the phrases she could not hear. In the pause between two dances she was left for a moment alone. Her partner had found her a seat in the shade of some foliage plants, and had gone to look for her fan which she had dropped. As she waited she noticed a man standing on the other side of the plants, but he was evidently unaware of her presence. Presently another man came hurrying up to him. The two were at the top of the social scale, the extremity which is nearest to the other end, as their idiom indicated.

“Oh, I say, George,” the hurrying one exclaimed, “have you seen the Jobb? She came this way. And my wife says I must dance with those diamonds – cruel necessity!”

“The diamonds are all right, at any rate,” George rejoined.

“Yes, first water. But the Jobb herself! Paste, my boy, paste; and not good old genuine candidly acknowledged either, but meant to deceive. She’s faked from head to foot, that woman, body and soul.”

“A clever work of art,” George suggested.

“Not art – artificiality,” the other man objected. “And she’s as hard as nails. Look at her husband to-night! He’s in for something. Can hardly drag himself about. And here she keeps him dancing attendance. He as good as told me so himself. His sister begged him to go home and get to bed; but he said he must stick it out till the Jobb was ready.”

“He didn’t say ‘the Jobb!’”

“No – Lord love him! He’s a knight, Fitzalbin is, King Arther, Round Table, and all that sort of thing, don’t you know. As good a fellow all round as they make `em. His one mistake was marrying the Jobb. She’s been his curse –”

“And she’ll be his death,” George put in.

“Well,” said the first speaker, “she’ll not be tolerated for half an hour among us when he goes – if he does go.”

“No, the beast. Jobbery would be extinct before she got into her weeds. And a good thing too. There’s been a lot too much of it. Let’s drink destruction to jobbery.”

They strolled away together. But the Jobb sat still, stunned by the shock, until her partner returned. In the interval she seemed to shrivel up, as if her attractions had crumbled away. Her face grew haggard, the light went out of her eyes, her mouth dropped at the corners. Her partner changed countenance when he saw her. She might have been the mother of the woman he had left.

“Take me to my husband,” was her greeting. “I feel ill. I must go home.”

In the carriage her husband expressed his concern for her sudden indisposition.

“It’s nothing,” she snapped, and the silence remained unbroken, save for his cough, until they reached the house. Then, with his usual solicitude, he insisted that she must “take something” to revive her before she went upstairs, and led her into the dining-room. There were decanters and soda water on the sideboard. He poured her out a little brandy.

“That’s no use,” she exclaimed, snatching the bottle from him and helping herself to half a tumbler full. “Destruction to ‘jobbery,’” flashed into her mind as she raised the glass to her lips, and she swallowed the dose at a draught. The effect was instantaneous relief.

“Go to bed,” she said to her husband.

He hesitated. “Is there nothing else that I can do –” he was beginning.

“No,” she interrupted, then added, “thank you,” as an afterthought. “I’m all right now.”

She passed out of the room before him and went upstairs. At the top she said “Good-night” to him over her shoulder.

“We shall both be the better for a good night,” he rejoined.

It would have been shorter for him to have gone through her room to his own, but she shut the door on him and he had to go round.

Strong spirit acts as a sedative on some constitutions, and that was its effect upon her. She was greedy for sleep, and no sooner was her head on the pillow than she dropped off into the deep oblivion from which the sleeper awakes with a start, unrefreshed, and without any sense of having slept at all. It was thus that she awoke. Some sharp sound in her husband’s room seemed to have aroused her.

Her first sensation was one of extreme irritation: “He might have kept quiet when I’m not well,” she thought. Then she heard a bell ringing. What could he be ringing for at that time of night? Was ever man so inconsiderate! She switched on the light, and looked at the clock. It was after six. Then she became aware of people talking in the next room. One voice she recognised as that of her husband’s valet, the other was indistinct. She felt impelled to get up to go and see what was the matter. She tried to resist the inclination but it was too strong for her, and she flung out of bed irritably. True to herself always, however, she arranged her hair and put on something becoming before she showed herself.

Her husband’s room was as simple as her own was luxurious. The floor was polished parquet with a few rugs on it; the furniture, just the bare necessities, good of their kind, but plain; the narrow brass bed hardly suggested comfort. Yet there was a neatness, a freshness, a refinement about it all which was strangely in contrast to the effect of her own sumptuous surroundings. In their intimate details the rooms were typical of the difference of character, of

the different lives led by their occupants, in spite of the door of communication between them; the one self-denying, the other so self-indulgent.

Eustacia stopped short on the threshold when she saw her husband, startled by the havoc wrought by suffering since she had flung at him her last good-night. He was propped up on pillows, fighting for breath, his face grey and haggard, his eyes sunken, his lips drawn and colourless. He saw her as she entered and held out his hand with a pitiful attempt to smile. She ignored the proffered caress.

“What’s the matter?” she exclaimed, noticing as she spoke that the other person present was the family doctor.

It was her husband’s man, an old servant, who replied.

“Mr. Fitzalbin has bin ill ll night, ma’am,” he said, precisely.

“Why wasn’t I called?” she demanded.

“Mr. Fitzalbin wouldn’t allow us to disturb you, ma’am.”

The man’s language was proper enough, but in his tone she detected something – blame? insolence? – she was not sure, but she remembered ... “won’t be tolerated for half an hour among us after he goes.” She turned to the doctor with an angry exclamation, which he checked.

“Mr. Fitzalbin is seriously ill,” he said. “I have sent for a nurse. It is a case of double pneumonia – not taken in time.”

A sudden panic seized her. Realising on the instant all else that she would lose if she lost this man, she threw herself on her knees beside the bed. Even in that short time there was a change. His eyes were closed; the hand he had held out to her had sunk inert upon the coverlet: “Albin!” she cried. A faint flutter of the eyelids showed that he had heard. Then he sank down lower into the bed.

“Speak to me, dear!” she cried, clutching his hand.

Too late. She had slighted the last effort of his love, and now no act of repentance could ever atone.

But all was not over yet. There were terrible hours still to be endured, hours during which, go where she would, she heard the laboured breathing, and saw one face, the face of the old servant, with steady eyes always upon her, full of contempt. Then others came. There was a sense of commotion in the house although every sound was subdued. The faces about her were grave, but there was no sympathy, no concern shown for her; it was of him they thought, all of them. This seemed dreadfully cruel. He would have thought of her; he – Like a stab the truth struck home, there was no one to think of her now as he had thought of her.

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Telegrams and letters of condolence began to arrive, and flowers – crosses and wreaths and hearts and harps; some of them humble little tokens of respect and affection from quite poor folk. Every regard was expressed for him; and all whom she had entertained did their formal duty by her; but they left her alone. No one burst in upon her with arms outstretched to clasp her close, as beloved friends are clasped at such a time, words failing. Her “particular friends,” women of her own stamp, did as she would have done herself in the circumstances. Foreseeing that, socially, her doom was sealed, and that there was no longer anything to be gained by cultivating her acquaintance, they saved themselves for the disagreeable experience of a visit to the house of mourning with excuses so turned as to make it appear that they only kept away out of consideration for her. One lady wrote: “I will not ask to see you, dearest Mrs. Fitzalbin. I m sure you would rather not be troubled with me at this moment, when all the world is crowding to express the very sincere sympathy,” *et cetera*. She tore the note to pieces savagely.

The family had assembled downstairs. Those who came near her only looked in at the door for a moment and made conventional speeches. They would not disturb her, they said, but they were at hand should she want them – want them! In the whole world there would not have been enough to supply her want of human sympathy. Yet there she sat alone; without child or friend; without a single soul to feel for her now that he was gone. Nevertheless, she was true to herself through it all. Her heart was bursting with bitterness rather than grief. She raged at the living more than she mourned for the dead. And she spared no pains in the choice of her weeds, no patience when the masseuse came to prepare her face for the funeral.

During those days of gloom in the darkened house thought had been suspended. She had felt, felt all the time, an ever increasing sense of something; something ominous, something awful. It was not as if the blow had fallen, but as if it were still pending; as if the worst had not yet happened. Nor had it. It was not until after the funeral, when she returned to the empty house, that the moment came; the terrible moment of illumination which showed her the world that was to be her world henceforth, the world she had made for herself. The first chill struck her as she entered the great house; it struck her with a sense of something wanting. He would have come to greet her, but now, now – oh, what desolation! She went into her sitting-room. The blinds were up and the summer sun streamed in. She had not been there since the night he had brought her the flowers for which she had scarcely thanked him; the fatal night when she refused to believe he was ill because she wanted his escort to a ball, to that ball where she was to hear – grinding her teeth and clenching her hands she banished the recollection and suspended all thought in the effort.

But presently thought returned. Looking about her she felt it strange that the aspect of things should remain unchanged. There was something callous, something brutal in the indifference to her which the attitude of all these familiar objects belonging to her, these slaves of her will and pleasure, suggested. Only one small thing was different; only one small object had suffered the blight of neglect. She noticed it with a pang. On the little table beside her accustomed chair, just as he had placed it, with the paper still unpinned, lay the last proof of his selfless affection, the flowers, rare and beautiful when he had offered them, shrivelled now, shapeless, ugly, dead – dead of her hardness and her spleen. In that last proof of his tenderness she had found her last chance to wound him, and she had wounded him, cruelly. God, if she might but put that right, just that at least. If she might but have that one hour over again!

For a merciful interval after that poignant moment of remorse she was too stunned to feel. Then she began to rouse herself slowly. She would not look back; no; there was the future – the future appeared; and she saw in the future, as she saw in the present, as she had seen in the past, herself, always herself. She saw herself now, the self that was to be in the days to come, an elderly woman with the lines of her character cut deep on her face, not the significant lines engraved by anxious care for others, not the pathetic lines with which time dignifies and endears the beloved, but the hard repulsive lines that come of ignoble thought and purpose. She saw the dreadful years before her in clear perspective. She saw the people who would come and go, who would accept her benefits, but would care not at all for her. No one, knowing her faults, and forgiving her everything, would ever again bring her a flower for love. She was alone; and from now on to the end she would be alone, always. The god of her devotion had claimed her and set her apart. Compliments in future would be for all that she had, for nothing that she was. She knew it at that moment and shrank appalled from the prospect. But she had no power left to attribute to the right cause the effects from which she suffered. In her perverted outlook she saw enemies only. They sapped her vitality; they brought about unhappy circumstances; but their wiles they robbed her of her rest, they spoilt her life. And yet, all the time, it was in her own heart, unsuspected, that there sat enthroned the only enemy she had need to fear – herself.

The Saving Grace

First published in *Printers' Pie* (19 May 1913): 71-2, 81-2.

The following text is transcribed from *Variety*. London: Heinemann, 1922, 99-107.

ADVENTURING beyond the lines one night on the veldt I was nabbed by a reconnoitring party of the Boer enemy and carried off in the dark.

We halted at daylight at what appeared to be a fortified farmstead. Soldiers, more or less ragged, were camping round about and passing in and out of the open doors.

I was hurried to an outhouse, flung in, and locked up. I happened to light²⁹⁵ on a heap of straw. After long hours over rough ground, done mostly at the double by persuasion of the butt end of a rifle, no bed of down could have been more grateful to my aching limbs. Groaning and complaining, I wallowed in the straw, making a nest for myself. I was conscious of a pale twilight in the place, but I had no curiosity. I did not care to see where I was. The one thing I craved for was insensibility – sleep.

* * * * *

Next thing, I was trying to recollect what had happened; “Must have been asleep,” I surmised aloud.

“Must have been asleep!” a voice made answer, like an echo. “I should think so, old man! About twelve hours, I should say. It’s time to pull yourself together. Eat and drink, if you can’t be merry. Your rations are beside you. I haven’t touched them.”

He seemed to be making a merit of this.

While he was speaking I had done my best to pull myself together. What light there was in the place came in through an oblong slit, about the size of a brick, high up above the door. I could just make him out, sitting with his back against the wall. I could not see his features.

I felt about and found a can with some liquid in it, which I drank at a draught. I also found a tin dish on the ground beside me with food on it, which I wolfed ravenously.

“How’s that, eh?” he asked, encouragingly.

“Deuced stuff,” I replied, with my mouth full. “Ring for the second course. I’m ready.”

He laughed. “Short commons,” he said. “But they’re decent chaps. They share and share alike with us.”

“How do you know?” I asked.

“Because some days they bring me a good whack,” he said. “Fresh supplies brought in, I suppose.”

“How long have you been here?” I asked.

“A hundred years, I think,” he replied. “I got nabbed out scouting. Volunteer. Yeomanry.”

“Intelligence²⁹⁶. Head Quarter Staff,” I rejoined.

²⁹⁵light: “alight” (PP).

²⁹⁶“Intelligence”: “Galloper” (PP).

I expected a question and had my answer ready. According to Cocker, I could not confide to a stranger the business I was up to when I got caught.

He was silent, awaiting further enlightenment, I knew. When, evidently, it was not forthcoming, he changed the subject. For this delicacy I set him down as all right. By his voice I had already gauged him as socially a gentleman; but a man may have the outward stamp without the inward grace of character; for proof of that, with a new acquaintance, one has to wait.

Presently he rose and began to walk up and down.

“I must have some exercise,” he said. “I’m infernally cramped.”

“Don’t they let you out for exercise?” I asked.

“They did – on parole,” he replied. “But one of the chaps broke his parole – got caught and brought back.”

“Serve him right. Beastly cad,” I exclaimed, with all the contempt I could express.

“Yes,” he agreed. “I was the chap.”

We did not speak for hours after that. In the interval I decided that I had set him down gentleman on insufficient proof.

The silence became irksome at last. I wished he would break it; but as the slow hours dragged along, it seemed that he never would. Delicacy again. The “beastly cad” was not going to force his acquaintance upon me. Finally I spoke: “What do you do with yourself?” I exclaimed.

“Make plans of escape.”

“Do you see your way?”

“No. But I’m hopeful now you’re here. Two heads, you know.”

He was in his old place, with his back to the wall. I went over and sat down beside him and we discussed possibilities. It was a fertile subject. We both knew of cases, of desperate attempts, successful and unsuccessful. We talked ourselves to sleep that night and began again²⁹⁷ next day.

But the conversation was not confined to means of escape. My companion was a brilliant *raconteur*. His stories were anything but edifying, but they excited²⁹⁸ and served well to pass the time. He showed himself a shameless scamp, but he was such a fascinating scamp that what I couldn’t condone I didn’t believe. I thought he was lying just to entertain me.

Our rations were brought by a genial talkative orderly. I knew little of the language, but my fellow prisoner spoke it fluently, and used to beguile our jailer with conversation to keep the door open while we ate. It was a relief to have bright daylight even for that short time.

One morning the orderly was more genial than usual, and the talk was particularly animated. It ended in a burst of laughter.

“What was the joke?” I asked, when we were shut up again.

My companion was writing. “One that will keep,” he said. “I’m making a note of it for you.”

“Can you see?” I said.

“I can manage,” he answered. “Shut up.”

He was busy for some time.

When at last he spoke he called my attention to a shutter high up in the wall opposite the door. A beam from the slit that gave us what light we had shone on it at the moment.

“There is our hope of escape,” he said.

“There’s no foothold on the wall,” I objected. “We can’t reach it.”

²⁹⁷ *again*: not in *PP*.

²⁹⁸ *they excited*: “they carried their own excuse in the interest excited” (*PP*).

“Can’t we!” he rejoined. “Just you see if you can’t stand on my shoulders.”

He was a tall, rather heavy man, and I was a good height, too, but light and slim; and we were both gymnasts. To stand on his shoulders was easy enough, once I got my balance; and I found that I could reach high enough to get a good hold of the shutter. It opened outwards and²⁹⁹ was insecurely fastened on the outside. We waited till nightfall, discussing the chances in whispers, for fear of being overheard.

“Why didn’t you think of it sooner?” I asked.

“I’ve been thinking of it all along,” he answered. “I noticed it from the outside when I was on parole. This outhouse stands up against the wall that surrounds the farm. You can drop on to the wall from the window-place. Nothing of a drop, that. And from the wall again down, outside the enclosure, a goodish fall. But you’ll do it all right. Then you’ll steer by the stars straight for your camp. It lies due south –”

“We’ll steer, I suppose you mean,” I interrupted.

“Oh, all right,” he rejoined. “That orderly chap let out that they’re off to-night, most of them. That’s what I’ve been waiting for. A raid somewhere, I guess. The guard will be slack.” He yawned noisily. “I’ll have a sleep, I think, to pass the time.”

I rather fancied that sleep was a pretence to stop further discussion.

During the long dragging hours that followed I planned our escape a hundred times. I would get through the aperture, turn somehow, reach down to him, and haul him up. It seemed easy enough. When he awoke I told him my plan.

“Capital!” he said, and then shouted with laughter – infectious laughter, in which I joined uproariously, although I didn’t see what we were laughing at.

Before we began operations he put a little packet in my hand: “Stow that somewhere safely,” he said.

“What is it?” I asked.

“It’s a keepsake,” he answered. “And the joke you saw me writing.”

“Oh, thank you,” I said, and took the little packet without much thought. Your gentleman scamp is apt to be whimsical, also he is sentimental, usually.

“Now, to business!” he exclaimed. “But first, old chap, if you don’t mind – shake hands. You know me pretty well, I should think, by this time –”

“If you think I believed your yarns –” I began.

“Shut up,” he interrupted roughly. “I ask you to shake hands. It will do you no harm, and it will do me good.”

I thought him a sickly sentimental loon to waste time on such foolishness, but I humoured him. He fairly clung to my hand. I thought he would never let go.

The shutter opened outwards, as I said³⁰⁰. The woodwork into which the staples were driven was rotten, and it gave way easily. He sprang me up from his shoulder, and I got through and turned round, as I had planned. But when I tried I found that I could not reach down to him. He had never supposed that I could.

“What did you calculate the length of your arms at, you genius!” he jeered in a whisper.

“I’ll not go without you,” I protested.

“You’ve got to go, you confounded blithering ass,” he rejoined.

I had my suspicions of that animated conversation with the orderly. My companion had played it low down once, by his own showing, and might again. I half thought he was giving me away somehow.

²⁹⁹ *opened outwards and*: not in *PP*.

³⁰⁰ *as I said*: not in *PP*.

“Don’t rob me of my last chance,” he pleaded, putting all his powers of persuasion into the words. “I’ll make a dummy with my coat and cover it up with straw in your corner. That will deceive the orderly beast when he comes in the morning. I can distract him with patter³⁰¹ besides, and you can’t. That’ll give you time. You can be back with a rescue party in twenty-four hours. Be off, like a good chap. And – God bless you!”

This did seem sense. Even on foot it was not so many hours from camp, and the return ride would be nothing. He might be giving me away, but then he might not. This last reflection decided me.

“You’ll be all right,” were his parting words. “And I’m all right too. Shriven, forgiven, at peace. Remember that. Awaiting my release, tranquilly.”

* * * * *

It all worked out as he anticipated, except that it took me much longer to find my way back than he seemed to think it would. What was left of me was greeted with a cheer when I staggered into camp. They thought I’d been sniped.

“A rescue party for a wastrel like that!” The C.O. exclaimed, when he had heard my story. “An awful outsider – I know him – disgraced his name. A taking chap, too; but not worth risking good men’s lives for.”

“It was awfully decent of him, sir, to insist on letting me go,” I ventured. “I’m pledged to make the attempt.”

“What’s that you’ve got in your hand?” the C.O. asked abruptly.

“A packet he gave me. I was to open it –”

“Open it,” he interrupted.

I obeyed. The packet contained a little well-worn prayer book. “The gift of Kathleen -”³⁰²

Wrapped round it was a scrap of paper on which he had written in pencil:-

“Please see this³⁰³ lady, give her the book, and tell her this is my first parting from it. That genial Johnny this morning gave me a tip. We are both to be shot to-morrow; why, particularly, he didn’t know. One of us would be enough, I think. I told him so. That was the joke. Good-bye and good luck.”

The rescue party arrived in time to bury him.

³⁰¹“patter”: “talk” (PP).

³⁰²“The gift of Kathleen ”: It is probable that Kathleen is the same Kathleen as the “Kathleen of the wonderful hair – Venetian red” in Grand’s story, “A Thorough Change:” she is from a family of “good, religious people” and has a positive influence on the adventurer, Florion de Tailleur, encouraging him to attend church and join in with family prayers.

³⁰³“this”: “the” (PP).

“I Can’t Explain It –”

This story was not published prior to its appearance in *Variety* (see letter from Sarah Grand to J.B. Pinker (9 July 1921). *SSPSG*. II. 86.)

The following text is transcribed from *Variety*. London: Heinemann, 1922, 111-136.

WE had spent the hours since dinner alone together in a cosy little upstairs sitting-room in Josepha’s town house. As the night advanced the talk had turned upon queer occurrences. Josepha was in the vein and had given me some striking examples, which, however, though puzzling, had not proved inexplicable. Upon this, rashly generalising, I had declared that “these things” could all be accounted for, given the details accurately, with the surrounding circumstances.

“Well, I don’t know. I had one experience,” she replied. “*I* can’t explain it. Perhaps you can.”

Midnight sounded from the city clocks.

When I could hear myself speak, I answered, “If you are at a loss I am not likely –”

“Mock modesty,” she interrupted. “You meant what you said just now.”

“I did not say that *I* could account for everything that happens,” I protested.

“Well, no –” She did me justice.

“But I’m for trying,” I declared.

“Then try,” she said, and paused to collect her thoughts.

“Let me see,” she began at last, reflectively. “I was not seeing you at the time –”

“You have a way of not seeing your friends, periodically,” I complained.

“One has to get out of the crowd periodically to save one’s soul alive,” she said, brushing complaint aside as negligible. “At the time I refer to I had found an ideal retreat for the purpose, a retreat in which I could be as solitary as I chose, also as sociable. It does not do to lose touch with one’s kind; solitude in the desert is stultifying. But one must be safe from intrusion, and one is safe among strangers; one’s intercourse with them is all on the surface, one remains alone in one’s self.

“This ideal retreat of mine was in an old town once much frequented by the Quality. Since their departure middle-class ugliness, convention and common-place had done their worst with it, and little of its erstwhile charm survived. Happily the Enclosure – my backwater – had escaped unscathed, because red-brick villadom preferred a more conspicuous site.

“I came upon the Enclosure by accident. My car broke down in the town one day as I was motoring through it on my way to see a house in the neighbourhood, and I had a long wait while it was being repaired. To beguile the time I set out to explore the older part of the town. It was sordid and slummy enough, and I found little to interest me and nothing to arrest my attention until, at the top of a steep street of dilapidated old houses and queer little shops I spied a gateway. Battered heraldic beasts upholding their battered shields ramped on the tall stone gate-posts; handsome old wrought iron gates dropping from their hinges stood wide open, and were so sunken in the ground that it was no longer possible to shut them. The crumbling gateway, evidently a relic of departed splendour, was the outpost of what had once been a fine private demesne. I stopped to look in and it was as if I were gazing into by-gone

days through an opening in time, so old-world, formal, spacious, satisfying was what I saw; so exactly like the grounds of a mansion in an eighteenth century print, urn and weeping willow, dark cypresses, stone vases, and all.

“I don’t know how long I had been standing there, absorbed, when I became aware of a little lady in the broad gravelled sweep coming towards me, staring suspiciously. There was nothing discordantly modern about her, because the characteristics of ragbags must be the same in all ages, and she had the effect of a fine lady’s ragbag, a jumble of scraps of splendid material. She glared at me as she approached, with the expression of a naturally timid animal roused to defend itself.

“‘This is not a public thoroughfare,’ she attacked me valiantly. ‘That’ – indicating a footpath railed off from the Enclosure on the one hand and flanked on the other by an impenetrable hedge of holly twenty feet high – ‘that is a public right of way.’

“The right of way was evidently a scrap stolen from the Enclosure. I felt as owners of property generally feel about rights of way. ‘What a pity!’ I exclaimed.

“Ignoring this, she warned me off again with added emphasis: ‘There is *no* thoroughfare for the public *through* the Enclosure.’

“I smiled down at her and stood my ground. She stood hers too, though less valiantly. I detected a wavering. My eyes wandered an instant with interest to an irregular crescent of tall grey houses, standing together in pairs, which encircled the grounds on the side opposite to the monstrous holly hedge. She caught the glance.

“‘You are perhaps acquainted with one of the residents,’ she suggested. ‘Of course anyone acquainted with a resident and on *calling* terms –?’

“Her tone implied that the highest references would be subjected to strict enquiry.

“‘Oh!’ I exclaimed impulsively, ‘I mean to be a resident myself. I’ve come to stay.’

“They were eighteenth century houses, much out of repair, but that did not prevent them being a joy to live in as well as to behold, so beautifully were they constructed in respect to ‘solidity, utility, symmetry, and space’³⁰⁴ – you remember the great eighteenth century architect’s formula? I secured one of them easily enough. The Quality’s taste had gone with the Quality. Red-brick villadom shunned the Enclosure, and the fate of the out-of-date was upon it. The owner himself was of ancient date and appreciated the possession. He was for preserving its beauties intact but was hampered by want of means. Rents had had to be lowered to keep the houses inhabited at all, with the inevitable result. Where powder and patch and brocade had once gorgeously peacocked, widows and spinsters of limited income roosted economically. They could all, however – and I did, I believe – find compensation for shortness of cash in length of pedigree, and pride themselves on their right to be exclusive, for the landlord would have no tenants who were not socially hall-marked gentlefolk. Only once had the Enclosure fallen from its high renown. In that instance the owner had allowed one of the houses to be used as a nursing home. The enterprise had been a failure, and the house was empty when I took mine; but there was no recovering from the effect. The residents felt that they had been betrayed, let down. Yet they were not at all by way of burying the episode in silence, so that it might be forgotten; it provided too much greatly needed capital for conversation for that. The tale had doubtless waxed in tragic importance as it aged. By the time it reached my ears it had taken on the dignity of an historical event garnished with the glamour of legendary accretions. I gathered that patients who went into the nursing home were not free agents, that they were lured in, hypnotised; and that nobody came out at all – except as a ‘coffined corpse’ smuggled forth at the dead of night, a

³⁰⁴“*solidity ... space*”: In the first century B.C., Vitruvius set out the virtues of architecture as being “*Utilitas, firmitas, venustas.*” Grand uses this formula in respect of the Palladian style of architecture, popular until the end of the eighteenth century, which derived much from the style of classical temples.

precaution which just showed you, you know – ever came out whole. My semi-detached neighbour, whose imagination was always better exercised than her powers of observation, had secured all rights in one repulsive detail. She assured me that the limbs which were cut off were buried in the back garden with no more respect than if they had been stray cats, there could be no doubt about this, she said, because ‘the aroma was perceptible.’

“The old-world air of the Enclosure held an old-world atmosphere, in which I dreamed in solitude, luxuriously, that first long warm summer through. But I am the reverse of hibernating creatures; in winter I am wide awake. Cold dissipates my dreams and compels me to look with my eyes and hear with my ears only; which means seeing and hearing but a miserable fraction of all that there is to be seen and heard; but, happily, for the time being, that little suffices.

“In the winter I cultivated acquaintances and made friends with the postman.

“The deserted nursing home was next door to my house, not in a line with it, but standing forward its whole width beyond. There was an open space yards wide, backed by a high wall, between us. This bond of union stretched from the front wall of my house to the back wall of the empty house. Each house had a garden door set close up to it in the wall. The grounds in front were common to all the houses, but each had its private patch behind. The architect who planned the houses had prided himself on varying the monotony; no two pairs were alike. Well worn stone steps led up to my hall-door, which was in front; the hall-door of the empty house was at the end and raised only one step above the ground, so that, standing on my steps, I looked down in it and into the sashed window beside it, which lighted its outer hall.

“I was standing in the bow-window of my sitting-room on the ground floor one evening, enjoying the tracery of bare brown branch outlined on the vivid colouring of a wintry sunset, when I saw the postman coming up the drive and opened the window. He gave me my letters with a sociable smile, then turned and limped away. He was an old soldier who had been lamed for life by a wound in the leg. I noticed him glance up at the empty house as he turned. Half way down the drive he looked up at it again over his shoulder hesitated, then limped back, dot-and-go-one. I had not shut the window.

“‘I think I ought to tell you that there’s a man in that empty house,’ he said, pointing upwards. ‘I see ‘imlookin’ out of that there top window at the end, on the right. There’s tramps about.’

“I looked up at the window he indicated and saw nothing but the flaming sunset reflected in the glass.

“‘He’s not there now,’ I said. ‘What was he like? It may have been a workman repairing something.’

“The postman scratched a puzzled head. ‘I can’t say wot ‘e was like – a sorter w’ite face – and eyes – mostly eyes,’ he began, and stopped. ‘Can’t say wot ‘e was like more’n that,’ he added upon reflection. ‘Only I’ll take my dick it wasn’t the face of no ‘olesome workman.’

“‘What’s to be done?’ I said.

“‘Search the ‘ouse, I’m thinkin’,’ the postman suggested. ‘I’ve finished my round, if you like I’ll –?’

“‘I’ll come with you,’ I cut him short.

“We examined the house all round outside, windows and doors, but found not a chink unfastened by which anybody could have got in. I said so.

“‘Well,’ said the postman, ‘there must ‘ave bin a chink w’en ‘e got in, fur in ‘e is. I saw ‘im as distinct as I see you.’

“‘What was he like?’ I asked again.

“And Again the postman scratched his head – but nothing more precise than his previous reply – ‘sorter w’ite face’ – came of the effort.

“I suggested that what he saw must have been an effect of light, a shadow on the glass, but the postman scouted that theory: ‘Shadows ain’tw’ite,’ he said; then added conclusively, ‘I see ’imm’self with me own eyes’ – as if he might be supposed to have been mistaken through using somebody else’s.

“There was nothing more to be done that evening, as the office of the house agent who had the keys would be shut. The postman, observing that ‘e was an ugly lookin’ customer,’ cautioned me to lock myself up tight for the night, and took his leave with the reassuring remark that ‘e’d be clever to get in through them shutters of mine, if I didn’t forget to bar them.’

“I wrote to the house agent, who sent a clerk next day with the keys. We examined every nook and corner of the empty house together. All over it the dust of years lay undisturbed. Had anyone been before us we must have found the imprint of his feet, but nowhere did we find the track even of a mouse. The clerk was dryly facetious on the subject of my postman’s imagination, but agreed when I put forward the suggestion that he might easily have been deceived by an effect of light on the glass, and we left it at that.

“The incident lapsed from my mind and I should probably have thought no more about it but for a forcible reminder that I had a few weeks later. Workmen were busy at the time repairing one of the other houses in the Enclosure. They were sitting about outside it smoking their pipes during their dinner hour one day, when one of them called the attention of the others to a man who was looking out of the end window on the top floor of the empty house. Happening to go out just then, I found them standing in a group frowning up at the window. I asked what was the matter, and looked up myself while one of them explained, but there was nothing that I could see in the window but shining glass. They were all positive that the man was there when I spoke to them; they had seen him distinctly enough to know him again if they met him. I remarked that he was evidently not afraid of being seen, to which one of them replied that he seemed to be too busy watching my house to think of the risk, or perhaps he didn’t mind; but at any rate ‘e couldn’t ’ave bin after no good, not there alone in that empty house.’ I asked if they had heard that a man had been seen there once before. They had not.

“The keys had been entrusted to me at my request in case I should again have occasion to enter the premises, and I fetched them, the men being keen to ‘noble’ the intruder. But we didn’t ‘noble’ him that time or find a trace of his having been there. The men agreed that it was ‘a rum go,’ but continued to believe their ‘own eyes.’ Wherever he’d got to there he was when they spotted his ugly mug at that there window. My theory that the appearance must have been a delusive effect of light was bluntly rejected. One man declared that it ‘wouldn’t ’old water, not against your own eyes,’ and another audibly muttered, ‘Delusion be blowed.’

“I remained of the same opinion still and interested myself not at all in the matter. There was so much to think about, and especially to feel, just then, one thing crowded another out, thanks to breaks in the weather. There is no monotony for anyone who is ‘under the weather’ in our variable climate; one can live in the same place all the year round and have a fine variety of changes in one’s self. Spring inclines me to reflect. I spent long days that spring busy with my hands making lace; that lace is a web of thought. Our lovely brief intervals of summer induce passivity; idleness is then recuperative and makes lotus eating for the time being a duty, the pleasantest of all duties to my mind, while it lasts. Heat is balm to my temperament, rest and refreshment. I thrive on it, especially on warm grey days. Are there anywhere on earth days so mystic-marvellous as our warm grey days in England? Pass me your sun-bright lands for blatant. The sun exposes. Under sunny skies one is a healthy, happy

animal, to whom a flower is a passing sensation; but here, where the mist transforms, where the air, ‘sea-saturate as with wine,’³⁰⁵ quickens perception; here on a warm grey day a flower is a spiritual experience. On such days my senses, acting without conscious effort on my part as channels of impression, of observation, busy themselves from morning till night, like honey bees, storing food for use in winter. In this mood I was made free of the past. Modern entities, thin as ghosts, moved in the old-world atmosphere of the Enclosure without disturbing it; the spot was peopled with presence more real to me, with whom I was more at home. I ‘vowed’ and was ‘vastly.’ It was life at its exquisite best – capacious, full, rich in refinement of feeling. The day’s decline, when the thrush atuned his song to nature’s *pianissimo* in the twilight; still dark nights, their solemnity; moonlight on the trees, their black shadows, their immobility; the chromatic palette of the dawn and the birds’ awakening – oh, the breath-catching, thought suspending, uplifting loveliness of it all! –”

She broke off, turned to me with an expressive gesture, and exclaimed: “I wonder that you wonder at my lone retreats!”

“I take it that ‘the breath-catching, thought suspending, uplifting loveliness’ doesn’t go on all the time,” I ventured.

“Don’t laugh at my moments!” she exclaimed, laughing herself. “Of course I was liable to the usual interruptions, the vulgar insistence of everyday affairs. The prose of life fills most of the volume – and a good thing too. Where would one drift to were it otherwise? Still, one’s ‘moments’ loom large; large enough for their purpose. They compensate –” She shrugged her shoulders significantly.

“What were we talking about?” she presently resumed. “Oh, I was telling you!” I have not been wandering from the point. In fairness to you I have been trying to recall every detail which, in your opinion, may have a bearing upon it. For the purpose I must give you myself at the time, and things as they appeared to me, and the way they expressed themselves in me, so to speak, purple patches and all. I cannot ignore my ‘moments’ as unimportant because they were brief. Which is the truer life and which the dream? I take it myself that such moments are a foretaste of the truer life – vouchsafed us for our encouragement, as a prize to be won is shown to a child to make him realise that it is well worth the trouble of winning. To be in the beautiful, every fibre alive to it, that is heaven. And it is *being* in the beautiful, this state of exaltation. I acknowledge that it has its dangers; that it is valuable as a stimulant on occasion, but destructive as dram-drinking if indulged in to excess. If you are liable to it, don’t abuse the gift by inducing the mood. Welcome it when it comes to you, and welcome the reaction; so you will preserve your balance. When the ‘movements of life’ become automatic, as they do if you take no interest in them, you have lost your balance, lost your power to discriminate. The great mystic is also a practical man; at home in both worlds; wide awake to the difference. The powers of his mind, healthily exercised, are the vehicles by which he transmits to us the knowledge beyond reach of our finite faculties which he is privileged to acquire.

“I had plenty of the prosaic business of life to attend to in the Enclosure, and I never shirked it. The weather itself that summer was more often than not prosaic. There was one long cold spell during which I had no inclination for anything but active pursuits. I walked and rode and even shopped myself into fine physical condition. Going out when I chose was all very well, but when I was obliged to go –” she made a grimace.

“One day – being obliged to go out – I was standing on the landing outside my bedroom putting on my gloves, in a state of suppressed irritation. There was a bitter east wind, the house was like a refrigerator, and I had just been told that the coals wouldn’t last

³⁰⁵“sea-saturate as with wine”: from Algernon Charles Swinburne, “By the North Sea” (1880), 162. *Atalanta in Calydon and Lyric Poems*. Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1901, 192-7.

over to-morrow. You know how exasperating servants are, they never tell one in time. There was no one but myself to hurry in the coals, and I was going – much against my inclination. From the landing on which I stood I could see across through the staircase window to the empty house. The corner window was a storey above me. Wrestling with a glove button and inwardly anathematising the servants, I glanced up at it and was aware of a face. The refractory button yielded and I ran downstairs. That is the face the postman saw, ‘a sorter w’ite face,’ skimmed across the surface of my mind as distinctly as a bird skims across water. ‘An effect of light,’ I assured myself, as I opened the door. From the doorstep I looked up again. The effect of light could hardly be the same from such a different point of view, but apparently it was, for there was the face looking down at me. I set off down the drive, and immediately I was saying to myself:-

‘...phantoms from another world
Haunt the dim confines of existence.’³⁰⁶

“The meaning of the words arrested me. I turned and once more, with an effort, looked up at the window. The face was still there, the eyes still on me. ‘Nevertheless, you may be an effect of light,’ I shot up at them defiantly. Yet I knew that it was not an effect of light. The expression would have been fixed had the face been an effect of light, and the expression was not fixed. It had changed as though my shot had told. I cannot describe the change. I only know that the result was reassuring. ‘Who am I to be cocksure that the dim confines of existence are not haunted by phantoms from another world?’ I asked myself, and then I addressed the appearance: ‘At all events, let us be friends,’ I bargained. The eyes gleamed responsively an instant; then all that I could see in the window was shining glass reflecting the clouds.

“After that, incessantly, from the staircase window or from the drive as I went and came, I saw my strange neighbour looking out at me. I became so used to him that I took his presence for granted. It was his occasional absences that surprised me and made me think about him – to the extent of momentarily wondering what had become of him. My feeling for him was indistinct, I neither liked nor disliked him; neither feared nor trusted him. I just took him for granted, as one takes any common object one is accustomed to see.

“I did not mention him to anybody. One doesn’t mention that sort of thing. And I was pretty sure that he had not been seen again by anyone else, or I should have heard of it. Talk would have set everybody seeing him and the whole place would have been agog. I had to allow that in my own case there had been suggestion, though at the same time I had no doubt of the reality of the appearance. Still, on the principle of making assurance doubly sure, I was, like all true believers, prepared to welcome further testimony if it should prove incontestably to be unbiased by suggestion. Unexpectedly, I did receive further testimony, and from a source that could not possibly have been tampered with. I had had a bright little girl confided to my care by her parents during a long absence – her father was a government official in India. She was at school, but stayed with me always for her holidays. She was a darling inquisitive little person, happy from morning till night making discoveries. Sitting opposite me at lunch one day she bombarded me with questions. Did I know that there was a thrush’s nest in the hedge in my garden? Did I know that Mr. Thomas Cat had his eye on it? She’d caught him and chased him away. The tortoise did actually eat buttercups, she’d seen him snipping off their heads; but what did he do in the winter when there were none? Oh, of course, she did know that he slept through the winter; she’d had that in a natural history lesson. Did I know that a huge speckled toad lived in a hole under the bushes? Was he really, *really* a friend of mine? What a funny friend!

³⁰⁶“phantoms ... dim confines of existence”: From Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *Christus: A Mystery* (1872), Part II: “The Golden Legend,” v.v. “The Inn at Genoa.” *Christus: A Mystery*. Boston (Mass.): James R. Osgood and Company, 1873, 115.

“‘And what,’ she asked, deliberately, after an interval of thought, ‘what *is* that *horrid* Thing that looks out of the window in the empty house?’

“I had never, so far, thought of the ‘Thing’ as horrid’ but from that instant I both knew and felt that it was horrid, and from that instant I saw it no more. For awhile I looked for it, expecting to see it; and then, as suddenly as it had ceased to appear at the window, it cased to haunt my mind and I forgot it.

“The darling little woman returned to school. She had filled the house, and when she went she emptied it, and I found myself at a loose end. I tried being sociable for a change, informally. I used to spend long evenings with a friend, walking there and back. On these occasions I took my latch-key and let the servants lock up the house and go out. One night coming home I was caught in a downpour. My little dog Pranks was with me. He was a welcome guest at the house I had been to, and I had taken him because he used to howl miserably all the time when he was left at home alone, and my semi-detached neighbour suffered. He was a clever, companionable little friend, with a thick white wiry coat. I picked him up when it began to rain and carried him to keep him dry and clean. When I got to my door I found to my consternation that I had forgotten my latch-key and the servants had not returned. My neighbours were early people and had probably all gone to bed. Anyway, I did not like to disturb any one of them. I tried my doors and all the windows that I could reach, and found them all only too securely fastened. The rain was coming down straight, a deluge against which my umbrella was little protection. Nevertheless, I was exhilarated. The sound of the mighty downpour excited me. I felt one with the motionless trees standing up bravely against it in the windless night. Had it not been for Pranks and the umbrella, I think I should have danced.

“All the same I began to wonder what was delaying the servants. They had always been punctual heretofore, and it was already past their time. Were they sheltering somewhere until the rain abated? I hoped they were, yet if they were – ‘We shall be drenched!’ I said to Pranks. Pranks whuffed expressively.

“There was no shelter under the trees, no portico, no outhouse unlocked, no anywhere to go – stay, though, wasn’t that window open? Surely it was – the window, all but flush with the ground, that lighted the outer hall of the empty house. I could see that the sash was up as high as it would go, and this did not strike me as strange. Framed in the aperture was inky blackness and this did not repel me. I made a dash for the window, and, sitting on the sill, swung myself over it into the inky blackness.

“Pranks was a well-bred gentleman by birth, sympathetic, adaptable. So far, he had considerably accommodated himself as best he could to the discomfort of the position in which I had been obliged to carry him; but the moment we were in shelter he rudely and roughly rebelled, wriggled himself out of my arms, and sprang through the window incontinently, with a yelp, out into the rain. The darkness or something had terrified him and I thought he was going to forsake me, but I wronged him; he was not of the cur kind. Alighting on his feet and standing a little way off, straining back with his legs stuck out as if he were pulling hard on the rope in a tug of war, every hair in his body on end so that he looked twice his natural size, he faced me, alternately snarling, yowling, or whining persuasively, apparently in extreme distress. ‘What’s the matter, you silly little dog?’ I exclaimed. ‘Come in out of the rain directly!’

“But Pranks excused himself.

“Never before had he been disobedient to an imperative command of mine. He was more than ordinarily plucky, too, a thorough-bred little beast both in character and conduct, but now, standing there with his tail between his legs, toeing an imaginary line as if his life depended on not being dragged across it, he looked, and it seemed to me that he was acting, like the veriest little mongrel cur in affright. Poor little dog friend, I misunderstood him in my

human obtuseness, as Gelert was misunderstood. It did not dawn upon me that he was using every art and argument of which he was capable to induce me ‘to come out of that’; and he only succeeded in exasperating me. If I had got hold of him he would have been well shaken and slapped. I upbraided him and called him names which at any other time would have brought him to heel deeply humiliated. All that I thought of was the state his coat would be in, splashed with mud, and the trouble of getting him washed at that time of night. Sitting on the window-sill, I tried to grab him, but he backed out of reach. I made an effort to catch him by the collar with the crook of my umbrella, but he managed to evade me. There was nothing for it but to go out after him. I swung myself round over the window-sill. At the same instant something – clutched me from behind.”

“How horrid!”

“Yes, it was horrid. But ‘clutched’ is not the right word. It was not hands that were laid upon me. It was – what shall I say? A force – something that acted as a magnet acts on a needle. What I felt was a tug – a sudden pull back into the house. The start it gave me defeated the intention by making me jump – jump forward. It seemed to me that I gained my own doorsteps at a bound. Pranks, in great excitement, hanging on with his teeth to my skirt, pulling with all his might, did his best to help me up them. My heart was thumping. I was in a state of abject terror.

“Then I became aware of Pranks standing on his hind legs, drumming on my skirt with his fore-paws, looking up in my face, and whimpering. Didn’t I understand now? Yes, I did. I caught him up, all drenched as he was, poor loyal little body, and hugged him.

“The sense of a great escape was upon me – an escape from something indescribably horrible. I was all shaken. Pranks tried alternately to encourage me by licking my face, and to warn me to keep a sharp look out for the enemy, by peering into the inky blackness encompassed by the window-frame and growling angrily. I thought that we were outside the danger zone, but he was not so sure.

“So we stood on the doorstep, or rather I stood leaning against the doorpost with him in my arms, both shivering in a stillness of which the steady sound of the downpour seemed a part. We had no shelter from it now, for I had dropped my umbrella.

“I don’t know how long we stood there – long enough at all events for my nerves to cease from troubling, my heart to stop thumping, and for Pranks to control himself. He did not relax his vigilance, but I only knew by the vibration of his body – a coffee-mill sort of grinding inside him – that he was still growling inwardly.

“Rays from an electric street lamp fell athwart the lawn in front of me, obliquely. The lamp, unseen itself from where I stood, had lightened the darkness but dimly while the downpour was at its heaviest, but now apparently the rain was moderating, for small objects were becoming distinct. I found myself thinking of the wet leaves of a silver birch shining in the lamplight. What did they remind me of? I had it – lace. A lace-like effect. The most exquisitely fabricated lace, patterned to perfection. It was satisfying to have hit on the right word, lace. I repeated the word. Certainly the rain was abating, the worst was over. Only a little longer, Pranks, be patient.

Lace, lace, lace – the word was repeating itself in my mind, bother it! I had to be obsessed by a word. Think of something else – the lamplight flickering on the leaves – or was it the leaves flickering in the lamplight? Flickering in a breath of air – come to life again; stirring – lace on the breast of a sleeper, stirred by a breath – the sighing of the leaves in a breath of air – no, not leaves, lace. Oh, bother lace!

“Pranks, how late the maids are! What has become of them? Is it possible’ – I caught my breath – ‘that they returned before we did and are asleep in bed all this time?’

“Pranks whuffed and whimpered. I rang the bell. Pranks barked. ‘Hush, I can’t hear!’ I rang again and listened and rang and listened again. There was not a sound in the house.

They must be out, I concluded. Pranks seemed to think so too. His vigilance relaxed, or rather changed its direction. He turned from the window and watched the path by which the maids would return, expectantly, as if he sensed their approach. I took it that we had not much longer to wait, and thanked goodness, for I began to feel dazed with fatigue. An overpowering longing to lie down came over me. I fought it by looking about me and trying to note what I saw. I said to myself, ‘The rain has ceased.’ Incontinently my mind again and again insisted that ‘the rain had ceased.’ The wet leaves shining in the ray from the unseen lamp caught my eye. They had reminded me of something, what was it? I stopped thinking by trying to think, and for a short time I was in what I suppose is the condition of an animal which hears and sees and feels without rendering any account to itself of what it is hearing and seeing and feeling, for want of words. My eyes remained fixed on the shining leaves; my mind repeated ‘The rain has ceased,’ rhythmically, without ceasing. It did not occur to me that I was being hypnotised. The last reality of which I was conscious was the discomfort of being wet through. Next, I was imagining myself – pictorially – in the most delightful surroundings. There was nothing definite that I can recollect, except the sense of delight. I knew it for a promising foretaste of a still more ecstatic state – to be gained with an effort. I had to get there. But where? Of course, into the empty house. To be in the empty house again pictured itself to me as of all things the most desirable. ‘Come, Pranks, don’t be silly,’ for Pranks was objecting to a move I had made. Then exactly what happened I don’t know. Pranks must have sprung from my arms as I ran down the steps. At any rate, he tripped me up somehow, brought me down plop on the ground and jumped on me, expressing in action. ‘No, you don’t, not if I can prevent it,’ as clearly as if he had spoken the words.

“I tried to rise and felt that I was being helped, felt myself attracted, pulled – how can I explain? Magnet and needle sort of thing, you know. The sensation was pleasurable. I lent myself to it gratefully, and undoubtedly the magnet would have had me – but for Pranks. I was all but up and off when Pranks uttered an agonised cry, the cry of a tortured animal, the cry to which one instantly responds, flying to the rescue. It brought me to my senses. Instinctively I clasped him. In a flash I knew what was happening, what had happened. I again experienced the horror of that tug from behind. With every fibre of my body I resisted the attraction.

“The next thing I knew was that the maids were picking me up, and Pranks was circling round us, yapping, wild with delight. Poor girls! They were in such a state of consternation, so remorseful for having sheltered from the downpour instead of coming straight home as usual, as if it were their fault that they did not know that I had forgotten my key!

“The next morning I examined the hall window of the empty house, attended by pranks, who, however, stood afar off with his heckles up, snarling, and was not to be persuaded to come near. The window, as usual, was shut and fastened, and the shutters were up,”

She paused, but I made no comment. Instead, I asked, “What next?”

“Oh, next? The inevitable bad cold,” she said. “Then I went abroad for a few weeks to recruit, and stayed a year.

“When I returned I found that the empty house had been let in my absence, and was full of children – such jolly children, the happiest, noisiest, naughtiest crew! They showed their feelings’ they had no respect for anything or anybody’ some they loved, and some they hated, and they let them know it. From the first they treated me as an equal. They made free with my garden, got into my house by any door or window that happened to be open, and played hide-and-seek all over it. And Pranks played about with them joyously, followed them everywhere, and was as much at home in their house as in his own.

“It did not strike me until afterwards that the atmosphere of the Enclosure was changed; lightened, brightened, like an overheated room when the windows are opened. I was no longer conscious of anything peculiar in it, anything uncanny, anything but what was healthy, happy, and normal. The effect upon me was immediate. I lived with the children in the present’ the past had ceased to exist for me.

For some time after my return no recollection of what had happened in the empty house crossed my mind. I never intentionally looked up at the end window. If I happened to glance in that direction at all, and I dare say I did, it was thoughtlessly – until the day when – suddenly – I realised the change which had taken place in the atmosphere of the Enclosure, and something in me asked, ‘Are the children safe in that house?’

“It was then that I recollected, that I first felt a qualm of fear for the children. I flew out of doors to look up at the window and make sure; yet such a horror of what I might see came over me that I had to force myself to look.

“There was no evil Thing looking out of the end window. There was no end window for it to look out of.”

“What!” I ejaculated.

“There was no end window for it to look out of,” she repeated. “The only window in that wall was the window on the ground floor which lighted the outer hall. Everywhere else that a window ought to have been there was a blank space such as you see frequently in the houses built in the days of the window tax. These spaces had no glass in them and were not even painted to look like windows. The wall was weather-stained and grey, blank window spaces and all.”

“But,” I exclaimed, “the postman, the workmen, the child – are you sure they particularised?”

“I am sure. I was interested in their phraseology, and for that reason I had noted carefully on each occasion every word that they said on the subject. They described the position of the window, all of them, in exactly the same words: ‘The end window of the top storey on your right looking up.’ Moreover, they looked up – and so did I. The postman had gone to another beat and I never saw the workmen again, or I might have been tempted to test their eyes – at the risk of causing no end of disturbance. But there was another pair of observant eyes to be reckoned with – my little ward’s. When she first questioned me about the ‘horrid Thing’ I thought I had convinced her that she had been dreaming with her eyes open. At all events, she did not refer to the subject again during that visit. I should not in any case have thought it right to question her, or to say anything to revive the impression. I hoped and expected that she would have forgotten all about it when next she came to stay with me. There was a considerable interval between the two visits. But I was mistaken. At lunch one day, soon after her arrival, she remarked in a casual tone: ‘The horrid Thing has gone and it has taken its window way with it. It don’t like the children, I s’pose.’ ‘But, darling,’ I said, ‘the window is where it always was.’ ‘The downstairs window is,’ she replied; ‘but the other one has gone, the high up one the horrid Thing used to look out of; don’t you remember? You used to look up at it yourself and smile.’”

Josepha smiled at me in conclusion.

A Thorough Change

Prior magazine publication not traced.

The following text is transcribed from *Variety*
London: Heinemann, 1922, 139-150.

AN awful looking ragamuffin, he was, the first time I saw him. I was out in the wilds shooting, and he staggered into my camp one night in a state of exhaustion. He stared at me across the fire with hollow, bloodshot eyes, and exclaimed: "White man, thank God! I thought it was Indians."

I did what I could for him, and in return he gave me his confidence generously – so far as not pretending to be any better than he was goes. It was about all he had to give, but it was worth something to me as a student of human nature, for he was an interesting specimen of a kind not rare but usually reticent, the gentleman blackguard. He might have posed as high-minded had he cared to, for, once he was washed and trimmed up in a suit of my clothes, he looked all right, and his manners were charming. He gave me to understand that he was a man of birth, and always spoke as if bad conduct were a mere humorous eccentricity in one of the nobility. He talked a good deal about "my people," with a curious show of pride in one particular trait, their acquisitiveness. "We are a predatory lot," he once said. "My ancestor who founded the English branch of the family, came over with William the Conqueror³⁰⁷, in some useful capacity about the stables. He was given the title and property of a man he claimed to have killed at the battle of Hastings. It was not he who killed the Saxon, but that is an unimportant detail. He got the prize, and since then we have gone on acquiring. The State has been our milch-cow³⁰⁸. Confiscated titles and property, Church lands, Common lands – anything that was going was sure to be snapped up by a de Tailleur."

"Do you inherit the trait?" I asked.

"Well, yes," he answered, modestly, "In a small way. I make the most of my opportunities. But there is not much to be done with the talent in these days. Those infernal radical cads are always on the look out to spoil sport. And that reminds me. I once had a chance. I'd got myself into a hole, and I got myself out again cleverly, thanks to the family trait." He broke off and chuckled. "Wonderful thing, heredity," he pursued. "I help myself instinctively, just as my ancestors did."

He brooded a little on some apparently gratifying reminiscence, then added abruptly: "Ever had any experience of thought-transference?"

"Only second-hand," I answered.

"Curious thing, thought-transference," he observed.

"You have had experiences yourself, perhaps?"

"Oh, yes," he answered. "Birth fines the perceptions. The most interesting instance was one I had in Switzerland." He yawned. "I'll tell you another time, old chap. Excuse me. I'm dog tired just now."

³⁰⁷ *William the Conqueror*: William the Conqueror (1028-1087) became the first Norman king of England in 1066, having defeated Harold at the Battle of Hastings.

³⁰⁸ *milch-cow*: another term for a dairy cow. Here it has slightly unpleasant connotations, with the suggestion that it is easy to steal from the State.

On another occasion he returned to the subject. “Thought-transference,” he began without preamble, “Do you know Lake Lemman³⁰⁹, the far end, Territet³¹⁰, there by Chillon³¹¹, overlooked by the Dent du Midi³¹²? Ever stayed at the Hôtel Byron³¹³? Years ago I found myself there. Found is the right word, for it’s a mystery to me how I got there. Any other place would have done just as well. Fate, I suppose! I was a bit off colour, I can’t tell why. It came on suddenly – at Monte Carlo. I was staying at the Grand – not alone.” He shrugged his shoulders to indicate a peccadillo. “My luck had been extraordinary. Coming in from the tables one night, I said to her, ‘I’m fed up with winning. If I don’t lose occasionally the blank monotony will get on my nerves.’ ‘You fool,’ she exclaimed, tartly. ‘You’ll lose your luck, talking like that; *then* where shall we be?’

“She was a splendid creature, with the air of a great lady. All the chaps envied me the temporary possession, and for that I used to pardon her language as a rule. But that night it jarred. I said nothing. It is in my nature to be soft-spoken, courteous, considerate. That is why she ventured to call me a fool. She made the mistake of supposing that softness was in my character. When she said, ‘Where shall we be?’ I said nothing; but I asked myself, ‘Where am I?’ I assure you, at that moment I felt myself as far down morally in the social scale as it is possible for a man to be who has the means to wallow luxuriously. Ostentation, vulgarity, commonness, vice – with these four words I labelled the best suite in the Grand Hôtel and the finest woman in Monte Carlo.

“It was a crisis. I bit my cigar. The atmosphere reeked of scent. I opened the windows.

“‘If you’re bent on catching your death of cold, I’m not,’ she said. ‘I shall go to bed.’

“‘Good-night,’ I answered.

“She flounced into the adjoining room and banged the door. I was left alone with my thoughts. And I realised that I was not the thing, that I had got regularly out of sorts. Now when that is the case there is nothing like thorough change, and I decided that what I required and must have was a thorough change.

“But how to get a change that would be thorough was the difficulty. Going from one place to another was no change to me. My life was spent in going from one place to another. That does no good. The only beneficial change is a change in oneself, a change of mind, of attitude towards life, an emotional change. Such a change may be brought about on the domestic hearth as well as anywhere else. The reading of a book, the making of a new acquaintance, a stirring event – anything that rouses interest and enthusiasm suffices. Still, there may be circumstances which render change of scene advisable. Such were my circumstances. I had come abroad to be out of the way for a bit. I had got into difficulties of sorts, and the family back was up. It always is up when there is anything to pay. But I was not hiding, you understand. It was not in my nature to hide. That would have looked bad.

“Well, I spare you the details. Suffice it that I presently found myself alone at the Hôtel Byron, Territet, there by Chillon, overlooked by the Dent du Midi. I entered my name

³⁰⁹ *Lake Lemman*: the French name for Lake Geneva: one of the largest lakes in Western Europe, it encompasses both Switzerland and France.

³¹⁰ *Territet*: situated on the northern shore of Lake Geneva.

³¹¹ *Chateau de Chillon*: an island castle on the shore of Lake Geneva, at the eastern end and just three kilometres from Montreaux, which inspired Byron’s poem *The Prisoner of Chillon* (1816).

³¹² *Dent du Midi*: a mountain with several summits situated in the Chablais Alps in Switzerland.

³¹³ *Hotel Byron*: named after the poet Lord Byron (1788-1824), famed for his turbulent private life. The hotel opened in 1839 (completely destroyed by fire on 23 January 1933). It was situated in Villeneuve, a mile from Chillon, and enjoyed views west along the Lake and south to the Dents du Midi. The hotel’s name commemorates Lord Byron’s visit to Lake Geneva in 1816.

in the visitors' book simply: Florion de Tailleux³¹⁴. But by dinner time everyone had got hold of my rotten little honorary title. It was pleasant the way they made up to me. There was one lot, however – a handsome old gentleman with two girls, one a beauty with the most wonderful hair, Venetian red; the other sweet looking, very, but an invalid. These people attracted me because they took no notice of me, and I concluded by that that they were something in their own right, so I determined to make their acquaintance – not by way of an ordinary introduction, don't you know, but somehow that would commend me to them. To be respected by the respectable is an excellent tonic. And I tell you I was run down.

“Well, the opportunity came fast enough. Church on Sunday. And there was no one to play the organ until I volunteered. I'm a bit of a dab at it, and I gave them a rollicking Hallelujah voluntary to cheer them up coming out. When I had done, I found the old gentleman and his niece waiting for me at the door. She had hold of his arm, and I knew she had made him wait. He raised his hat and said: ‘Allow me to thank you for your music, sir.’ I thanked him for thanking me, and we all three walked on together.

“It was easy enough after that. The attraction was mutual. They opened their arms to me, so to speak, and that in itself had its charm, for they were people of good Irish family, and proud, and, as you may have inferred, I was rather out of it with people of that kind just then. After having been pretty well barred by my own lot, it was new life to me to be treated like a brother by those two lovely girls. I don't know which I admired the most, the sweetness of Aileen, the invalid, or the healthy beauty, the wit, the charm of her sister Kathleen of the wonderful hair – Venetian red. And the handsome, courteous old gentleman himself was a man to be seen with! I'd have done anything for them. And I did do all I could. It was the time of my life! Helping to entertain Aileen, keeping her provided with flowers, wheeling her about in her chair, rowing Kathleen on the lake, playing the organ in church – I never missed a service; reading aloud to them in the evening, joining in their family prayers, which I did with all my heart – living their life, in fact, one with those delightful, good, religious people. It was the change I required, a thorough change.”

(What more thorough change for such a man than to be good for a bit?)

“I was happy. I forgave myself everything and made a fresh start. In a veiled way I confided my troubles to Kathleen and won her sympathy. And that was the mistake I made. You know the pure Celt is psychic. Once in touch with you, you're never safe with one of them. There are times when they can read you like a book. I did not suspect it, but Kathleen had the faculty.

“The blissful episode had lasted for weeks. It might have lasted for ever. I had no feeling but that it would, when one day there came a bolt from the blue. My Monte Carlo companion, tired of amusing herself elsewhere, wrote to say that she was coming to join me. If she came there would be an end of these halcyon days, and come she would, I knew, if she had made up her mind to. And there was no way to fit her into this life; I saw the effect of her on these gentle ladies – her flamboyant beauty, her dress, her slang – no! I could never stand her myself in such company. I would fly rather than break the charm. I would at least preserve the memory intact of this one golden experience of what it is to live nobly.

“But how could I get away? I had been living latterly on the credit off my name. I had very little cash; not enough to take me any distance. And I had no valuables left to sell. I was fairly caught. What was I to do? Prepare them; that was the best and the kindest preliminary step. So that evening I shut the book I had been reading aloud, and remarked casually: ‘I must be off to Geneva to-morrow, to meet my wife.’

³¹⁴*Florion de Tailleux*: this appears to be a grandiose, fabricated name, to conceal the real identity of the unredeemed villain of the story.

“There was dead silence. I didn’t look at them, but I felt their surprise. I hoped that Kathleen at least conjectured that I had not mentioned this wife before because she was part of the past I was anxious to forget for the good of my soul. I don’t know who spoke first, or what was said; some well-bred common-place, doubtless, they were that sort. You could rely on them all to say and to do the right thing whatever happened. But I knew that my day was done. I should never be the same to them again. And that made me wild to escape. But how? All night long I lay awake, asking myself the question. No answer came.

“I generally breakfasted with Kathleen and her uncle, but that morning I was purposefully late. When I left my room, which was at the top of the house, most of the guests had gone down. Lingered as I descended, for no particular purpose, I glanced into the empty bedrooms. Doors and windows stood wide open, the sun was streaming in, and, in a room on the first floor, on a table, there lay some things which flashed back an answering gleam. I stepped in to see what the shining objects might be. Rings! Four splendid rings. Instinctively I put them in my pocket. The corridor was empty. No one had seen me enter or leave the room. I went upstairs again, and cleverly inserted the rings in the hem of my trousers, which, like most old Etonians, I generally wore turned up.

“I stayed in my room until I heard people coming up from breakfast, then I opened my door, and said my good-mornings to those whom I met, with the remark that I seemed to be late.

“‘You’ve missed a great excitement,’ one lady said. ‘The Countess forgot to put on her rings this morning, and when she went back to her room for them they had disappeared.’

“‘Oh, they’ll turn up all right,’ I replied. ‘Nothing is ever lost.’

“At the end of the next corridor I saw Kathleen coming towards me. She was strolling along, not thinking of anything in particular, I should say, until she saw me. Then – I don’t know how to describe it, but something seemed to flash from my mind to hers. She flew at me, she struck my chest with the palms of her hands, she cried: ‘*You* have the rings! You can’t get away with them. Nobody is to be allowed to leave the house till a thorough search has been made. Go at once and give them up. Pretend you found them.’

“I smiled. ‘Really,’ I said, composedly, ‘you are paying me a high compliment!’

“She looked bewildered. ‘I thought – I was sure for a moment –’ she stammered.

“‘Think again then,’ I said reproachfully, and left her to repent.

“I went straight to the manager. ‘I want to get off by the boat to meet my wife,’ I said. ‘But I refuse to leave the house without being searched. I hear some rings have disappeared.’

“I took off my things and handed them to him one by one. He protested, and when I insisted made a joke of the search. I did conjurer’s patter all the time to divert his attention. It was a nervous moment when I handed him my trousers, but he only turned the pockets out perfunctorily, just to satisfy me.

“‘I don’t suppose the rings have been stolen at all,’ I remarked. ‘They’ll turn up all right. We know what women are! Probably the lady has them in her own pocket. But it is just as well to be on the safe side.’

“‘Parfitement,’ he agreed. ‘But Monsieur must hurry if he is to catch the boat.’

“He bowed me out of the house himself.”

“A good story,” I said. “You made your point about the hereditary predatory instinct very neatly.”

“That by the way,” he replied. “The interest, to me, lies in the instance of thought transference.”

I knocked the ashes out of my pipe, refilled it, and smoked for a little, then I remarked: “We have a story like that in our family – at least the thought-transference episode tallies, and the old gentleman and the two nieces.”

“Indeed!” he said. “The same sort of thing with the kind of difference which makes all the difference, I suppose.”

“Yes. The details differ.”

“Ah! Few people have my memory for detail,” he answered, complacently.

“Memory, do you call it!” I exclaimed. “But let me give you my family version. The young man in our story introduced himself – as ‘The Honourable’ – which struck them as – er – unusual. But they got over that, he made himself so agreeable and useful. All that part agrees with your account. But early one morning he came into their room, and said he was going to Geneva to meet his wife, that they had been on their honeymoon in Paris, where he had contracted typhoid fever, that she had nursed him through it devotedly, and then taken it herself; that the doctor said it would be fatal for him in his state to remain to nurse her, therefore, when she was out of danger, he had come to the Hôtel Byron to wait till she could join him. This was rather a shock to the family because it was the first they had heard of a wife.

“He returned with the lady, whom they describe as ‘a most strange looking person, like a bad lot.’ But he avoided the party from that time on. This they thought natural seeing what the lady was like.

“One morning about three weeks later, when the uncle and eldest niece were at breakfast, he came up and said, ‘I really could not go away without saying good-bye to you. My wife and I are off to Paris by the twelve o’clock boat. I am afraid I shall not see Miss Aileen again, but I hope she will recover and be repaid for all her patience and goodness.’

“At déjeuner the eldest niece sat next to a lady who had the most beautiful diamond ring she had ever seen. The young lady noticed that she had not got it on. ‘What have you done with your ring?’ she asked. The lady was surprised, for she had not missed the ring. She thought she must have left it on her washstand when she washed her hands, and ran upstairs to see. In a few minutes she came down agitated, said she’d searched everywhere and could not find it, and must go to the bureau and give notice to the manager to stop anyone leaving the hotel.

“The young lady cannot account for it, but she *knew* on the instant that ‘The Honourable’ had stolen the ring. Going upstairs she met him coming down ready to start for the boat, and stopped him. ‘The ring is missed!’ she exclaimed. ‘Notice has been given at the bureau. Everyone is to be searched. Give it up, and say you found it.’ ‘You’ve saved me this time!’ was all he said. He ran on, gave up the ring, and caught the boat, leaving his luggage behind. It was found weighted with old music books, taken from the chapel for the purpose.

“Yes,” I added, “less detail and a difference. Not three rings, you see, accidentally seen glittering in the sun, a temptation to a desperate man, but one ring which he must have been sneaking about the lady’s bedroom to find lying on the washstand. It came out afterwards who he was and all about him. He was the reprobate son of a respectable Jew banker at Hamburg. I had my version of the story from the young lady herself, the girl with the splendid hair, Venetian red.”

I looked at him for the first time, expecting to find that he had collapsed like a balloon with the gas let out.

“Your score, old man,” he said, meeting my eyes and nodding composedly.

One Of The Olden Time

First published in *The Pall Mall Magazine*
XLVIII, no. 219 (July 1911): 67-73.

The following text is transcribed from *Variety*.
London: Heinemann, 1922, 153-171.

A STUDY FROM LIFE³¹⁵

MY house is in a quiet backwater of the town, one of a crescent of tall old houses, semi-detached, and with round bow windows that blink their dazzling eyes as the sun goes down. You come up a steep and somewhat sordid street to us, and, turning in under an archway, find yourself a hundred years away from modern lodging-houses, plastered with stucco, and little shops where the refuse from bigger shops excuses itself for being cheap with vainglorious boastings of its value; in a corner of the old world where you might expect to meet those gentlefolk of high gentility who were wont to keep up their dignity and do the honours of their social situation, duties requiring admirable self-denial and much ingenuity, on incomes, the narrow limits of which, by the conventions of the day, they were bound for shame to conceal. In front of us is an open garden, of which we each have a share. The garden is bounded by a high hedge of holly and laurel, and rhododendrons, very lovely when in flower. There are some tall trees, too, the lower branches of which we allow to be lopped with great reluctance, and only when our friends' coachmen fairly strike, because they do not like to have their hats swept off – as if a hat were worth considering when the existence of a beautiful branch is in question! In this respect our two old acacias have given us most trouble. We fought for every twig that had delighted us with its pendant white blossom in the early summer.

My share of the garden is of Chippendale plainness; just a pear-shaped lawn with four silver birches on it, and round it the drive that comes up to the house. The lawn has suffered erosion from the wheels of butchers' and bakers' carts. I wage war with their drivers, as Miss Betsey Trotwood waged war with the donkey boys³¹⁶, and have mastered such a fine variety of pointed epithets descriptive of their incapacity to handle their reins, that, rather than suffer in the sting, they shave off the corners of my neighbour's grass in their efforts to avoid mine. But that is my neighbour's business, with which, of course, I know better than to meddle.

Behind my house there is a larger lawn, with long flower borders, sheltered by high ledges and old trees, on either side and at the end³¹⁷; about enough for an active man to keep in perfect order during the summer with one day's work or so a week. But my experience is that jobbing gardeners are not active men. I had a succession of old gentlemen, who came and

³¹⁵ At the bottom of the first page of the story, in *PMG*, the following information appears: "Copyright, 1911, by Sarah Grand." On p.66 there is a full-page illustration by Hugh Thomson, with Mallory in the centre leaning on a spade looking at his employer. She is shown on the right hand side of the page, in profile, alongside a partially depicted wheelbarrow. The caption to the illustration reads: "He was a fine old fellow in appearance, a mixture of Henry VIII, in a flattering portrait, and of Falstaff, but a shorter man, slightly bow-legged, strongly built, and sturdy rather than stout." His female employer is elegantly dressed in a long dress, wears a large hat, with abundant long hair, loosely pinned up. She appears to be about forty years old and looks confident and in control. Part of the house, with "round bow windows," is depicted in the top right hand corner.

³¹⁶ *Miss Betsey Trotwood*: see Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield* (1850): she is David's great aunt.

³¹⁷ Sheltered by high ledges and old trees, on either side and at the end: "sheltered on either side and at the end by high hedges and old trees" (*PMG*).

reflected under the trees while the weeds grew up about them. A glimpse of me at my study window would set them going, but their activity only lasted while I was in sight, and the state of quiescence which succeeded would have done credit to the masterly passivity of a Hindoo Yogi³¹⁸. And I let them rest. I never had the heart to remonstrate. They were such worn old men for the most part, so gnarled and marred and bent and aching, so well deserving of a little ease at the end of their toilsome lives, had such a thing been possible for them with credit. It was not. In many instances the old age pension was either not enough or began too late in life to save them.³¹⁹ The only rest their affluent country offered them was imprisonment in the workhouse with the stigma of pauper attached, and it was to their honour that they preferred literally to work till they dropped rather than incur the disgrace. The will to work was there, I am sure, but after they had flogged themselves up and on to my ground in the early morning their little stock of strength was expended, and, in the effort to recover, standing under the old trees, they fell into a state of torpor which mercifully rendered them oblivious to the flight of time.

So I seldom stood at my study window, except by accident, and my garden became a playground for the weeds.

My neighbour's garden, meanwhile, blossomed through all the blossoming time. There was much more to do in it, too, than there was in mine, for the grass had been cut up into little beds that were always full and always well tended. I used to wonder how they managed. Then I noticed that their old gentleman was a permanent institution, who came and went at the same deliberate pace at all hours and in all weathers. He was a fine fellow in appearance, a mixture of Henry VIII in a flattering portrait, and of Falstaff, but a shorter man, slightly bow-legged, strongly built, and sturdy rather than stout. His bushy white beard and moustache concealed a mouth which I am sure was humorous, to match his shrewd little eyes. He made my acquaintance by touching his hat with a cheery "Good day," when I passed him at work in my neighbour's patch before their house. From "Good day" he got on to kindly inquiries, which showed a friendly interest in my welfare. He always spoke with an eye on my neglected demesne, a look which meant that he could have said things had he thought proper. One day I passed him in a drenching shower, with an old sack over his shoulders, digging away manfully.

"Not afraid of the wet, Mallory?" I said.

"No, miss – madame, I isn't. Watter don't damp my sperrits, and its the sperrits as keeps you goin'! A gardiner as 'asn't good sperrits is no gardiner. You'll 'ear o' shoemakers and tailors and such-like indoor workers, sittin' all day, 'avin the 'ump, but never a gardiner – as is a gardiner. Now," he stuck his spade into the earth emphatically, and looked up at me out of the corner of his eye: "did ye ever 'ear tell o' a gardiner as committed suicide, miss – madame?"

The "miss" was not a compliment to my youthful appearance, but the force of habit acquired in the service of my neighbours, who were maiden ladies. He took off his cap when he had spoken and ruffled his thick curly white hair, then clasped his beard and drew it to a point, closed the subject with a nod, and so dismissed me.

The next time I saw him I was without a gardener, my last reflecting remnant of a man having, happily for him, won³²⁰ to his long rest suddenly. Emboldened by Mallory's friendliness, I consulted him about a successor. He turned up three or four spadefuls of earth

³¹⁸ A Hindu Yogi is a wise man who spends his life in meditation and study, helping him to understand the mysteries of life.

³¹⁹ *In many instances the old age pension was either not enough or began too late in life to save them.*: not in *PMM*. The Old Age Pension was introduced in Britain, in January 1909, at the rate of 5s per week for a single person or 7s6d for a married couple with an income below £21 per annum.

³²⁰ won: "gone" (*PMM*).

before he replied. I thought he had not heard me, but that was his way, as I afterwards found. Cautious in the extreme, he looked well first before he leaped to any decision.

"I'll look after the place fur ye myself," he said at last. "You jest leave 'en to me."

"Oh, all right, thank you," I said. "That will save me a lot of worry."

"Ay," he observed, pausing in his digging to survey my ground with an air of proprietorship. "You jest leave 'en to me."

Looking upon the matter as settled beyond all need of further parley from the moment he made me the offer, he went on with his digging by way of dismissing both me and the subject. And very soon I found that I had to "leave 'en" to him. Once or twice I tried to consult with him, but that was before I knew better, and always, when I made the attempt, I found him so hard of hearing that I had to give it up. Then – I cannot tell you how he did it, but he made me understand that the garden was his. I had to literally "leave 'en" to him, and content myself with being told what he was doing or going to do in it. He came and went as it suited his convenience, giving himself a day's work or half a day's work when he chose. He was very particular about his pay. If he stayed the whole day he sent in for four shillings, but if he stayed less he took off sixpences to make it no more than his just due for the exact time he had given me. Once, before I knew him well, I ventured to say that an hour or two more or less (meaning less of course) need make no difference to his pay. Now, on looking back, I am amazed at my own assurance. The way he took the suggesting made me feel "only a woman who knows no better, poor thing. One must make allowances," in a way no other man I had insulted ever made me feel it.

Mallory was over seventy, and how he did it was a mystery, for he never seemed to be hard at work, but in less than a year he had converted my wilderness of weeds into blooming borders, my rank grass into smooth green lawns.

"You see them there long borders," he said to me one day. "I'm agoin' to plant 'emwi' flowers wot lies dormouse i' the winter. Then every spring, w'en they comes up, you'll 'avesomut t' look at."

Another day I found him surveying a ragged hedge of rambler roses. "I'll put up a rusty arch for these 'ere roses," he said. And up went the "rusty" arch – to my terror while the work was in progress, for he nailed the bark-covered poles together standing on a rickety pair of kitchen steps in a dangerous position for a man of his age and weight, hammering away with reckless vigour. Fortunately no accident occurred and the arch was a great success. He would come in to admire it himself at odd times, in the intervals of work next door.

"You'll show it to Miss Mary?" he remarked one day. "She's a jolly lady, she is!" He chuckled to himself as if enjoying some reminiscence of the lady's jollity.

I wonder what the word "jolly" conveyed to Mallory; not at all what it does to me, that is certain; but it must have meant for him something sweet-natured and good and beautiful like the lady herself, or he would not have called her "jolly."

Meeting him one day in the street, he stopped to tell me he was "comin' to look arter" me next day. He did not come for two or three days, and then he explained: "They're paintin' up at Candleyard's, an' I got a job to clear out the conservatives; that's why I not bin w'en I said."

This was not by way of excusing his absence. He did not speak apologetically at all, but conversationally, as he would have spoken if the weather had been in question. He believed in masculine supremacy and would have scorned to humble himself to a woman. The best he could do for us was to make allowances.

"Onreasonable," he labelled a neighbour of mine one day. "Women is. An' ye must let 'em go at that." He straightened his old back with a grunt and looked up at me out of the corner of his eye: "Other evenin'," he pursued; "arter I'd done my day's work, mind you, she met me" – the "onreasonable" neighbour – "an' she says, 'I got a job fur you, Mallory,' she

says, 'come at once.' 'Wot, now, miss?' I ses. 'Yes, now. W'y not?' she ses. 'I done my day's work, miss,' I ses. 'I bin 'ard at it since early mornin'. You'd work the willin' 'orse to death. Wimin does mostly. Your job'll keep ontill the mornin', I expect. I'll be fresher fur it then.' 'Ow,' she ses, 'umpy like, an' turns 'er back. Anwot does she do? She goes straight off to mother – that's my old woman; an' she says, 'That man o' yourn's 'as bin drinkin' at the public 'ouse,' she ses. An' mother she up an' she ses: 'An' whose money 'as he bin a-spendin' if 'e 'as?' she ses. You'll not get no change out o' mother. But wot made me mad was that there onreasonable ole girl agoin' and tryin' to make mischief, an' all because I wouldn't do double time fur 'er."

"And had you been at the public house?" I asked.

"As it 'appened, I 'adn't," he answered, and went on with his work.

It was election time when he told me he had been clearing out the "conservatives," and I wondered if his vocabulary were suffering from his political opinions. What those might be I could only guess. So far he had not given me his full confidence about anything. I had not earned it. Something in me was still wanting, and he let me know it. When I asked a question, which was seldom, he always eyed me carefully with a shrewd, sidelong glance, before he replied, and then he spoke cautiously, as though on guard; and, when he had spoken, he would look at me as a man who has fired a shot looks at his bird to see the effect.

I was sitting in the garden that afternoon, and he was on his knees trimming the grass borders of the flower beds near me.

"Have you voted yet, Mallory?" I asked.

"I 'ave," he answered with emphasis. "I brushed meself up a bit and went to Town 'all yestiddy." A pause, during which he sat up on his knees, and seemed to be considering the state of the garden. "I voted," he pursued. "But 'ow I voted, or who I voted for, I tells to no one."

He glanced from me, when he had spoken, to the open windows of my neighbour's house. The said neighbours were conservatives, and it is the custom of conservatives hereabouts to make their dependents pay for independence of opinion.

"You *have*³²¹ told me," I said, laughing.

"I tol' you?" he asked, sharply.

"Yes," I said, and looked up at my neighbour's windows as he had done. He caught the glance and smiled. "You needn't be afraid of losing your job here if you vote on that side," I assured him. "I am a good liberal³²², let me tell you, and the liberals³²³ are for the rights of humanity. Among the rights of humanity is a man's right to his own opinion."³²⁴

Mallory cut away hard at the grass for some minutes, and as he did so his fine old face relaxed. The next time he stopped to rest he looked at me with a cunning smile, then looked next door as if he were afraid of being caught.

"I'll not tell," I said.

"I ain't said nothing," he protested.

"No. And it wouldn't have mattered if you had – to me."

³²¹ *have*: not in italics in *PMM*.

³²² *liberal*: "Liberal" (*PMM*).

³²³ See note 322.

³²⁴ *Among the rights of humanity is a man's right to his own opinion.*: "Among the rights of humanity is a man's right to his own opinion. It's the other side of the hedge that stands for its own interests" (*PMM*). In addition to Josepha's veiled reference to her Conservative neighbours, she may well be making a topical reference to E.M. Forster's short story "The Other Side of the Hedge" (1904) where the hedge symbolises the division between progress and stagnation.

Just then the tortoise appeared on the lawn, coming at his best speed towards us, and snipping off the buttercup flowers, which had escaped the mowing machine only to proffer their burnished brightness to his greedy maw.

“‘Ere’syer crocodile,” said Mallory. “Well,” he remarked to the “crocodile,” after watching his manœuvres among the buttercups in silence for a little, “Well, old man, yaller’s your colour, at any rate.”

From that day I had more of old Mallory’s confidence, always given, however, with his eye on the next house, and each disclosure rounded off with: “It don’t do to say nowthin’, miss-madame, as, fur sure, ye know, —” which was as surely met by me with the indignant assertion that I did not know, my own delight being to say everything and to have everything in reason said to me, so long as it was civilly said. By slow degrees, however, Mallory did at last discover that I was a human being, and from that time forward he gave me his full confidence. In fact, I had it before I knew, for a certain vagueness in some of his statements made me fancy that he was withholding something; but by degrees I perceived that the vagueness was due to complexity of feeling, his head being at variance with his heart in many matters, and such knowledge as he had not comprehensive enough to prevent confusion of mind. I could never, for instance, make out anything definite with regard to his political principles, except that he voted liberal³²⁵ although he “didn’t ’old wi’ Lloyd George nor them Socialists as wants to take everything from everybody.” I ventured to point out that the two were not identical in the respect to which he objected. Such information as I could give him was invariably met with the unanswerable assertion that “you can’t take away wot belongs to a man w’outrobbin’ of ’im, and on’y a lawyer would do that.” His prejudice against Mr. Lloyd George’s profession was not to be eradicated. Respect for the landed gentry was in his blood. He was resigned to suffer under their rule, and not to be convinced that any better ordering by a professional man was possible. He saw them from their own point of view, and believed that they had done and would do the best that could be done for the country. In his liberalism³²⁶ he followed certain landowners of his acquaintance. Had he not known of liberals³²⁷ in that class he would certainly not have adopted that policy. As it was, underneath his liberalism³²⁸ he had, like the agricultural English generally, a layer of conservatism as concrete as the conservatism of the Chinese. He was suspicious of innovation of any kind, and could not perceive that any change had been for the better.

“W’en I was a young man,” he told me, “I worked for a farmer wot ’ad three hundred acres an’ eight men on ’em, an’ ’e died a warm man. Wotd’ye think ’e died worth? ’E died worth thirty thousan’ pound! An’ if I was to ’ev a farm o’ me own tomorrer, I’d do as ’e did.”

I acknowledged that the example was encouraging, but ventured to suggest that, with improved modern methods, the farm might have been made doubly productive.

“You’ll not do better nor that,” he answered, doggedly. “Dung one year an’ lime the next, an’ you’ll ’ave no disease in yer taters.”

On another occasion I found him kneeling on a piece of board, weeding the mossy path under the trees with a clasp knife. He saluted me with the hand in which he held the knife and pressed the other hand to his back as if to ease it.

“I’m a bit stiff,” he said cheerfully. “Not so young as I was, by a good bit. Wotd’ye think o’ that there London pride?” He pointed his knife at a luxuriant border in full flower. There had been a few scattered plants on that ragged border when he took possession of my garden; now there was not a break in the broad band of delicate bloom that ran the whole length.

³²⁵ *liberal*: “Liberal” (PMM).

³²⁶ See note 325.

³²⁷ See note 325.

³²⁸ See note 325.

“I think you’re a gardener, Mallory,” I replied, and was glad to see that I had said the right thing for once. Most of my observations Mallory met with a correction, but this time he chuckled.

“Well, I wasn’t always a gardiner,” he said, attacking the weeds with his knife and speaking reflectively. “I’d bin everything on a farm, ’edgin’, ditchin’, ’arvestin’, ’orsekeeper, cowman, afore I took to the gardin. An’ I stuck to the masters. One time the Union come to our village. We wasgettin’ two-an’-threepence a day then, an’ the Union says if we’d belong we’d get two-an’-sixpence. I was slack o’ work then – tho’ I never bin wot ye might call out o’ work i’ my life, on’y slack at times; an’ one day I met a farmer comin’ down street, an’ ’e ses to me: ‘You b’long to Union?’ ’eses, an’ I ses, ‘No,’ I ses. ‘I don’t ’old wi’ no Unions,’ I ses. ‘All right,’ ’e ses. ‘You come along up to my place to-morrer, an’ I’ll give ye two-an’-six.’ An’ ’e did. Eh! I never bin a day out o’ work on’yw’en I took one myself – fur weddins an’ buryins an’ that.

“But the working man has helped himself with his Trade Unions³²⁹,” I said. “There’s more to be made now than there was then.”

He was loath to acknowledge it. “There’s money an’ there’s money’s worth,” he replied. “W’en I was a young man on a farm I took twelve shillin’ a week –”

“That didn’t give you much to eat with a wife and family,” I put in.

“I took twelve shillin’ a week,” he repeated, “an’ I ’ad me cottage –”

“Rent free?”

“I ’ad me cottage at two shillin’, ye might say, an’ me two nice pigs, an’ me poultry, an’ a goodish bit o’ gardin. We didn’t ’ave no meat, on’y on Sundays a little bit of beef now and then. But we ’ad pork” – pork was evidently not considered meat – “an’ allus a side o’ bacon up chimbly, an’ taters an’ cabbages. An’ master ’e’d say many a time, ‘Ere Mallory,’ ’e’d say, ‘take that sack of taters ’omewi’ ye,’ or it might ’a’ bin turnips, an’ a cheese now an’ then from the dairy. It was good livin’, an’ we thruv on it. Me an’ my mate we mowed a ’undred an’ twenty acres o’ hay in one year, an’ I ’ad nowthin’ but bread an’ cheese an’ a glass o’ beer to work on. My mate ’e ’ad beef. But ’e wasn’t the man I was – no!”

“You get more meat now, I suppose?”

“I don’t ’old wi’ no more,” he said. “I got a pound o’ beef las’ Saturday night. That’ll last me a week. Mother she don’t eat no beef. She got a mutton chop. But wot I do relish is w’en mother bakes a bit o’ pork in pie-crust. I don’t eat no kickshaws. But, eh, I do enjoy a bit o’ pork baked i’ pie-crust. Wi’ the fat kep’ in. That’s good.” He smacked his lips and weeded very energetically on the strength of this recollection. After a little he asked me could I tell him the time? I did so.

“Arterfive, is it?” he remarked. “I thought it would be that. I’m thinkin’ o’ me tea.”

“Have a glass of beer before you go, won’t you?” I said.

“Thankee, miss-madame,” he replied, but without enthusiasm.

When I went in I called down my cook to give Mallory some beer and something to eat with it if he liked, when he had done work.

“I always give him a good tea,” the reply came up from below in a tone which made me feel the shortcomings of my own hospitable intentions. Since then I have been made to understand that a glass of beer is all very well for an occasional job, such as a parcel, coal carrying, or the dustman; but for your regular worker a good tea is the thing – if the cook likes him. For her own young man supper is *de rigueur*.

Once, after I had been ill, Mallory asked me if I had *Culpepper’s Herbal*³³⁰ among my many books. When I confessed that I had not, I could see that he formed a poor opinion of

³²⁹Trade Unions: “trade unions” (PMM).

my collection, also of me as a well-informed person, when he discovered that I had never even seen the book. "I'll lend it to you," he said. "I wouldn't lend it to everybody. I did lend it to one man, an' it got tore, an' I 'ad a trouble to get it back. But I don't mind yer 'aving it. Don't you 'avenowthin' to do wi' doctors. Doctor's stuff's no good. There's nowthin' like 'erbs. There's a 'erb fur everythin'. Doctors makes the doctors. They does their best. But it's the Lord makes the 'erbs an' puts 'em there fur us. Ye've on'y got to gather 'em. It don't matter wotyersufferin' from, low sperrits or low fever, religion, a disappointment i' love, or boils where ye can't sit fur 'em. I cured a might o' people wi' 'erbswot the doctors 'ad give up. There was my own sister-in-law, my wife's sister. She 'ad a w'iteswellin' on 'er knee, an' spent a mint o' money on the doctors, an' got no good, an' I ses to 'er 'usband, I ses, 'if so be as yer approve, I'll cure that there w'iteswellin' in no time, an' nowthin' to pay.' An' 'e ses, 'I'd be grateful if ye would.' An' I goes out an' gathers some 'emlock an' some burdock an' some watterbetteny, a good 'andful o' each, an' I boils 'em together, an' I gets a cloth an' ses to 'er, 'I'll tie yer knee up w' this 'ere' – a poultice like as ye might say. She were i' bed then an' 'ad bin days an' days. I does it several times" – impressively – "an' arter every time that swellin' 'ad mended a bit. Then one day as in I went, she opened the door fur me 'erself, an' she ses, laughing: 'You needn't come no more,' she ses. 'You've lost yer job.' 'Er 'usband 'e were that pleased 'e would 'a' paid me like as if I was the doctor.³³¹ But I don't take nothin' for curin' folk."

He paused for a little to enjoy the recollection of this success, and then continued in the same vein: "The same's good for cow's udders wot's inflamed an' they gives no milk. Yer bile the 'erbs, an' ye bathe the udder i' the mornin' wi the watter, not too 'ot, an' by night you'll get the milk. But you must take care the skin's not broke. 'Emlock'spison, but so long's the skin's not broke yer all right."

Afterwards he confessed, in the tone of a man who thinks it only honest to let you know the worst of him, that he did subscribe to the Sick Club "to please mother," and had had the doctor himself: "I'd got the yallerjarndice, an' the doctor 'e gave me a bottle of stuff. That did me no good. But I went an' got another bottle. On me way back wi' it, I met the farrier, an' 'e ses, 'Wotyer got there?' An' I tol' 'im. An' 'e takes an' tastes it, an' then 'e throws the bottle on the ground. 'That there's no good,' 'e ses. 'You come 'omewi' me, an' I'll give ye somethin' as'll cure the yallerjarnidice.' An' 'e gies me somethin' to take, an' 'e ses, 'Yew get three pennorth o' brandy at the public 'ouse an' take it 'ome an' drink it 'ot an' get into bed an' drink this.' An' I done as 'e told me. An', O my – sweat! W'en I woke i' the mornin', you'd 'a' thought my night shirt 'ad the yallerjarndice! But it cured me. I were at work next day." He paused to let this sink in, then asked me sharply, like a schoolmaster calling a dilatory pupil to attention: "Wotd'ye think 'e'd give me?" I couldn't say. "It were solendine" (? celandine).

Mallory gave me many other instances of the cures he had made with the aid of *Culpepper*, and insisted on lending me the book. I took it to please him little dreaming of the consequences. These were oppressive, for Mallory would not let me off with a glance through. He required me to master the contents, and examined me rigorously time after time

³³⁰ *Culpeper's Herbal*, by physician and astrologer Nicholas Culpeper, first published in 1653. Still in print, it lists over four hundred herbs and their uses.

³³¹ The National Health Service, offering free medical care for all, was not introduced until 1948. The National Insurance Act of 1911 marked, however, the beginning of the creation of the welfare state. First announced in Lloyd George's "People's Budget" of 1909 it came into effect in July 1912. The Act was designed to insure working people aged between 16 and 70 against illness and unemployment. All wage earners had to contribute 4d per week while employers paid 3d and the State 2d. This entitled workers to some free medical care and 7shillings per week for up to 15 weeks a year if unemployed.

to make sure that I was shirking nothing, before he would allow me to return the precious volume. I am obliged to him, however. *Culpepper's Herbal* did me good.

But, alas! I am afraid that there is one grave omission in the *Herbal*. Search it through and through as I might, I could find no cure for old age. Mallory could have told me if there were one, but I had a delicacy about asking him, for the subject was certainly personal. The weight of years! How one does ache for the power to ease the old shoulders that are bent by it! What pain it is to be forced to stand by helpless, looking on as time³³², with pitiless hand remorselessly piles up the burden, all unmoved by the dumb, pathetic endurance with which the aged bear their sufferings, the brave, hopeless resistance which they offer to their doom. Old Mallory is fighting every inch of the way. He grows every stiff in the joints, gives himself fewer whole day's work, tells me occasionally, after an absence, that he had been having a good day's rest in bed. Nothing the matter, of course. He gives me to understand that he stays in bed just for jovial self-indulgence. The garden has not suffered, but it goes to my heart to see him at work in the early morning now, when a little more rest might mean a little longer life. He pushes the mowing machine with more and more of an effort. I know by the many pauses in its busy rattling. And when he stoops he finds it hard to straighten himself again. But he will never give in. He tells me proudly that he is not entitled to an old age pension because he is making too much money.

During the winter, when the snow lay thick on the ground, he came twice a day to keep a path for me clean swept. I caught him at it once, all white with the hoary flakes that were falling, and threw up the window to remonstrate; but he only growled at the interruption, and reminded me of his promise to look after the place for me if I would leave it to him. The tone in which he spoke made me feel guilty of a breach of contract, and, when it came to pay time, he snubbed me sorely by letting me know that he had not come to do such a trifling job as sweep the path in order to pick my pocket. I did not like to point out that it was risking his life to do that "trifling job" in the wet snow and the bitter cold; it might have occurred to him that I should not have said the same to a younger man. I am more sensitive about his age, perhaps, than he is. I hope so, for it gives me a pang to think of it. When I hear the click of his spade, or am waked by the intermittent rattle of the mowing machine in the early morning, I know that a friend is near me. One of these days the poor old crippled feet, on which most of his toilsome life has been passed, will bring him here no more. That will be a sorrowful day for me. Oh, those poor pence which he loved to save me; those sixpences which he never would let me pay because he had not earned them! And, oh, the loyalty, the endurance, the independence, the old past England of it all! the England that still had a heart, that bore itself bravely, and never whined!

³³²time: "Time" (PMM).

Josepha Recounts a Remarkable Experience

Prior magazine publication not traced.

The following text is transcribed from *Variety*.
London: Heinemann, 1922, 175-190.

AN evening *tête-à-tête* with Josepha promises adventures of the mind. She is one of those rare people who face life, death, and the hereafter, in a spirit of adventure. To know, to feel – that is what she demands. Her temperament clamours to face the fact, to experience the sensation, whatever it be; and her every nerve responds to the effort. She is, that is to say, splendidly alive.

We had been engaged together one day in a little business out of which she had not come quite to her own satisfaction. She had on this occasion been the instrument, not the moving spirit by which right was made manifest; therefore the honour was to another, and she did not like it. Whenever there was a good deed to be done she desired to be the doer. That was her human weakness.

I returned with her to her house, that beautiful old house, embowered in a garden, sheltered by forest trees, defended by high stone walls, moss-grown and grey. To step into this peaceful paradise was to step out of the world of strife; yet the world was all round about, washing up to the very gates.

Josepha stopped the motor at a narrow door in the high wall which surrounded her secluded abode, and let herself in with a latch-key. She used this side door in her comings and goings that she might not encounter the servants. There were times when, to have exchanged a word with one of them, as was her kindly habit, would have cost her the lingering effect, and the lesson, of her latest experience.

The door opened into a dark, damp, underground passage, which led direct to her own sanctum. She guided me along this passage, up a narrow stairway, into her room. We emerged from behind some tapestry which concealed the door. To me there was an air of mystery in this approach, but Josepha disclaimed the intention.

“Seclusion if you like, not mystery,” she objected. “I require seclusion now,” she added. “I did not always.”

She was kneeling, as she spoke, on a great black woolly rug before the fire, drawing the embers together with the tongs to make a blaze. The only other light in the room was from a large lamp, shaded with an indeterminate hue, a mingling of purple, crimson, and black. The dim room glowed softly with this indescribable tint, a rich harmony; in effect, sedative to the grosser senses, but stimulating to the spirit.

“After living in so many places, and seeing so much of life,” I said, tentatively, “it is perhaps time you shook hands with seclusion. It must be a rest.”

“Yes,” she answered, laying down the tongs and seating herself in an easy chair, the counterpart of the one I was sitting in opposite. She held her hands out to the blaze with a little shiver.

“Won’t you draw up to the fire?” she said.

I obeyed, then waited. Her eyes followed the leaping flames. It was curiously still in that room. No one would have suspected that a turbulent city crouched so near without, like a beast of prey, stalking its victims. In the pause that ensued I became aware of a rising gale.

Fitful gusts of wind mournfully wailed in the chimney, and presently hail beat upon the windows with a crash.

Josepha shivered again. "A stormy night," she said: -

"We are the voices of the whispering wind
Which moans for rest and rest can never find,"³³³

"The sound reminds me" – I expected her to say of past tempests, but it was just the reverse – "of one place I lived in. It was summer there all the time. Not a long time. Summer times never are long. Especially when it is a summer of the soul. But that was a rich time, fertilised by a strange experience."

There was a gap between each little jerky sentence, a gap filled with thought. I waited, hoping that she would explain the connection between the wind that howled in the chimney and that summer-time to which she had alluded. I could see that she was listening to the wind.

"Voices, surely," she said – "the voices of Elementals, striving to become articulate."

"The lowest society of the other world," I remarked. "I have made acquaintance with some of them at the *séances* of disreputable mediums. They become articulate enough on those occasions!"

"The Astrals are as dangerous and more alluring," she observed.

"But they dissolve."

"Yes – the happier sort. But there are Astrals which are not released, a criminal class, chained to the scene of their offences. They are, if anything, more malignant than the Elementals. Others haunt the scene of the wrong that was done them –"

"For no particular purpose, apparently," I said.

"On the contrary, for some particular purpose, I should say, if anyone had the kindness and the courage to enquire into it."

"And the faculty," I suggested.

"And the faculty," she agreed. "Ghosts can be laid, you know, when what they desire is accomplished – beneficent ghosts. But the other kind – the Astral of the suicide, for instance. The Astral of the sane suicide haunts the spot where the deed was committed, and lures the unwary to self-destruction."

"I know," I said. "But can't they be exorcised?"

"I should think so. There is a pond in Lord Mankelon's park into which many victims have been lured. The last was an old servant, a man of excellent character and the happiest disposition, the last person in the world to commit suicide, if he knew what he was doing. I suggested exorcism to Lord Mankelon at the time, but he only laughed at me. He may be doomed to go next himself."

"How uncanny!" I exclaimed. "I am glad I don't live in a lonely spot where Things have such power. There is safety in numbers. One's fellow creatures, here in a crowded centre, guarantee immunity from disastrous spiritual adventures, at all events."

"Do they!" she answered dryly.

"Perhaps we don't mean the same thing by spiritual adventures," I answered, comfortably.

³³³ This quotation is from Sir Edwin Arnold's *The Light of Asia*, Book III, lines 23-4 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964, 33). Josepha has slightly misquoted it. It reads:

"We are the voices of the wandering wind
Which moan for rest and rest can never find."

The poem continues:

"Lo! as the wind is, so is mortal life,
A moan, a sigh, a sob, a storm, a strife."

Grand may well have expected her readers to be familiar with this work.

“Perhaps not,” she replied.

The hail swirled against the windows.

Josepha rose and rang the bell.

“We’ll have some coffee and a cigarette,” she said. “The gale does not favour sleep, and when I *am* awake, I like to be *wide* awake, however late it is,”

“Coffee and eatables were brought in on a tray by an aiguilleted automaton in black. Josepha told him the household might retire, she should want no more that night. He withdrew, bowing profoundly.

When we had had coffee, we drew up close to the fire again, lighted our cigarettes, and smoked awhile in contented silence. Josepha was thinking, I could see, and I let her think for awhile. She had always something unusual and interesting to tell if she would, but one had to wait on the mood; it could not be forced. My mind recurring to her allusion to a “summer-time,” I expected nothing uncanny that night. It was a “summer-time” of the heart, I surmised, although she had said “of the soul.”

“You spoke of a strange experience,” I said at last.

“Did I?” she answered absently. “O yes. I remember. It happened in a London flat, just an ordinary, comfortable, common-place London flat.”³³⁴

“I can’t imagine you in such surroundings,” I said.

“Can’t you?” she rejoined. “Then you can’t imagine with what pleasure I took possession of that flat. But if you had ever been storm-tossed as I had been, you would understand. To me it was a safe anchorage, a sheltered harbour after long buffeting on the open sea. My first night in it, when I went to bed, I fairly hugged myself, I was so thankful to be there – alone – with no one to interfere with me. I could come and go as I chose. My time was my own. I had nothing to fear. I was free! You can’t think what that means to a woman who had known what it was to be always at somebody’s beck and call – the kind of beck and call exercised by power without love!

“I could not sleep that first night. I kept myself awake, to begin with, making plans. Then I was disturbed by somebody walking up and down overhead; up and down, up and down, a kind of sentry-go step; stopping from time to time, as you see a sentry on duty stop at his post, to vary the monotony by looking about him; then up and down, and up and down again, interminably.

“I began to wonder what was the matter with my neighbour; what impelled him to keep moving at such an hour; what manner of man he was. I pictured him as he paced to and fro. Soldierly, I was sure; doubtless the sentry-go measure of his steps conveyed that impression. A fine looking man, and well bred. Straight nose, moustache drooping at the corners of the mouth, like a Viking’s. I perceived him clearly. I felt attracted. His voice had a special charm for me –”

“You heard him speak?”

³³⁴Gillian Kersley alerts the reader to the fact that there is a strong autobiographical element in this story. She writes about Sarah Grand’s move from Warrington to London in the early 1890s: “[s]he hated London, despised the way society lived, yearned to escape and yet felt bound by what she saw as her vocation.” She continues: “This conflict led to acute depression and, while living in a vast new block of flats ‘in one of the oldest roads in historic Kensington’, surrounded by bowls of roses and pale china-blue walls hung with quaint daggers from her ‘soldier stepsons’, she became aware of an unnatural force Repeatedly, she felt herself drawn towards the open bedroom window and impelled to throw herself out, until her doctor, ‘an advanced psychologist’, advised her to leave London immediately. Sarah then sub-let the flat and moved to Paris. While she was away her tenant had the same experience, and when Sarah heard this she checked with the porter who told her that a man and a woman had both thrown themselves to their deaths from the same window. It made an effective story – with embellishments – and one which chilled the citizens of Bath when she recounted it as *Mayoress*” (*DM*, 81.) (Kersley’s sources, here, are H.C. Black. *Pen, Pencil, Baton & Mask*. Spottiswoode, 1896 and *Bath & Wilts Chronicle*, April 1925).

“N-no. That is strange, too. I did not hear him speak, yet his voice had a special charm for me. I can’t tell you know, but I knew it – remembered or perceived it – I can’t explain.

“Although the step sounded overhead, I imagined the walker down below, somewhere in the street. I remember no more of that night. I must have fallen asleep. But I heard the step on other occasions. Not every night. At irregular intervals. I always listened for it, and I was disappointed when I did not hear it, gladdened when I did. It was companionable. I liked it to keep me awake. It was as if it were the step of someone who was thinking about me – kindly.”

She chose that last word after a moment’s hesitation, and I felt that she had substituted it for another and a stronger word, a word which would have better expressed her meaning.

“As I listened,” she proceeded, “I felt a strange expansion of the heart, a glow, wholly pleasurable – at first. I was conscious of feeling, and also, at the same time, curiously conscious that I could not think. I must have been then as the animals are, that have no power to express themselves, except with inarticulate sounds. They do not will to do, I presume. They act on some other kind of impulse. And I should have acted in the same way had the impulse come. Merlin must have been reduced to the same state by the spell that Vivien put upon him,

‘With woven paces and with waving arms.’³³⁵

I say reduced because the influence was a kind of enslavement, the power was a conquering power. Yet, oh! but I was glad to be enslaved! He drew me, drew me, doting –”

“You were in love with a footstep!” I exclaimed.

“Certainly I had not seen him,” she replied. “But – Well, I can’t explain. You must try and understand. I neither saw nor imagined. I knew him. I should have known him anywhere had we met face to face. Yet – a pointed to be noted is – that by day the attraction did not hold. Night after night I determined that I would watch for him in the morning, as he passed downstairs from his flat, but I never did. When the time came the inclination had gone.”

She paused until I asked her what had happened next.

“Next,” she replied, “one of my brothers, who had been ill, came to London to be under a specialist, and I put him up in my flat. On the night of his arrival I heard the footsteps as usual, but, for the first time, it was not companionable. It was merely a disturbance which prevented me from sleeping. My brother’s presence accounts for that. In his state of health it was important that he should sleep, and it worried me to think that he might be disturbed too. I lay listening until I could stand it no longer. Then I got up and put on a wrapper. I meant to go to the other side of the flat, where the sitting-rooms were, and read or do something until my restless neighbour stopped his sentry-go. As I opened my door at one end of the corridor my brother opened his at the other end.

“‘Anything the matter, James?’ I asked. ‘You are not feeling ill, are you?’

“‘No, I’m all right, thanks,’ he answered. ‘But some fellow overhead keeps walking up and down, and I can’t sleep. I’m going to have a cigarette in the dining-room.’

“‘So am I,’ I said.

“We went to the dining-room, and smoked and made caviare sandwiches, and had a long talk and quite a good time. When at last I returned to my room all was still.

“I did not hear the footsteps again until another brother joined us, a week or two later. On the night of his arrival there was the same sort of disturbance as on James’s first night in the flat, except that Walter, being a more energetic and irritable person, never attempted to put up with it. He was in the room next to mine, and I heard him open his door with a bang very soon after the sentry-go tread began.

“I jumped up at once and called to him, ‘What’s the matter?’

³³⁵ See note 15, where this line from Tennyson is also quoted in “The Yellow Leaf.”

“Some beast overhead keeps walking up and down,’ he answered, irritably. ‘I can’t sleep while that kind of thing goes on I’m going to smoke in the dining-room.’

“I’ll come too,’ I said.

“And I,’ James chimed in from his end of the corridor.

“Once out of earshot James had not bothered about the disturbance, but Walter was of a different disposition. He was for sifting things to the bottom, and no sooner had we lighted our cigarettes than he began to enquire about the man in the flat overhead.

“He has no business to make a nuisance of himself like that,’ he protested, emphatically. ‘You ought to have written to remonstrate. You’d better let me though, as I’m here. What’s his name?’

“His name?’ I repeated.

“Yes,’ he said impatiently. ‘The name of the tramping outsider in the flat overhead?’

“There is no flat overhead,’ I said.

“I cannot account for it, but the fact that mine was the top flat had not occurred to me until that moment. Now, too, I remembered that the roof sloped. Nobody could have been tramping overhead.

“We naturally speculated as to where the sound came from, and decided that it must be an echo from the street below, probably a solitary policeman on his beat. The weather being hot our windows were wide open, and as we all knew how elusive sound is, and how hard to place, especially at night, this explanation satisfied us.

“I never heard the step again.

“But I began to be very restless at night. Often I could not sleep. And I used to get up and wander about the flat. And always, in the stillness, I felt that there was someone stealthily following me. It was not imagination. I have never experienced the dread that creates such fancies for itself, and I was not afraid now. It occurred to me that my trailing draperies might cause the illusion, if it were an illusion, and time and again I held them up to make sure; but the soft footfalls followed me all the same.

“One afternoon, on returning from a luncheon party, I found my cook standing on the landing outside the flat, leaning on the bannisters. As it was an odd place for her to be taking her ease, I wanted to know what she was doing there.

“Is anything the matter?’ I asked.

“Nothing, ma’am,’ she answered. ‘Leastways –’ she hesitated. ‘You’ll laugh at me if I tell you, I’m afraid. But everybody’s out. And when I’m left alone in the flat like that I get scared. I can’t tell you what it is. But something scares me. The more I know that everybody’s out the more I feel I’m not alone. There’s a someone about –’

“That’s nerves,’ I said, laughing to reassure her. ‘Let’s go in now and have some tea.’

“I kept her company to encourage her while she made the tea, and we drank it together in her cosy kitchen, comfortably.

“The flats being very high, parcels used to be delivered at the back kitchen window by means of a rope and pulley. While we were at tea we heard the basket drawn up. The cook went to empty it, but lingered so long that at last I called to her, ‘Your tea will be cold.’

“She came back, but reluctantly, I thought’ and there was a strange look on her face, the look of one who has just experienced something pleasantly exciting.

“The time I waste at that lift!’ she exclaimed. ‘I never can tear myself away! I get to standin’ there lookin’ down every time, like a owl – leastways, like a bird o’ some kind. For I jest feel as if I had to spread my arms out like they was wings and fly down! Lor’, but flyin’ must be fine! I do feel that dored to it, as if I’d got to have a try!’

“You’d better not,’ I said. ‘I object. You are not the kind of bird that would alight comfortably on the ground if you were to fly down from the sixth storey of these flats.’

“I suppose not, ’m’,’ she replied, looking at me queerly.

“The season was in full swing, and I was having a really good time. Many of my best friends were in town and we made up parties and did everything together. For the moment I did not dabble in anything that bore upon mysterious happenings, or was likely to keep me in tune with the infinite. I was merely going into society, a pursuit which is eminently stultifying to the finer perceptions.

“Still, I remembered my Friend of the Footstep. When I returned to my room at night I found myself listening, involuntarily. I never thought of him at other times; but, alone, at night, I knew that he was not far off. I used to long for a sign, but he made none, and I missed him – not less but more as time passed.

“One night I started broad awake. I was standing in the middle of the room in the dark. And I knew that, before I awoke, my intention had been to throw myself out of the window.”

Her voice dropped to a whisper, as if the awful significance of her words made them dangerous.

“And what I felt,” she added, “was exhilaration. It was as if I had anticipated, in the act, an ecstasy of sensation.

“What first aroused me I do not know. I thought I heard the opening of a door. With this sound there came the certainty that I was wanted – that someone else wanted me. Someone else? That meant that I was already wanted by –? I was being drawn before that door opened. But whither? By whom? I tried to think. And with the effort came the power. Then, instantly, the sense of exhilaration left me. It was succeeded by a disagreeable sensation. I was not alarmed exactly; but I knew that there was something wrong – something threatening – something from which I must escape.

“I was quite wide awake, quite cool, quite normal – that was the immediate result of this certainty. I found the matches, lit the gas, and sat down to think. I certainly did not want to die. Life was very full and sweet just then. And in my sleep I had been within an ace –!

“Well, you know I’m a practical person. Indecision is not one of my weaknesses. In a minute my mind was made up. I determined to consult my doctor. He is one of the new school, an advanced psychologist, but of well-balanced discretion; quick to gauge the proportion in which soul and body are acting on a patient; and an adept in the fine art of suggestion. He gave me his best attention, drew from me several particulars I should have omitted insignificant, but made no comments until I said I felt unsafe.

“I should think so!’ he said. ‘The excitement of the rackets life you’ve been living has told on your nerves. You must go away at once. Don’t sleep in your flat again at present. Let it if you can. And be off to the mountains.’

“I took his advice. An agent found a tenant for my flat, an excellent lady, with several noisy children. I was glad to hear of the children. I thought they would be good for the flat.

* * * * *

“When I returned from abroad my tenant was still in possession of the flat. I called on her, and found her in a motherly body, not at all fanciful, I am sure; and certainly unacquainted with nerves.

I hoped she had been comfortable.

“‘Thank you, quite comfortable,’ she replied. ‘The flat is thoroughly well-appointed.’ She stopped short, and looked at me. I could see that there was something else she wanted to say but did not like to.

“‘If there is anything I can do?’ I said, to encourage her.

“‘Oh, nothing,’ she declared. ‘At least – perhaps you could tell me? Did you ever notice anything – peculiar – about the flat?’

“‘How peculiar?’ I asked.

“‘Well,’ she said, ‘it is difficult to explain. But I sit up late. And sometimes, too, I have to get up to look after the children, if one of them wakes, you know, or is not well’ and always, when I am moving about the flat at night, I fancy there is someone stealing after me. I hear soft footsteps and feel the movement of the air.’

“‘Might it not be your gown trailing after you on the ground?’ I suggested.

“‘No,’ she answered, positively. ‘I don’t wear things that trail.’

* * * * *

“‘On my way downstairs I met our head porter.

“‘Brinkman,’ I said, ‘I wish you would tell me about my flat – the details of the story, you know.’

“‘Which story, ’m?’ he asked, falling into the trap at once.

“‘The whole, from the beginning,’ I said. ‘What happened first?’

“‘The company don’t like it mentioned, ’m,’ he objected.

“‘Not to everybody, of course,’ I said, taking out my purse.

“‘Well, ’m, since you know so much,’ he conceded. He looked round cautiously and lowered his voice. ‘First it was that ’ousekeeper,’ he said, confidentially. She over-reached herself takin’ somethin’ out o’ that there basket-lift-thing at the scullery winder, and fell out. So t’was said at the inquest.’

“‘And next?’ I asked.

“‘Next, ’twas the Colonel ’imself. They called that acc’dent too. But there’d bin talk about ’im and that good lookin’ ’ousekeeper, and the flats shrugged their shoulders. Howsumever, the verdic’ on ’im were likewise. Acc’dental Death. They made it out some’ow that ’e fell out o’ that there winder.’

“‘Which window?’ I asked.

“‘The winder o’ your bedroom, ’m.’

“‘I never returned to that flat.’”

The Commandant³³⁶

This story was not published prior to its appearance in *Variety* (see letter from Sarah Grand to J.B. Pinker, (9 July 1921). *SSPSG.II.* 86)

The following text is transcribed from *Variety*. London: Heinemann, 1922, 193-221.

A STUDY FROM LIFE³³⁷

She stood in the hall. The boys just discharged from hospital were filing by. Each as he passed stopped to take leave of her with a shake of the soft white hand so cordially held out to him. It was interesting to note how each differed in manner. There was the shy boy, the self-possessed, the graceful, the awkward, the hilarious, the depressed, the effusive, the reserved – all the outward marks of degrees of difference in class and character. But in one respect there was no difference. Not one but in taking her hand looked as if he were at the same time fain to bend the knee. The impulse showed in shuffling feet, in actual bow, in the lingering clasp with downcast eyes searching the floor for something; the courage to show feeling probably, that being the only form of courage in which any of them were lacking. One Irishman found it in her clear blue Irish eyes and passionately kissed her hand. Her face in its setting of dark hair bound with flowing white lawn veil, was the face of a *mater dolorosa*³³⁸ that yet could smile – not a gay smile though, but very tender. She would never smile gaily again.

Some forty were going to-day. She knew them all by name and with that subtler knowledge called sympathetic insight, and had a word for each – the right word, one could see. She was apt at ticking off a man's salient point in a sobriquet – by which she called him more often than not.

“Going, Jack Daw!” she said to one. “And your pranks go with you, for the plague of my life. But I'm sorry you're going!”

“Not sorrier than I am, thank you kindly, ma'am” – he raised his eyes to the group of nurses standing behind her – “and all here.”

There was a suppressed feeling in his voice, he got the words out like an Englishman, that is to say, with an effort, and shamefacedly.

The Commandant gave him her left hand. Private Jack Daw took it in his left hand and gave painful vent to his emotion in a convulsive grasp. The left-handed shake was promoted on the spot to the rank of a joke. A little thing raised a laugh at the moment, the tension being taut. The men adored what they called “the Commandant's jolly ways,” and were always on the look out for one of her quips. The expression of her face betrayed the grief at her heart, but cheerfulness never failed her in speech. And smiles received her; laughs approved her feeblest attempts to cheer them up; eyes affectionately followed her retreat.

But the left-handed shake was inevitable if there were to be any shake at all, for Private Jack Daw had lost his right arm.

“Good luck to you, boy!” said the Commandant.

³³⁶ When Grand refers to this story in her letter to Pinker (9 July 1921), she names it “The Lady Commandant.” It is not clear why “Lady” was deleted for the book publication.

³³⁷ This is the second time in *Variety* that Sarah Grand has subtitled a story as “A Study from Life.”

³³⁸ *mater dolorosa*: The Virgin Mary is often referred to as Mater Dolorosa, or the sorrowful Mother. She is a popular subject for many artists, including Titian, El Greco and Murillo.

“Good luck it is!” he responded, waving his cap. “I’m one of the lucky ones.”

He had done his bit, given his country an arm, been discharged the service with honour, was safe in Old Blighty. Life was sweet, and, from the boys’ point of view, to be alive at all was luck – as witness the lad, who, ripped open, an arm blown off, a foot shattered, and an eye knocked out, when the doctor remarked, “You’ve had a narrow squeak of it, my boy,” answered, “Yes, sir,” complacently; “it might have been serious.”

That, at all events, was the way the boys took it here under their Commandant. Songs, laughter, and lively chatter were the rule in the wards, moping the exception. But at this particular time the weather was awful. A nerve-racking gale had been howling round the hospital for days, and a deluge of rain battering at the windows and walls and on the roofs to get in – too often successfully, as was shown in great patches of damp, and the trickle of water with which the nurses had to contend day and night. Depression had set in and must be ousted. The Commandant was sad enough herself, for she had been fighting for long hours for the life of a darling boy, and now he was sinking. Disheartened and exhausted as she was, the last of her strength had to be taxed in a valiant effort to keep the men’s spirits up to the mark. Depression meant a set-back in most cases; death in some. But she had only to show herself, and ask in a whimsical tone, accusingly, “Are we down-hearted, boys?” to evoke a reassuring, unanimous, “No!”

From ward to ward the tall, graceful, blue-clad figure glided, white veil falling back from glossy black hair, dark face animated, blue eyes favouring each in turn with a greeting so that each felt himself singled out for special attention, pretty voice with its curious carrying power making her words audible without apparent effort to the furthest bed when she wished them all to hear – a war economy of words, as she said. But it is impossible to convey her voice, her mien, her magnetism. Without these no one can realise the effect of her utterances – such trivial little things they seem, baldly repeated. It is told of the Irishman that he never opened his mouth without putting his foot in it. With her it was just the reverse. When she opened her mouth she invariably “got there” – helped by what the boys expected of her and their being so “gleg³³⁹ at the uptake.” She could clear the air with two words, as on this occasion, when she came to the huts and stopped “grouching” in thirty beds with one happy hit. The turmoil of wind and rain was bad enough in the solidly built houses which formed the main block of the hospital, but in the wooden huts which had been hastily run up in the gardens behind it was a hundred times worse – a veritable deluge. She had had to cut across an open space and was dripping when the men turned dull eyes upon her standing in the middle of the long hut. Hopeless endurance, patient and impatient, looked out of their eyes. The damp had made great maps of Europe in patches on the wooden walls; the rafters were frilled with lively drops that ran into each other, accumulated, and fell in slender streams, indiscriminately, on men and things; the rain beat a thundering tattoo on the sloping roof; the hut rocked in the gale, was isled in water. The likeliest thing they knew of to being shut up in it under the circumstances, though they had not thought of it, she suggested on the instant, bringing the whole thing together with a sweeping glance and gesture: “Noah’s ark!” she said. “Hit it off to a T!” one exclaimed, and they all revived with a laugh.

It seems nothing in the telling – so obvious! But is it not a rare gift to be able to strike the one right not for the occasion? There is nothing better for the purpose than the obvious, gilt by the apposite, and that was her gift.

One of the men had not heard of Noah’s Ark, and that set the better informed off with a roar. They came out of themselves to enlighten the “Pore chap’s” ignorance with a dozen different versions of the story, illustrated with highly coloured details, all vouched for on

³³⁹ *gleg*: A Scottish word meaning quick, particularly of understanding.

unimpeachable authority. Sister and nurses silently blessed the Commandant as she withdrew. One saw in their faces, "For this relief much thanks."³⁴⁰

It was a great pleasure to her that the boys were not afraid of her. They knew her for a stern disciplinarian; she herself never shirked and she was down on all shirkers. But she was consistent and just, and, as they said, "You always knew where you were with her," and they responded like schoolboys home for the holidays, respecting her authority, but sure of her fun. The Colonial boys were her especial delight and her trial. "They are so alive," she said. "Lambs while they are in bed, but once they are up –! It is superabundant vitality, not vice," she explained to me. "I have only had to dismiss two out of hundreds, in disgrace. But I have to pass them on as soon as I can to the military, or I should have the head of every young nurse in the hospital turned."

She was doing her evening rounds, and the word flew on before us: "The Commandant is coming!" Four Colonials in a little ward shook off home-sickness "to get one on to the Commandant" – the disgraceful young scamps. No disrespect in it though. Let any try on that sort of thing and they'd have shown you, if they'd died for it. Three of the four were in bed. The other, a small, old looking young man, his thin face lined and brown and set, all but his twinkling eyes, stood behind his bed as we entered.

"What, up, Macjolly!" she exclaimed – Macjolly was her name for him. "I *am* glad! How are you feeling?"

"Bad," he answered, with a dolorous shake of his head. "It's my left leg. I'm troubled about it."

"Why, what's the matter with it?" she asked, the woman concerned, the nurse in her on the alert.

"It's all swollen. It's bad, bad."

"And I heard you were doing so well!" she exclaimed. "What does the doctor say?"

"He hasn't seen it."

"He – hasn't – seen it!" she gasped. A patient neglected by the doctor! The colour flamed to her face, and she made for the door. "I'll send –"

She was arrested by laughter from the other beds, and knew she had been "had," but how? She had forgotten for the moment what Macjolly was in for. One of the others joyfully enlightened her: "His left leg is in France."

She turned on Macjolly "The truth is not in you," she reproached him.

"It isn't," he replied, "if my left leg isn't swollen and bad by this time, and –" he signified with a sniff and a grimace another likely effect of its condition.

"You are an incorrigible lot," she despaired of them. "Why did I promise to try and keep you here!"

"Oh, but you will! You will! We'll be such good boys!" they pleaded and vowed.

She had been under orders to send them on to a military hospital, and had put up a hard fight for them; and word had just come through that she had won. "It's all right, boys," she pardoned and reassured them. "You are not to go."

Colonial boys don't gush much, but you could see!

"Dear boys, they like being here," she somewhat unnecessarily explained to me, when we had left the ward. "It's homey, you know – not like a military hospital, irksome with rules and restrictions. They're all to be operated on again too, and dreaded a strange doctor. Ours is a jewel, and they know it."

The hospital was her own private venture at the outset. She had adapted a row of handsome houses, thrown out additional wards as they were required by having huts constructed in the gardens, collected material of all kinds, and raised money – heaven knows

³⁴⁰"For this relief much thanks": *Ham.* 1.1.6.

how, considering time, the magnitude of the task, and the limits of human endurance pitted against the inevitable opposition in small things and great that cropped up to hamper her at every turn – opposition devised by the devil, as she said, and carried out in good faith by innocent tools craftily suborned to do his bidding, as often as by his willing emissaries. Not until her indomitable spirit had surmounted every difficulty, with the result that only one patient per thousand was lost, did the powers that be grant first rank to her establishment and subsidy enough to encourage her to persevere, but not enough to ease her of her heavy burden of anxiety as to ways and means. Thereafter too they favoured her with the most hopeless cases, and saw to it that formidable red tape entanglements and nagging interference by officials who never came near the hospital should cause enough extra trouble to justify the benefits bestowed by making her office no sinecure. Working the willing horse to death was apparently what the system aimed at, and she was kept constantly under the lash, as if whips to scourge her were an integral part of the official equipment. Only the finest nature could have survived such trials unembittered, as she had survived. But she did not talk about “trials”; she called even the greatest injustice “an experience.” A loyal friend, a negligible enemy, she was too just and generous herself to be anything but impartial. But she did not take injustice lying down. Nobody ever put up a better fight for the right. She fought with discrimination, impersonally, not attacking the exponent of the principle at fault, but the principle itself. And she was essentially sporting. She fought fair and felt no ill-will towards an adversary after a round, even when she was knocked out. “Deed, then, he knows no better, poor man,” was the worst she ever said of her meanest enemy.

Her impartiality came out in her talk. Successes and failures, her own or other peoples, were recounted with the same scrupulous, impersonal exactitude. Her detachment in either case was perfect. High strung, with every nerve exposed, she responded at the moment to the touch, in laughter or tears or temper, but each outburst was a passing squall, good in its way since it relieved her, and stirred depths which would have stagnated in a too long unbroken calm. She looked at things in the large. All faults and failings, she maintained, are effects which can only be justly arraigned when the cause, however remote, is given first place in the indictment. “Society punishes the individual for its own sins,” she said. “Society collectively is the arch criminal. Sin and death are the devil and the deep sea, and it is Society in extreme cases which hounds the individual on until he stands between, with no choice but to sin or die. I see it every day in the specimens Society turns out of the workshop, in which it is always engaged in the manufacture of every variety of fault, folly, and crime, from vanity and selfishness to infanticide.”

She had reason enough to rail, seeing the monstrous wrongs she had unearthed, and the monstrous deceits that had been practised upon her. She firmly believed in the ultimate perfectability of human institutions, by a gradual process; but she had no faith in the sudden conversion of self-interested people to altruism, and officials are apt to be self-interested people. Of course, there are exceptions, new brooms that attempt to sweep clean, but wear out while the dust they raise is still beclouding their work; and the dust settles again, abuses are covered up, and things go on pretty much as they were before. Personality lasts in full force but a life-time. The Great One’s influence wanes as his body moulders in the grave. What he was is disputed; what he thought is made matter for contention; what he raised is lowered; what he constructed is broken up into fragments; and the union which was strength, no longer cemented by his will, ceases to be.

“Don’t you flatter yourself,” she warned me, “that the trouble and horror of these times is bound to change character in the ruck of mankind. There is but one general effect of the war: it has given those who want it – opportunity. How they use opportunity depends on what they were; their objective will be the goal of their old innate desires. In one case opportunity means license; in another, it makes possible a noble vocation. I see it here in the

wards. And I was sanguine enough myself. I was sanguine enough, for one thing, to expect to have in my nurses an army of potential nuns, devoted to duty, delighting in the sacrifice of self. And what have I found, my grief! All sorts, a mixed pack, here for mixed motives, the mixture complicated in individual characters by diverse incompatible ingredients. Oh, I could tell you of saintly women who are devils of selfishness, and of sinners who play the blessed part of peace-makers; of angelic tempers concealing scandalous deceits; of capable mischief makers, whose value as nurses is discounted by the broils they foment; of homely bodies who can be trusted to do work they have been taught with machine-like accuracy, but beyond that are useless, and their opposite, the clever nurses with plenty of initiative, who rise to an exciting occasion, but shirk monotonous duties when they can. And then there is the exclusive fine lady, true to type here as in her own house, who expects all the dirty work to be done for her by the "lower orders" in hospital life, and would have discipline applied only to them, while she is left at liberty to pose gracefully for admiration, and do any little decorative thing she may choose at odd times, as she feels inclined. She is of the climber kind as a rule, a half-breed. Pity the sorrows of a lone Commandant, who is responsible for everything, and at the same time dependent on her staff! But only give me a good matron! And that is at the bottom of all my difficulties – I never know whom to trust, or what I have got hold of until I try her, though I take the utmost pains to discover her character and previous career before I engage her. But I am not thorough, God help me! or I should enquire into the character and previous career of the people who reply to my enquiries. The war has not made scrupulous the unscrupulous who are by way of pushing pets of their own into good billets, regardless. One exalted lady sent me as matron, with the highest recommendations, a quite impossible woman – a lady by birth, undoubtedly, but –! I first caught sight of her in the wards, strolling about with a cigarette in her mouth – not intent upon the wounded; not thinking of them at all, but of herself; desiring them as men to be intent upon her, if you know what I mean. She made me sick. But I could not dismiss her on suspicion for an attitude. She gaily pleaded that smoking was not a sin, that tobacco was one of the kindly fruits of the earth, so as in due time we might enjoy it. I had her there. Was it due time in the wards, where she should be setting an example of diligence, continence and sobriety? Oh, she was plausible! She confessed with regret that it was an error of judgement, force of habit, that sort of thing, and vowed it should never happen again. I should have been on my guard against impeccable manners and hereditary tact. My intuition was against her, but the charm prevailed.

"The next thing – I had had to go away and leave her in charge. In my absence she had had a parcel of bathing dresses sent on approval, and I returned in time to find her trying them on in the corridor for the men to decide which suited her best." The Commandant laughed silently. She had a tender place in her heart for scamps, male and female. "But think of the consequences of leaving such a woman in charge," she mourned. "It is a trying experience in any case for my very nice V.A.D girls and workers, jealously guarded girls as a rule till they are launched into hospital life, where the standards are all upsetting. Many of them were carried away by excitement and fun of life under such conditions, and some had their first experience of standing out against what they felt to be wrong. Of course things had gone from bad to worse with the discipline. Imagine this with first line cases constantly arriving and such tragedies of shattered bodies to be helped! I took good care that my next matron should be one of a different stock. I had learnt to beware of wily, dishonest, intriguing great ladies, bad luck to them! The lives of hundreds of men had been endangered, the sufferings of many of the maimed prolonged, and the recovery of all retarded by a certificate, false in every particular, callously given for the sole purpose of securing a paying billet for a poor relation. Criminal? Yes, I should think so! And so I told her. She doesn't seem to have liked me since."

The Commandant's doctors had not all been "jewels" by any means. Efficient or inefficient, they were arbitrarily sent to her and as arbitrarily removed. Sometimes she knew more than her medical man, and had the maddening trial of seeing mistakes made which she could have prevented had her position not imposed silence upon her. But red tape was no more to her gallant spirit when her blood was up than withes³⁴¹ to Samson's strength³⁴². There were occasions when she went for Red Cross, Army Medical Department, and War Office, "the whole boiling in a bunch," and stunned them all by dint of venturing. Ignorance, intrigue, jealousy, all mean motives, she valiantly attacked, and if ignorance, intrigue, and jealousy still conspired, it was not because she had not dared to expose them.

Medical conservatism was one of her bugbears. There was the case of Sergeant Longshanks (her name for him). He had had one leg terribly burnt. For seven months he had been hauled about from one hospital to another, the only apparently reason being to shift the responsibility when each change of treatment proved less efficacious than the last. Finally, when his case appeared hopeless, the onus of losing him was imposed upon our Commandant. In not one of the previous hospitals had ambrine been tried.

She visited the patient on his arrival with her then medical officer, an incapable against whom rebellion was seething in the breast of every woman in the hospital, from herself and the matron down to the youngest probationer. He casually inspected the sloughing limb, hummed and hawed, then observed, "Well, I'll think of something to do for him tomorrow." And there wasn't a moment to be lost! "Do you mind," asked the commandant, "if I begin at once to prepare the wound with –" and she named the medicaments. "Mind? Certainly not, not at all," he answered, in a tone of relief. "Then, with your permission, I should like to try ambrine³⁴³," she ventured. "Oh, certainly – a new quack thing, isn't it?" "They've established a hospital outside Paris³⁴⁴ for the treatment of burns with ambrine, with splendid results," she said. "I ran across myself to see it used. But, of course, if you are afraid –" "Afraid!" he blustered, "what do you mean?" "They I may try it," she concluded.

Sergeant Longshanks, brought in in a dying state, made good under the Commandant's treatment from the first, and recovered without a single set back. "I hadn't even to resort to my own peculiar in his case," she said. "In bad cases I watch for the moment when it is that or nothing, and apply it on my own responsibility if my M.O. is impossible. If I am unsuccessful I take my wiggling humbly; but in nine cases out of ten it answers, and then what is a wiggling? 'My own peculiar' consists of father or mother – particularly mother – or wife, or sweetheart."

She opened the door of a ward at the end of a long passage.

"It is touch and go here," she whispered.

The stillness in this ward made it startling to find it had its full complement of men. Some were sitting up, but most of them were in bed. Their usual distractions, knitting, embroidery, jig-saw puzzles, writing materials, books, were at hand but neglected; all occupation was suspended. Every eye sought the Commandant as she entered; every face was bright as though each had a private right to be glad. In the corridor, with none to observe, discipline had been relaxed and anxiety had triumphed in the expression of her face, but all

³⁴¹ *withes*: Willows or osiers – long flexible shoots used for basketmaking.

³⁴² *Samson's strength*:

³⁴³ *ambrine*: "Many soldiers suffered burns for which the traditional treatments were fairly simple and nontoxic but not optimum. ... A much-heralded new treatment called 'the ambrine treatment' was developed by Dr Barthe de Sanfort. Ambrine was a liquid preparation of paraffin and oil of amber ... resulting in less scarring and deformity than in the past." *Personal Perspectives: World War 1*. Ed. Timothy C. Dowling. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2006, 182.

³⁴⁴ *hospital outside Paris*: Dr Barthe de Sanfort worked in the Hospital St. Nicholas, 66 rue Ernest Renan, Moulineaux, in the south-west suburbs of Paris.

trace of it vanished as she opened the door, and she appeared as usual to her boys, calm, confident, encouraging. With their eyes they directed her to a bed in the corner, on which a handsome lad lay prone. A young girl sat beside him, her fair head resting on the pillow close to his dark one, his hand clasped in hers. Both were fast asleep. It was late afternoon then, and the girl had sat there since the evening before – the Commandant’s “own peculiar,” imported and administered as a forlorn hope.

“Sleeping!” she just breathed.

“These two hours,” the man in the nearest bed whispered, but he held up two fingers instead of uttering the word.

The Commandant glided down the long ward, and stood for a little beside the bed. Then she knelt down, softly gauged the boy’s temperature with her hand, and felt his pulse. The man in the next bed looked on, keenly interested, those further off craned forward to see. Suspense was in the air. The Commandant rose from her knees. “He’s through. I am thankful.”

The men who saw her face as she hurried from the ward exchanged sympathetic glances.

“It is that kind of thing that breaks me up – the relief,” she apologised to me, in the corridor. “You must see my poor darling boy from ‘down under.’ Not one he loves within reach. I *have* fought for him. And I’m beaten, I’m beaten.”

She had to put up a fight for herself, standing there, eyes shut, hands clenched, nerves taut, in a mighty effort to recover her composure. She might have been thought too emotional for her office, when, as now, the woman in her got the better of the nurse, but the nurse was bound to have the best of it on occasion. And it was an advantage to her in her work that her sensitiveness had not been blunted. A woman’s intuition is surer and swifter than reason or logic, but it is a delicate faculty, easily deflected and hard to re-adjust. A nurse without sympathetic insight may have technical skill, but she is blind of the eye which would perfect her work. The finishing touch is psychological, and the heart is the lamp which enlightens the head. But the heart exacts a price for its service, and our Commandant paid it in grief.

Her boy was in bed, supported by a pile of pillows, his beautiful face only a shade less white, and strangely animated. His blue eyes welcomed her, while with one thin delicate hand he made a futile effort to smooth his mop of golden hair. In his other hand he held one of the stout sticks with a crook which the wounded use. The sleeve of his nightshirt falling back exposed an arm like a stick of ivory. With a flourish of the stick he upset his pillows. A one-legged man who was seated beside the fire limped to the bedside with the help of a crutch: “Steady, sir,” he said, “while I make things ship-shape,” and balancing himself on his crutch he skilfully rearranged the pillows. The boy threatened him with the stick by way of thanks.

“He keeps us all in order with that stick,” the one-legged man explained to me.

“He’s hard on us,” said the veteran in the next bed. “I’d call him a tyrant if I dared.”

“What’ll it be when he commands the regiment?” yet another wanted to know.

It was all a game to amuse the boy. The men he could not see looked in no mood for play.

“Aren’t they good-hearted, our boys!” the Commandant exclaimed, on the way to the next ward. “You saw them quiet as mice for hours to save a comrade’s life. These last tend that boy, amuse him, comfort him day and night. It is speeding the parting guest. We don’t tell them when there is no hope, but they know. They always know. Oh, their cheerfulness, their patience, their brave uncomplaining acceptance of the cruellest fate. And their kindness to each other!” Tears welled up in her eyes. “The way those that can only just hobble, and often enough only with pain, wait on those that are helpless! Talk of Christ in man! Christ did not sacrifice Himself for others more absolutely than they do – most of them – and all unconsciously too. They’ve no notion that there’s any merit in it – Don’t run over me,

Dawson!” This to a man who came at her blindly, his dilated eyes staring into vacancy. He stopped at the sound of her voice and brushed his hand back over his hair. She grasped the lapels of his coat and shook him playfully. “Where are you?” she asked. He looked at her vaguely, then looked again into vacancy and muttered, “I see him running – with his head off.”

“Look at me, dear boy,” she said. “Look at me and listen to me. It is *your* wound that was painful. He did not even hear the explosion of the shell. He had not even a moment of fear. He felt nothing, nothing on this earth. The next thing he knew he was with the blessed angels in heaven, one of them, in glory everlasting.”

“But he ran –”

“His poor body ran on like a machine till its force was spent, because he was not there to control it.”

“If I could believe that!”

“You must make yourself believe it, because it’s the truth. Remember you promised to think it and say: ‘He felt no pain. He knew nothing at all about it.’”

“He felt no pain. He knew nothing at all about it,” the boy repeated slowly several times and gradually his countenance cleared. “Of course not,” he said. “I understand. It was so sudden. Over in an instant. He felt no pain. He knew nothing at all about it.”

He passed on, dwelling intently on the phrases as he repeated them. The Commandant stood looking after him: “That’s better,” she said. “He’s trying to help himself. When they begin to do that they’ve turned the corner. His chum charging beside him had his head taken off and ran fifty yards before he fell, and ever since that poor lad has seen him running, and will see him so long as he thinks he was in conscious agony. I go over it with him again and again, holding him down to the point – that he felt no pain – and now at last I hope the suggestion has begun to do its work. Shell shock!³⁴⁵ People imagine that their nerves are racked by the infernal din of battle, but I know better. It is what they have seen and what they have done that shatters them. Four men were brought in the other day unwounded but doddering like old men with the palsy. They had been set to prepare boiling oil for the enemy, and had seen its effect; and one of them told me that it came over them all at once, what they were doing, devil’s work. That finished them. Another is haunted by the shriek of a man he bayoneted –”

She broke off, ran up a flight of stairs, stopped at a door, and with her hand on the handle, whispered elliptically: “Two new men here, just brought in with a convoy straight from the battle field. In the last push. Wanted to be together. Put them in a small ward, just holds two. We welcome the wounded with tea, then bath and bed, and a cigarette to top up with, when they are equal to it. Must make their acquaintance.”

This small ward at the top of one of the houses was lighted by two dormer windows, one looking west, one south. The white roof sloped but was not low. The walls were distempered a cheerful buff. A few good landscapes in water-colour hung on them. Vases of flowers decorated the mantelpiece. A dark green cork carpet, warm to the feet, covered the floor. Bedspreads enlivened with patterns of flowers covered the two beds, which stood side by side. In one of them was a typical old soldier, a regular, sergeant of engineers, a middle-sized, broad-shouldered, strongly-built man, with a heavy chestnut moustache, and no “grouser,” as was evident at a glance. Intelligence surmounted the difficulty of expression in a language with the grammar and pronunciation of which he was but imperfectly acquainted,

³⁴⁵“*Shellshock*”: Shellshock was first recognised as a mental condition during the First World War. It was first named by Charles Myers in “A Contribution to the Study of Shellshock,” *The Lancet* 1, 1915, 316-20. Much was subsequently written on the subject, including Lewis R. Yealland’s influential *Hysterical Disorders of Warfare* (1918).

although it was his own. The other case was a tall, slight, singularly handsome lad, with great grey eyes, black hair, and delicate, bloodless face.

"I just looked in to see if you were comfortably settled," said the Commandant.

"Comfortably settled, ma'am?" the sergeant responded cordially. "I calls this comin' 'ome!"

He was wounded in the chest and leg, the boy's right arm was shattered – "three days ago. It's been pillar to post ever since," he said casually.

"Yes, 'e was going on eighteen hours gettin' me to the dressin' station from the gory field of battle," the sergeant took up the tale, with keen relish of their sufferings in the retrospect. "'E saw me lyin' in the mud, and 'ooked on to me. Me 'avin' on'y one leg and 'e on'y one arm, as you might say, we kep' tumblin' down, me pullin' 'im, but 'e wouldn't let go, jaw 'im as I would, bein' a sergeant. Gord! we'd lie there in the mud, me swearin' at 'im for disobedience of orders, an' 'immakin' believe sarcastic as I was off my chump. Larf! I tell you, w'en I wasn't groanin' and swearin' I was larfin' fit to split, an' the whizz-bangs goin' all the time. An' becos we got ourselves in the doctors took no particular notice of us, an' you'd not wonder nor blame 'em if you'd a' seen wot they'd in 'and. Up to their eyes in gore they was. We was set down for the convalescent camp, but my young friend 'e mutinied, so to speak. 'Come, 'ero of the stricken field,' 'e ses, an' shouldered me, me not knowin' wot 'e was up to, an' 'opped me along on me one leg straight to the P.M.O. 'imself, an' didn't say nothin' – jest stripped me leg an' 'is own arm to show wot we'd got, an' stood there 'oldin' me up. Peppery old gentleman – the P.M.O. Gord! if you'd seen 'im! Purple, that was 'is flag. It was me asked 'im if we was to carry on to the convalescent camp, an' 'e blamed our eyes an' condemned our souls, an' sent us back to Blighty.'

From a revised official edition of this ingenious narrative we learnt that the boy, Private Blank Blank, had been awarded the V.C. for his gallant rescue of Sergeant Old Style under heavy fire at imminent risk of his life, when badly wounded himself. That V.C. was the surprise of his life, so little was he conscious of anything remarkable in the proceeding. Indeed, nobody would ever have heard of it but for Sergeant Old Style's sense of humour.

* * * * *

At a moment when no one expected it there came a call on the telephone from Head Quarters to the Commandant to bring in a convoy of wounded. The station where the train was to be met was fifteen miles from the hospital, and there were twenty minutes to make ready and cover the distance. "Just like them!" cried the Commandant, the naturally impatient, combative woman ousting the nurse the moment she was free of restraint outside the wards.

"My motor!" She flew to her quarters. "Rugs, pillows, cigarettes, matches, brandy," – nothing was forgotten. "Here, pile them up on the pavement. Oh, look at the time! Ten minuets to do fifteen miles through streets and uphill most of the way. Where's my motor! The train's sure to be punctual if I'm late." The telephone bell whirred frantically. She sprang to the receiver. "Do I want ambulances!" she screamed. "Don't I want ambulances! And stretchers! They should be there by this time. How am I to land stretcher cases without stretchers and ambulances? Oh, you duffers, have you all lost your heads?" Thus over the telephone she objurated no matter what high official in the far-off camp.

"Five minutes and no motor – my poor boys! They'll be laid out on the platform, in the cold – oh! here it is, *at last!*"

She began to fling things into the car before it had stopped, at the same time loudly rating her chauffeur. Encompassed by a mountain of rugs, pillows, and what-not in the way

of comforts for the wounded, she gave the word, “Off! Drive like mad! and pray, pray, *pray* that the train may be late!”

Headlong speed restored her composure. “There’s a time to rage and time to be cool,” she reviewed her outburst. “When you want the slow coach to move, you must rage. I made them buzz that time! But we don’t often have such a muddle as this,” she did justice to those responsible in the present instance, “and if only the ambulances are there I’ll forgive them.”

The floods were out. Parts of the way were shallow lakes through which the motor splashed, sheets of water flying from the wheels on either side. The chauffeur bending to his wheel shook off the drops like a water-dog. The Commandant covered one heap of pillows and rugs with her waterproof, and spread herself out over the other to keep it dry. Her white veil fluttered back from her glossy hair, colour mounted to her cheeks, her eyes sparkled, to herself she chanted:-

“’Tis a glorious race, a rage against time,
A thousand to one we win it!
Look at those flitting ghosts,
The white-armed finger posts!
If we’re going to the eight of an inch, I say,
We’re going a mile a minute!”³⁴⁶

The floods crossed, hedgerows flew by, viridian meadows slid into golden cornfields bespattered with blood-red poppies: “The colour, the horrid colour,” she noted, “I see too much of it!” Heather purpled the interval to the woods; then gorgeous autumn foliage of trees, of battalions of trees, canopied the rest of the road to the brow of the hill. Below, towers and spires dominated an ancient city. “Another three minutes, and we’re in!” she exclaimed. “Is that the train, that steam? Pray heaven not!”

A block at the city gate, crowds in the narrow streets. Wrath and despair, silently contained, but visible in the clenched hands and puckered brows. Then the station yard and the car rocking and jolting in across iron rails amid railway trucks and engines that puffed and screamed at it as if resenting the intrusion of an impertinent busybody.

“Good!” said the Commandant coolly. “I feel better. The ambulances have not arrived, but the train is not in either. Get the things on to the platform, and stand by with the pillows to slip under the boys’ heads as the stretchers are brought out – if there *are* any stretchers. I’ll just run over to the telephone and – and make things pleasant for the authorities in camp.”

A crowd on the platform, and the tall, graceful figure of the Commandant cleaving it as a bird cleaves the air, her white veil fluttering. She was in her element establishing order, on the spot in every sense of the word. Presently the stretcher bearers lined up, the ambulances were in. No confusion now, but a sense in the air as of an impending great event.

“Hospital train!”

No one could say who breathed the words, but each ear caught them, and the heterogeneous crowd, marshalled by their import, fell into line and stood to attention, as though at the word of command, a triumph of good feeling. They waited in silence, well knowing what was to come. Hearts were bursting with grief in many breasts. It was one of those long minutes crowded with impressions which bite deeper into the memory than the

³⁴⁶“’Tis a glorious race ... mile a minute”: from Henry Cholmondely-Pennell, “The Night Mail North” in *From Grave to Gay: A Volume of Selections from the Complete Poems of H Cholmondeley-Pennell*. London: Longman, Green and Co., 1884, 43. Grand uses part of this quotation in “Eugenia,” when Eugenia and Brinkhampton are racing on the beach on horseback trying to beat the incoming tide.

happenings of ordinary years. Many faces, only glimpsed, were never to be forgotten because the key to their varying expression was contained in the secret feelings of the observer. There was curiosity in all, but variously tempered. In the higher kind it was curiosity refined by pained anticipation' in the commoner sort it was exalted by the thrill which fathers a cheer. Only a minute, and then wreaths of white smoke, and the roaring of the iron monster, whose dark breast and throbbing flanks were as if animated by human feeling for what he drew, so imperceptibly swift, so carefully smooth was his oncoming The crowd grew tense as the Red Cross, repeated and repeated and repeated, flashed by. Then, through windows and doorless apertures with bars across on either side of long aisles, prone and helpless, in narrow berths one above the other, a tragic freight, dimly perceived at first as coach after coach passed in rapid succession (was there no end to them?) but seen soon enough distinctly, as the long train slowed down to a standstill – exhausted, disfigured, blinded, broken, our boys – our dear, dear boys.

No hailing of heroes at this moment; only wringing of hands. Yet no king in his glory, welcomed with shouts, was ever honoured with a royaler reception, a finer tribute of love and respect than these, in the spontaneous unanimous greeting which was silence to the ear, grief to the eye, a wave of deep feeling bursting in every breast.

Only a few minutes to move them gently, tenderly, with life at stake; yet there was no confusion, no sign of haste apparent. Stretcher bearers seemed to move mechanically, the Red Cross stirring the stream of khaki. Wherever she could be of use was the Commandant, a blue bird heartening duty, inspiring hope, giving comfort, exchanging familiar greetings with Red Tabs, jumping professional “tips” in regard to special cases out of mighty, reticent M.O.’s. Out of the train by a stretcher, easing an aching head with a pillow; into the train again superintending the removal of a dangerous case – never in the way, never out of the way; and the magical right word for ever ready – as in the case of one fastidious fellow, a walking case, whose tunic was covered with blood from a wound in the throat. He descended from the train alongside the Commandant, grumbling at the man who helped him, because he “had not been cleaned up fit for a lady to see.” She turned on him her brave, friendly eyes. “Robin Red Breast,” she called him.

What was there in the two words, but an imperfect analogy, to stop a man worrying and inspire life-saving pride in a blood-stained tunic? Enough, apparently. An order of merit bestowed by a queen could not have caused greater gratification. She was so alive herself – that was her secret. She had life and to spare, and gave and gave, inexhaustibly.

“Robin Red Breast, ahoy!” a casual naval man in the crowd hailed him, making ready to lend a hand, brown chest bare, knife hanging from white lanyard round his neck, blue trousers flopping wide about his feet, “Endurance” emblazoned in letters of gold on his cap, clean as if sterilised. “Ere, lean on me, matey. I’ve got yer.” And the strong arm bore up the tottering figure. “The ambulance, is it? Gangway, there!” He introduced his man to the onlookers: “Robin Red Breast, the ’ero,” and Robin Red Breast cocked his woollen cap on his bandaged head and played up – comic relief, a grateful interlude.

Next, one after the other, the remains of three splendid boys were lifted from the train and borne way on stretchers, and the Commandant was ready again with the magic word, whispered to each in turn. It opened the eyes of the first with a gleam of pleasure as she bent over him; it set a smile on the lips of the second; it brought hoarse words to the lips of the third: “Blighty! Wave my cap for me, nurse. I’ve got no arms.”

“Three of them with no arms, oh, my boys! My poor, darling boys!”

She had to hide emotion that time behind a truck piled conveniently high with luggage.

The engine snorted, doorways were being barred, the haggard men still left in their berths, who had been cheered with the hope that at all events the dolorous journey was over,

resigned themselves to be carried on; but there was one more case for the Commandant, a bad one. As they lifted him out of the train she stood by, pillow in hand ready to slip under his head – a young, young head, the damp curly locks hanging low in his forehead. “Och hone, Mother of God!” Articulate pain. Stooping, she answered in his own soft brogue, “Mother of God, indade, preserve us! Is it bad ye are, Pat asthore?”

The dark blue Irish eyes opened on her. She caught the words “Oirish” and “lady.”

“Sure, and I’m Oirish, Pat, my son, and it’s a proud woman I am to say it this day. God bless Oirland!”

A flickering smile fought pain on the lad’s face.

“Hould me hand, ma’am, if ye plaze, and I’ll see it again. God bless Oirland!”

Clasping his hand in hers, she gave the word, “Gently!” and fell into step with the bearers.

Slowly, it might have been to the beat of muffled drums, they bore him past the silent spectators towards the ambulance. Half way she halted them. “Och hone! he has slipped away from us entirely, the beautiful boy,” she mourned. “Mother of God, receive him!”

The smile was still sweet on his face when the Commandant reverently covered it.