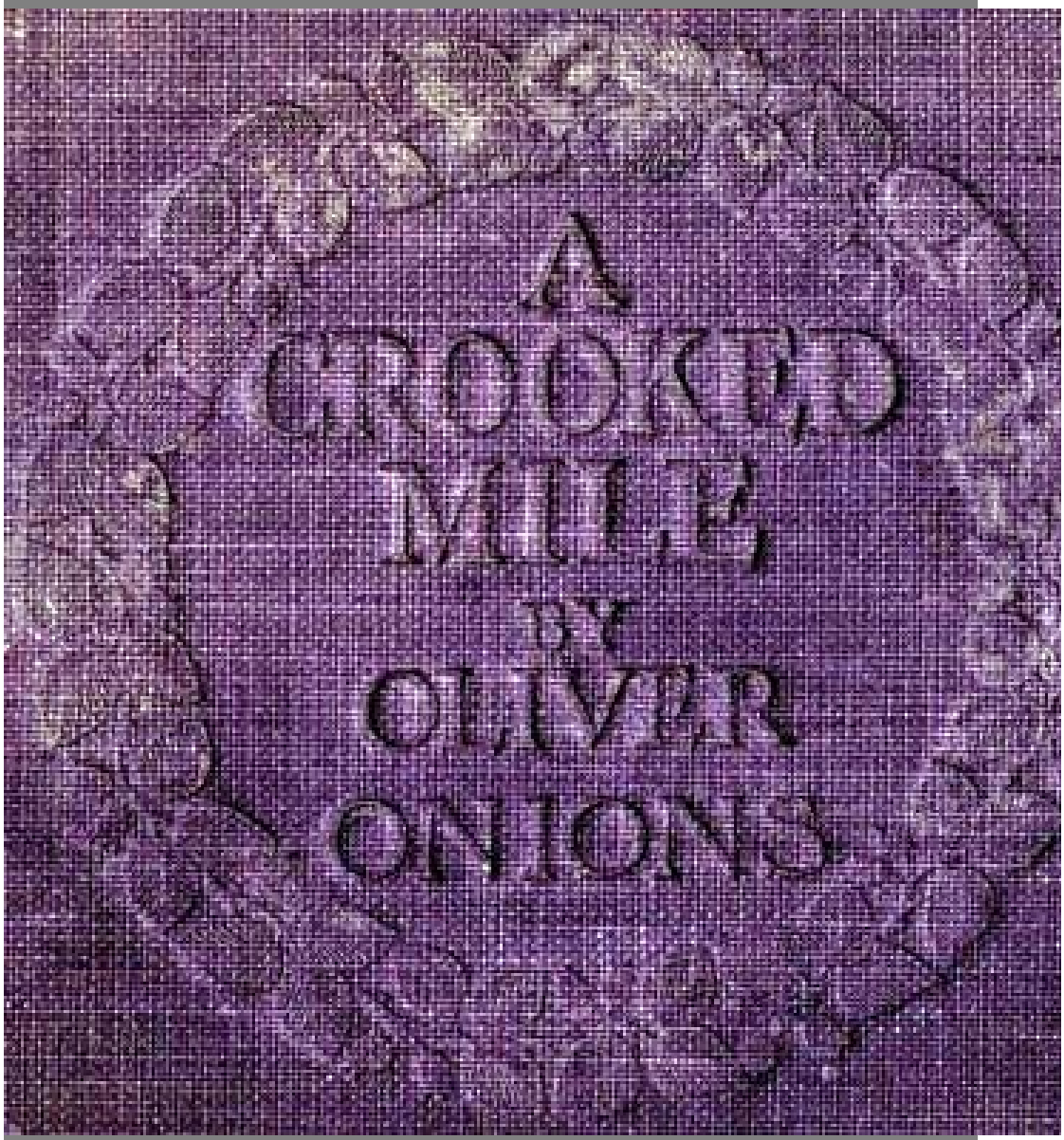
A CROOKED MILE

BY

OLIVER ONIONS


A
GOOD
MEAL
BY
OLIVER
ONIONS

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A CROOKED MILE

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE EXCEPTION

GOOD BOY SELDOM

THE TWO KISSES

A CROOKED MILE

BY

OLIVER ONIONS

AUTHOR OF "THE TWO KISSES"

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I

THE WITAN

Lady Tasker had missed her way in the Tube. She had been on, or rather under known ground on the Piccadilly Railway as far as Leicester Square, but after that she had not heard, or else had forgotten, that in order to get to Hampstead by the train into which she had stepped she must change at Camden Town. Or perhaps she had merely wondered what Camden Town supposed itself to be that she should put herself to the trouble of changing there. With the newspaper held at arm's length, and a little figure-8-shaped gold glass moving slightly between her puckered old eyes and the page, she was reading the "*By the Way*" column of the "Globe."—"All change," called the man at Highgate; and, still unconscious of her mistake, Lady Tasker left the train. She was the last to enter the lift. But for an unhurried raising of the little locket-shaped glass as the attendant fidgeted at the half-closed gate she might have been the first to enter the next lift.

Only from the policeman outside Highgate Station did she learn that she must either take the Tube back again to Camden Town or else walk across the Heath.

Now Lady Tasker was seventy, and, with the exception of the Zoo, a place she visited from time to time with troops of turbulent great-nephews, the whole of North London was a sort of Camden Town to her, that is to say, she had no objection to its existence so long as it wasn't troublesome. It was half-past three when she said as much to the Highgate policeman, who up to that time had been an ordinary easy-going Conservative; by five-and-twenty minutes to four she had made of him a fuming Radical. He was saying something about South Square and Merton Lane. Lady Tasker addressed the bracing Highgate air in one of those expressionless and semi-ventriloquial asides that, especially in a mixed company, always made her ladyship very well worth sitting next to.

"Merton Lane! Does the man suppose that conveys anything to me?.... I want to know how to get to Hampstead, not the names of the objects of interest on the way!"

The newly-made Radical told her that there might be a taxi on the rank, and turned away to cuff the ears of an urchin who was tampering with an automatic machine. It was a wonder that Lady Tasker's glare, focussed through the gold-rimmed glass on a point between his shoulder-blades, did not burn a hole in his tunic.

Taxis at eightpence a mile, indeed, with the house at Ludlow already full of those children of Churchill's, and three of Tony's little girls eating their way through the larder in Cromwell Gardens, and young Tommy, Emily's boy, who had just "pulled" his captaincy, arriving at Southampton in the "Seringapatam" on Saturday with another batch for her to take under her wing! Did people suppose she was made of money?...

The policeman's tunic was just beginning to scorch when Lady Tasker, dropping the glass, turned away and set out for Hampstead on foot.

She might very well have been excused had she omitted to return Mrs. Cosimo Pratt's call. Indeed she had vowed that very morning that nothing should drag her up to Hampstead that day. But for twenty times that Lady Tasker said "I will not," nineteen she repented and went, taking out the small change of her magnanimity when she got there. And after all, she would be killing two birds with one stone, for her niece Dorothy also lived somewhere in this northern Great Karroo, and unless she got these things over before the "Seringapatam" dropped anchor on Saturday there was no knowing when next she would have an hour to call her own. As she turned (after a brush with a second policeman, who summed her up quite wrongly on the strength of her antiquated pelisse and trailing old Victorian hat) down Merton Lane to the ponds, she told herself again that she was a foolish old woman to have come at all.

For the Cosimo Pratts were not bosom friends of hers. True, they had been, until six months ago, her neighbours at Ludlow, and for that matter she had known young Cosimo's people for the greater part of her life: but she had not forgotten the hearty blackguarding the young couple had

got, any time this last two years, from the rest of the country-side. Small wonder. What else did they expect, after the way in which they had made farm-labour too big for its jacket and beaters hardly to be had for love or money? Not that Lady Tasker herself had seen very much of their antics. Great-nieces and nephews had kept her too busy for that, and she was moreover wise enough not to believe all she heard. And even were it true, that, she now told herself, had been in the country. They would have to behave differently now that they had let the Shropshire house and had come to live in town. They could hardly dance barefoot round a maypole in Hampstead, or stage-manage the yearly Hiring-Fair for the sake of the "Daily Speculum" photographer (as they had done in Ludlow), or group themselves picturesquely about the feet of the oldest inhabitant while that shocking old reprobate with the splendid head recited (at five shillings an hour) the stories of old, unhappy, far-off things he had learned by heart from the booklets they had printed at the Village Press. No: in London they would almost certainly have to do as other people did, and Shropshire, after its three years of social and artistic awakening, would no doubt forget all about the æsthetic revival and would sink back into a well-earned rest.

It was a Thursday afternoon in September, warm for the time of the year, and a half-day closing for the shops. Had Lady Tasker remembered the half-holiday she certainly would not have come. She hated crowds, and, if you would believe her, had no illusions whatever about the sanctity of our common nature and the brotherhood of man. She would tell you roundly that there was far too much aimless good-nature in the world, and that every sob wasted over a sinner was something taken away from the man who, if he was a sinner too, had at least the decency to keep up appearances. And so much for brotherhood. Great-nephewship, of course, was another matter. Somebody had to look after all those youngsters, and if her sister Eliza, the one at Spurrs, went into a tantrum about every bud that was picked in the gardens and every chair-leg that was an inch out of its place in the house, so much the worse for Lady Tasker, who must walk because she had something else to do with her money than to waste it on taxis.

She had been told by her niece Dorothy to look out for a clump of tall willows and an ivied chimney; that was where the Pratts lived; but Dorothy had spoken of the approach from the Hampstead side, not from Highgate way. Lady Tasker got lost. She was almost dropping for want of a cup of tea, and the Heath seemed all willows, and all the wrong ones. No policeman, Radical or Conservative, was to be seen. Walking across an apparently empty space, well away (as she thought) from a horde of shouting boys, the old lady suddenly found herself enveloped in a game of football. This completed her exhaustion. Near by, one of Messrs. Libertys' carts was ascending a steep road at a slow walk; somehow or other Lady Tasker managed to get her hand on the tail of it; and the car gave her a tow. She was seventy after all.

As it happened, that was her first piece of luck in a luckless afternoon. The cart drew on to the left; Lady Tasker trailed after it; and suddenly it stopped before a high privet hedge with a closed green door in the middle of it. Lady Tasker did not look for the ivied chimney. On the door was painted in white letters "The Witan." She was where she wanted to be.

Ordinarily Lady Tasker would have approved of the height of the privet hedge, which was seven or eight feet; that was a nice, reassuring, anti-social height for a hedge; but as it was she could not even put up her hand to the bell. The carter rang it for the pair of them. Over the hedge came the low murmur of voices and the clink of cups and saucers, and then the door was opened. It was opened by the mistress of the house. No doubt Mrs. Pratt had expected the cart, had heard its drawing up, and had not waited for a maid to come. Her eyes sought the carman, who had stepped aside. She spoke with some asperity.

"It's Libertys', isn't it?" she said. "Well, I've a very good mind to make you take it back. It was promised for yesterday."

"Can't say, I'm sure, m'm."

"It's always the same. Every time I——"

Then she saw her visitor, and gave a little start.

"Why, it's Lady Tasker! How delightful! Do come in! And do just excuse me—I shan't be a minute.... Why didn't this come yesterday? It was promised faithfully——"

She stepped outside to scold the carman, leaving Lady Tasker standing just within the green door.

The altercation was plainly audible:

"Very sorry, m'm. You see——"

"I will see, if it occurs again——"

"The orders is taken as they come, m'm——"

"They said the first delivery——"

"We wasn't loaded till one o'clock——"

"That's none of my business——"

"Very sorry, m'm——"

"Well, the next time it occurs——"

And so forth.

Now in reading what happened the next moment you must remember that Lady Tasker was very, very tired. Had she been less tired she might have wondered why one of the two maids she saw crossing to the tea-table under the copper beech had not been allowed to take in Mrs. Cosimo Pratt's parcel. And she would certainly have thought it extraordinary that she should be left standing alone while Mrs. Cosimo Pratt scolded the carrier, and wanted to know why the parcel had not been brought yesterday. But, tired as she was, her eyes had already rested on something that had momentarily galvanized even the weariness out of her. It was this:—

Seven or eight people sat in basket-chairs or stood talking; and, under the copper beech, as if Mrs. Pratt had just slid out of it, a hammock of coloured string still moved, slung from the beech to a sycamore beyond. Lady Tasker saw these things at once; she did not at once see what it was that stood just beyond the hammock.

Then it moved, and Lady Tasker raised her glass.

No doubt you have seen the cover of Mr. Wells's "Invisible Man." It will be remembered that all that can be seen of that afflicted person is his clothes; and all that Lady Tasker at first saw of the Invisible Man by the copper beech was his clothes. These were of light yellow tussore, with a white double collar and a small red tie, sharp-edged white cuffs and highly polished brown boots. At collar and cuffs the man ended.

And yet he did not end, for the lenses of a pair of spectacles made lurking lights in the shadow of the beech, a few inches above the white collar.

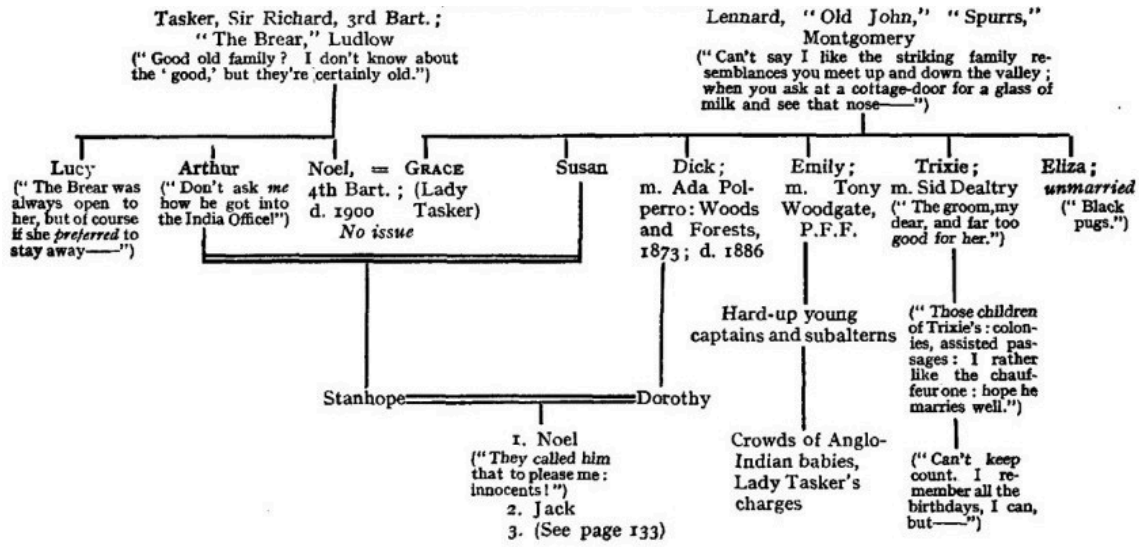
The phantom wore no hat.

Then Lady Tasker, suddenly pale, dropped her glass. Between the collar and the spectacles a white gash of teeth had appeared. The Invisible Man had smiled, and at the same moment there had shown round the bole of the beech a second smoky shape, this one without teeth, but with white and mobile eyes instead.

Lady Tasker was in the presence of two Hindoos.

Now all her life, and long before her life for that matter, Lady Tasker had been accustomed ... but no: that is not the way to put it. The following table will save many words:

PORTION OF TREE OF THE LENNARDS AND TASKERS
(COMMENTS BY LADY TASKER)



You see how it was, and had to be. Not only was Lady Tasker insular, arrogant, and of opinion that Saint Paul made the mistake of his life when he set out to preach the Gospel to all nations, but she made a virtue of her narrowness and defect. Show her a finger-nail with a purple half-moon, and you no longer saw a charming if acid-tongued old English lady, who cut timber in order to pay for governesses for those grandchildren of Emily's and sent, under guise of birthday gifts, useful little cheques to the descendants of her brother-in-law the groom. Babu or Brahmin, all were the same to her. No defence is offered of an attitude so indefensible. Such people do still exist. Let us sigh for their narrowness of mind, and pass on.

The smile of the first Hindoo was for Mrs. Pratt, who had got her row with the carman over and had reappeared behind Lady Tasker and closed the door of The Witan again. Her face, pretty and finished as a miniature, and the great chestnut-red helm of her hair, showed over the slant of the box in her arms. "Do excuse me, just *one* moment!" she said, smiling at Lady Tasker as she passed; and she ran off into the house, her mistletoe-berry white robe with its stencilling of grey-green whipping about her heels as she did so. And fortunately, as she ran in at the door, Cosimo Pratt came out of the French window, saw Lady Tasker, and strode to her. He broke into rapid and hearty speech.

"You here! How delightful!—Amory!—I didn't hear you come! So kind of you!—Amory, where are you?—How are you? Do let me get you some tea!—Amory!——"

Lady Tasker spoke faintly.—"I should like," she said, "to go into the house."

"Rather! Hang on to my arm.—Amory! Where is that girl?—Sure you won't have tea outside? I can find you a nice shady place under the beech——"

Lady Tasker closed her eyes.—"Please take me in."

"Tube headache? I hate the beastly thing. I thought you were in Ludlow. Charming of you——"

And he led Lady Tasker into the house.

This was a low building of stucco, with slatted window-shuts which, like the sashes of the slightly bowed French window and of the two windows beyond, were newly painted green. This painting seemed rather to emphasize than to mitigate a certain dogseared look the place had, not amounting to dilapidation, but enough to make it probable that Cosimo Pratt had taken it on a repairing lease. The copper beech, the high privet hedge and the willows beyond it, shut out both light and air. The fan-lighted door had two electric bell buttons, with little brass plates. The upper plate read, "Mr. Cosimo Pratt"; the lower one "Miss Amory Towers (Studio)."

But Lady Tasker noticed none of these things. In the hall she sank into the first chair she came to. "Tea, please," she said faintly; and Cosimo dashed out to get it. He returned, and began to murmur something sympathetic, but Lady Tasker made a little movement with her hand. She didn't want him to "send Amory." She only wanted to rest her tired legs and to collect her dispersed thoughts.

An eight-foot hedge, not to shut the populace out, but to shut Indians in! And she, Lady Tasker, had been kept standing while some parcel or other had been taken into the house—standing, and watching a still-moving hammock with a smiling Invisible Man bending over it! Was this England, or a Durbar?... And even yet her hostess didn't come to ask her if she felt better!... Not that Lady Tasker was greatly surprised at that. She knew that Mrs. Pratt was quite capable of reasoning that the greatest respect is shown to a tired old lady when no fuss is made about her tiredness. The Pratts were like that—full of delicacies so subtle that plain folk never noticed them, but jumped instead to the conclusion that they were bad-mannered. And it would not in the least surprise Lady Tasker if, presently, Mrs. Pratt allowed her to leave without a word about her indisposition. Of course: Lady Tasker had a little forgotten the Pratts at Ludlow. That would be it: "Good-bye—and do come again!" She could see Mrs. Pratt's pretty brook-brown eyes did anybody (say a Japanese or an Ethiopian) point out this so-called omission to her. She could see the surprise in them. She could hear her earnest voice: "*Say* these things!... Why, does she suppose I was *glad* then?"...

Yes, Lady Tasker had a little forgotten her Pratts.

It was an odd little hall in which she sat. It appeared to be an approach to the studio of which the electric bell gave notice, for it was continued by a narrower passage that led to a garden at the back; and either the studio "properties" were gradually thrusting the hatstand and hall table out of the fan-lighted front door, or else these latter ordinary and necessary objects were fighting as it were for admission. Thus, the chair on which Lady Tasker sat was of oak, but it had a Faust-like look; beyond it stood a glass-fronted cupboard of bric-à-brac, with a trophy of Abyssinian armour hanging over it; and the whole of the wall facing Lady Tasker was hung with a tapestry which, if it had been the only one of its kind in existence, would no doubt have been very valuable. And two other objects not commonly to be seen in ordinary halls were there. One of these stood on the narrow gilt console table next to Lady Tasker's cup of tea. It was a plaster cast, taken from the life, of a female foot. The other hung on the wall above it. This also was a plaster cast, of the whole of a female arm and shoulder, ending with a portion of the side of the neck and the entire breast—of its kind an exquisite specimen. Many artists make or buy such things, but Brucciani has nothing half so beautiful.

It was as Lady Tasker finished her tea that her gaze fell on the two casts. Half negligently she raised her glass and inspected, first the foot, and then the other piece. It is probable that her first remark, uttered in a casual undertone to the air about her, was prompted by mere association of ideas; it was "Hm! I wonder if Mrs. Pratt nursed those twins herself!" Any other reflection that might have followed it was cut short by a sudden darkening of the doorway by which she had entered. Mrs. Pratt stood there. Lady Tasker had been wrong. She *had* come to ask if she felt better. She did ask her, gathering up long swathes of some newly unpacked white material she carried over her arm as she did so.

"Sorry you were done up," she remarked. "Won't you have some more tea?"

Already Lady Tasker was rising.—"No more, thank you.—I was just looking at these. What are they?" She indicated the casts.

The gesture that Mrs. Pratt gave she could probably no more have helped giving than an eye can help winking when it is threatened with a blow. Within one mistletoe-white sleeve an arm moved ever so slightly; very likely a foot also moved within a curiously-toed Saxon-looking white slipper; and she gave a confused and conscious and apologetic little laugh.

"Oh, those silly things!" she said deprecatingly. "I really must move them. But the studio is so full.... Do you know, it's a most horrid feeling having them done—first the cold plaster poured on, and then, when they take it off again—the mould—you know——"

Lady Tasker plainly did not understand. Perhaps she did not yet even apprehend.—"But—but—," she said, "they're from a statue, aren't they?"

Again Mrs. Pratt gave the pleased bashful little laugh. It was almost as if she said it was very good of Lady Tasker to say so.

"No, they're from life," she said. "As a matter of fact they're me, but I really must move them; they aren't so remarkable as all that.... Oh, you're not going, are you?——"

For Lady Tasker had given a jump, and a movement as sudden and sprightly as if she had only that moment got freshly out of her bed. Nervously she put out her hand, while her hostess looked politely disappointed.

"Oh, and I was hoping you'd come and join us in the garden! We've Brimby there, the novelist, you know—and Wilkinson, the young Member—and Mr. Strong, of the 'Novum'—and I should so much like to introduce Mr. Suwarree Prang to you——"

"Oh, thank you so much—," sprang as effusively from Lady Tasker's lips as if she had been a schoolgirl allowed for the first time to come down to dinner, "—it's so good of you, but really I half hoped you'd be out when I called—I only meant to leave cards—I'm going on to see my niece, and really haven't a moment——"

"Oh, I'm sure Dorothy'd excuse you for once!——," Mrs. Pratt pressed her.

"Oh, she wouldn't—I'm quite sure she wouldn't—she'd never forgive me if she knew I'd been so near and hadn't called," said Lady Tasker feverishly.... "How do I get to Dorothy's from here?"

"Oh, Mr. Wilkinson will take you, or Mr. Prang; but are you sure you won't stay?"

Lady Tasker was so far from staying that she was already out of the hall and walking quickly towards the green door in the eight-foot hedge. "Thank you, thank you so much," she was murmuring hurriedly. "I don't see your husband anywhere about—never mind—so good of you—good-bye——"

"Come again soon, won't you?"

"Yes, yes—oh, yes!... No, no, please don't!" (Mrs. Pratt had made a half-turn towards the hammock and the copper beech). "Straight across the Heath you said, didn't you? I shall find it quite easily! Don't come any further—good-bye——"

And, touching Mrs. Cosimo Pratt's extended fingers as timorously as she might have touched those of the cast itself, she fairly broke into a run. The door of The Witan closed behind her.

II

THE POND-ROOM

The truth was not very far to seek: Lady Tasker was too old for these things. Nobody could have expressed this more effectively than Mrs. Cosimo Pratt herself, had it entered the mind of Mrs. Pratt to conceive that any human soul could be so benighted as the soul of Lady Tasker was. "Those casts!" Mrs. Pratt might have cried in amazement—or rather Miss Amory Towers might have cried, for there is nothing in the Wedding Service about making over to your husband, along with your love and obedience, the valuable goodwill of a professional name. "Those poor casts!... Of course they may not be *very* beautiful—," here the original of the casts might have modestly dropped her eyes, "—but such as they are—goodness me! How *can* people be so prurient, Cosimo? Don't they see that what they really prove has nothing at all to do with the casts, but—ahem!—a good deal to do with their own imaginations? I don't want to use the word 'morbid,' but really!... Well, thank goodness Corin and Bonniebell won't grow up like that! Afraid of the beautiful, innocent human form!... Now that's what I've always claimed, Cosimo—that that's the type of mind that's made all the mischief we've got to set right to-day."

But for all that Lady Tasker was too old. Invisible Men in the garden (or, if not actually invisible, at any rate as hard to be seen against the leaves of the copper beech as a new penny would have been)—and in the hall those extraordinary replicas! In the hall—the very forefront of the house! It was to be presumed that Mrs. Pratt's foreign friends, who were permitted to lean over her hammock, would not be denied The Witan itself, and, for all Lady Tasker knew, the rest of Mrs. Pratt might be reduplicated in plaster in the dining-room, the drawing-room, and elsewhere....

Had she not said it herself, Lady Tasker would never have believed it....

What a—what a—what an extraordinary thing!——

Lady Tasker had fled from The Witan still under the influence of that access of effusive schoolgirlishness in which she had told Mrs. Pratt that she really must go; nor did she grow up again all at once. But little by little, as she walked, she began to resume the burden of her years. She became eighteen, twenty-five, thirty again. By the time she reached the lower pond Arthur had just got that billet in the India Office, and her brother Dick, of the Department of Woods and Forests, had married Ada Polperro, daughter of old Polperro of Delhi fame, and her sister Emily had got engaged to Tony Woodgate, of the Piffers. (But those casts!)... Then as she took the path between the ponds she remembered the children at Ludlow, the three little girls at Cromwell Gardens, and the arrival on Saturday of the "Seringapatam." (But those natives!)... The thought of the children settled it. Her curious lapse into juvenescence was over. By the time she rang Dorothy's bell she was the same Lady Tasker who changed the political opinions of policemen and deprecated the wanderings of Saint Paul.

Dorothy's flat was as different as it could well be from that other house which (Lady Tasker had already decided) had something odd and furtive about it—stagnant yet busy, segregated yet too wide open. The flat had one really brilliant room. This room did not merely overlook the pond in front of it; it seemed actually to have asked the pond to come inside. A large triple window occupied the whole of one end of it; this window faced west; and not only did the September sun shine brightly in, but the inverted sun in the water shone in also, doubling (yet also halving) all shadows, illumining the ceiling, and setting the cream walls a-ripple with the dancing of the wavelets outside. Sprightly chintzes looked as if they also might begin to dance at any moment; the china in Dorothy's cupboards surprised the eye that had not expected this altered light; and presently, to complete the complexity, the shadow of the sycamore in the little garden below would move round, so that you would hardly be able to tell whether the ceaseless creeping on the cream walls was glitter of ripples, pattern of leaves, or both.

Dorothy sat in her accordion-pleats by the window, surrounded by letters. And pray do not think it mere coincidence in this story that her letters were Indian letters. Some interests that the home-amateur takes up as he might take up poker-work or the diversion of jig-saw hold a large part of

the hearts and lives of others, and so Dorothy, as she did more or less every week, had been reading her cousin Churchill's letter, and that of her little niece and namesake Dot, up in Murree, and Eva Woodgate's, who had sent her a parcel from Kohat, and others. She rose slowly as her aunt was announced, and put her finger on the bell as she passed.

"How are you, auntie?" she said, kissing Lady Tasker on both cheeks. "Give me your things. Somehow I thought you might come to-day, but I'd almost given you up. Do look what Eva's sent me! Really, with her own to look after, I don't know how she finds the time! Aren't they sweet! ____"

And she held them up.

Now Lady Tasker knew perfectly well the meaning of her niece's accordion-pleating; but she was seventy and worldly-wise again now. Therefore as she looked at the things she remarked off-handedly, "But they're far too small."

"Too small!" Dorothy exclaimed. "Of course they aren't. Why, Noel was only nine, and that's pretty big, and Jackie only just over eight-and-a-half, though he put on weight while you watched him. They're just right."

Lady Tasker reached for a chair. "But they *are* for Jackie, aren't they?"

Dorothy's blue eyes were as big as the plates in her cupboards.—"Jackie! Good gracious, auntie! ____"

"Eh?" said Lady Tasker, sitting down. "Not Jackie? Dear me. How stupid of me. Of course, I did hear, but I've so many other things to think of, and nobody'd suppose, to look at you——"

Dorothy ran to her aunt and gave her a kiss and a hug, a loud kiss and a hug like two.

"You dear old thing!—Really, I'd begun to *hate* all the horrid kind people who asked me how I felt to-day and whether I shouldn't be glad when it was over! What business is it of theirs? I nearly made Stan sack Ruth last week, she looked so, and I positively refuse to have a young girl anywhere near me!... But wasn't it sweet of Eva? I'll give you some tea and then read you her letter. Indian or China?"

"China," Lady Tasker remarked.

"China, Ruth, and I'll have some more too. I don't know whether His Impudence is coming in or not; he's gadding off somewhere, I expect.... But you weren't only *pretending* just now, were you, auntie?——"

She put the plug of the spirit-kettle into the wall.

"Well, how are the Bits?" Lady Tasker asked....

(Perhaps "His Impudence" and "The Bits" require explanation. Both expressions Dorothy had from her "maid," Ruth Mossop. "Maid" is thus written because Ruth was a young widow, who, after a series of disciplinary knockings-about by the late Mr. Mossop, was not over-troubled with maternal anxiety for the four children he had left her with. When asked by Dorothy whether she would prefer to be called Mrs. Mossop or Ruth, Mrs. Mossop had chosen the latter name, giving as her reason that it had been like Mr. Mossop's impudence to ask her to accept the other name at all; and very many other memories also, brooded on and gloomily loved, including the four children, had been bits of Mr. Mossop's impudence. Stan had adopted the phrase, finding in it chuckles of his own; and so His Impudence he had become, and Noel and Jackie the fruits thereof.)

Dorothy put her fair head on one side, as if she considered the absent Bits critically and dispassionately, and really thought that on the whole she might venture to approve of them.

"Ra-ther little dears; but oh, Heaven, how *are* we going to manage with a third!"

Her aunt dissociated herself from the problem with a shrug.—"Well—if Stan will persist in thinking that his dressing-room is merely a room for him to dress in——"

"So I tell him," Dorothy murmured, with great meekness. "But—but flats aren't made for children. We did manage to seize the estate agent's little office for a nursery when all the flats were let, but when Stan brings a man home we have to sleep him in the dressing-room as it is—," (Lady Tasker shook her head, but the words "Wrong man" were hardly audible), "—and a house will mean stair-carpets, and hall furniture, and I don't know what else. Besides, Stan hasn't time to look for one ——"

"No?" said Lady Tasker drily.

"He really hasn't, poor boy," Dorothy protested. "And he's after something really good this time—Fortune and Brooks, the what-d'-you-call-'ems, in Pall Mall——"

"What about them?"

"Well, Stan's been told that they pay awfully good commissions, for introductions, new accounts, you know; Stan dines out, say, and makes himself nice to somebody with whole stacks of money, and mentions Fortune & Brooks's chutney and pickled peaches and things, and—and——"

"I know," remarked Lady Tasker, with not much more expression than if she had been a talking doll and somebody had pulled the string that worked the speaking apparatus. She did know these dazzling schemes of her smart and helpless nephew's—his club secretaryships, his projects for journals that should combine the various desirable features of the "Field" and "Country Life" and the "Sporting Times" and "Punch," his pony deals, and his other innumerable attempts to make of his saunters down Bond Street to St. James's and back *viâ* the Junior Carlton and Regent Street a source of income. Perhaps she knew, too, that Dorothy knew of her knowledge, for she went on, "Well, well—let's hope there's more in it than there was in the fishing-flies—now tell me what Eva's got fresh."

"Oh, yes!" cried Dorothy, plunging her hand into her letters. "Eva sent the things, but here's Dot's first—look at the darling's writing!——"

And from a sheet of paper with a regimental heading Dorothy began to read:

> "Dearest Aunt Dorothy,—
>
> "were in murree and we got a servant that wigles his toes when we speak to him and he loves baba and makes noises like him and there are squiboos in the tres—"

—(she means squirrels)—

> "—and ive got a parrot uncle tony bought me and uncle tony says the monsoon will praps fale and the peple wont have anything to eat but weve lots and i like this better than kohat the shops are lovely but there are lots of flees and they bite baba and he cries this is a long letter how are Jackie and noel i got the photograf—"

—(that's the new one on the mantelpiece)—

> "—were going to tifin at major hirsts little girls one is called marjorie and were great friends——"

"Where's the other page got to? It was here——"

She found the other page, and continued the reading of the child's letter.

Suddenly Lady Tasker interrupted her.

"Had Jack to borrow money to send them up there?"

"To Murree? I really don't know. Perhaps he had. But as adjutant of the Railway Volunteers he'd have his saloon."

"H'm!... Anyway, the child oughtn't to be there at all. India's no place for children."

"I know, auntie; but what can one do? They do come."

"H'm!... They didn't to me. Thank goodness I've done with love and babies." (Dorothy laughed, perhaps at a mental vision of the houses in Ludlow and Cromwell Gardens.) "Anyway, now they are here somebody's got to look after them. They may as well be healthy...."

She mused, and Dorothy reached for other letters.

Lady Tasker's additions to her responsibilities usually began in this way. Dorothy had very little doubt that presently little Dot also would be handed like a parcel to some man or other coming home on leave, and Lady Tasker would send to the makers for yet another cot.... Therefore, pushing aside her last letter, she exclaimed almost crossly, "I *do* think it's selfish of Aunt Eliza! There she is, with Spurrs all to herself, and she never once thinks that Jack might like to send Dot to England!"

"Neither would I if I had my time over again," said Lady Tasker resolutely. "You needn't look like that—I wouldn't. Cromwell Gardens is past praying for, and in another year there won't be a stick at the Brear that's fit to be seen. The next batch I certainly intend to charge for. I'm on the brink of the poorhouse as it is."

This time it was Dorothy who mused. She was a calculating young woman; the wife of His Impudence had to be; and she was far too shrewd to suppose for a moment that her aunt could ever escape her destiny, which was to be imposed upon by her own flesh and blood while hardening her heart against the rest of the world. Dorothy, and not Stan, had had to keep that flat going, and the flat before it; unless Fortune & Brooks turned up trumps—a rather remote contingency—she would have to continue to do so; and she was quite casuistical enough to argue that, while Aunt Eliza might keep her old Spurrs, Aunt Grace might properly be victimized because Dorothy loved Aunt Grace. Therefore there were musings in Dorothy's wide-angle blue eyes ... musings that only the sound of a key in the outer lock interrupted.

"Hallo, that's His Impudence," Dorothy exclaimed. "I do hope he hasn't brought anybody. I shall simply rush out if he has."

Stan hadn't. He came in at the door drawing off a pair of lemon-yellow gloves, said "Hallo, Aunt Grace," and rang the bell. He next said, "Hallo, Dot! Been out? Beastly smelly in town. No, I've not had tea. Look here, you've eaten all the hot cakes; never mind; bread and butter'll do, if you've got some jam—no, honey. Got an invitation for you, Dot, to lunch, with Ferrers on Monday; can't you buck up and manage it?... Well, Aunt Grace, what brings you up here? Bit off your beat, isn't it? Awfully rude of me, I know, but it is a long way. Glad I came in."

"I've been to see the Cosimo Pratts," said Lady Tasker.

Dorothy looked suddenly up.

"Oh, auntie, you didn't tell me that!" she exclaimed.

A grin lighted up Stan's good-looking face.

"Oh? How many annas to the rupee are they to-day? By Jove, they are a rum lot up there! Any new prime cuts?"

"Stan, you mustn't!" said Dorothy, peremptorily. "Please don't! Don't listen to him, auntie; he's outrageous."

But His Impudence went on, with his mouth full of bread and butter.

"I've only seen the fore-quarter and the trotter, but you see I haven't been over the house. Did they show you the Bluebeard's Chamber? What is there there? By Jove, it's like Jezebel and the dogs.... But I don't suppose they'll have me up again. There was some chap there, and I got him by himself and told him he didn't know what he was talking about; rotten of me, I know, but you should have heard him! Anarchist—Votes for Women—all the lot; whew!... More tea, Ruth, please——"

Lady Tasker felt the years beginning to ebb away from her again. She had remembered the hammock and the Invisible Men.

"I hope he was—English?" she murmured.

"Who?"

"The man you say you were rude to."

"English? Yes. Why? English? Rather! No end of gas about the Empire. Said it was on a wrong basis or something. Why do you ask?"

"I only wondered."

But Stan was perspicacious; he could see anything that was as closely thrust under his nose as is the comparative rarity of the Englishman in Hampstead. He laughed.

"Oh, that! We're used to that. We've all sorts up here.... By Jove, I believe Aunt Grace has been thrown into the arms of a Jap or a nigger or something! Well, if that doesn't put the lid on!... So of course you wondered what I meant by the fore-quarter and Jezebel and the dogs. Those are just some things they used to have.... Well, I'll tell you what you can do about it next time, auntie. You talk to 'em about Ludlow. That shuts 'em up. Sore spot, Ludlow; they're trying to forget about Ye Olde Englysshe Maypole, and that row with old Wynn-Jenkins, and old Griffin letting his hair grow and reciting those poems. They look at you as if it never happened. But they didn't shut *me* up."

"You seem to have been thoroughly rude," Lady Tasker remarked.

"Well, dash it all, they ask for it. She used to be some sort of a pal of Dorothy's——"

"She's very clever, and she was always very kind to me," Dorothy interpolated over her sewing.

"When, I should like to know? But never mind. I was going to say, Aunt Grace, that I've had to put my foot down. I won't have the Bits meeting those kids of Pratt's. It's perfectly awful; why, those children know as much as I do—and I know a bit! They'll be wanting latchkeys presently. That day I was up there I heard one of 'em say that little boys weren't the same as little girls. I forget how she put it, but she knew all right; think of that, at about four! I wish I could remember the words, but it was a bit thick for four!——"

A restrained smile, perhaps at the thought of Stan putting his foot down, had crossed Lady Tasker's face; no doubt it was part of the smile that she presently said, toying with the little gold-rimmed glass, "Quite right, Stan.... Anything fresh about Fortune & Brooks? Dorothy told me."

Stan's feelings on any subject were never so strong but that at a word he was quite ready to talk about something else. "Eh? Rather!" he said heartily, and went straightway off at score.—New? Yes. He'd seen old Brooks the day before; not a bad chap at all really; and they quite understood one another, he and old Brooks. He'd told Stan things, old Brooks had, (which Stan wasn't at liberty to disclose) about the commissions they paid for really first-class introductions, things that would astonish Lady Tasker!——

"You see," he explained, "as Brooks himself said, they can't afford to advertise in the ordinary way; *infra dig*. They'd actually lose custom if they put an ad. in the 'Daily Spec.' I don't mean that they don't put a thing now and then into the right kind of paper, but just being mentioned in general conversation, at dinners and tamashas and so on, that's *their* kind of advertisement! For instance—but just a minute, and I'll show you——"

He jumped up and dashed out of the room. Lady Tasker took advantage of his absence to give a discreet glance at Dorothy, but Dorothy's head remained bent demurely over her work. Stan returned, carrying a small parcel.

"Here we are," he said, unfastening the package: and then suddenly his voice and manner changed remarkably. He took a small pot from the parcel and set it on the palm of his left hand; he pointed at it with the index-finger of his right hand; and a bright and poster-like smile overspread his face. He spoke slightly loudly, and very, very persuasively.

"Now I have here, Aunt Grace, one of our newest lines—Pickled Banyan. Now I'm not going to ask you to take my word for it; I want you to try it for yourself. It isn't what this man says or what that man says; tasting's believing. Give me your teaspoon."

"My *dear* Stan!" the astonished Lady Tasker gasped.

"We're selling a great many of this particular article, and are prepared to stake our reputation on it," Stan went on. "Established 1780; more than One Hundred Gold Medals. Those are our credentials. Those are what we lose.—Pass your spoon."

Lady Tasker was rigid. Perhaps Stan would have been better advised to cast his spell over those who were going up in the world, and not on those who, like themselves, were coming down or barely holding their own. Again he went on, pointing engagingly at the small pot.

"But just try it," he urged, pushing the pot under his aunt's nose. "It isn't what this man says or—I mean, it doesn't cost you anything to try it. A free trial invited. Here's the recipe, look, on the bottle—carefully selected Banyans, best cane sugar, lemon-juice refined by a patent process, and a touch of tabasco. The makers' guarantee on every label—none genuine without it—have a go!"

With a "Really, Stan!" Lady Tasker had turned away in her chair, revolted. "And do you expect to go to a house again after an exhibition like that?" she asked over her shoulder.

"Eh?" said Stan, a little discomfited. "Too much salesman about it, d'you think? Brooks warned me about that. Fact is, he had a chap in as a sort of object-lesson. This chap came in—I didn't know they had schools and classes for this kind of thing, did you?—this chap came in, and I was supposed to be somebody who didn't want the stuff at any price, and he'd got to sell it to me whether I wanted it or not, and old Brooks said to me, 'Now ask him how much the beastly muck is,' and a lot of facers like that, and so we'd a set-to.... Then, when the fellow had gone, he said he'd had him in just to show me how *not* to do it.... But he was an ingenious sort of beast, and I can't get his talk out of my head. I'd thought of having a shot at it to-night, but perhaps I'd better practise a bit more first. Thanks awfully for the criticism, Aunt Grace. If you don't mind I'll practise on you as we go along. I'm dining with a man to-night, but I'd better be sure of my ground.—Now what about having the Bits in, Dot?"

"I think I hear them coming," said Dorothy, whose demureness had not given as much as a flicker. Perhaps she was wondering whether she could spare the sovereign His Impudence would presently ask her for.

The door opened, and Noel and Jackie stood there with a nurse behind them. Noel walked stoutly in. Jackie, not yet very firm on his pins, bumbled after him like an overladen bee.

III

THE "NOVUM"

Stan was quite right in supposing that the Cosimo Pratts wished to forget all about the Ludlow experiment that had disturbed the Shropshire country-side a year or more before, but he was wrong in the reason he assigned them. They were not in the least ashamed of it. As a stage in their intellectual development, the experiment had been entirely in its place. Especially in Mrs. Pratt's career—as an old student of the McGrath School of Art, a familiar (for a time) with Poverty in cheap studios, the painter of the famous Feminist picture "Barrage," and so forward—had this been true. Cosimo, in "The Life and Work of Miss Amory Towers," a labour to which he devoted himself intermittently, pointed out the naturalness and inevitability of the sequence with real eloquence. Step had led to step, and the omission of any one step would have ruined the whole.

But nobody with work still in them lingers long over the past. They had dropped the task of regenerating rural England, or rather had handed it over to others, only when it had been pointed out to them that capacity so rare as theirs ought to be directed to larger ends. One evening there had put in an appearance at one of the Ludlow meetings—a meeting of the Hurdy-gurdy Octette, which afterwards gave instrumental performances with such success at Letchworth, Bushey and Golder's Green—Mr. Strong, the original founder and present editor of the "Novum Organum," or, as it was usually called, the "Novum." Mr. Strong, as it happened, was the man whom the scatter-brained Stan had met at The Witan, and of whom he had expected that impossibility of any man whomsoever—an admission that he did not know what he was talking about. At that time Mr. Strong had been perambulating the country with a Van, holding meetings and distributing literature; and whatever Mr. Strong's other failings might have been, nobody had ever said of him that he did not recognize a good thing when he saw it. The Cause itself had served as an introduction between him and Cosimo; it had also been a sufficient reason for his inviting himself to Cosimo's house for a couple of days and remaining there for three weeks; and then he had got rid of the Van and had come again. He was a rapturous talker, when there was an end to be gained, and he had expressed himself as strongly of the opinion that, magnificent a field for the sowing of the good seed as the country-side was, there was simply stupendous propaganda to be done in London. He knew (he had gone on) that Mrs. Pratt would forgive him (he had a searching blue eye and an actor's smile) if he appeared for a moment to speak disparagingly of what he might call the mere graces of the Movement, (alluring as these were in Mrs. Pratt's capable and very pretty hands); it was not disparagement really; he only meant that these garlands would burgeon a hundred-fold if the stern and thankless work was got out of the way first. Mr. Strong had a valuable trick of suddenly making those searching blue eyes of his more searching, and of switching off the actor's smile altogether; both of these things had happened as he had gone on to point out that what the Cause was really languishing for was a serious and responsible organ; and then, and only then, when they had got (so to speak) the diapason, there would be time enough for the trills and appoggiaturas of the Hurdy-gurdy Band.

Before the end of Mr. Strong's second visit Cosimo had put up the greater part of the money for the "Novum."

So you see just where the feather-pated Stan was wrong. The Cosimo Pratts were not outfaced from anything; they had merely seen a new and heralding light. They did not so much recede from the Rural Experiment, and discussions of the Suffrage, and eating buns on the floor at assemblies of the Poets' Club, and a hundred and twenty other such things, as become as it were translated. They still shed over these activities the benignity of their approval, but from on high now. Amory could no longer be expected actually to "run" the Suffrage Shop herself—Dickie Lemesurier did that; nor the "Eden" (the new offshoot off the Lettuce Grill)—that she left to Katie Deedes; nor the "Lectures on Love" Agency—that was quite safe in the hands of her friends, Walter Wyron and Laura Beamish. Amory merely shed approval down. She was *hors concours*. She ... but you really must read Cosimo's book. You will find it all there (or at any rate a good deal of it).

For Amory Pratt, in so far as Cosimo was the proprietor of the "Novum," was the proprietor of the proprietor of a high-class weekly review that was presently going to put the two older parties out

of business entirely. She had more than a Programme now; she had a Policy. She had crossed the line into the *haute politique*. Her At Homes were already taking on the character of the political salon, and between herself and the wives of ministers and ambassadors were differences, in degree perhaps, but not in kind. And that even these differences should become diminished she had taken on, ever since her settling-down at The Witan, slight, but significant, new attitudes and condescensions. She was kinder and more gracious to her sometime equals than before. She gave them encouraging looks, as much as to say that they need not be afraid of her. But it was quite definitely understood that when she took Mr. Strong apart under the copper beech or retired with him into the studio at the back of the house, she must on no account be disturbed.—Mr. Strong, by the way, always dressed in the same Norfolk jacket, red tie and soft felt hat, and his first caution to Cosimo and Amory had been that Brimby, the novelist, was an excellent chap, but not always to be taken very seriously.

Amory did not often put in an appearance at the "Novum's" offices. This was not that she thought it more befitting that Mr. Strong should wait on her, for she went about a good deal with Mr. Strong, and did not always trouble him to come up to The Witan to fetch her. It was, rather, if the truth must be told, that she found the offices rather dingy. Her senses loved the newly-machined smell of each new issue of the paper, but not the mingled odour of dust and stale gum and Virginia cigarettes of the place whence it came. Moreover, the premises were rather difficult to find. They lay at the back of Charing Cross Road. You dodged into an alley between a second-hand bookseller's and a shop where electric-light fittings were sold, entered a narrow yard, and, turning to the right into a gas-lighted cavern where were stacked hundreds and hundreds of sandwich-boards, some back-and-fronts, some with the iron forks for the bearer's shoulders, you ascended by means of a dark staircase to the second floor. There, at the end of a passage which some poster-artist had half papered with the specimens of his art, you came upon the three rooms. The first of these was the general office; the second was Mr. Strong's private office; and the third was a room which, the "Novum" having no need of it, Mr. Strong had thought he might as well use as a rent-free bedroom as not. The door of this room Mr. Strong always kept locked. It was more prudent. He was supposed to live somewhere in South Kentish Town, and gave this address to certain of his correspondents. The letters of these reached him sooner or later, through the agency of a barber, in whose window was a placard, "Letters may be addressed here."

Perhaps, too, the extraordinary people who visited Mr. Strong in the way of business helped to keep Amory away. For an endless succession of the queerest people came—contributors, and would-be contributors, and friends of the Cause who "were just passing and thought they'd look in," and artists seeking a paper with the courage to print really stinging caricatures, and article-writers who were out of a job only because they dared to tell the truth about things, and Russian political exiles, and Armenians who wanted passages to America, and Eurasians who wanted rifles, and tramps, and poets, and the boy from the milkshop who brought in the bread and butter and eggs for Mr. Strong's breakfast. And out of these strange elements had grown up the paper's literary style. This was unique in London journalism: philosophical, yet homely; horizon-wide of outlook, yet never without hope that the shining thing in the gutter might prove to be a jewel; and, despite its habitual omissions of the prefix "Mr." from the names of statesmen, and its playful allusions to this personage's nose or the waist-measurement of the other, with more than a little of the Revelation of Saint John the Divine about it. "Damn" and "Hell" were words the "Novum" commonly used. Once Amory had demurred at the use of a word stronger still. But Mr. Strong had merely replied, "If I can say it to you I think I can say it to them." He was no truckler to his proprietors, and anyhow, the man whom the word had encarnadined was only a colliery-owner.

The "Novum" had hardly been six weeks old when a certain desire on Amory's part to make experiment of her power had, putatively at any rate, lost it money. The little collision of wills had come about over the question of whether the "Novum" should admit advertisements to its columns or not. Now as most people know, that is a question that seldom arises in journalism. A question far more likely to arise is whether the advertisements can be got. But when a journal sets out to do something that hitherto has not only not been done, but has not even been attempted, you will admit that the case is special. The experience of other papers is useless; their economics do not apply. What did apply was the fact that Mrs. Pratt had been an artist, looked on sheets of paper from another angle than that of the mere journalist and literary man, and loved symmetry and could not endure unsightliness. Besides, "No Compromise" was the "Novum's" motto, and what was the good of having a motto like that if you compromised in the very form of your

expression?... A "shoulder-piece," "*The Little Mary Emollient*," had brought out all Mrs. Pratt's finer artistic instincts. Here was a journal consecrated to a great and revolutionary cause, and the very first thing to catch a reader's eye was, not only an advertisement, but a facetious advertisement at that—a Pill, without a Pill's robust familiarity—a commercial cackle issuing from the "Novum's" august and oracular mouth.... For the first time in her life Mrs. Pratt had wielded the blue pencil, tearing the rubbishy proof-paper in the energy with which she did so. Mr. Strong's blue eyes, bluer for the contrast with his red knot of a tie, had watched her face, but he had said nothing. He was willing to humour her....

But when all was said and done he was an editor, and no sooner was Amory's back turned than he had restored the announcement. The paper had appeared, and there had been a row....

"Then I appeal to Pratt," Mr. Strong had said, with all the good-nature in the world. "I take it the 'Novum's' a serious enterprise, and not just a hobby?"

Cosimo had glanced a little timidly at his wife. Then he had replied thoughtfully.

"I don't know. I'm not so sure. That is, I'm not so sure it oughtn't to be a serious enterprise *and* a hobby. The world's best work is always done for love—that's another way of calling it a hobby—you see what I mean—Nietzsche has something about it somewhere or other—or if he hasn't Ruskin has——"

Any number of effective replies had been open to Mr. Strong, but he had used none of them. Instead his eyes had given as it were a flick to Amory's face. The proprietor's proprietor had continued indignantly.

"It ruins the whole effect! It's *unspeakably* vulgar! After that glowing, that impassioned Foreword—*this*! Hardly a month ago that lovely apostrophe to Truth Naked—that beautiful image of her stark and innocent on our banners but with a forest of bright bayonets bristling about her—and now *this*! It's revolting!"

But Mr. Strong had himself written that impassioned Foreword, and knew all about it. Again he had given his proprietor's wife that quietly humouring look.

"Do you mean that the 'Novum's' going to refuse advertisements?"

"I mean that I blue-pencilled that one myself."

"And what about the others—the 'Eden' and the Suffrage Shop and Wyron's Lectures?"

"They're different. They *are* the Cause. You said yourself that the 'Novum' was going to be a sort of generalissimo, and these the brigades or whatever they're called. They are, at any rate, doing the Work. Is *that* doing any Work, I should like to know?"

Mr. Strong had refrained from flippancy.—"I see what you mean," he had replied equably. "At the same time, if you're going to refuse advertisements the thing's going to cost a good deal more money."

"Well?" Amory had replied, as who might say, "Has money been refused you yet?"

Strong had given a compliant shrug—"All right. That means I censor the advertisements, I suppose. New industry. Very well. The 'Eden' and Wyron's Lectures and Week-end Cottages and the Plato Press only, then. I'll strike out that '*Platinum: False Teeth Bought*.' But I warn you it will cost more."

"Never mind that."

And so the incident had ended.

But perhaps Mrs. Pratt's sensitiveness of eye was not the only cause of the rejection of that offending advertisement. Another reason might have lain in her present relation with her sometime fellow-student of the McGrath School of Art, Dorothy Tasker. For that relation had suffered a change since the days when the two girls had shared a shabby day-studio in Cheyne Walk, Chelsea. At that time, now five years ago, Amory Towers had been thrust by circumstances into a position of ignoble envy of her friend. She had been poor, and Dorothy's people (or so she had

supposed) very, very wealthy. True, poor Dorothy, without as much as a single spark of talent, had nevertheless buckled to, and, in various devious ways, had contrived to suck a parasitic living out of the wholesome body of real art; none the less, Amory had conceived her friend to be of the number of those who play at hardship and independence with a fully spread table at home for them to return to when they are tired of the game. But the case was entirely changed now. Amory frankly admitted that she had been mistaken in one thing, namely, that if those people of Dorothy's had more money, they had also more claims upon it, and so were relatively poor. Amory herself was now very comfortably off indeed. By that virtue and good management which the envious call luck, she had now money, Cosimo's money, to devote to the regeneration of the world. Dorothy, married to the good-tempered and shiftless Stan, sometimes did not know which way to turn for the overdue quarter's rent.

Now among her other ways of making ends meet Dorothy had for some years done rather well out of precisely that kind of work which Amory refused to allow the "Novum" to touch—advertisements. She had wormed herself into the services of this firm and that as an advertisement-adviser. But her contracts had begun in course of time to lapse, one or two fluky successes had not been followed up, and two children had further tightened things. Nor had Stan been of very much help. Amory despised Stan. She thought him, not a man, but a mere mouth to be fed. Real men, like Cosimo, always had money, and Amory was quite sure that, even if Cosimo had not inherited a fortune from his uncle, he would still have contrived to make himself the possessor of money in some other way.

Therefore Amory was even kinder to Dorothy than she was to Dickie Lemesurier of the Suffrage Shop, to Katie Deedes of the "Eden," and to Laura Beamish and Walter Wyron, who ran the "Lectures on Love." But somehow—it was a little difficult to say exactly how, but there it undoubtedly was—Dorothy did not accept her kindnesses in quite the proper spirit. One or two she had even rejected—gently, Amory was bound to admit, but still a rejection. For example, there had been that little rebuff (to call it by its worst name for a moment) about the governess. Amory had, in Miss Britomart Belchamber, the most highly-qualified governess for Corin and Bonniebell that money and careful search had been able to obtain; Dorothy lived less than a quarter of an hour's walk away; it would have been just as easy for Britomart to teach four children as to teach two; but Dorothy had twisted and turned and had finally said that she had decided that she couldn't put Amory to the trouble. And again, when the twins had had their party, Amory would positively have *liked* Noel and Jackie to come and dance "Twickenham Ferry" in those spare costumes and to join in those songs from the Book of Caroline Ditties; but again an excuse had been made. And half a dozen similar things had driven Amory to the conclusion, sadly against her will, that the Taskers were taking up that ridiculous, if not actually hostile attitude, of the poor who hug their pride. It was not nice between old friends. Amory could say with a clear conscience that she had not refused Dorothy's help in the days when the boot had been on the other leg. She was not resentful, but really it did look very much like putting on airs.

But of course that stupid Stanhope Tasker was at the bottom of it all. Amory did not so much mind his not having liked her from the first; she would have been sorry to let a trifle like that ruffle her equanimity; but it was evident that he did not in the least realize his position. She was quite sure, in the first place, that he couldn't afford (or rather Dorothy couldn't afford) to pay eighty pounds for that flat, plus another twenty for the little office they had annexed and used as a nursery. And in the next place he dressed absurdly above his position. Cosimo dressed for hygiene and comfort, in cellular things and things made of non-irritant vegetable fibre; but those absurdly modish jackets and morning-coats of Stan's had, unless Amory was very much mistaken, to be bought at the expense of real necessaries. And so with their hospitality. In that too, they tried to cut a dash and came very near to making themselves ridiculous. Amory didn't want to interfere; she couldn't plan and be wise for everybody; she had her own affairs to attend to; but she was quite sure that the Taskers would have done better to regulate their hospitality as hospitality was regulated at The Witan—that was, to make no special preparation, but to have the door always open to their friends. But no; the Taskers must make a splash. They must needs "invite" people and be a little stand-offish about people coming uninvited. They were "At home" and "Not at home" for all the world as if they had been important people. But Amory would have thought herself very stupid to be taken in by all this ceremony. For example, the last time she and Cosimo had been asked to the flat to dinner she knew that they had been "worked off" only because the Taskers had had the pheasants given by somebody, and very likely the fish too. And it would have been just like Stan

Tasker's insolence had he asked them because he *knew* that the Pratts did not eat poor beasties that should have been allowed to live because of their lovely plumes, nor the pretty speckled creatures that had done no harm to the destroyer who had taken them with a hook out of their pretty stream.

But, kind to her old friend as Amory was always ready to be, she did not feel herself called upon to go out of her way to be very nice to her friend's husband. He had no right to expect it after his rudeness to Edgar Strong about the "Novum." For it had been about the "Novum" that Stan had given Strong that talking-to. Much right (Amory thought hotly) he had to talk! Just because he consorted with men who counted their money in rupees and thought nothing of shouldering their darker-skinned brothers off the pavement, he thought he was entitled to put an editor into his place! But the truth, of course, was, that that very familiarity prevented him from really knowing anything about these questions at all. Because an order was established, he had not imagination enough to see how it could have been anything different. His mind (to give it that name) was of the hidebound, official type, and too many limited intelligences of that kind stopped the cause of Imperial progress to-day. Or rather, they tried to stop it, and perhaps thought they were stopping it; but really, little as they suspected it, they were helping more than they knew. A pig-headed administration does unconsciously help when, out of its own excesses, a divine discontent is bred. Mr. Suwarree Prang had been eloquent on that very subject one afternoon not very long ago. A charming man! Amory had listened from her hammock, rapt. Mr. Prang did the "Indian Review" for the "Novum," in flowery but earnest prose; and as he actually was Indian, and did not merely hobnob with a few captains and subalterns home on leave, it was to be supposed that he would know rather more of the subject than Mr. Stanhope Tasker!——

And Mr. Stanhope Tasker had had the cheek to tell Mr. Strong that he didn't know what he was talking about!

Amory felt that she could never be sufficiently thankful for the chance that had thrown Mr. Strong in her way. She had always secretly felt that her gifts were being wasted on such minor (but still useful) tasks as the "Eden" Restaurant and the "Love Lectures" Agency. But her personal exaltation over Katie Deedes and the others had caused her no joy. What had given her joy had been the immensely enlarged sphere of her usefulness; that was it, not the odious vanity of leadership, but the calm and responsible envisaging of a task for which not one in ten thousand had the vision and courage and strength. And Edgar Strong had shown her these things. Of course, if he had put them in these words she might have suspected him of trying to flatter her; but as a matter of fact he had not said a single word about it. He had merely allowed her to see for herself. That was his way: to all-but-prove a thing—to take it up to the very threshold of demonstration—and then apparently suddenly to lose interest in it. And that in a way was his weakness as an editor. Amory, whom three or four wieldings of the blue pencil had sufficed to convince that there was nothing in journalism that an ordinary intelligence could not master in a month, realized this. She herself, it went without saying, always saw at once exactly what Mr. Strong meant; she personally liked those abrupt and smiling stops that left Mr. Strong's meaning as it were hung up in the air; but it was a mistake to suppose that everybody was as clever as she and Mr. Strong. "I's" had to be dotted and "t's" crossed for the multitude. But it was at that point that Mr. Strong always became almost languid.

It was inevitable that the man who had thus revealed to her, after a single glance at her, such splendid and unsuspected capacities within herself, should exercise a powerful fascination over Amory. If he had seen all this in her straight away (as he assured her he had), then he was a man not lightly to be let go. He might be the man to show her even greater things yet. He puzzled her; but he appeared to understand her; and as both of them understood everybody else, she was aware of a challenge in his society that none other of her set afforded her. He could even contradict her and go unsacked. Prudent people, when they sack, want to know what they are sacking, and Amory did not know. Therefore Mr. Strong was quite sure of his job until she should find out.

Another thing that gave Mr. Strong this apparently off-hand hold over her was the confidential manner in which he had warned her not to take Mr. Brimby, the novelist, too seriously. For without the warning Amory, like a good many other people, might have committed precisely that error.... But when Mr. Brimby, taking Amory apart one day, had expressed in her ear a gentle doubt whether Mr. Strong was quite "sound" on certain important questions, Amory had suddenly seen. Mr. Strong had "cut" one of Mr. Brimby's poignantly sorrowful sketches of the East End—seen through Balliol eyes—and Mr. Brimby was resentful. She did not conceal from herself that he

might even be a little envious of Mr. Strong's position. He might have been wiser to keep his envy to himself, for, while mere details of routine could hardly expect to get Amory's personal attention, there was one point on which Mr. Strong was quite "sound" enough for Amory—his sense of her own worth and of how that worth had hitherto been wasted. And Mr. Strong had not been ill-natured about Mr. Brimby either. He had merely twinkled and put Amory on her guard. And because he appeared to have been right in this instance, Amory was all the more disposed to believe in his rightness when he gave her a second warning. This was about Wilkinson, the Labour Member. He was awfully fond of dear old Wilkie, he said; he didn't know a man more capable in some things than Wilkie was; but it would be foolish to deny that he had his limitations. He wasn't fluid enough; wanted things too much cut-and-dried; was a little inclined to mistake violence for strength; and of course the whole point about the "Novum" was that it was fluid....

"In fact," Mr. Strong concluded, his wary blue eyes ceasing suddenly to hold Amory's brook-brown ones and taking a reflective flight past her head instead, "for a paper like ours—I'm hazarding this, you understand, and keep my right to reconsider it—I'm not sure that a certain amount of fluidity isn't a Law...."

Amory nodded. She thought it excellently put.

IV

THE STONE WALL

Amory sometimes thought, when she took her bird's-eye-view of the numerous activities that found each its voice in its proper place in the columns of the "Novum," that she would have allowed almost any of them to perish for lack of support rather than the Wyron's "Lectures on Love." She admitted this to be a weakness in herself, a sneaking fondness, no more; but there it was—just that one blind spot that mars even the clearest and most piercing vision. And she always smiled when Mr. Strong tried to show this weakness of hers in the light of a merit.

"No, no," she always said, "I don't defend it. Twenty things are more important really, but I can't help it. I suppose it's because we know all about Laura and Walter themselves."

"Perhaps so," Mr. Strong would musingly concede.

Anybody who was anybody knew all about Laura Beamish and Walter Wyron and a certain noble defeat in their lives that was to be accounted as more than a hundred ordinary victories. That almost historic episode had just shown everybody who was anybody what the world's standards were really worth. Hitherto the Wyrons have been spoken of both as a married couple and as "Walter Wyron" and "Laura Beamish" separately; let the slight ambiguity now be cleared up.

Mrs. Cosimo Pratt became on occasion Miss Amory Towers for reasons that began and ended in her profession as a painter; and everybody who was anybody was as well aware that Miss Amory Towers, the painter of the famous feminist picture "Barrage," was in reality Mrs. Cosimo Pratt, as the great mass of people who were nobody knew that Miss Elizabeth Thompson, the painter of "The Roll Call," was actually Lady Butler. But not so with the Wyrons. Reasons, not of business, nor yet of fame, but of a burning and inextinguishable faith, had led to their noble equivocation. Deeply seated in the hearts both of Walter and of Laura had lain a passionate non-acceptance of the merely parroted formula of the Wedding Service. So searching and fundamental had this been that by the time their various objections had been disposed of little had remained that had seemed worth bothering about; and in one sense they had not bothered about it. True, in another sense they had bothered, and that was precisely where the defeat came in; but that did not dim the splendour of the attempt. To come without further delay to the point, the Wyrons had married, under strong protest, in the ordinary everyday way, Laura submitting to the momentary indignity of a ring; but thereafter they had magnificently vindicated the New Movement (in that one aspect of it) by not saying a word about the ceremony of their marriage to anybody—no, not even to the people who were somebody. Then they had flown off to the Latin Quarter.

It had not been in the Latin Quarter, however, that the true character of their revolt had first shown. Perhaps—nobody knows—their relation had not been singular enough there. Perhaps—there were people base enough to whisper this—they had feared the singularity of "letting on." It is easy to do in the Boul' Mich' as the Boul' Mich' does. The real difficulties begin when you try to do in London what London permits only as long as you do it covertly.

And if there had been a certain covertness about their behaviour when, after a month, they had returned, what a venial and pardonable subterfuge, to what a tremendous end! Amory herself, up to then, had not had a larger conception. For while the Wyrons had secretly married simply and solely in order that their offspring should not lie under a stigma, their overt lives had been one impassioned and beautiful protest against any assumption whatever on the part of the world of a right to make rules for the generation that was to follow. No less a gospel than this formed the substance of those Lectures of Walter's; great as the number of the born was, his mission was the protection of a greater number still. The best aspects both of legitimacy and of illegitimacy were to be stereoscoped in the perfect birth. And he now had, in quite the strict sense of the word, a following. The same devoted faces followed him from the Lecture at the Putney Baths on the Monday to that at the Caxton Hall on the Thursday, from his ascending the platform at the Hampstead Town Hall on the Tuesday to his addressing of a garden-party from under the copper-beech at The Witan on the Sunday afternoon. And in course of time the faithfulness of the

followers was rewarded. They graduated, so to speak, from the seats in the body of the building to the platform itself. There they supported Laura, and gave her a countenance that she no longer needed (for she had earned her right to wear her wedding-ring openly now), and flocked about the lecturer afterwards, not as about a mere man, but rather as seeing in him the physician, the psychologist, the expert, the helper, and the setter of crooked things straight that he was.

As a lecturer—may we say as a prophet?—Walter had a manner original and taking in the extreme. Anybody less sustained by his vision and less upheld by his faith might have been a little tempted to put on "side," but not so Walter. Perhaps his familiarity with the stage—everybody knew his father, Herman Wyron, of the New Greek Theatre—had taught him the value of the large and simple statement of large and simple things; anyhow, he did not so much lecture to his audiences as accompany them, chattily and companionably, through the various windings of his subject. With his hands thrust unaffectedly into the pockets of his knickers, and a sort of sublimated "Well, here we are again" expression on his face, he allayed his hearers' natural timidity before the magnitude of his mission, and gave them a direct and human confab. on a subject that returned as it were from its cycle of vastness to simple personal experience again. His every sentence seemed to say, "Don't be afraid; it's nothing really; soon you'll be as much at your ease in dealing with these things as I am; just let me tell you an anecdote." No wonder Laura held her long and muscular neck very straight above her hand-embroidered yoke. Everybody understood that unless she adopted some sort of an attitude her proper pride in such a married lover must show, which would have been rather rubbing it in to the rest of her sex. So she booked dates for new lectures almost nonchalantly, and, when the platform was invaded at the end of the Lecture, or Walter stepped down to the level of those below, she was there in person as the final demonstration of how well these things actually would work as soon as Society had decided upon some concerted action.

Corin and Bonniebell, Amory's twins, did not attend Walter's Lectures. It was not deemed advisable to keep them out of bed so late at night. But Miss Britomart Belchamber, the governess, could have passed—had in fact passed—an examination in them. It had been Amory who, so to speak, had set the paper. For it had been at one of the Lectures—the one on "*The Future Race: Are We Making Manacles?*"—that Miss Belchamber had first impressed Amory favourably. Amory had singled her out, first because she wore the guarantee of Prince Eadmond's Collegiate Institution—the leather-belted brown sleeveless djibbah with the garment of fine buff fabric showing beneath it as the fruit of a roasted chestnut shows when the rind splits—and secondly because of her admirable physique. She was splendidly fair, straight as an athlete, and could shut up her long and massive limbs in a wicker chair like a clasp-knife; and for her movements alone it was almost a sin that Walter's father could not secure her for the New Greek Society's revival of "Europa" at the Choragus Theatre. And she was not too quick mentally. That is not to say that she was a fool. What made Amory sure that she was not a fool was that she herself was not instinctively attracted by fools, and it was better that Miss Belchamber should be ductile under the influence of Walter's ideas than that she should have just wit enough to ask those stupid and conventional and so-called "practical" questions that Walter always answered at the close of the evening as patiently as if he had never heard them before. And Miss Belchamber told the twins stories, and danced "Rufty Tufty," with them, and "Catching of Quails," and was really cheap at her rather stiff salary. Cosimo loved to watch her at "Catching of Quails." If the children did not grow up with a love of beauty after that, he said, he gave it up. (The twins, by the way, unconsciously served Amory as another example of Dorothy Tasker's unreasonableness. As the mother of Noel and Jackie, Dorothy seemed rather to fancy herself as an experienced woman. But Amory could afford to smile at this pretension. There was a difference in age of a year and more between Noel and Jackie. No doubt Dorothy knew a little, but she, Amory, could have told her a thing or two).

On a Wednesday afternoon about a fortnight after Lady Tasker's visit to The Witan, Amory walked the garden thoughtfully. The weather was growing chilly, the hammock had been taken in, and her feet in the fallen leaves made a melancholy sound. Cosimo had left her half an hour before; certain points had struck him in the course of conversation which he thought ought to be incorporated in the "*Life and Work*"; and it was a rule at The Witan that nothing must ever be allowed to interfere with the impulse of artistic creation. For the matter of that, Amory herself was creating now, or at any rate was at the last preparatory stage that immediately precedes creation. Presently she would

have taken the plunge and would be deep in the new number of the "Novum." For the moment she was thinking of Mr. Strong.

As she tried to clear up exactly what place Mr. Strong had in her thoughts she was struck by the dreadful tendency words and names and definitions have to attach themselves to vulgar and ready-made meanings—a tendency so strong that she had even caught herself more than once jumping to a common conclusion. To take an example, though a rather preposterous one. Had Dorothy, with one of her ridiculous advertisements waiting to be done, confessed to her that instead of setting about it she was thinking of a male person with a pair of alert blue eyes and a curiously mobile and clean-cut mouth (not that it was likely that Dorothy would have had the candour to make such a confession)—well, Amory might have smiled just like anybody else. She was not trying to make herself out any better than others. She was candid about it, however, which they were often not.

Still, the trouble about her feeling for Mr. Strong was to find a word for it that had not been vulgarized. She was, of course, exceedingly interested in him, but that was not saying very much. She "liked" him, too, but that again might mean anything. Her difficulty was that she herself was so special; and so on second thoughts she might have been right in giving an interpretation to Dorothy's actions, and Dorothy quite wrong in giving the same interpretation to hers merely because the data were the same.

Nor had Mr. Strong himself been able to help her very much when, a couple of days before, she had put the question to him, earnestly and without hateful false shame.

"What *is* this relation of ours?" she had asked him, point-blank and fearlessly.

"Eh?" Mr. Strong had replied, a little startled.

"There *must* be a relation of some sort between every two people who come into contact. I'm just wondering exactly what ours *is*."

Then Mr. Strong had knitted his brows and had said, presently, "I see.... Have you read '*The Tragic Comedians*?'"—Amory had not, and the copy of the book which she had immediately ordered had not come yet. And then she too had knitted her brows. She had caught the trick from him.

"I suppose that what it really comes to is knowing *yourself*," she had mused; and at that Mr. Strong had given her a quick approving look, almost as if he said that if she put in her thumb in the same place again she might pull out a plum very well worth having.

"And not," Amory had continued, curiously heartened, "anything about the other person at all."

"Good, good," Mr. Strong had applauded under his breath; "have you Edward Carpenter's book in the house, by the way?... Never mind: I'll send you my copy."

He had sent it. It was in Amory's hand now. She had discovered that it had a catching and not easily identifiable smell of its own, of Virginia cigarettes and damp and she knew not what else, all mingled; and somehow the smell seemed quite as much an answer to the question she had asked as anything in the book itself.

Nor, despite Walter's special knowledge of these indications, could she go to the Wyrons for diagnosis and advice. For one thing, there was her own position of high patronage to be considered; for another, splendidly daring as the Wyrons' original protest had been, the Lectures had lately begun to have a little the air of a shop, over the counter of which admittedly valuable specifics were handed, but with a kind of "*And* the next article, please?" suspicion about it. Besides, the Wyrons, having no children, had of necessity to "chic" a little in cases where children formed a complicating element. Besides ... but anyway, Amory wasn't going either to Laura Beamish or to Walter Wyron.

She made a charming picture as she walked slowly the length of the privet hedge and then turned towards the copper beech again. Mr. Strong had said that he liked her in that dress—an aluminium-grey one, very simple and very expensive, worn with a handsome Indian shawl, a gift of Mr. Prang's, the mellow colour of which "led up" to the glowing casque of her hair; and she had smiled when Mr. Strong had added that Britomart Belchamber's rough tabards and the half-gym costume in which she danced "Rufty Tufty" would not have suited her, Amory, at all. Probably they wouldn't—not as a regular thing. Cosimo liked those, especially when the wearer was largish;

indeed, it was one of Cosimo's humours to pose as Britomart's admirer. But Amory was small, and never shut her limbs up like a multiple-lever in a basket chair, but drew her skirt down a foot or so below her toes instead whenever she sat down. She fancied, though Mr. Strong had never used the word, that the "Novum's" editor found Miss Belchamber just a little hoydenish.

Amory wished that something would bring Mr. Strong up that afternoon. It was one of the days on which the editing of the "Novum" could take care of itself, and besides, they would actually be editing it together. For the next number but one—the forthcoming one was already passed—was to be their most important utterance yet. It was to indicate clearly, firmly and once for all, their Indian policy. The threatened failure of the monsoon made the occasion urgent, and Mr. Suwarree Prang himself had explained to Amory only the night before precisely what the monsoon was, and how its failure would provide, from the point of view of those who held that the present wicked regime of administration by the strong hand was at last tottering to its fall, a providential opportunity. It had struck Amory as wondrously romantic and strange that a meteorological condition half-way round the world, in a place she had never seen, should thus change the course of her quiet life in Hampstead; but, properly considered, no one thing in this wonderful world was more wonderful than another. It was Life, and Life, as she remembered to have read somewhere or other, is for the Masters of it. And she was beginning to find that after all these things only required a little confidence. It was as easy to swim in six miles deep of water, like that place in Cosimo's atlas of which the name escaped her for the moment, as it was in six feet. And Mr. Prang had talked to her so long and so vividly about India that she sometimes found it quite difficult to realize that she had never been there.

Still wishing that Mr. Strong would come, she slowly left the garden and entered the house. In the hall she paused for a moment, and a tender little smile softened her face. She had stopped before the exquisite casts of the foot and the arm. Pensively she took the foot up from the console table, and then, coming to a resolution, she took the arm down from its hook on the wall. After all, beautiful as she had to admit them to be, the studio, and not the hall, was the proper place for them.

With the foot and Edward Carpenter in her left hand, and the plaster arm hugged to her right breast, she walked along the passage and sought the studio.

It was called the studio, and there certainly were canvases and easels and other artists' paraphernalia there, but it was less used for painting than as a room for sitting and smoking and tea and discussion. It was a comfortable apartment. Rugs made islands on the thick cork floor-covering, and among the rugs were saddlebag chairs, a long adjustable chair, and a wide couch covered with faded tapestry. The room was an annex of corrugated iron lined with matchboarding, but electric-light fittings depended from the iron ties overhead, and in place of an ordinary hearth was a sort of stage one, with an imitation log of asbestos, which, when you put a match to it, broke into a licking of blue and yellow gas-jets. The north window occupied the whole of the garden end, and, facing it, was the large cartoon for Amory's unfinished allegorical picture, "*The Triumph of Humane Government*." High up and just within the door was the bell that answered to the button outside.

Amory was putting down the casts on a Benares tray when the ringing of this bell startled her. But as it rang in the kitchen also, she did not move to answer it. She stood listening, the fingers of one hand to her lips, those of the other still resting on the plaster shoulder. Then she heard a voice, and a moment later there came a tap at the door.

It was Mr. Strong.

He advanced, and did a thing he had not done before—lifted the hand she extended to his lips and then let it drop again. But Amory was not surprised. It was merely a new and natural expression of the homage he had never concealed, and even had Amory been vain enough to suppose that it meant anything more, the briskness of the "Good afternoon" that followed it would have disabused her. "Glad I found you," Mr. Strong said. "I wanted to see you. Cosimo in?"

Her husband was always Cosimo to him, but in speaking to herself he used no name at all. It was as if he hesitated to call her Amory, and refused to call her Mrs. Pratt. Even "Miss Towers" he had only used once, and that was some time ago.

Amory's fingers left the cast, and Mr. Strong walked towards the asbestos log.—"May I?" he said, drawing forth a packet of Virginia cigarettes; and afterwards he put the match with which he lighted one of the cigarettes to the log. Amory drew up a small square footstool, and put her elbows on her knees and her interwoven fingers beneath her chin. Mr. Strong examined the end of his cigarette, and thrust his chin down into his red tie and his hands deep into his trousers pockets. Then he seemed to plunge into thought.

Suddenly he shot a glance at Amory, and said abruptly, "I suppose you've talked over the Indian policy with Cosimo?"

It was nice and punctilious of him, the way he always dragged Cosimo in, and Amory liked it. She felt sure that the editor of the "Times," calling on the Prime Minister's wife, would not ignore the Prime Minister. But to-day she was a little abstracted—dull—she didn't know exactly what; and so she replied, without moving, "Would you like him here? He's busy with the '*Life*'."

"Oh no, don't trouble him then."

There was a pause. Then, "I did talk to him about it. And to Mr. Prang," Amory said.

"Oh. Hm. Quite so," said Mr. Strong, looking at the toes of his brogues.

"Yes. Mr. Prang was here last night," Amory continued, looking at the points of her own slippers.

"Yes."

Again Mr. Strong's chin was sunk into his red tie. He was rising and falling slowly on his toes. His eyes moved ruminatively sideways to the rug at Amory's feet.

"Yes. Yes. I've been wondering——" he said thoughtfully.

"Well?"

"Oh, nothing really. I dare say I'm quite wrong. You see, Prang——"

"What?" Amory asked as he paused again.

There was a twinkle in the eyes that rose to Amory's. Mr. Strong gave a slight shrug.—"Well—Prang!——" he said with humorous deprecation.

Amory was quick.—"Oh!—You don't mean that Mr. Prang isn't sound?"

"Sound? Perfectly, perfectly. And a most capable fellow. Only I've wondered once or twice whether he isn't—you know—just a little *too* capable.... You see, we want to use Prang—not to have Prang using *us*."

Amory could not forbear to smile. If that was all that was troubling Mr. Strong she thought she could reassure him.

"I don't think you'd have been afraid of that if you'd been here last night," she replied quietly. "We were talking over England's diabolical misrule, and I never knew Mr. Prang so luminous. It was pathetic—really. Cosimo was talking about that Rawal Pindi case—you know, of that ruffianly young subaltern drawing down the blinds and then beating the native.—'But how do they take it?' I asked Mr. Prang, rather scornfully, you know; and really I was sorry for the poor fellow, having to apologize for his country.—'That's it,' he said sadly—it was really sad.—And he told me, frankly, that sometimes the poor natives pretended they were killed, and sometimes they announce that they're going to die on a certain day, and they really *do* die—they're so mystic and sensitive—it was *most* interesting.... But what I mean is, that a gentle and submissive people like that—Mr. Prang admits that's their weakness—I mean they *couldn't* use *us*! It's our degradation that we aren't gentle and sensitive too. You see what I mean?"

"Oh, quite," Mr. Strong jerked out. "Quite."

"And that's why I call Mr. Prang an idealist. There must be something *in* the East. At any rate it was splendid moral courage on Prang's part to say, quite openly, that they couldn't do anything without the little handful of us here, but must simply go on suffering and dying."

There fell one of the silences that usually came when Mr. Strong lost interest in a subject. Merely adding, "Oh, I've not a word to say against Prang, but——," he began to rise and fall on his toes again. Then he stepped to the Benares table where the casts were. But he made no criticism of them. He picked the foot up, and put it down again. "I like it," he said, and returned once more to the asbestos hearth. The silence fell again.

Amory, sitting on the footstool with her knees supporting her elbows and her wrists supporting her chin, would have liked to offer Mr. Strong a penny for his thoughts. She had had an odd, warm little sensation when he had picked up that cast of the perfect foot. She supposed he must know that it was her foot, but so widely had his thoughts been ranging that he had merely put it down again with an abstracted "I like it." Amory was not sure that any other woman than herself would not have been piqued. Any other woman would have expected him either not to look at the thing, or else to say that it was small, or to ask whether the real one was as white, or something foolish like that. But Amory was superior to such things. She lived on higher levels. On these levels such an affront to the pure intellect as a flirtation could not exist. Free Love as a logical and defensible system—yes, perhaps; or a combination so happy of marriage and cohabitation as that of the Wyrons'—yes again; but anything lower she left to the stupid people who swallowed the conventions whole, including the convention of not being found out.—So she merely wondered about their relation again. Obviously, there must be a relation. And yet his own explanation had been quite insufficient; it had been no explanation at all to ask her whether she had read "*The Tragic Comedians*" or whether she had Edward Carpenter in the house. No doubt it was flattering to her intelligence to suppose that she could "flash" at his meaning without further words on his part, but it was also a little irritating when the flash didn't come. And, now that she came to think of it, except that he allowed it to be inferred that he found Britomart Belchamber a bit lumpish, she didn't know what he thought, not merely of herself, but of women at all.

And yet there was a passed-through-the-furnace look about him that might have piqued any woman. It was not conceivable that his eyes had softened only over inspired passages in proof, or that the tenderest speeches his lips had shaped had been the "Novum's" rallying-cries to the devoted band of the New Imperialists. Amory was sure that his memory must be a maze of things, less spacious perhaps, but far more interesting than these. He looked widely now, but must have looked close and intense too. He pronounced upon the Empire, but, for all he was not married, must have probed deep into the palpitating human heart as well.

Amory was just thinking what a gage of intimacy an unembarrassed silence can be when Mr. Strong broke it. He lighted another cigarette at the end of the last, turned, threw the end on the asbestos log, and stood looking at the purring blue and yellow jets. No doubt he was full of the Indian policy again.

But as it happened it was not the Indian policy—"Oh," Mr. Strong said, "I meant to ask you—Who was that fellow who came up here one day?"

This was so vague that when Amory said "What fellow?" Mr. Strong himself saw the vagueness, and laughed.

"Of course: 'How big is a piece of wood?'—I mean the fellow who came to The Witan in a morning-coat?"

This was description enough. Amory's back straightened a little.

"Oh, Stanhope Tasker! Oh, just the husband of a friend of mine. I don't think you've met her. Why?"

Surely, she thought, Mr. Strong was not going to tell her that "Stanhope Tasker was an excellent fellow in his way, but——," as he had said of Mr. Brimby, Mr. Wilkinson and Mr. Prang!——

"Oh, nothing much. Only that I saw him to-day," Strong replied offhandedly.

"He's often about. He isn't a very busy man, I should say," Amory remarked.

"Saw him in Charing Cross Road as I was coming out of the office," Mr. Strong continued. "I don't think he saw me though."

"After his abominable manners to you that day I should think he'd be ashamed to look you in the face."

For a moment Mr. Strong looked puzzled; then he remembered, and laughed again.

"Oh, I didn't mind that in the least! Rather refreshing in fact. Far more likely he didn't notice me because he had his wife with him. I think you said he was married?"

Amory was just about to say that Mr. Strong gave Stan far more magnanimity than he deserved when a thought arrested her. Dorothy in Charing Cross Road! As far as she was aware Dorothy had not been out of Hampstead for weeks, and even then kept to the less frequented parts of the Heath. It wasn't likely....

Her eyes became thoughtful.

"Oh? That's funny," she said.

"What, that he shouldn't see me? Oh no. They seemed far more interested in electric-light fittings."

Amory's eyes grew more thoughtful still—"Oh!" she said; and added, "Did you think her pretty?"

"Hm—in a way. Very well dressed certainly; they both were. But I don't think these black Spanish types amuse me much," Mr. Strong replied.

Dorothy a black Spanish type!

"Oh, do tell me what she had on!" said Amory brightly.

She rather thought she knew most of Dorothy's dresses by this time.

A black Spanish type!

The task of description was too much for Mr. Strong, but he did his best with it. Amory was keenly interested. But she pocketed her interest for the present, and said quite banteringly and with an almost arch look, "Oh, I should have thought Mrs. Tasker exactly your type!"

Again the quick motion of Mr. Strong's blue eyes suggested an audible click—"Oh? Why?" he asked.

"Oh, there's no 'why' about it, of course. It's the impression of you I had, that's all. You see, you don't particularly admire Miss Belchamber——"

"Oh, come! I think Miss Belchamber's an exceedingly nice girl, only——"

"Well, Laura Beamish, then. But I forgot; you don't go to Walter's Lectures. But I wonder whether you'd admire Laura?"

"If she's black and Spanish you think I should?" He paused. "Is she?"

"No. Brown and stringy rather, and with eyes that open and shut very quickly.... But I'm very absurd. There's no Law about these things really. Only, you see, I've no idea of the kind of woman you *do* admire?"

She said it smilingly, but that did not mean that she was not perfectly candid and natural about it too. Why not be natural about these things? Amory knew people who were natural enough about their preferred foods and clothing and houses; was a woman less than an entrée, or a bungalow, or a summer overcoat? Besides, it was so very much more intrinsically interesting. Walter Wyron had made a whole Lecture on it—Lecture No. II, "*Types and Tact*," and Walter had barely touched the fringe of the subject. Amory wanted to go a little deeper than that. But she also wanted to get away from those vulgarized words and ready-made conclusions, and to have each case considered on its merits. Surely it ought to be possible to say that the presence of a person affected you pleasantly, or unpleasantly, without sniggering inferences of a *liaison* in the one case or of a rupture in the other!

Therefore it was once more just a little irritating that Mr. Strong, instead of telling her what type he did admire, should merely laugh and say, "Well—not Mrs. Tasker." If Amory had a criticism at

all to make of Mr. Strong it was this habit of his of negatives, that sometimes almost justified the nickname Mr. Brimby had given him, of "Stone Wall Strong." So she dropped one hand from her chin, allowing it to hang loose over her knee while the other forearm still kept its swan's-neck curve, and said abruptly, "Well—about the Indian Number. Let's get on."

"Ah, yes," said Mr. Strong. "Let's get on."

"What had we decided?"

"Only Prang's article so far."

"But you say you have your doubts about it?"

Mr. Strong hesitated. "Only about its selling-power," he said with a little shrug. "We must sell the paper, you see. It's not paying its way yet."

"Well, I'm sure that's not Mr. Prang's fault," Amory retorted. "He's practically made the export circulation."

"You mean the Bombay circulation? Yes, I suppose he has. I don't deny it."

"You can't deny it. Since Prang began to write for us we've done awfully well in Bombay."

To that too, Mr. Strong assented. Then Amory, after a moment's pause, spoke quietly. She did not like to think of her editor as jealous of his own contributors.

"I know you don't like Mr. Prang," she said, looking fixedly at the asbestos log.

"I!" began Stone Wall Strong. "Why, you know I think he's a first rate fellow, if only——"

This time, however, Amory really did intend to get it out of him. For once she would have one of those hung-up sentences completed.

"If only what?" she said, looking up at him.

"Oh, I don't know—as you said a moment ago, there's no 'why' about these things——"

"But I did give you my impression. You don't give me yours."

"You did, I admit. Yes, I admit you did.... What is it you want to know, then?"

"Only why you seem so doubtful about Mr. Prang."

"Ah!" said Mr. Strong....

Those who knew Edgar Strong the best said that he was a man who, other things being equal, would rather go straight than not. Even when the other things were not quite equal, he still had a mild preference for straightness. But if other people positively insisted that he should deviate from straightness, very well; that was their look-out. He had been a good many things in his time—solicitor's clerk, free-lance journalist, book-pedlar, election-agent's minion, Vanner, poetic vagabond, and always an unerring "spotter" of the literary son of the farming squire the moment he appeared in sight; and the "Novum" was the softest job he had found yet. If the price of his keeping it was that he should look its owner's wife long and earnestly in the eyes, as if in his own there lay immeasurable things, not for him to give but for her to take if she list, so be it; he would sleep none the less well in his rent-free bedroom behind the "Novum's" offices afterwards. His experience of far less comfortable sleeping-quarters had persuaded him that in this imperfect world a man is entitled to exactly what he can get.

His eyes, nevertheless, did not seek Amory's. Instead, roving round the room to see if nothing less would serve (leaving him still with the fathomless look in reserve for emergencies), they fell on the Benares tray and the casts. And as they remained there he suddenly frowned. Amory's own eyes followed his; and suddenly she felt again that little creeping thrill. A faint colour and warmth, new and pleasurable, came into her cheeks.

Then with a little rush, her discovery came upon her....

She *had* got something from Mr. Strong at last!

Her head drooped a little away from him, and the hand that had hung laxly over her knee dropped gently to the rug. It was a delicious moment. So all these weeks and weeks Mr. Strong *had* cared that that foot, that arm, had been exposed to the gaze of anybody who might have entered the house! He had not said so; he did not say so now; but that was it! More, he had cared so much that it had quite distorted his judgment of Mr. Prang. And all at once Amory remembered something else—a glance Edgar Strong had given her, neither more nor less eloquent than the look he was bending on the casts now, one afternoon when she had lain in the hammock in the garden and Mr. Prang, bending over her, had ventured to examine a locket about her throat....

So *that* was at the bottom of his reserve! *That* was the meaning of his "buts"!...

Amory did not move. She wished it might last for hours. Mr. Strong had taken a step towards the casts, but, changing his mind, had turned away again; and she was astonished to find how full of meaning dozens of his past gestures became now that she had the key to them. And she knew that the casts *were* beautiful. Brucciani would have bought them like a shot. And she seemed to see Mr. Strong's look, piteous and frowning both at once, if she should sell them to Brucciani, and Brucciani should publish them to hang in a hundred studios....

The silence between them continued.

But speak she must, and it would be better to do so before he did; and by and bye she lifted her head again. But she did not look directly at him.

"It was very foolish," she murmured with beautiful directness and simplicity.

Mr. Strong said nothing.

"But for weeks I've been intending to move them."

Mr. Strong shrugged his shoulders. It was as if he said, "Well better late than never ... but you see, *now*."

"Yes," breathed Amory, softly, but aloud.

The next moment Mr. Strong was himself again. He returned to his station by the asbestos log.

"Well, there's Prang's article," he said in his business voice. "Am I to have it set up?"

"Perhaps we'd better see what Cosimo says first," Amory replied.

She did not know which was the greater delicacy in Mr. Strong—the exquisite tact of the glance he had given at the casts, or the quiet strength with which he took up the burden of editing the "Novum" again.

V

THREE SHIPS

A white October mist lay over the Heath, and the smell of burning leaves came in at the pond-room window of Dorothy Tasker's flat. But the smell was lost on Dorothy. All her intelligence was for the moment concentrated in one faculty, the faculty of hearing. She was sure Jackie had swallowed a safety-pin, and she was anxiously listening for the click with which it might come unstuck.

"Shall I send for the doctor, m'm?" said Ruth, who stood holding the doorknob in her aproned hand. She had been called away from her "brights," and there was a mournful relish of Jackie's plight on her face.

"No," said Dorothy.... "Oh, I *know* there were twelve of them, and now there are only eleven!... *Have* you put one of these things into your mouth, Jackie?"

"He put it up his nose, mumsie, like he did some boot-buttons once," said Noel cheerfully.

"But he couldn't do that.... *Have* you swallowed it, Jackie?"

"Mmm," said Jackie resolutely, as who should say that that which his hand (or in this case his mouth) found to do he did with all his might.

"Oh dear!" sighed Dorothy, leaning back in her chair....

She supposed it was the still white weather that weighed on her spirits; she hoped so, for if it was not that it was something worse. Even dreary weather was better than bankruptcy. She had sent her pass-book to the bank to be balanced; until it should come back she refused to look at the pile of tradesmen's books that stood on her writing-desk; and borrowing from her aunt was not borrowing at all, but simply begging, since Aunt Grace regarded the return of such loans as the last of affronts.

And (she sighed again) she had been *so* well-off at the time of her marriage! Why, she had had well over a thousand a year from Hallowell and Smith's alone!... But Stan had had a few debts which had had to be settled, and Stan's knowledge of the style in which things ought to be done had been rather a drawback on that trip they had taken to the Riviera, for his ideas of hotels had been a little splendacious, and of dinners to "a few friends" rather daring; and, with one thing and another, the problem of how to satisfy champagne tastes on a beer income had never been really satisfactorily solved by Stan, poor old boy. And he never, never grumbled at home, not even when the cold beef came on three evenings together, which was harder on him than it was on most people. He did what he could to earn, too. It wasn't his fault that the standard of efficiency in the Army was so impracticably high, nor that he had been packed off to try his luck in Canada with the disadvantage of being a remittance-man, nor that, at the age of twenty-seven, when his father had died, he had had to turn to and compete for this job or that with a horde of capable youngsters years his juniors and with fewer hampering decencies. It was his father's fault and Aunt Susan's really, for having sent him to Marlborough and Sandhurst without being able to set him properly on his feet afterwards. Such victims of circumstances, on a rather different level, made husbands who stopped at home and cleaned the knives and took the babies out in the perambulator. In Stan's case the natural result had been to make a young man fit only to join as a ranker or to stand with his back to a mirror in a suspect card-room.

"Shall I take him away, m'm?" Mrs. Mossop asked—("And prepare his winding-sheet," her tone seemed to add).

"Yes, do," Dorothy replied, with a glance at Ruth's blackened hands. "And please make yourself fit to be seen, Ruth. You know you oughtn't to be doing all that on the very day I let Norah out."

She knew that her rebuke had set Ruth up in the melancholy enjoyment of resentment for half a week, but she was past caring. Ruth rose an inch in height at being chidden for the faithful

performance of her most disagreeable duties; she turned; and as she bore the Bits away the mighty roar into which Jackie broke diminished in volume down the passage.

Dorothy sighed, that all her troubles should thus crowd on her at once. Her eyes fell again on the tradesmen's books. It hardly seemed worth while to pay them, since they would only come in again next week, as clamourous and urgent as ever. They were thrust through the letterbox like letters; Dorothy knew very well the thud with which they fell on the floor; but she could never help running out into the hall when they came. She had tried the plan of dispensing with books altogether and paying for everything in cash as she got it, but that had merely meant, not one large worry a week, but harassing little ones all the week through.

Oh, why had she squandered, or allowed Stan to squander, those good round sovereigns of Hallowell and Smith's!——

Still—there is measure in everything—she had not sent her pass-book to the bank in order to learn whether she had a balance. That would have been too awful. It was the amount of her margin that she wanted, and feared, to know. For presently there would be the doctor to pay, and so many guineas a week at the Nursing Home, and the flat going on just the same, and poor old Stan pathetically hoping that a casual dinner-table puff in a Marlborough voice would result in fat new ledger-accounts for Fortune and Brooks' and magnificent commissions for himself. If only she could get just a little ahead of her points! But the money went out just slightly quicker than it came in. Stan carved it as it were in twopences off the cold beef, the Bits swallowed it in pennorths with their breadcrumbs and gravy, and directly the strain eased for a little, down swooped the rent and set everything back again exactly where it had been three months before.

And the Income Tax people had actually sent Stan a paper, wanting to know all about his income from lands, hereditaments, etc., and warning him that his wife's income must be accounted as part of his own!

But it must not be supposed that Dorothy had allowed things to come to this pass without having had an idea. She had an idea, and one that she thought a very good one. Nevertheless, an idea is one thing, and the execution thereof at the proper time quite another. For example, the proper moment for the execution of this idea of Dorothy's was certainly now, or at any rate at the Christmas Quarter (supposing she herself was up and about again by that time and had found a satisfactory sub-tenant for the flat). But the person against whom her idea was designed—who, by the way, happened to be her unsuspecting and much-loved aunt, Lady Tasker—was a very present difficulty. Dorothy knew for a fact that what would be admirably convenient for herself at Christmas could not possibly be convenient to her aunt until, at the very earliest, next summer. That was the crab—the intervening period of nine months. She knew of no mandragora that would put herself, Stan and her Bits of Impudence gently to sleep, to wake up again to easier times.

Oh, why had she spent those beautiful thick sovereigns of Hallowell and Smiths' so recklessly!—

The mist lay flat over the pond outside, making in one corner of it a horrible scum, from which the swans, seeking their food, lifted blackened necks. There was never a ripple on the pond-room walls to-day. Slowly Dorothy rose. Moping was useless; she must do something. She crossed to her writing-desk and took from one of its drawers a fat file, concertina-ed like her own accordion-pleated skirts; and she sat down and opened it fan-wise on her knee. It was full of newspaper-cuttings, draft "ideas" for advertisements, and similar dreary things. She sighed again as her listless fingers began to draw them out. She had not thought at one time that she would ever come to this. By a remarkable piece of luck and light-heartedness and ingenuity she had started at Hallowell and Smith's at the top of the tree; the brains of underlings had been good enough to cudgel for such scrap-stuff as filled her concertina-file; but that was all changed now. Light come, light go; and since the lapse of her contracts she had been glad not only to devise these ignoble lures for the public, but to draw them also. They formed the pennies-three-farthings that came in while Stan carved the twopences from the joint. She had thought the good times were going to last for ever. They hadn't. She now looked enviously up to those who had been her own subordinates.

With no heart in her task at all, Dorothy set about the drafting of an advertisement.

She was just beginning to forget about swallowed safety-pins, and poor luckless Stan, and guineas for her Nursing Home, and the prospect of presently having seven mouths, big and little, to feed—

she was even beginning to cease to hear the clamour of the Bits in the room along the passage—when there came a ring at the bell. Her fair head did not move, but her blue eyes stole abstractedly sideways as Ruth passed the pond-room door. Then a man's voice sounded, and Dorothy dropped her pen....

"Mrs. Tasker," she had heard, with the "a" cut very short and two "s's" in her name....

The next moment Ruth had opened the pond-room door, and, in tones that plainly said "You needn't think that I've forgotten about just now, because I haven't," announced: "Mr. Miller."

Now it was curious that Dorothy had just been thinking about Mr. Miller. Mr. Miller was Hallowells' Publicity Manager, and the time had been when Dorothy had had Mr. Miller completely in her pocket. She had obtained that comfortable contract of hers from Mr. Miller, and if during the latter part of its continuance she had taken her duties somewhat lightly and her pleasures with enormous gusto, she was not sure that Mr. Miller had not done something of the same kind. But the firm, which could excuse itself from a renewal of her own contract, for some reason or other could not get rid of Mr. Miller; and now here was Mr. Miller unexpectedly in Dorothy's flat—seeking her, which is far better for you than when you have to do the seeking. He stood there with his grey Trilby in his hand and his tailor-made deltoids almost filling the aperture of the doorway.

"There, now, if I wasn't right!" said Mr. Miller with great satisfaction, advancing with one hand outstretched. "I fixed it all up with myself coming along that you'd be around the house. I've had no luck all the week, and I said to myself as I got out of the el'vator at Belsize Park, 'It's doo to change.' And here I find you, right on the spot. I hope this is not an introosion. How are you? And how's Mr. Stan?"

He shook hands heartily with Dorothy, and looked round for a place in which to put his hat and stick.

"Why, now, this is comfortable," he went on, drawing up the chair to which Dorothy pointed. "I like your English fires. They may not have all the advantages of steam-heat, but they got a look about 'em—the Home-Idee. And you're looking just about right in health, Mrs. Tasker, if I may say so. You English women have our N'York ladies whipped when it comes to complexion, you have for sure. And how's the family——?"

But here Mr. Miller suddenly stopped and looked at Dorothy again. If the look that came into his eyes had come into those of a young unmarried woman, Dorothy would have fled there and then. He dropped his head for a moment as people do who enter a church; then he raised it again.

"If you'll pardon an old married man and the father of three little goils," Mr. Miller said, his eyes reverently lifted and his voice suddenly altered, "—but am I right in supposing that ... another little gift from the storks, as my dear old Mamie—that was my dear old negro nurse—used to say?" Then, without waiting for the unrequired answer, he straightened his back and squared his deltoids in a way that would have made any of Holbein's portraits of Henry the Eighth look like that of a slender young man. His voice dropped three whole tones, and again he showed Dorothy the little bald spot on the crown of his head.

"I'm glad. I say I'm glad. I'm vurry glad. I rejoice. And I should like to shake Mr. Stan by the hand. I should like to shake you by the hand too, Mrs. Tasker." Then, when he had done so: "It's the Mother-Idee. The same, old-fashioned Idee, like our own mothers. It makes one feel good. Reverent. I got no use for a young man but what he shows lats of reverence for his mother. The old Anglo-Saxon-Idee—reverence for motherhood.... And when, if an old married man may ask the question——?"

Dorothy laughed and blushed and told him. Mr. Miller, dropping his voice yet another tone, told her in return that he knew of no holier place on oith than the chamber in which the Anglo-Saxon-Idee of veneration for motherhood was renewed and sustained. And then, after he had said once more that he rejoiced, there fell a silence.

Dorothy liked Mr. Miller. Once you got over his remarkable aptitude for sincerities he had an excellent heart. Nevertheless she could not imagine why he had come. She shuddered as he seemed for a moment to be once more on the point of removing his shoes at the door of the

Mosque of Motherhood, but apparently he thought better of it. Squaring his shoulders again, and no doubt greatly fortified by his late exercise, he said, "Well, I always feel more of a man after I felt the throb of a fellow-creature's heart. That's so. And now you'll be wondering what's brought me up here? Well, the fact is, Mrs. Tasker, I'm wurried. I got wurries. You can see the wurry-map on my face. Hallowells' is wurrying me. I ain't going to tell you Hallowells' ain't what it was in its pammy days; it may be, or it may not; mebbe you've heard the talk that's going around?"

"No," said Dorothy.

"Is that so? Well, there is talk going around. There's a whole push of people, knocking us all the time. They ain't of much account themselves, but they knock us. It's a power the inferior mind has. And I say I'm wurried about it."

Dorothy, in spite of her "No," had heard of the "knocking" of Hallowell and Smiths', and her heart gave an excited little jump at the thought that flashed across her mind. Did Hallowells' want her back? The firm had been launched upon London with every resource of publicity; Dorothy herself had been the author of its crowning device; and whereas the motto of older firms had been "Courtesy Costs Nothing," Hallowells' had vastly improved upon this. Courtesy had, as a matter of fact, cost them a good deal; but the rewards of the investment had been magnificent. Mr. Miller had known that if you say to people often enough "See how courteous I am," you are to all intents and purposes courteous. But what Mr. Miller had not known had been the precise point at which it is necessary to begin to build up a strained reputation again. Commercial credit too, like those joints Stan carved, comes in in two-pence-halfpennies but goes out in threepences.... And so the "knocking" had begun. Rumours had got about that Hallowells' was a shop where you were asked, after a few unsuitable articles had been shown to you, whether you didn't intend to buy anything, and where you might wait for ten minutes at a counter while two assistants settled a private difference behind it. Did Mr. Miller want her help in restoring the firm's fair name? Did he intend to offer her another contract? Were there to be more of Hallowells' plump, ringing sovereigns—that she would know better how to take care of this time? It was with difficulty that she kept her composure as Mr. Miller continued:

"There's no denying but what inferior minds have that power," he went sorrowfully on. "They can't build up an enterprise, but they can knock, and they been good and busy. You haven't heard of it? Well, that's good as far as it goes, but they been at it for all that. Now I don't want to knock back at your country, Mrs. Tasker, but it seems to me that's the English character. You're hostile to the noo. The noo gives you cold feet. You got a terrific capacity for stopping put. Your King Richard Core de Lion did things in a certain way, and it ain't struck you yet that he's been stiff and straight quite a while. And so when you see something with snap and life to it you start knocking." Mr. Miller spoke almost bitterly. "But I ain't holding you personally responsible, Mrs. Tasker. I reckon you're a wonderful woman. Yours is a reel old family, and if anybody's the right to knock it's you; but *you* appreciate the noo. *You* look at it in the light of history. *You* got the sense of world-progress. *You're* a sort of Lady Core de Lion to-day. I haven't forgotten the Big Idee you started us off with. And so I come to you, and tell you, straight and fair, we want you."

Dorothy was tingling with excitement; but she took up a piece of sewing—the same piece on which she had bent her modest gaze when she had machinated against her aunt on the afternoon on which Lady Tasker had come on, weary and thirsty, from The Witan. It was a piece she kept for such occasions as these. She stitched demurely, and Mr. Miller went on again:—

"We want you. We want those bright feminine brains of yours, Mrs. Tasker. And your ladies' intooition. We're stuck. We want another Idee like the last. And so we come to the department where we got satisfaction before."

Dorothy spoke slowly. She was glad the pond-room was beautifully furnished—glad, too, that the hours Ruth spent over her "brights" were not spent in vain. The porcelain gleamed in her cabinets and the silver twinkled on her tables. At any rate she did not look poor.

"This is rather a surprise," she said. "I hardly know what to say. I hadn't thought of taking on another contract."

But here Mr. Miller was prompt enough.

"Well, I don't know that we were thinking of a noo contract exactly. You're a lady with a good many responsibilities now, and ain't got too much time for contracts, I guess. No, it ain't a contract. It's an Idee we want."

Far more quickly than Dorothy's hopes had risen they dropped again at this. "An Idee:" naturally!... Everybody wanted that. She had not had to hawk an idea like the last—so simple, so shapely, so beauty-bright. And she had learned that it is not the ideas, but what follows them, that pays—the flat and uninspired routine that forms the everyday work of a lucrative contract. It is the irony of this gipsy life of living by your wits. You do a stately thing and starve; you follow it up—or somebody else does—with faint and empty echoes of that thing, and you are overfed. An Idea—but not a contract; a picking of her brains, but no permanent help against that tide of tradesman's books that flowed in at the front door.... And Dorothy knew already that for another reason Mr. Miller had sought her out in vain. Ideas are *not* repeated. They visit us, but we cannot fetch them. And as for echoes of that former inspiration of hers, no doubt Mr. Miller had thought of all those for himself and had rejected them.

"I see," she said slowly....

"Well," said Mr. Miller, his worry-map really piteous, "I wish you could tell me where we've gone wrong. It must be something in the British character we ain't appreciated, but what, well, that gets me. We been Imperialistic. There ain't been one of our Monthly House Dinners but what we've had all the Loyal Toasts, one after the other. There ain't been a Royal Wedding but what we've had a special window-display, and christenings the same, and what else you like. We ain't got gay with the Union Jack nor Rotten Row nor the House of Lords. We've reminded folk it was your own King George who said 'Wake up, England——!'"

But at this point Mr. Miller's doleful recital was cut short by a second ring at the bell. Again Ruth's step was heard in the passage outside, and again Ruth, loftily sulky but omitting no point of her duty, stood with the door-knob in her hand.

"Mrs. Pratt," she announced; and Amory entered.

Seeing Mr. Miller, however, she backed again. Mr. Miller had risen and bowed as if he was giving some invisible person a "back" for leapfrog.

"Oh, I do so beg your pardon!" said Amory hurriedly. "I didn't know you'd anybody here. But—if I could speak to you for just a moment, Dorothy—it won't take a minute——"

"Please excuse me," said Dorothy to Mr. Miller; and she went out.

She was back again in less than three minutes. Her face had an unusual pinkness, but her voice was calm. She did not sit down again. Neither did she extend her hand to Mr. Miller in a too abrupt good-bye. Nevertheless, that worried man bowed again, and looked round for his hat and stick.

"I shall have to think over what you've been saying," Dorothy said. "I've no proposal to make off-hand, you see—and I'm rather afraid that just at present I shan't be able to come and see you——"

There were signs in Mr. Miller's bearing of another access of reverence.

"So I'll write. Or better still, if it's not too much trouble for you to come and see me again——? Perhaps I'd better write first.—But you'll have tea, won't you?"

Mr. Miller put up a refusing hand.—"No, I thank you.—So you'll do your possible, Mrs. Tasker? That's vurry good of you. I'm wurried, and I rely on your sharp feminine brains. As for the honorarium, we shan't quarrel about that. I wish I could have shaken hands with Mr. Stan. There ain't a happier and prouder moment in a man's life than——"

"Good-bye."

And the father of three little goils of his own took his leave.

No sooner had he gone than Dorothy's brows contracted. She took three strides across the room and rang for Ruth. Never before had she realized the inferiority, as a means of expressing temper, of an electric bell to a hand-rung one or to one of which a yard or two of wire can be ripped from

the wall. Only by mere continuance of pressure till Ruth came did she obtain even a little relief. To the high resolve on Ruth's face she paid no attention whatever.

"A parcel will be coming from Mrs. Pratt," she said. "Please see that it goes back at once."

Ruth's head was heroically high. The late Mr. Mossop had had his faults, but he had not kept his finger on electric-bell buttons till she came.

"No doubt there's them as would give better satisfaction, m'm," she said warningly.

But Dorothy rushed on her fate.—"There seems very little satisfaction anywhere to-day," she answered.

"Then I should wish to give the usual notice," said Ruth.

"Very well," said the reckless mistress.... "Ruth!" (Ruth returned). "You forgot what I said about always shutting the door quietly."

This time the door close so quietly behind Ruth that Dorothy heard her outburst into tears on the other side of it.

Second-hand woollies for her Bits!... Of course Amory Pratt had made the proposal with almost effusive considerateness. No doubt the twins, Corin and Bonniebell, *had* outgrown them. Dorothy did not suppose for a moment that they were *not* the best of their kind that money could buy; the Pratts seemed to roll in money. And beyond all dispute the winter *might* come any morning now, and the garments *would* just fit Jackie. But—her own Bits!... She had had her back to the bedroom window when the offer had been made; she knew that her sudden flush had not showed; and her voice had not changed as she had deliberately told her lie—that she had bought the children's winter outfits only the day before....

"I'm sure you won't have any difficulty in giving them away," she had concluded as she had passed to the bedroom door.

"Far less difficulty than you'll find here," she might have added, but had forborne....

Other children's woollies for her little Jackie!——

What gave sting to the cut was that Jackie sorely needed them; but then it was not like Amory Pratt, Dorothy thought bitterly, to make a graceful gift of an unrequired thing. She must blunder into people's necessities. A gift of a useless Teddy Bear or of a toy that would be broken in a week Dorothy might not have refused; but mere need!—"Oh!" Dorothy exclaimed, twisting in her chair with anger....

What a day! What a life! And what a little thing thus to epitomize the whole hopeless standstill of their circumstances!

And because it was a little thing, it had a power over Dorothy that twenty greater things would not have had. She was about to call the precious and disparaged Jackie when she thought better of it. Instead, she dropped her face into her hands and melted utterly. What Ruth did in the kitchen she did in the pond-room; and Jackie, who caught the contagion, filled the passage between with an inconsolable howling.

It was into this house of lamentation that Stan entered at half-past four.

"Steady, there!" he called to his younger son; and Jackie's bellow ceased instantaneously.

"Ruth's c'ying, so I c'ied too," he confided solemnly to his father; and the two entered the pond-room together, there to find Dorothy also in tears.

"Hallo, what's this?" said Stan. "Jackie, run and tell Ruth to hurry up with tea.... Head up, Dot—let's have a look at you——"

Perhaps he meant that Dot should have a look at him, for his face shone with an—alas!—not unwonted excitement. Dorothy had seen that shining before. It usually meant that he had been let in on the ground floor of the International Syndicate for the manufacture of pig-spears, or had secured an option on the world's supply of wooden pips for blackberry jam, or an agency for a

synthesized champagne. And she never dashed the perennial hopefulness of it. The poor old boy would have been heartbroken had he been allowed to suppose that he was not, in intent at any rate, supporting his wife and children.

"What is it, old girl?" he said. "Just feeling low, eh? Never mind. I've some news for you."

Dorothy summoned what interest she could,—

"Not an agency or anything?" she asked, wiping her eyes.

"Better than that."

"Well, some agencies are very good."

"Not as good as this!"

"Put your arm round me. I've been feeling *so* wretched!"

"Come and sit here. There. Wretched, eh? Well, would three hundred a year cheer you up any?"

It would have, very considerably; but Stan's schemes were seldom estimated to produce a sum less than that.

"Eh?" Stan continued. "Paid weekly or monthly, whichever I like, and a month's screw to be going on with?"

Suddenly Dorothy straightened herself in his arms. She knew that Stan was trying to rouse her, but he needn't use a joke with quite so sharp a barb. She sank back again.

"Don't, dear," she begged. "I know it's stupid of me, but I'm so dull to-day. You go out somewhere this evening, and I'll go to bed early and sleep it off. I shall be all right again in the morning."

But from the pocket into which she herself had put four half-crowns that very morning—all she could spare—Stan drew out a large handful of silver, with numerous pieces of gold sticking up among it. A glance told her that Stan was not likely to have backed a winner at any such price as that. Other people did, but not Stan. She had turned a little pale.

"Tell me, quick, Stan!" she gasped.

"You laughed rather at the Fortune & Brooks idea, didn't you?"

"Oh, don't joke, darling!——"

"Eh?... I say, you're upset. Anything been happening to-day? Look here, let me get you a drink or something!"

"Do you mean—you've got a job, Stan?"

"Rather!—I say, do let me get you a drink——"

"I shall faint if you don't tell me——"

She probably would....

Stan had got a job. What was it, this job that had enabled Stan to come home, before he had lifted a finger to earn it, with masses of silver in his pocket, and the clean quids sticking up out of the lump like almonds out of a trifle?

—He would have to lift more than a finger before that money was earned. He would have to hang on wires by his toes, and to swim streams, and to be knocked down by runaway horses, and to dash into burning houses, and to fling himself on desperate men, and to ascend into the air in water-planes and to descend in submarines into the deep. Hydrants would be turned on him, and sacks of flour poured on him, and hogsheads of whitewash and bags of soot. Not for his brains, but for his good looks and steady nerves and his hard physical condition had he been the chosen one among many. For Stan had joined a Film Producing Company, less as an actor than as an acrobat. Go and see him this evening. He is as well worth your hour as many a knighted actor. And the scene from "Quentin Durward," in which Bonthron is strung up with the rope round his neck, is

not fake. They actually did string Stan up, in the studio near Barnet that had been a Drill Hall, and came precious near to hanging him into the bargain.

But he passed lightly over these and other perils as he poured it all out to Dorothy at tea. Pounds, not perils, were the theme of his song.

"I didn't say anything about it for fear it didn't come off," he said, "but I've been expecting it for weeks." He swallowed tea and cake at a rate that must have put his internal economy to as severe a strain as "Mazeppa" (Historical Film Series, No. XII) afterwards did his bones and muscles. "I start on Monday, so breakfast at eight, sharp, Dot. 'Lola Montez.' They've got a ripping little girl as Lola; took her out to tea and shopping the other day; I'll bring her round." ("No you don't—not with me sitting here like a Jumping Bean," quoth Dorothy). "Oh, that's all right—she's getting married herself next month—furnishing her flat now—I helped her to choose her electric-light fittings—you'd like her.... *Ain't* it stunning, Dot!——"

It was stunning. Part of the stunningness of it was that Dorothy, with an abrupt "Excuse me a moment," was enabled to cross to her desk and to dash off a note to Harrods. Second-hand woollies for her Bits! Oh no, not if she knew it!... "Yes, go on, dear," she resumed, returning to the tea-table again. "No, I don't wish it was something else. If we're poor we're poor, and the Services are out of the question, and it's just as good as lots of other jobs.—And oh, that reminds me: I had Mr. Miller in this afternoon!"...

"And oh!" said Stan ten minutes later; "I forgot, too! I met a chap, too—forgotten all about it. That fellow I gave a dressing-down about India to up at the Pratts' there. He stopped me in the street, and what do you think? It was all I could do not to laugh. He asked me whether I could put him on to a job! Me, who haven't started myself yet!... I said I could put him on to a drink if that would do —I had to stand somebody a drink, just to wet my luck, and I didn't see another soul—and I fetched it all out of my pocket in a pub in St. Martin's Lane—," he fetched it all out of his pocket again now, "—fetched it out as if it was nothing—you should have seen him look at it!—Strong his name is—didn't catch it that day he was burbling such stuff——"

Dorothy's eyes shone. Dear old Stan! That too pleased her. No doubt the Pratts would be told that Stan was going about so heavily laden with money that he had to divide the weight in order not to walk lopsided——

Worn woollies for His Impudence's Bits!——

Rather not! There would be a parcel round from Harrods' to-morrow!

VI

POLICY

Amory would have been far less observant than she was had it not occurred to her, as she left Dorothy's flat that day, that she had been hustled out almost unceremoniously. She hoped—she sincerely hoped—that she did not see the reason. To herself, as to any other person not absolutely case-hardened by prejudice, the thing that presented itself to her mind would not have been a reason at all; but these conventional people were so extraordinary, and in nothing more extraordinary than in their regulations for receiving callers of the opposite sex. That was what she meant by the vulgarizing of words and the leaping to ready-made conclusions. A conventional person coming upon herself and Mr. Strong closeted together would have his stereotyped explanation; but that was no reason why anybody clearer-eyed and more open-minded and generous-hearted should fall into the same degrading supposition. It would be ridiculous to suppose that there was "anything" between Dorothy and Mr. Miller. Amory knew that in the past Dorothy had had genuine business with Mr. Miller. And so now had she herself with Mr. Strong. And as for Stan's going about in open daylight with a "dark Spanish type"—a type traditionally wickeder than any other—Amory thought nothing of that either. Stan had as much right to go about with his Spanish female as Cosimo had to take Britomart Belchamber to a New Greek Society matinée or to one of Walter's Lectures. Amory would never have dreamed of putting a false interpretation on these things.

Nevertheless, her visit *had* been cut singularly short, and Dorothy plainly *had* wanted to be rid of her. Because hearts are kind eyes need not necessarily be blind. Amory could not conceal from herself that in magnanimously passing these things over as nothing, she was, after all, making Dorothy a present of a higher standard than she had any right to. Judged by her own standards (which was all the judgment she could strictly have claimed), there was—Amory would not say a fishiness about the thing—in fact she would not say anything about it at all. The less said the better. Pushed to its logically absurd conclusion, Dorothy's standard meant that whenever people of both sexes met they should not be fewer than three in number. In Amory's saner view, on the other hand, two, or else a crowd, was far more interesting. Nobody except misanthropists talked about the repulsion of sex. Very well: if it was an attraction, it *was* an attraction. And if it was an attraction to Amory, it was an attraction to Dorothy also; if to Cosimo, then to Stan as well. The only difference was that she and Cosimo openly admitted it and acted upon it, while Stan and Dorothy did not admit it, but probably acted furtively on it just the same.

It was very well worth the trouble of the call to have her ideas on the subject so satisfactorily cleared up.

At the end of the path between the ponds she hesitated for a moment, uncertain whether to keep to the road or to strike across the sodden Heath. She decided for the Heath. Mr. Strong had said that he might possibly come in that afternoon to discuss the Indian policy, and she did not want to keep him waiting.

Then once more she remembered her unceremonious dismissal, and reflected that after all that had left her with time on her hands. She would take a turn. It would only bore her to wait in The Witan alone, or, which was almost the same thing, with Cosimo. The Witan was rather jolly when there were crowds and crowds of people there; otherwise it was dull.

She turned away to the right, passed the cricket-pitch, found the cycle track, and wandered down towards the Highgate ponds.

She had reached the model-yacht pond, and was wondering whether she should extend her walk still further, when she saw ahead of her, sitting on a bench beneath an ivied stump, two figures deep in conversation. She recognized them at a glance. They were the figures of Cosimo and Britomart Belchamber. Britomart was looking absently away over the pond; Cosimo was whispering in her ear. Another second or two and Amory would have walked past them within a yard.

Now Amory and Cosimo had married on certain express understandings, of which a wise and far-sighted anticipation of the various courses that might be taken in the event of their not getting on very well together had formed the base. Therefore the little warm flurry she felt suddenly at her heart could not possibly have been a feeling of liberation. How could it, when there was nothing to be liberated from? Just as much liberty as either might wish had been involved in the contract itself, and a formal announcement of intention on either part was to be considered a valid release.

And so, in spite of that curious warm tingle, Amory was not one atom more free, nor one atom less free, to develop (did she wish it) a relationship with anybody else—Edgar Strong or anybody—than she had been before. She saw this perfectly clearly. She had talked it all over with Cosimo scores of times. Why, then, did she tingle? Was it that they had not talked it over enough?

No. It was because of a certain furtiveness on Cosimo's part. Evidently he wished to "take action" (if she might use the expression without being guilty of a vulgarized meaning) *without* having made his formal announcement. That she had come upon them so far from The Witan was evidence of this. They had deliberately chosen a part of the Heath they had thought it unlikely Amory would visit. They could have done—whatever they were doing—under her eyes had they wished, but they had stolen off together instead. It was a breach of the understanding.

Before they had seen her, she left the path, struck across the grass behind them, and turned her face homewards. She was far, far too proud to look back. Certainly it was his duty to have let her know. Never mind. Since he hadn't....

Yet the tingling persisted, coming and going in quite pleasurable little shocks. Then all at once she found herself wondering how far Cosimo and Britomart had gone, or would go. Not that it was any business of hers. She was not her husband's keeper. It would be futile to try to keep somebody who evidently didn't want to be kept. It would also take away the curious subtle pleasure of that thrill.

She was not conscious that she quickened the steps that took her to the studio, where by this time Edgar Strong probably awaited her.

Most decidedly Cosimo ought to have given her warning——

As for Britomart Belchamber—sly creature—no doubt she had persuaded him to slink away like that——

Well, there would be time enough to deal with her by and bye——

Amory reached The Witan again.

As she entered the hall a maid was coming out of the dining-room. Amory called her.

"Has Mr. Strong been in?"

"He's in the studio, m'm," the maid replied.

"Are the children with Miss Belchamber?"

"No, m'm. They're with nurse, m'm."

"Is Miss Belchamber in her room?"

"No, m'm. She's gone out."

"How long ago?"

"About an hour, m'm."

"Is Mr. Pratt in?"

"I think so, m'm. I'll go and inquire."

"Never mind. I'm going upstairs."

Ah! Then they had gone out separately, by pre-arrangement! More slyness! And this was Cosimo's "pretence" at being Miss Belchamber's devoted admirer! Of course, if there had been any pretence

at all about it, it would have had to be that he was not her admirer. Very well; they would see about that, too, later!——

She went quickly to her own room, changed her blouse for a tea-gown, and then, with that tingling at her heart suddenly warm and crisp again, descended to the studio.

It was high time (she told herself) that the "Novum's" Indian policy was definitely settled. Mr. Strong also said so, the moment he had shaken hands with her and said "Good afternoon." But Mr. Strong spoke bustlingly, as if the more haste he made the more quickly the job would be over.

"Now these are the lines we have to choose from," he said....

And he enumerated a variety of articles they had in hand, including Mr. Prang's.

"Then there's this," he said....

He told Amory about a crisis in the Bombay cotton trade, and of a scare in the papers that very morning about heavy withdrawals of native capital from the North Western Banks....

"But I think the best thing of all would be for me to write an article myself," he said, "and to back it up with a number of Notes. What I really want cleared up is our precise objective. I want to know what that's to be."

"We'll have tea in first, and then we shall be undisturbed," said Amory.

"Better wait for Cosimo, hadn't we?"

"He's out," said Amory, passing to the bell.

She sat down on the corner of the sofa, and watched the maid bring in tea. Mr. Strong, who had placed himself on the footstool and was making soughing noises by expelling the air from his locked hands, appeared to be brooding over his forthcoming number. But that quick little tingle of half an hour before had had a curious after-affect on Amory. How it had come about she did not know, but the fact remained that she was not, now, so very sure that even the "Novum" was quite as great a thing as she had supposed it to be. Or rather, if the "Novum" itself was no less great, she had, quite newly, if dimly, foreseen herself in a more majestic rôle than that of a mere technical *directrice*.

Politics? Yes, it undoubtedly was the Great Game. Strong men fancied themselves somewhat at it, and conceited themselves, after the fashion of men, that it was they who wrought this marvel or that. But was it? Had there not been women so much stronger than they that, doing apparently nothing, their nothings had been more potent than all the rest? She began to give her fancy play. For example, there was that about a face launching a thousand ships. That was an old story, of course; if a face could launch a thousand ships so many centuries ago, there was practically no limit to its powers with the British Navy at its present magnificent pitch of numerical efficiency. But that by the way. It was the idea that had seized Amory. Say a face—Helen's, she thought it was—had launched a thousand, or even five hundred ships; where was the point? Why, surely that that old Greek Lord High Admiral, whoever he was—(Amory must look him up; chapter and verse would be so very silencing if she ever had occasion to put all this into words)—surely he had thought, as all men thought, that he was obeying no behest but his own. The chances were that he had hardly wasted a thought on Helen's face as a factor in the launching....

Yet Helen's face had been the real launching force, or rather the brain behind Helen's face ... but Amory admitted that she was not quite sure of her ground there. Perhaps she was mixing Helen up with somebody else. At any rate, if she was wrong about Helen she was not wrong about Catherine of Russia. Nor about Cleopatra. Nor about the Pompadour. These had all had brains, far superior to the brains of their men, which they had used through the medium of their beauty. She knew this because she had been reading about them quite recently, and could put her finger on the very page; she had a wonderful memory for the places in books in which passages occurred.... So there were Catherine the Second, and Cleopatra, and the Pompadour, even if she had been wrong about Helen. That was a curious omission of Homer's, by the way—or was it Virgil?—the omission of all reference to the brain behind. Perhaps it had seemed so obvious that he took it for granted. But barring that, the notion of a face launching the ships was very fine. It was the Romantic Point of View. Hitherto Amory had passed over the Romantic Point of View rather lightly, but now she

rather thought there was a good deal in it. At any rate that about the face of a woman being the real launching-force of a whole lot of ships—well, it was an exaggeration, of course, and in a sense only a poetic way of putting it—but it was quite a ripping idea.

So if a ship could be launched, apparently, not by a mere material knocking away of the thingummy, but by the timeless beauty of a face, an Indian policy ought not to present more difficulties. At all events it was worth trying. Perhaps "trying" was not exactly the word. These things happened or they didn't happen. But anybody not entirely stupid would know what Amory meant.

The maid lighted the little lamp under the water-vessel that kept the muffins hot and then withdrew. Amory turned languidly to Mr. Strong.

"Would you mind pouring out the tea? I'm so lazy," she said.

She had put her feet up on the sofa, and her hands were clasped behind her head. The attitude allowed the wide-sleeved tea-gown into which she had changed to fall away from her upper arm, showing her satiny triceps. The studio was warm; it might be well to open the window a little; and Amory, from her sofa, gave the order. It seemed to her that she had not given orders enough from sofas. She had been doing too much of the work herself instead of lying at her ease and stilly willing it to be done. She knew better now. It was much better to take a leaf out of the book of *les grandes maitresses*. She recognized that she ought to have done that long ago.

So Mr. Strong brought her tea, and then returned to his footstool again, where he ate enormous mouthfuls of muffin, spreading anchovy-paste over them, and drank great gulps of tea. He fairly made a meal of it. But Amory ate little, and allowed her tea to get cold. The cast which Stan had coarsely called "the fore-quarter" had been hung up on the wall at the sofa's end, and her eyes were musingly upon it. The trotter lay out of sight behind her.

"Well, about that thing of Prang's," said Mr. Strong when he could eat no more. "Hadn't we better be settling about it?"

"Don't shout across the room," said Amory languidly, and perhaps a little pettishly. She was wondering what was the matter with her hand that Mr. Strong had not kissed it when he had said good afternoon. He had kissed it on a former occasion.

"Head bad?" said Mr. Strong.

"No, my head's all right, but there's no reason we should edit the 'Novum' from the housetops."

"Was I raising my voice? Sorry."

Mr. Strong rose from his footstool and took up a station between the tea-table and the asbestos log.

Amory was getting rather tired of hearing about that thing of Prang's. She did not see why Mr. Strong should shuffle about it in the way he did. The article had been twice "modified," that was to say more or less altered, and Amory could hardly be expected to go on reading it in its various forms for ever. What did Mr. Strong want? If he whittled much more at Mr. Prang's clear statement of a point of view of which the single virtue was its admitted extremeness, he would be reducing the "Novum" to the level of mere Liberalism, and they had long ago decided that, of the Conservative who opposed and the Liberal who killed by insidious kindnesses, the former was to be preferred as a foe. Besides, there was an alluring glow about Mr. Prang's way of writing. No doubt that was part and parcel of the glamour of the East. The Eastern style, like the Eastern blood, had more sun in it. Keats had put that awfully well, in the passage about "parched Abyssinia" and "old Tartary the Fierce," and so had that modern man, who had spoken of Asia as lying stretched out "in indolent magnificence of bloom." Yes, there was a funny witchery about Asia. In all sorts of ways they "went it" in Asia. Bacchus had had a spree there, and it was there—or was that Egypt?—that Cleopatra or the Queen of Sheba or somebody had smuggled her satiny self into a roll of carpets and had had herself carried as a present to King Solomon or Mark Antony or whoever it was. It seemed to be in the Asian atmosphere, and Mr. Prang's prose style had a smack of it too. Mr. Strong—his literary style, of course, she meant—might have been all the better for a touch of that blood-warmth and thrill....

And there were ripping bits of reckless passion in Herodotus too.

But Mr. Strong continued to stand between the tea-table and the asbestos log, and to let fall irresolute sentences from time to time. Prang, he said, really was a bit stiff, and he, Mr. Strong, wasn't sure that he altogether liked certain responsibilities. Not that he had changed his mind in the least degree. He only doubted whether in the long run it would pay the "Novum" itself to acquire a reputation for exploiting what everybody else knew as well as they did, but left severely alone. In fact, he had assumed, when he had taken the job on, that the work for which he received only an ordinary working-salary would be conditioned by what other editors did and received for doing it.... At that Amory looked up.

"Oh? But I thought that the truth, regardless of consequences, was our motto?"

"Of course—without fear or favour in a sense—but where there are extra risks——"

What did this slow-coach of a man mean?——"What risks?" Amory asked abruptly.

"Well, say risks to Cosimo as proprietor."

"You mean he might lose his money?" she said, with a glance round the satiny triceps and the apple-bud of an elbow.

"Well—does he *want* to lose his money?—What I mean is, that we aren't paying our way—we've scarcely any advertisements, you see——"

"I think that what you mean is that we ought to become Liberals?" There was a little ring in Amory's voice.

Mr. Strong made no reply.

"Or Fabians, perhaps?"

Still Mr. Strong did not answer.

"Because if you *do* mean that, I can only say I'm—disappointed in you!"

Now those who knew Edgar Strong the best knew how exceedingly sensitive he was to those very words—"I'm disappointed in you." In his large and varied experience they were invariably the prelude to the sack. And he very distinctly did not want the sack—not, at any rate, until he had got something better. Perhaps he reasoned within himself that, of himself and Prang, he would be the more discreet editor, and so lifted the question a whole plane morally higher. Perhaps, if it came to the next worst, he was prepared to accept the foisting of Prang upon him and to take his chance. Anyway, his face grew very serious, and he reached for the footstool, drew it close up to Amory's couch, and sat down on it.

"I wonder," he said slowly, looking earnestly at his folded hands, "whether you'll put the worst interpretation on what I'm going to say."

Amory waited. She dropped the satiny-white upper arm. Mr. Strong resumed, more slowly still—

"It's this. We're risking things. Cosimo's risking his money, but he may be risking more than that. And if he risks it, so do I."

Into Amory's pretty face had come the look of the woman who prefers men to take risks rather than to talk about them.—"What do you risk?" she asked in tones that once more chilled Mr. Strong.

"Well, for one thing, a prosecution. Prang's rather a whole-hogger. It's what I said before—we want to use him, not have him use us."

"Oh?" said Amory with a faint smile. "And can't you manage Mr. Prang?"

There was no doubt at all in Mr. Strong's mind what that meant. "Because if you can't," it plainly meant, "I dare say we can find somebody who can." Without any qualification whatever, she really was beginning to be a little disappointed in him. She wondered how Cleopatra or the Queen of Sheba would have felt (had such a thing been conceivable) if, when that carpet had been carried by the Nubians into her lover's presence and unrolled, Antony or whatever his name was had blushed

and turned away, too faint-hearted to take the gift the gods offered him? Risks! Weren't—Indian policies—worth a little risk?...

Besides, no doubt Cosimo was still with Britomart Belchamber....

She put her hands behind her head again and gave a little laugh.

Well, (as Edgar Strong himself might have put it in the days when his conversation had been slangier than it was now), it was up to him to make good pretty quickly or else to say good-bye to the editorship of a rag that at least did one bit of good in the world—paid Edgar Strong six pounds a week. And if it must be done it must, that was all. Damn it!...

Perhaps the satiny upper arm decided his next action. Once before he had made its plaster facsimile serve his turn, and on the whole he would have preferred to be able to do so again; but even had that object not been out of reach on the wall and its original not eighteen inches away at the sofa's end, three hundred pounds a year in jeopardy must be made surer than that. He would have given a month's screw could Cosimo have come in at that moment. He actually did give a quick glance in the direction of the door....

But no help came.

Damn it——!

The next moment he had kissed that satiny surface, and then, gloomily, and as one who shoulders the consequences of an inevitable act, stalked away and stood in the favourite attitude of Mr. Brimby's heroes under great stress of emotion—with his head deeply bowed and his back to Amory. There fell between them a silence so profound that either became conscious at the same moment of the soft falling of rain on the studio roof.

Then, after a full minute and a half, Mr. Strong, still without turning, walked to the table on which his hat lay. Always without looking at Amory, he moved towards the door.

"Good-bye," he said over his shoulder.

There was the note of a knell in his tone. He meant good-bye for ever. All in a moment Amory knew that on the morrow Cosimo would receive Edgar Strong's formal resignation from the "Novum's" editorial chair, and that, though Edgar might retain his hold on the paper until his successor had been found, he would never come to The Witan any more. He had called Mr. Prang a whole-hogger, but in Love he himself appeared to be rather a whole-hogger. He had all but told her that to see her again would mean ... she trembled. The alternative was not to see her again. His whole action had said, more plainly than any words could say, "After that—all or nothing."

She had not moved. She hardly knew the voice for her own in which she said, still without turning her head, "Wait—a minute——"

Mr. Strong waited. The minute for which she asked passed.

"One moment——," murmured Amory again.

At last Mr. Strong lifted his head.—"There's nothing to say," he said.

"I'm thinking," Amory replied in a low voice.

"Really nothing."

"Give me just a minute——"

For she was thinking that it was her face, nothing else, that had launched him thus to the door. For a moment she felt compunction for its tyranny. Poor fellow, what else had he been able to do?... Yet what, between letting him go and bidding him stay, was she herself to do? At his touch her heart had swelled—been constricted—either—both; even had she not known that she was a pretty woman, now at any rate she had put it to the proof; and the chances seemed real enough that if he turned and looked at her now, he must give a cry, stride across the studio floor, and take her in his arms. Dared she provoke him?...

The moment she asked herself whether she dared she did dare. Not to have dared would to have been to be inferior to those great and splendid and reckless ones who had turned their eyes on their lovers and had whispered, "Antony—Louis—I am here!" If she courted less danger than she knew, her daring remained the same. And the room itself backed her up. So many doctrines were enunciated in that studio, the burden of one and all of which was "Why not?" The atmosphere was charged with permissions ... perhaps for him too. He was at the door now. It was only the turning of a key....

Amory's low-thrilled voice called his name across the studio.

"Edgar——"

But he had thought no less quickly than she. He had turned. Shrewdly he guessed that she meant nothing; so much the better—damn it! There was something female about Edgar Strong; he knew more about some things than a young man ought to know; and in an instant he had found the "line" he meant to take. It was the "line" of honour rooted in dishonour—the "line" of Cosimo his friend—the "line" of black treachery to the hand that fed him with muffins and anchovy paste—or, failing these, the all-or-nothing "line."... But on the whole he would a little rather go straight than not....

Nor did he hesitate. Amory had turned on the sofa. "Edgar!" she had called softly again. He swung round. The savagery of his reply—there seemed to Amory to be no other word to describe it—almost frightened her.

"Do you know what you're doing?" he broke out. "Haven't you done enough already? What do you suppose I'm made of?"

The moment he had said it he saw that he had made no mistake. It would not be necessary to go the length of turning the key. He glared at her for a moment; then he spoke again, less savagely, but no less curtly.

"You called me back to say something," he said. "What is it?"

Instinctively Amory had covered her face with her hands. It was fearfully sweet and dangerous. Flattery could hardly have gone further than that tortured cry, "What do you think I'm made of?" Her heart was thumping—thump, thump, thump, thump. A lesser woman would have taken refuge in evasions, but not she—not she, with Cosimo carrying on with Britomart, and Dorothy Tasker no doubt whispering to her Otis or Wilbur or whatever her American's name might be, and Stan perhaps deep in an intrigue with his Spanish female at that very moment. No, she had provoked him, and he had now every right to cry, not "Have you read '*The Tragic Comedians*'?" but "Do you know what you're doing?"... And he was speaking again now.

"Because," he was saying quietly, "if *that's* it ... I must know. I must have a little time. There will be things to settle. I don't quite know how it happened; I suddenly saw you—and did it. Anyway, it's done—or begun.... But I won't stab Cosimo in the back.... It will have to be the Continent, I suppose. Paris. There's a little hotel I know in the Boulevard Montparnasse. It's not very luxurious, but it's cheap and fairly clean. Seven francs a day, but it would come rather less for the two of us. And you wouldn't have to spend much on dress in the Quartier. Or there's Montmartre. Or some of those out-of-the-way seaside places. I should like to take you to the sea first, and then to a town ____"

He stopped, and began to walk up and down the studio.

Amory was suddenly pale. She had not thought of this. She had thought that perhaps Mr. Strong might give a cry, rush across the studio, and take her in his arms; but of this cold and almost passionless prevision of details she had not dreamed. And yet that was magnificent too. Edgar wasted no time in dalliance when there was planning to be done. There would be time enough for softer delights when the whole of the Latin Quarter lay spread out before them in indolent magnificence of bloom. He was terrifying and superb. Such a man not manage Mr. Prang! Why, here he was, ready to bear her off that very night at a word!

Paris—Montmartre—the Quartier!

It was Romance with a vengeance!

Then at a thought she grew paler still. The children! What about Corin and Bonniebell? It didn't matter so much about Cosimo; it would serve him right; but what about the twins? Were they also to be included in the seven francs a day? And wouldn't it matter how they dressed either in the Quarter? Or did Edgar propose that they should be left behind in Cosimo's keeping, with Britomart Belchamber for a stepmother?

Edgar had reached the door again now. He was not hurrying her, but there was a look on his face that seemed to say that all she needed was a hat and a rug for the steamer.

Such a very different thing from a carpet to roll round her——

She had risen unsteadily from the sofa. She crossed the floor and stood before Edgar, looking earnestly up into his blue eyes. She moistened her lips.

"What's happened——" she began in a whisper....

He interrupted her only to make the slightest of forbidding gestures with his hand; her own hands had moved, as if she would have put them on his shoulders. And she saw that he was quite right. At the touch of her his control would certainly have broken down. She went on, appealingly and almost voicelessly.

"What's happened—had to happen, hadn't it?" she whispered. "*You* felt it sweeping us away too—didn't you?... But need we say any more about it to-night?... I want to think, Edgar. We must both think. There's—there's a lot to think about—and talk over. We mustn't be too rash. It *would* be rash, wouldn't it? Look at me, Edgar——"

"Oh—I must go——," he said with an impatience that he had not to assume.

"But look at me," she begged. "I shan't sleep a wink to-night. I shall think about it all night. It will be lovely—but torturing—dear!—But you'll sleep, I expect...." She pouted this last.

"I'm going away," he announced abruptly.

"Oh!" she cried, startled.... "But you'll come in to-morrow?"

"I shall go away for a few days. Perhaps longer."

"But—but—we haven't settled about the paper!——"

He was grim.—"You don't suppose I can think about the paper *now*, do you?"

"No, no—of course not—but it *must* be done to-day, Edgar! Or to-morrow at the very latest!... Can't we *try* to put this on one side, just for an hour?"

He shook his head before the impossibility....

And that was how it came about that the Indian policy of the "Novum" was left in the hands of Mr. Suwarree Prang.

Part II

I

THE PIGEON PAIR

Amory had been at a great deal of trouble to gather all the opinions she could get about the education of her twins, Corin and Bonniebell; but it was not true, as an unkind visitor who had been once only to The Witan had said, that they were everybody's children. Just because Amory had taken Katie Deedes' advice and had had their hair chopped off short at the nape like a Boutet de Monvel drawing—and had not disdained to accept the spelling-books which Dickie Lemesurier had given them (books in which the difficult abstraction of the letter "A" was visualized for their young eyes as "Little Brown Brother," "B" as "Tabby Cat," and so on)—and had listened to Mr. Brimby when he had said what a good thing it would be to devote an hour on Friday afternoons to the study of Altruism and Camaraderie—and, in a word, had not been too proud and egotistical to make use of a good suggestion wherever she found it—because she had done these things, it did not at all follow that she had shirked her duties. If she did not influence them directly, having other things to do, she influenced those who did influence them, which came to the same thing. She influenced the Wyrons, for example, and nobody could say that the Wyrons had not made a particularly careful study of children. They had, and Walter had founded at least two Lectures directly on the twins and their education.

But the Wyrons, who had submitted to the indignity of marriage for the sake of the race, laboured and lectured under an obvious disadvantage; they had no children of their own. And so Amory had to fill up the gaps in their experience for herself. Still, it was wonderful how frequently the Wyrons' excogitations and the things Amory had found out for herself coincided. They were in absolute accord, for example, about the promise of the immediate future and the hope that lay in the generation to come. The Past was dead and damned; the Present at best was an ignoble compromise; but the Morrow was to be bright and shining.

"Walter and I," Laura sometimes said sadly, "aren't anything to brag about. There is much of the base in us. Our lives aren't what they should be. We're in the grip of inherited instincts too. We strive for the best, but the worst's sometimes too much for us. It's like Moses seeing the Promised Land from afar. We're just in the position of Moses. But these young Aarons——"

Amory thought that very modest and dignified of poor old Laura. She frequently thought of her as 'poor old Laura,' but of course she didn't mean her actual age, which was only two years more than Amory's own. And that was very good, if a little sad, about Moses. The Wyrons did look forth over a Canaan they weren't very likely ever to tread.

Lately—that is to say since that secret and tremendous moment between herself and Edgar Strong in the studio—Amory had fallen into the habit of musing long over the sight of the twins at lessons, at play, or at that more enlightened combination that makes lessons play and play lessons. Sometimes Mr. Brimby, the novelist, had come up to her as she had mused and had asked her what she was thinking about.

"Your little Pigeon Pair, eh?" he had said. "Ah, the sweetness; ah, lucky mother! Grey books have to be the children of some of us; ah, me; yours is a pleasanter path!"

Then he would fondle the little round topiary trees of their heads. Amory was almost as sorry for Mr. Brimby as she was for Laura. His books sold only moderately well, and she had more than once thought she would like the "Novum" to serialize one of them—the one with the little boy rather like Corin and the little girl rather like Bonniebell in it—if Mr. Brimby didn't want too much money for it.

Edgar Strong, on the other hand, never fondled the children, and Amory's heart told her why. How could he be expected to do anything but hate those poor innocents who had come between him and his desire? He must have realized that only the twins had frustrated that flight to Paris. Of course he was polite about it; he said that he was not very fond of children at all; but Amory was not deceived. She was, in a way, flattered that he did not fondle them. It was such an eloquent

abstention. But it would have been more eloquent still had he come to The Witan and not-fondled them oftener.

Therefore it was that Amory looked on Corin and Bonniebell as the precious repositories of her own relinquished joys, and heirs to a happier life than she herself had known. She dreamed over them and their future. Laura Wyron was quite right: by the time they had grown up the fogs of cowardice and prejudice and self-seeking would have disappeared for ever. Perhaps even by that time, as in Heaven, there would be no more marrying nor giving in marriage. Things would have adjusted themselves out of the rarer and sweeter and more liberal atmosphere. Corin, grown to be twenty, would one day meet with some mite who was still in her cradle or not yet born, and the two would look at one another with amazement and delight, and the Ideal Love would be born in their eyes, and Corin would recite a few of those brave and pure and unashamed things out of "Leaves of Grass" to her, and—well, and there they would be.... And Bonniebell, too, would do the same, on a Spring morning very likely, simply clad, cool and without immodest blushes—yes, she too would see somebody, and she would say, gladly and simply, "I am here" (for there would be no reason, then, why she should wait for the youth to speak first), and—well, and there they would be too. And it would be Exogamy, or whatever the word was that Walter used. Either would go forth from the family on the appointed day—or perhaps only Corin would go, and Bonniebell remain behind—but anyway, one, if not both of them would go forth, and rove the morning-flushed hills, alone and free and singing and on the look-out for somebody, and they would look just like pictures of young Greeks, and nobody would laugh, as they did at the poor lady who walked in Greek robes down the Strand....

And Amory herself? Alas! She would be left with the tribe. She would be old then—say fifty-something on the eleventh of October. And Edgar would be old too. They would have to recognize that *their* youth had been spent in the night-time of ignorance and suspicion. *They* would only be able to think of those spirited young things quoting "Leaves of Grass" to one another and wondering what had happened to them....

No wonder Amory was sometimes pensive....

Mr. Wilkinson, the Labour Member, had been to all intents and purposes asked not to fondle the twins. He was a tall spare man with a great bush of pepper-and-salt hair, a Yorkshire accent, and an eye that hardly rested on any single object long enough to get more than a fleeting visual impression of it. He wrote on the first and third weeks of the month the "Novum's" column of "Military Notes," and on the alternate weeks filled the same column with officially inspired "Trade Union Echoes." Between these two activities of Mr. Wilkinson's there was a connexion. He, in common with everybody else at The Witan, was loud in decrying the jobberies and vested interests of Departments, with the War Office placed foremost in the shock of his wrath. But the Trade Unions were another matter, and never a billet-creating measure came before Parliament but he strove vehemently to have its wheels cogged in with those of the existing Trade Union machine. That is to say, that while in theory he was for democratic competitive examination, in practice he found something to be said for jobbery, could the fitting Trade Unionist but be found. He was, moreover, a firebrand by temperament, and this is where the connexion between the "Military Matters" and the "Echoes" appears. Trade Unionists he declared, ought to learn to shoot. The other side, with their cant about "Law and Order," never hesitated to call out the regular troops; therefore, until the Army itself should have been won over by means of the leaflets that were disseminated for the purpose, they ought in the event of a strike to be prepared to throw up barricades, to shoot from cellar-windows, and to throw down chimney-stacks from the housetops. Capitalist-employed troops would not destroy more property than they need; in a crooked-streeted town the advantage of long-range fire would be gone; and Mr. Wilkinson was prepared to demonstrate that a town defended on his lines could hold out, in the event of Industrial War pushed to an extreme, until it was starved into surrender.—These arguments, by the way, had impressed Mr. Prang profoundly.

Now (to come back to the twins) on Corin's fourth birthday Mr. Wilkinson, moved by these considerations, had given him a wooden gun, and in doing so had committed a double error in Amory's eyes. His first mistake had been to suppose that even if, under the present lamentable (but nevertheless existing) conditions of militarism, Corin should ever become a soldier at all, he would be the uncommissioned bearer of a gun and not the commissioned bearer of a sword. And his second mistake had been like unto it, namely, to think that, in the case of a proletariat uprising

say in Cardiff or York, Corin would not similarly have held some post of weight and responsibility on the other side. Corin shoot up through the street-trap of a coal-hole or pot somebody from behind a chimney-stack!... But Amory admitted that it must be difficult for Mr. Wilkinson to shake off the effects of his upbringing. That upbringing had been very different from, say, Mr. Brimby's. Mr. Brimby had been at Oxford, and in nobly stooping to help the oppressed brought as it were a fragrant whiff of graciousness and culture with him. Mr. Wilkinson was a nobody. He came from the stratum of need, and, when it came to fondling the twins, must not think himself a Brimby.... Therefore, Amory had had to ask him to take the gun back (a deprivation which had provoked a mighty outcry from Corin), and to give him, if he must give him something, a Nature book instead.

Katie Deedes and Dickie Lemesurier were both permitted to fondle the twins, though in somewhat different measure. This difference of measure did not mean that either Katie or Dickie suffered from a chronic cold that the twins might have contracted. Here again the case was almost as complicated as the case of Mr. Wilkinson. Cases had a way of being complicated at The Witan. It was this:—

Both of these ladies, as Amory had assured Mr. Brimby, were "quite all right." She meant socially. No such difference was to be found between them in this respect as that which yawned between Mr. Brimby and Mr. Wilkinson. Indeed as far as Dickie was concerned, Amory had given a little apologetic laugh at the idea of her having to place and appraise a Lemesurier of Bath at all. The two girls had equally to work for their living, and—but perhaps it was here that the difference came in. There are jobs and jobs. It was a question of tone. Dickie, running the Suffrage Book Shop, enjoyed something of the glamour of Letters; but Katie, as manageress of the Eden Restaurant, was, after all, only a caterer. It was not Amory's fault that Romance had pronounced arbitrarily and a little harshly on the relative dignity of these occupations. She could not help it that books are books and superior, while baked beans are only baked beans, necessary, but not to be talked about. If Dickie had, by her calling, a shade more consideration than was strictly her due, while Katie, by hers, was slightly shorn of something to which she would otherwise have been entitled, well, it was not Amory who had arranged it so.

But between books and baked beans the twins did not hesitate for an instant. They saw from no point of view but their unromantic own.

Dickie, overhauling the remainder stock at the Suffrage Shop, was able to bring them a book from time to time; but Katie, whose days were spent in a really interesting place full of things to eat, brought them sweetened Proteids, and cold roasted chestnuts, and sugared Filbertine, and sometimes a pot of the Eden Non-Neuritic Honey for tea. And because the flesh was stronger in them than Amory thought it ought to be (at any rate until the day should come when they must leave the tribe with a copy of "Leaves of Grass" in their hands), they adored Katie and thought very much less of Dickie.

Now this belly-guided preference was a thing to be checked in them; and one day Amory had asked Katie (quite nicely and gently) whether she would mind *not* bringing the children things that spoiled their appetites, not to speak of their tempers when they clamoured for these comestibles at times when they were not to be had. Then, one afternoon in the nursery, Amory actually had to repeat her request. Half an hour later, when the children had been brought down into the studio for their after-tea hour, she learned that Katie had left the house. It was Corin himself who informed her of this.

"Auntie Katie was crying," he said. "About the vertisements," he added.

"*Ad*-vertisements, dear," Amory corrected him. "Say *ad*-vertisements, not vertisements."

"*Ad*-vertisements," said Corin sulkily. "But—" and he cheered up again, "—she *was*, mother."

"Nonsense," said Amory. "And you're not to say 'Auntie' to Katie. It isn't true. Your Auntie is your father's or your mother's sister, and we haven't any.... And now you've played enough. Say good-night, both of you, and take Auntie Dickie's book, and ask Miss Belchamber to read you the story of the Robin and her Darling Eggs, and then you must have your baths and go to bed."

"I want the tale about Robin Hood, that Mr. Strong once told me," Corin demurred.

"No, you must have the one about the dear Dickie Bird, who had a wing shot off by a cruel man one day, and had to hide her head under the other one, so that when her Darling Eggs were hatched out the poor little birds were all born with crooked necks—you remember what I told you about the fortress in a horrible War, when the poor mothers were all so frightened that all the little boys and girls were born lame—it's the same thing—"

"Were there guns, that went bang?" Corin demanded. He had forgotten that the story contained this really interesting detail.

"Yes."

"Great big ones?" Corin's eyes were wide open.

"Very big. It was very cruel and anti-social."

But Corin's momentary interest waned again.—"I want Robin Hood," he said sullenly.

"Now you're being naughty, and I shall have to send you to bed without any nice reading at all."

"I want Robin Hood." The tone was ominous....

"And I want some chestnuts," Bonniebell chimed in, her face also puckering....

And so Amory, who had threatened to send them bookless to bed, must keep her word. It is very wrong to tell falsehoods to children. She dismissed them, and they went draggingly out, their Boutet de Monvel hair and fringed *éponge* costumes giving them the appearance of two luckless pawns that had been pushed off the board in some game of chess they did not understand.

Amory thought it very foolish of Katie to take on in this way. She might have known that her advertisements had not been refused without good reason. Amory had fully intended to explain all about it to Katie, but she really had had so many things to do. Nor ought it to have needed explaining. Surely Katie could have seen for herself that Dickie's Bookshop List, with its names of Finot and Forel and Mill and the rest, was a distinction and an embellishment to the paper, while her own Filbertines and Protolaxatives were a positive disfigurement. The proper place for these was, not in the columns of the "Novum," but in the "Please take One" box at the Eden's door.... But if Katie intended to sulk and cry about it, well, so much the worse.... (To jump forward a little: Katie did elect to sulk. Or rather, she did worse. She was so ill-advised as to go behind Amory's back and to speak to Cosimo himself about the advertisements. With that Katie's goose—or perhaps one should say her Anserine—was cooked. Amory did not allow that kind of thing. She certainly did not intend to explain anything after that. It was plain as a pikestaff that Katie was jealous of Dickie. Amory was bitterly disappointed in Katie. Of course she would not forbid her the house; she was still free to come to The Witan whenever she liked; but—somehow Katie only came once more. She found herself treated so very, very kindly.... So she gulped down a sob, fondled the twins once more, and left).

Miss Britomart Belchamber saw enough of the twins not to wish to fondle them very much. Amory was not yet absolutely sure that she fondled Cosimo instead, but she was welcome to do so if she could find any satisfaction in it. Cosimo fondled the twins to a foolish extreme. Mr. Prang could never get near enough to them to fondle them. Both Corin and Bonniebell displayed a most powerful interest in Mr. Prang, and would have stood stock-still gazing at him for an hour had they been permitted; but the moment he approached them they fled bellowing.

And in addition to these various fondlings there were casual fondlings from time to time whenever the more favoured of the "Novum's" contributors were asked to tea.

But the Wyrons remained, so to speak, the *ex-officio* fondlers, and perhaps childless Laura felt a real need to fondle at her heart. It was she who first asked Amory whether she hadn't noticed that, while Mr. Brimby and Dickie frequently fondled the twins separately, more frequently still they did so together.

"No!" Amory exclaimed. "I hadn't noticed!"

"Walter thinks they would be a perfect pair," Laura mused....

II

THE 'VERT

Stan saw very little in the scheme that Dorothy darkly meditated against her aunt. He seldom saw much in Dorothy's schemes. Perhaps she did not make quite enough fuss about them, but went on so quietly maturing them that her income seemed to be merely something that happened in some not fully explained but quite natural order of events. Stan thought it rather a lucky chance that the money usually had come in when it was wanted, that was all.

But of his own job he had quite a different conception. *That* took thought. This appeared plainly now that he was able to dismiss his own past failures with a light and almost derisive laugh.

"I don't know whatever made me think there was anything in them," he said complacently one night within about ten days of Christmas. He had put on his slippers and his pipe, and was drowsily stretching himself after a particularly hard "comic film" day, in the course of which he had been required to fall through a number of ceilings, bringing the furniture with him in his downward flight. He had come home, had had a shampoo and a hot bath, and the last traces of the bags of flour and the sacks of soot had disappeared. "I don't think now they'd ever have come to very much."

"Hush a moment," said Dorothy, listening, her needle arrested half-way through the heel of one of his socks.... "All right. I thought I heard him—Yes?"

She could face young girls now. The third Bit had turned out to be yet another boy.

"I mean," Stan burbled comfortably, "there wouldn't have been the money in them I thought there would. Now take those salmon-flies, Dot. Of course I can tie 'em in a way. But what I

mean is, it's a limited market. Not like the boot-trade, I mean, or soap, or films. Everybody wears boots and sees films. There's more scope, more demand. But everybody doesn't carry a salmon-rod. Comparatively few people do. And the same with big-game shooting. Or deerstalking. Everybody can't afford 'em."

"No, dear," said Dorothy, her eyes downcast.

"Then there was Fortune and Brooks," Stan continued with a great air of discovery. "*I* see their game now. You see it too, don't you?—They just wanted orders. New accounts. That's what they wanted. If I could have put 'em on to a chap who'd have spent say five hundred a year on Chutney and things—well, what I mean is, where would they be without customers like that?"

"Nowhere, dear," said the dutiful Dorothy.

"Exactly. Nowhere. That's what I was leading up to. They wouldn't be anywhere. They just wanted to be put on to these things. And it's just struck me how *I* should have looked, going out to dinner somewhere, strange house very likely, and I'd said to somebody I'd perhaps met for the first time, 'Don't think much of these salted almonds; our hostess ought to try the F. and B. Brand, a Hundred Gold Medals, and see that the blessed coupon isn't broken.'—Eh? See what I mean?"

"I was never very keen on the idea," Dorothy admitted gravely.

"No, and I'm blessed if I see why I was, now," Stan conceded cheerfully....

She loved this change in him which a real job with real money had brought about. Poor old darling, she thought, it must have been pretty rotten for him before, borrowing half-crowns from her in the morning, which he would spend with an affected indifference on drinks and cab fares in the evening. And he *should* speak with a new authority if he wished. Not for worlds would she have smiled at His Impudence's new air of being master in his own house. He *should* be a Sultan if he liked—provided he didn't want more than one wife.

Moreover, his bringing in of money had been a relief so great that even yet she had hardly got out of the habit of reckoning on her own earnings only. It had taken her weeks to realize that now the twopences came in just a little more quickly than they went out, and that she could actually afford herself the luxury of keeping Mr. Miller waiting for his Idea, or even of not giving it to him at all. She really had no Idea to give him. She was entirely wrapped up now in her plot against Lady Tasker.

That plot, summarized from several conversations with Stan, was as follows:—

"You see, there's the Brear, with all that land, Aunt Grace's very own. The Cromwell Gardens lease is up in June, and it's all very well for auntie to say she doesn't hate London, but she does. She spends half a rent, with one and another of them, in travelling backwards and forwards, and she's getting old, too. —Then there's us. We can't go on living here, and the Tonys will be home just as Tim's leave's up, and they're sure to leave their Bits behind. Very well. Now the Tims and the Tonys can't afford to pay much, but they can afford something, and I think they ought to pay. They're sure to want those boys to go into the Army, and they'd *have* to pay for that anyway.—So there ought to be a properly-managed Hostel sort of place, paying its way, and a fund accumulating, and Aunt Gracie at the head of it, poor old dear, but somebody to do the work for her.—I don't see why we shouldn't clear out that old billiard-table that nobody ever uses, and throw that and the gun-room into one, and make that the schoolroom, and have a proper person down —a sort of private preparatory school for Sandhurst and Woolwich, and the money put by to help with the fees afterwards. It would be much easier if we all clubbed together. And I should jolly well make Aunt Eliza give us at least a thousand pounds—selfish old thing."

"Frightful rows there'd be," Stan usually commented, thinking less of Dorothy's plan than of his own last trick-tumble. "Like putting brothers into the same regiment; always a mistake. And we're all rather good at rows you know."

"Well, they're our *own* rows anyway. We keep 'em to ourselves. And we *do* all mean pretty much the same thing when all's said. I'm going to work it all out anyway, and then tackle Aunt Grace.... *I* shall manage it, of course."

She did not add that her Lennards and Taskers and Woodgates would sink their private squabbles precisely in proportion as the outside attacks on their common belief rendered a closing-up of the ranks necessary. But she *had* been to The Witan and had kept her eyes open there, and knew that there were plenty of other Witans about. If stupid Parliament, with its votes and what not, couldn't think of anything to do about it, that was no reason why she should not do something, and make stingy old Aunt Eliza pay for the training of her Bits into the bargain.

She had not seen Amory since that day when the episode of the winter woollies had made her angry, for, though Amory had called once at the Nursing Home soon after the birth of the third Bit, Dorothy had really not felt equal to the hair-raising tale of the twins all over again, and had sent a message down to her by the nurse. There was this difference between this tragic recital of Amory's and the fervour with which Ruth Mossop always hugged to her breast the thought of the worst that could happen—that Ruth *had* known brutality, and so might be forgiven for getting "a little of her own back"; but Amory had known one hardish twelvemonths perhaps, a good many years ago and when she had been quite able to bear it, and had since magnified that period of discomfort by a good many diameters. Amory, Dorothy considered, didn't really know she was born. She was unfeignedly sorry for that. Whatever measure of contempt was in her she kept for Cosimo.

For she considered that Cosimo was at the bottom of all the trouble. If Stan, at his most impecunious and happy-go-lucky, could still stalk about the house saying "Dot, I won't have this," or "Look here, Dorothy, that has got to stop," it seemed to her that Cosimo, with never a care on his mind that was not his own manufacture, might several times have prevented Amory from making rather a fool of herself. But it seemed to Dorothy that kind of man was springing up all over the place

nowadays. Mr. Brimby was another of them. Dorothy had read one of Mr. Brimby's books—"*The Source*," and hadn't liked it. She had thought it terribly dismal. In it a pretty and rich young widow, who might almost have been Amory herself, went slumming, and spent a lot of money in starting a sort of Model Pawn Shop, and by and by there came a mysterious falling-off in her income, and she went to see her lawyer about it, and learned, of course, that her source of income was that very slum in which she had stooped to labour so angelically.... Dorothy didn't know very much about pawnshops, but then she didn't believe that Mr. Brimby did either; and if her interest in them ever should become really keen, she didn't think she should go to Oxford for information about them. And Mr. Brimby himself seemed to feel this "crab," as Stan would have called it, for after "*The Source*" he had written a Preface for a book by a real and genuine tramp.... And it had been Amory who had recommended "*The Source*" to Dorothy. She had said that it just showed, that with vision and thought and heart and no previous experience ("no prejudice" had been her exact words), there need be none of these dreadful grimy establishments, with their horrible underbred assistants who refused a poor woman half a crown on her mattress and made a joke about it, but airy and hygienic rooms instead, with rounded corners so that the dust could be swept away in two minutes (leaving a balance of at least twenty-eight minutes in which the sweeper might improve himself), and really courtly-mannered attendants, full of half crowns and pity and Oxford voice, who would give everybody twice as much as they asked for and a tear into the bargain.

And Amory knew just as much about real pawnshops as did Dorothy and Mr. Brimby.

For the life of her Dorothy could not make out what all these people were up to.

And—though this was better now that Stan was earning—the thought of the money that was being squandered at The Witan had sometimes made her ready to cry. For at the Nursing Home she had had one other visitor, and this visitor had opened her eyes to the appalling rate at which Cosimo's

inheritance must be going. This visitor had been Katie Deedes. Katie too, was an old fellow-student of Dorothy's; it had not taken Dorothy long to see that Katie was full of a grievance; and then it had all come out. There had been some sort of a row. It had been simply and solely because Katie ran a Food Shop. Amory thought that *infra dig*. And just because Katie had given the children a few chestnuts Amory had practically said so.

"*I* shan't go there again," Katie had said, trying on Dorothy's account to keep down her tears. "*I* didn't marry a man with lots of money, and turn him round my finger, and make him write my *Life and Works*, and then snub my old friends! And none of the people who go there are really what she thinks they are. *She* thinks they go to see *her*, but Mr. Brimby only goes because Dickie does, and because he wants to sell the 'Novum' something or other, and Mr. Strong of course has to go, and Mr. Wilkinson goes because he wants Cosimo to stop the 'Novum' and start something else with him as editor, and Laura goes because they get things printed about Walter's Lectures, and I don't know what those Indians are doing there at all, and anyway *I've* been for the last time! I'm just as good as she is, and I should like to come and see you instead, Dorothy, and of course I won't bring your babies chestnuts if you don't want.... But I'm frightfully selfish; I'm tiring you out.... May an A B C girl come to see you?"

And Katie had since been. There is no social reason why the manager of a Vegetarian Restaurant may not visit the house of a film acrobat.

As it happened, Katie came in that very night when the weary breadwinner was painstakingly explaining to his thoughtful spouse his reasons for doubting whether he would ever have got very rich had he remained one of Fortune and Brooks' well-dressed drummers. Katie had a round face and puzzled but affectionate eyes, and Stan was just beginning to school his own eyes not to rest with too open an interest on her Greenaway frocks and pancake hats. Katie for her part was intensely self-conscious in Stan's presence. She felt that when he wasn't looking at her clothes he was, expressly, *not*-looking

at them, and that was worse.... But she couldn't have worn a hobble skirt and an aigrette at the "Eden."... Stan had told Dorothy that when he knew Katie better he intended to get out of her the remaining gruesome and Blue-Beard's-Chamber details which the hoof and the forequarter seemed to him to promise.

"Poor little darlings!" Dorothy exclaimed compassionately by and by—Katie had been relating some anecdote in which Corin and Bonniebell had played a part. "I *do* think it's wrong to dress children ridiculously! The other day *I* saw a little girl —she must have been quite six or seven—and *she'd* knickers like a little boy, and long golden hair all down her back! What *is* the good of pretending that girls are boys?"

"Awful rot," Stan remarked with a mighty stretch. "I say, I'm off to bed; I shall be yawning in Miss Deedes' face if I don't. Is there any arnica in the house, Dot?... Good night——"

"Good night," said Katie; and as the door closed behind the master of the house she settled more comfortably in her chair. "Now that he's stopped not-looking at me we can have a good talk," her gesture seemed to say; "how *does* he expect I can get any other clothes till I've saved the money?"...

They did talk. They talked of the old days at the McGrath, and who'd married who, and who hadn't married who after all, and, in this connection, of Laura Beamish and Walter Wyron, whom they had both known.... And it just showed how little glory and fame were really worth in the world. For Dorothy, who had been living in London all this time, had not heard as much as a whisper of that memorable revolt of the Wyrons against the Marriage Service, and, though she did know vaguely that Walter lectured, had not the ghost of an idea of what his lectures were about. She had been too busy minding her own petty and private and selfish affairs. Katie couldn't believe it. She thought Dorothy was joking.

"You've never heard of Walter's Lecture on '*Heads or Tails in the Trying Time*,' nor his '*Address on the Chromosome*'?" she gasped....

"No; do tell me. What is a Chromosome?"

"A Chromosome? Why, it's a—it's a—well, you know when you've a cell—or a nucleus—or a gland or something—but it isn't a gland—it's the—but you *do* astonish me, Dorothy!"

"But surely you're joking about Walter and Laura?" Dorothy exclaimed in her turn.

"Indeed I'm not! Why, I thought *every*body knew!..."

"(It's all right—he won't come in again). But *why* did they pretend not to be married?" Dorothy asked in amazement.

"I don't know—I mean I forget for the moment—it seemed perfectly clear the way Walter explained it—you ought to go and hear him——"

"But what difference could being married—I mean not being married—make?"

"Ah!" said Katie, with satisfaction at having found her bearings again. "Walter's got a whole Lecture on that. It always thrills everybody. Amory thinks it's almost his best—after the '*Synthetic Protoplasm*' one, of course—that's admitted by everybody to be quite *the* best!"[1]

"Proto ... but I thought those were a kind of oats!" said poor Dorothy, utterly bewildered.

"Oats!" cried Katie in a sort of whispered shriek. "Why, it's—it's—but I don't know even how to *begin* to explain it! Do you mean to say you haven't read about these things?"

"No," murmured Dorothy, abashed.

"Not Monod, nor Ellen Key, nor Sebastien Faure, nor Malom! ——"

"N-o." Dorothy felt horribly ashamed of herself.

"But—but—those *lovely* little boys of yours!——"

She gazed wide-eyed at the disconcerted Dorothy....

It was the humiliating truth: Dorothy had never heard of the existence of a single one of these writers and leaders of thought. She had borne Noel in black ignorance of what they had had to say about the Torch of the Race, and Jackie and the third Bit for all the world as if they had never set pen to paper. Monod had not held her hand, nor Faure been asked for his imprimatur; Key had hymned Love superfluously, and the Synthesists, equally superfluously, its supersession. For a moment she anxiously hoped that it was all right, and then, as Katie went on, the marvel of it all overwhelmed her again.

The dictum that desirable children could be born only *out* of wedlock! That stupendous suggestion of Walter's to millionaires who did not know what to do with their money, that, for the improvement of the Race, they should endow with a thousand pounds every poor little come-by-chance that weighed eleven pounds at birth! That other proposal, that twenty years could straightway be added to woman's life and beauty by a mere influencing of her thoughts about the Chromosome—whatever it was!... Poor uncultured Dorothy did not know whether she was on her head or her heels. She had never dreamed, until Katie told her, that before marrying Stan she ought to have gone to the insect-world, or to the world of molluscs and crustacæ, to learn how *they* maintained the integrity of their own highest type—whether by pulling their wings off after the flight, or devouring their husbands, or —or—or what! She had heard of the moral lessons that can be learned of the ant, but it had not struck her that she and Stan might, by means of a little more study and care, have lifted up the economy of their little flat to the level of the marvellously-organized domesticity you see when you kick over a stone.

But Katie's hesitations and great gaps of confessed ignorance gave her a little more courage. Katie was at pains to explain that all that she herself knew about it all was that these things were what they *said*, and Dorothy must go to Walter and the books for the rest.

"They're all very expensive books, and I may not really have understood them," she said wistfully. "They must be awfully deep and so on if they're so dear—twelve and fifteen and twenty shillings! But I did try so hard, and sometimes it seemed quite reasonable and plain, especially when the print was nice and big.... Close print always seems so frightfully learned.... And I know I've explained it badly; I haven't Walter's gift of putting things. Amory has, of course. When she and Walter have a really good set-to it makes one feel positively *abject* about one's ignorance. I doubt if Cosimo can always *quite* follow them, and I'm quite sure Mr. Strong can't —I know he's only hedging when he says, 'Ah, yes, have you read Fabre on the Ant or Maeterlinck on the Bee?'—and I believe he just glances at the review books that come to the 'Novum' instead of really studying them, as Walter and Amory do. And it's very funny about Mr. Strong," she rattled artlessly on. "Sometimes I've thought that it isn't just that Amory doesn't know what they all go to The Witan for, but that everybody else *does* know. They all seem to want it to themselves. Of course if Mr. Wilkinson wants Cosimo to stop the 'Novum,' and to start something else for him, it's only natural that he and Mr. Strong should be a little jealous of one another; but Dickie and Mr. Brimby are jealous of the Wyrons, and I suppose I was jealous of Dickie too—and everybody seems jealous of everybody, and Amory of Cosimo, and Amory's always interfering between Britomart Belchamber and the twins' lessons, and that *can't* be a very good thing for discipline, but Britomart's like me in being rather stupid, and I wish I'd her screw—she gets nearly twice as much as I do. The only people who don't seem jealous of anybody are those Indians. They're *always* affable. I suppose it's rather nice for them, so far from their own country, having a house to go to...."

But here Dorothy's humility and self-distrust ended. The moment it came to India, she shared her aunt's deplorable narrow-mindedness and propensity to make a virtue of her intolerance. It seemed to her that it was one thing for the Tims and Tonys, in India, to have to employ a native interpreter (and to be pretty severely rooked by him) when they had their Urdu

Higher Proficiency to pass, but quite another for these same natives to come over here, and to learn our law and language, and our excellent national professions, and our somewhat mitigated ways of living up to them. No, she was not one whit better than her hide-bound old aunt, and she did not intend to have too practical a brotherly love taught at that meditated foundation at the Brear....

She became silent as she thought of that foundation again, and presently Katie rose.

"I suppose I couldn't see him in his cot?" she said wistfully.

Dorothy smiled. Katie meant the youngest Bit.

"Well ... I'm afraid he's in *our* room, you see ...," she said.

Katie had been thinking of The Witan. She coloured a little.

"Sorry," she murmured; and then she broke out emphatically.

"I *like* coming to see you, Dorothy. I don't feel so—such a *fool* when I'm with you.... And do tell me where you got that frock, and how much it was; I *must* have another one as soon as I can raise the money! I do wish I could make what Britomart Belchamber makes! Two-twenty a year! Think of that!... But of course Prince Eadmond teachers do come expensive——"

More and more it was coming to seem to Dorothy that the whole thing was terrifically expensive.

III

THE IMPERIALISTS

They were great believers in the Empire, they on the "Novum." Indeed, they were the only true Imperialists, since they recognized that ideas, and not actions, were by far and away the most potent instruments in the betterment of mankind. Everybody who was anybody knew that, a mere sporadic outbreak here and there (such as the one in Manchuria) notwithstanding, war had been virtually impossible ever since the publication of M. Bloch's book declaring it to be so. What, they asked, was war, more than an unfortunate miscalculation on the part of the lamb that happened to lie down with the lion? And what made the miscalculation so unfortunate? Why, surely the possession by the lion of teeth and claws. Draw his teeth and cut his claws, and the two would slumber peacefully together. So with the British lion. He only fought because he had things ready to fight with. Philosophically, his aggressions were not much more than a kind of sportive manifestation of the joy of life, that happened, rather inconsequentially, to take the form of the joy of death. Take away the ships and guns, then, and everything would be all right.

These views on the Real Empire were in no way incompatible with Mr. Wilkinson's desire to see all Trade Unionists armed. For a war at home, about shorter hours and higher wages, would at any rate be a war between equals in race. It was wars between unequals that had made of the Old Empire so hideous a thing. Amory herself had more than once stated this rather well.

"I call it cowardice," she had said. "Every fine instinct in us tells us to stick up for the weaker side. It makes my blood boil! Think of those gentle and dusky millions, all being, to put it in a word, bullied—just bullied! We all know the kind of man who goes abroad—the conventional 'adventurer' (I like

'adventurer!') He's just a common bully. He drinks disgustingly, and swears, and kicks people who don't get out of his way—but he's always careful to have a revolver in his pocket for fear they should hit him back!... And he makes a tremendous fuss about his white women, but when it comes to their black or brown ones ... well, anyway, *I* think he's a brute, and we want a better class of man than *that* for our readers!"

And that was briefly why, at the "Novum," they tried to reduce armaments at home, and gave at least moral encouragement to the other side whenever there was a dust-up abroad.

But it had been some time ago that Amory had said all this, and her attitude since then had undergone certain changes. One of these changes had been her acquisition of the Romantic Point of View; another had been that suspended state of affairs between herself and Mr. Strong. The first of these curtailed a good deal of the philosophy in which Mr. Strong always seemed anxious to enwrap the subject (in order, as far as Amory could see, to avoid action). It also made a little more of the position of women, white, black or brown, and especially when rolled up in carpets, in Imperial affairs. And the second, that hung-up relation between Edgar Strong and herself, had left her constantly wondering what would have happened had she taken Mr. Strong at his word and fled to Paris with him, and exactly where they stood since she had not done so.

For naturally, things could hardly have been expected to be the same after that. Since Edgar had ceased to come quite so frequently to The Witan, Amory had thought the whole situation carefully over and had come to her conclusion. Perhaps the histories of *les grandes maitresses* and the writings of Key had helped her; or, more likely, Key in Sweden (or wherever it was) and herself in England had arrived at the same conclusion by independent paths. That conclusion, stated in three words, was the Genius of Love.

It was perfectly simple. Why had Amory Towers, the painter of that picture ("Barrage") so enthusiastically acclaimed by the whole of Feminist England, now for so long ceased to paint? What had become of the Genius that had brought that picture

into being? It is certain that Genius cannot be stifled. Deny it one opportunity and it will break out somewhere else—in another art, in politics, in leadership in one form or another, or it may be even in crime.

Even so, Amory was conscious, her own Genius had refused to be suppressed. It had found another outlet in politics, directed in a recumbent attitude from a sofa.

Yet that had landed her straightway in a dilemma—the dilemma of Edgar and the twins, of Paris on seven francs a day and the comforts Cosimo allowed her, of a deed that was to have put even that of the Wyrons into the shade and a mere settling down to the prospect of seeing Edgar when it pleased him to put in an appearance.

She had not seen this protean property of Genius just at first. That could only have been because she had not examined herself sufficiently. She had been introspective, but not introspective enough.

And lest she should be mistaken in the mighty changes that were going on within herself, at first she had tried the painting again. Her tubes were dry and her brushes hard, but she had got new ones, and one after another she had taken up her old half-finished canvases again. A single glance at them had filled her with astonishment at the leagues of progress, mental and emotional, that she had made since then. She had laughed almost insultingly at those former attempts. That large canvas on the "*Triumph of Humane Government*" was positively frigid! And Edgar had liked it!... Well, that only showed what a power she now had over Edgar if she only cared to use it. If he had liked that chilly piece of classicism, he would stand dumb before the canvas that every faculty in her was now straining to paint. She began to think that canvas out....

It must be Eastern, of course; nay, it must be The East—tremendously voluptuous and so on. She would paint it over the "*Triumph*." It should be bathed in a sunrise, rabidly yellow (they had no time for decaying mellowness in those vast and kindling lands to which Amory's inner eye was turned)—and of course there ought to be a many-breasted what-was-her-

name in it, the goddess (rather rank, perhaps, but that was the idea, a smack at effete occidental politeness). And there ought to be a two-breasted figure as well, perhaps with a cord or something in her hand, hauling up the curtain of night, or at any rate showing in some way or other that her superb beauty was actually responsible for the yellow sunrise....

And above all, she must get *herself* into it—the whole of herself—all that tremendous continent that Cosimo had not had, that her children had not had, that her former painting had left unexpressed, that politics had not brought out of her....

The result of that experiment was remarkable. Two days later she had thrown the painting aside again. It was a ghastly failure. But only for a moment did that depress her; the next moment she had seen further. She was a Genius; she knew it—felt it; she was so sure about it that she would never have dreamed of arguing about it; she had such thoughts sometimes.... And Genius could never be suppressed. Very well; the Eastern canvas was a total failure; she admitted it. Ergo, her Genius was for something else than painting.

That was all she had wanted to know.

For what, then? No doubt Edgar Strong, who had enlightened her about herself before, would be able to enlighten her again now. And if he would not come to see her, she must go and see him. But already she saw the answer shining brightly ahead. She must pant, not paint; live, not limn. Her Genius was, after all, for Love.

True, at the thought of those offices in Charing Cross Road she had an instinctive shrinking. Their shabbiness rather took the shine out of the voluptuousnesses she had tried, and failed, to get upon her canvas. But perhaps there was a fitness in that too. Genius, whether in Art or in Love, is usually poor. If she could be splendid there she could be so anywhere. No doubt heaps and heaps of grand passions had transfigured grimy garrets, and had made of them perfectly ripping backgrounds....

So on an afternoon in mid-January Amory put on her new velvet costume of glaucous sea-holly blue and her new mushroom-white hat, and went down to the "Novum's" offices in a taxi. It seemed to her that she got there horribly quickly. Her heart was beating rapidly, and already she had partly persuaded herself that if Edgar wasn't in it might perhaps be just as well, as she had half-promised the twins to have tea with them in the nursery soon, and anyway she could come again next week. Or she might leave Edgar a note to come up to The Witan. There were familiar and supporting influences at The Witan. But here she felt dreadfully defenceless.... She reached her destination. Slowly she passed through the basement-room with the sandwich-boards, ascended the dark stairs, and walked along the upper corridor that was hung with the specimens of poster-art.

Edgar was in. He was sitting at his roll-top desk, with his feet thrust into the unimaginable litter of papers that covered it. He appeared to be dozing over the "Times," and had not drunk the cup of tea that stood at his elbow with a sodden biscuit and a couple of lumps of sugar awash in the saucer.—Without turning his head he said "Hallo," almost as if he expected somebody else. "Did you bring me some cigarettes in?" he added, still not turning. And this was a relief to Amory's thumping heart. She could begin with a little joke.

"No," she said. "I didn't know you wanted any."

There was no counterfeit about the start Mr. Strong gave. So swiftly did he pluck his feet away from the desk that twenty sheets of paper planed down to the floor, bringing the cup of tea with them in their fall.

But Mr. Strong paid no attention to the breakage and mess. He was on his feet, looking at Amory. He looked, but he had never a word to say. And she stood looking at him—charming in her glaucous blue, the glint of rich red that peeped from under the new white hat, and her slightly frightened smile.

"Haven't you any?" she said archly.

At that Mr. Strong found his tongue.

"Excuse me just a moment," he muttered, striding past her and picking up something from his desk as he went. "Sit down, won't you?" Then he opened the door by which Amory had entered, did something behind it, and returned, closing the door again. "Only so that we shan't be disturbed," he said. "They go into the other office when they see the notice.—I wasn't expecting you."

Nor did he, Amory thought, show any great joy at her appearance. On the contrary, he had fixed a look very like a glare on her. Then he walked to the hearth. A big fire burned there behind a wire guard, and within the iron kerb stood the kettle he had boiled to make tea. He put his elbows on the mantelpiece and turned his back to her. Again it was Mr. Brimby's sorrowing Oxford attitude. Amory had moved towards his swivel chair and had sat down. Her heart beat a little agitatedly. He remembered!...

He spoke without any beating about the bush.—"Ought you to have done this?" he said over his shoulder.

She fiddled with her gloves.—"To have done what?" she asked nervously.

"To have come here," came in muffled tones back. It was evident that he was having to hold himself in.

Then suddenly he wheeled round. This time there was no doubt about it—it was a glare, and a resolute one.

But he had not been able to think of any new line. It was the one he had used before. He made it a little more menacing, that was all.

"I'm only flesh and blood—," he said quickly, his hands ever so slightly clenching and unclenching and his throat apparently swallowing something.

Her heart was beating quickly enough now.—"But—but—," she stammered,—"if you only mean my coming here—I've been here lots of times before——"

He wasted few words on that.

"Not since——," he rapped out. He was surveying her sternly now.

"But—but—," she faltered again, "—it's only me, Edgar—I *am* connected with the paper, you know—that is to say my husband is——"

"That's true," he groaned.

"And—and—I should have come before—I've been intending to come—but I've been so busy——"

But that also he brushed aside for the little it was worth. "*Must* you compromise yourself like this?" he demanded. "Don't you see? I'm not made of wood, and I suppose your eyes are open too. Prang may be here at any moment. He'll see that notice on the door, and wait ... and then he'll see you go out. You oughtn't to have come," he continued gloomily. "Why did you, Amory?"

Once more she quailed before the blue mica of his eye. Her words came now a bit at a time. The victory was his.

"Only to—to see—how the paper was going on—and to—to talk things over—," she said.

"Oh!" He nodded. "Very well."

He strode forward from the mantelpiece and approached the desk at which she sat.

"I suppose Cosimo wants to know; very well. As a matter of fact I'm rather glad you've come. Look here——"

He grabbed a newspaper from the desk and thrust it almost roughly into her hands.

"Read that," he said, stabbing the paper with his finger.

The part in which he stabbed it was so unbrokenly set that it must have struck Katie Deedes as overwhelmingly learned. —"There you are—read that!" he ordered her.

Then, striding back to the mantelpiece, he stood watching her as if he had paid for a seat in a playhouse and had found standing-room only.

Amory supposed that it must be something in that close and grey-looking oblong that was at the bottom of his imperious curtness. She was sure of this when, before she had read half a dozen lines, he cut in with a sharp "Well? I suppose you see what it means to us?"

"Just a moment," she said bewilderedly; "you always did read quicker than I can——"

"Quicker!—" he said. "Just run your eye down it. That ought to tell you."

She did so, and a few capitals caught her eye.

"Do you mean this about the North-West Banks?" she asked diffidently.

"Do I mean——! Well, yes. Rather."

"I do wish you'd explain it to me. It seems rather hard."

But he did not approach and point out particular passages. Instead he seemed to know that leaden oblong by heart. He gave a short laugh.

"Hard? It's hard enough on the depositors out there!... They've been withdrawing again, and of course the Banks have had to realize."

"Yes, I saw that bit," said Amory.

"A forced realization," Mr. Strong continued. "Depreciation in values, of course. And it's spreading."

It sounded to Amory rather like smallpox, but, "I suppose that's the Monsoon?" she hazarded.

"Partly, of course. Not altogether. There's the rupee too, of course. At present that's at about one and twopence, but then

there are these bi-metallists.... So until we know what's going to happen, it seems to me we're bound hand and foot."

Amory was awed.—"What—what do you think will happen?" she asked.

Edgar gave a shrug.—"Well—when a Bank begins paying out in pennies it's as well to prepare for the worst, you know."

"Are—are they doing that?" Amory asked in a whisper. "Really? And is that the bi-metallists' doing—or is it the Home Government? Do explain it to me so that I can visualize it. You know I always understand things better when I can visualize them. That's because I'm an artist.—Does it mean that there are long strings of natives, with baskets and things on their heads to put the pennies in, all waiting at the Banks, like people in the theatre-queues?"

"I dare say. I suppose they have to carry the pennies somehow. But I'm afraid I can't tell you more than's in the papers."

Amory's face assumed an expression of contempt. On the papers she was quite pat.

"The papers! And how much of the truth can we get from the capitalist press, I should like to know! Why, it's a commonplace among us—one is almost ashamed to say it again—that the 'Times' is always wrong! We have *no* Imperialist papers really; only Jingo ones. Is there *no* way of finding out what this—crisis—is really about?"

This was quite an easy one for Mr. Strong. Many times in the past, when pressed thus by his proprietor's wife for small, but exact, details, he had wished that he had known even as much about them as seemed to be known by that smart young man who had once come to The Witan in a morning coat and had told Edgar Strong that he didn't know what he was talking about. But he had long since found a way out of these trifling difficulties. Lift the issue high enough, and it is true of most things that one man's opinion is as good as another's; and they lifted issues quite toweringly high on the "Novum." Therefore in self-defence Mr. Strong flapped (so to speak) his wings,

gave a struggle, cleared the earth, and was away in the empyrean of the New Imperialism.

"The 'Times' always wrong. Yes. We've got to stick firmly to that," he said. "But don't you see, that very fact makes it in its way quite a useful guide. It's the next best thing to being always right, like us; we can depend on its being wrong. We've only got to contradict it, and then ask ourselves why we do so. There's usually a reason.... So there is in this—er—crisis. Of course you know their argument—that a lot of these young native doctors and lawyers come over here, and stop long enough to pick up the latest wrinkles in swindling—the civilized improvements so to speak—and then go back and start these wildcat schemes, Banks and so on, and there's a smash. I think that's a fair statement of their case.—But what's ours? Why, simply that what they're really doing is to give the Home Government a perfectly beautiful opportunity of living up to its own humane professions.... But we know what that means," he added sadly.

"You mean that it just shows," said Amory eagerly, "that we aren't humane at all really? In fact, that England's a humbug?"

Mr. Strong smiled. He too, in a sense, was paying out in pennies, and so far quite satisfactorily.

"Well ... take this very crisis," he returned. "Oughtn't there to be a grant, without a moment's loss of time, from the Imperial Exchequer? I'm speaking from quite the lowest point of view —the mere point of view of expediency if you like. Very well. Suppose one or two natives *are* scoundrels: what about it? Are matters any better because we know that? Don't the poverty and distress exist just the same? And isn't that precisely our opportunity, if only we had a statesman capable of seeing it?... Look here: We've only got to go to them and say, 'We are full of pity and help; here are a lot of—er—lakhs; lakhs of rupees; rupee one and twopence: you may have been foolish, but it isn't for us to cast the first stone; it's the conditions that are wrong; go and get something to eat, and don't forget your real friends by and by.'—Isn't that just the way to bind them to us? By their gratitude, eh? Isn't getting their gratitude better than

blowing them from the muzzles of guns, eh? And isn't that the real Empire, of which we all dream? Eh?..."

He warmed up to it, while keeping one ear open for anybody who might come along the passage; and when he found himself running down he grabbed the newspaper again. He doubled it back, refolded it, and again thrust it under Amory's nose.... There! That put it all in a nutshell, he said! The figures spoke for themselves. The Home Government, he said, knew all about it all the time, but of course they came from that hopeless slough of ineptitude that humorists were pleased to call the "governing classes," and that was why they dragged such red herrings across the path of true progress as—well, as the Suffrage, say.... What! Hadn't Amory heard that all this agitation for the Suffrage was secretly fomented by the Government itself? Oh, come, she must know that! Why, of course it was! The Government knew dashed well what they were doing, too! It was a moral certainty that there was somebody behind the scenes actually planning half these outrages! Why? Why, simply because it got 'em popular sympathy when a Minister had his windows smashed or a paper of pepper thrown in his face. They were only too glad to have pepper thrown in their faces, because everybody said what a shame it was, and forgot all about what fools they'd been making of themselves, and when a real—er—crisis came, like this one, people scarcely noticed it.... But potty little intellects like Brimby's and Wilkinson's didn't see as deep as that. It was only Edgar Strong and Amory who saw as deep as that. That was why they, Edgar and Amory, were where they were—leaders of thought, not subordinates....

"Just look rather carefully at those figures," he concluded....

Nevertheless, lofty as these flights were, they had a little lost their thrill for Amory. She had heard them so very, very often. She had trembled in the taxi in vain if *this* was all that her stealthy coming to the "Novum's" offices meant. Nor had she put on her new sea-holly velvet to be told, however eloquently, that Wilkinson and Brimby were minor lights when compared with Edgar and herself, and that the "Times" was always wrong. Perhaps the figures that Edgar had thrust under her

nose as if he had been clapping a muzzle on her meant something to the right person, but they meant nothing to Amory, and she didn't pretend they did. They were man's business; woman's was "visualizing." The two businesses, when you came to think of it, *were* separate and distinct. Whoever heard of a man wrapping himself up in a carpet and being carried by Nubians into his mistress's presence? Whoever heard of a man's face launching as much as an up-river punt, let alone fleets and fleets of full-sized ships? And whoever heard of the compelling beauty of a man's eyes, as he lay on a sofa with one satiny upper-arm upraised, simply making—making—a woman come and kiss him?... It was ridiculous. Amory saw now. Even Joan of Arc must have put on her armour, not so much because of all the chopping and banging of maces and things (which must have been very noisy), but more with the idea of *inspiring*.... Yes, inspiring: that was it. There *was* a difference. Why, even physically women and men were not the same, and mentally they were just as different. For example, Amory herself wouldn't have liked to blow anybody from the mouth of a gun, but she wasn't sure sometimes that Edgar wouldn't positively enjoy it. He had that hard eye, and square head, and capacity for figures....

She wasn't sure that her heart didn't go out to him all the more because of that puzzle of noughts and dots and rupees he had thrust into her hands....

And so, as he continued (so to speak) to gain time by paying in pennies, and to keep an ear disengaged for the passage, it came about that Edgar Strong actually overshot himself. The more technical and masculine he became, the more Amory felt that it was fitting and feminine in her not to bother with these things at all, but just to go on inspiring. She still kept her eyes bent over the column of figures, but she was visualizing again. She was visualizing the Channel steamer, and the Latin Quarter, and satiny upper-arms. And the taxi-tremor had returned....

Suddenly she looked softly yet daringly up. She felt that she must be Indian—yet not too Indian.

"And then there's suttee," she said in a low voice.

"Eh?" said Strong. He seemed to scent danger. "Abolished," he said shortly.

But here Amory was actually able to tell Edgar Strong something. She happened to have been reading about suttee in a feminist paper only a day or two before. No doubt Edgar read nothing but figures and grey oblongs.

"Oh, no," she said softly but with a knowledge of her ground. "That is, I know it's prohibited, but there was a case only a little while ago. I read it in the 'Vaward.' And it was awful, but splendid, too. She was a young widow, and I'm sure she had a lovely face, because she'd such a noble soul.—Don't you think they often go together?"

But Edgar did not reply. He had walked to a little shelf full of reference books and books for review, and was turning over pages.

"And the whole village was there," Amory continued, "and she walked to the pyre herself, and said good-bye to all her relatives, and then——"

Edgar shut his book with a slap.—"Abolished in 1829," he said. "It's a criminal offence under the Code."

Amory smiled tenderly. Abolished!... Dear, fellow, to think that in such matters he should imagine that his offences and Codes could make any difference! Of course the "Vaward" had made a mere Suffrage argument out of the thing, but to Amory it had just showed how cruel and magnificent and voluptuous and grim the East could be when it really tried.... And then all at once Amory thought, not of any particular poem she had ever read, but what a ripping thing it would be to be able to write poetry, and to say all those things that would have been rather silly in prose, and to put heaps of gorgeous images in, like the many-breasted what-was-her-name, and Thingummy —what-did-they-call-him—the god with all those arms. And there would be carpets and things too, and limbs, not plaster ones, but flesh and blood ones, as Edgar said his own were, and—and—and oh, stacks of material! The rhymes might be a bit hard, of course, and perhaps after all it might be better to

leave poetry to somebody else, and to concentrate all her energies on inspiring, as Beatrice inspired Dante, and Laura Petrarch, and that other woman Camoens, and Jenny Rossetti, and Vittoria Colonna Michael Angelo. She might even inspire Edgar to write poetry. And she would be careful to keep the verses out of Cosimo's way....

"Abolished!" she smiled in gay yet mournful mockery, and also with a touch both of reproach and of disdain in her look.... "Oh well, I suppose men think so...."

But at this he rounded just as suddenly on her as he had done when he had told her that she ought not to have come to the office. Perhaps he felt that he was losing ground again. You may be sure that Edgar Strong, actor, had never had to work as hard for his money as he had to work that afternoon.

"Amory!" he called imperiously. "I tell you it won't do—not at this juncture! I'd just begun to find a kind of drug in my work; I've locked myself up here; and now you come and undo it all again with a look! I see we must have this out. Let me think."

He began to pace the floor.

When he did speak again, his phrases came in detached jerks. He kept looking sharply up and then digging his chin into his red tie again.

"It was different before," he said. "It might have been all right before. We were free then—in a way. It was different in every way.... (Mind your dress in that tea).... But we can't do anything now. Not at present. There's this crisis. That's suddenly sprung upon us. There's got to be somebody at the wheel—the 'Novum's' wheel, I mean. I hate talking about my duty, but you've read the 'Times' there. The 'Times' is always wrong, and if we desert our posts the whole game's up—U.P. Prang's no good here. Prang can't be trusted at a pinch. And Wilkinson's no better. Neither of 'em any good in an emergency. Weak man at bottom, Wilkinson—the weakness of violence—effeminate, like these strong-word poets. We can't rely on Wilkinson and Prang. And who is there left? Eh?"

But he did not wait for an answer.

"Starving thousands, and no Imperial Grant." His voice grew passionate. "Imperial Grant must be pressed for without delay. What's to happen to the Real Empire if you and I put our private joys first? Eh? Answer me.... There they are, paying in pennies—and us dallying here.... No. Dash it all, no. May be good enough for some of these tame males, but it's a bit below a man. I won't—not now. Not at present. It would be selfish. They've trusted me, and——," a shrug. "No. That's flat. I see *my* nights being spent over figures and telegrams and all that sort of thing for some time to come.... Don't think I've forgotten. I understand perfectly. I suppose that sooner or later it *will* have to be the Continent and so on—but not until this job's settled. Not till then. Everything else—everything—has got to stand down. You do see, don't you, Amory? I hope you do."

As he had talked there had come over Amory a sense of what his love must be if nothing but his relentless sense of duty could frustrate it even for a day. And that was more thrilling than all the rest put together. It lifted their whole relation exactly where she had tried to put it without knowing how to put it there—into the regions of the heroic. Not that Edgar put on any frills about it. On the contrary. He was simple and plain and straight. And how perfectly right he was! Naturally, since the "Times" and its servile following of the capitalist Press would not help, Edgar had to all intents and purposes the whole of India to carry on his shoulders. It was exactly like that jolly thing of Lovelace's, about somebody not loving somebody so much if he didn't love Honour more. He did love her so much, and he had as much as said that there would be plenty of time to talk about the Continent later. Besides, his dear, rough, unaffected way of calling this heroic work his "job!" It was just as if one of those knights of old had called slaying dragons and delivering the oppressed his "job!"

Amory was exalted as she had never been exalted. She turned to him where he stood on the hearth, and laved him with a fond and exultant look.

"I see," she said bravely. "I was wretchedly selfish. But remember, won't you, when you're fighting this great battle against all those odds, and saying all those lovely things to the Indians, and getting their confidence, and just showing all those other people how stupid they are, that *I* didn't stop you, dear! I know it would be beastly of me to stop you! I shouldn't be worthy of you.... But I think you ought to appoint a Committee or something, and have the meetings reported in the 'Novum,' and I'm sure Cosimo wouldn't grudge the money. Oh, how I wish I could help!——"

But he did not say, as she had half hoped he would say, that she did help, by inspiring. Instead, he held out his hand. As she took it in both of hers she wondered what she ought to do with it. If it had been his foot, and he had been the old-fashioned sort of knight, she could have fastened a spur on it. Or she might have belted a sword about his waist. But to have filled his fountain-pen, which was his real weapon, would have been rather stupid.... He was leading her, ever so sympathetically, to the door. He opened it, took from it the notice that had kept Mr. Prang away, and stood with her on the landing.

"Good-bye," she said.

He glanced over his shoulder, and then almost hurt her hands, he gripped them so hard.

"Good-bye," he said, his eyes looking into hers. "You *do* understand, don't you, Amory?"

"Yes, Edgar."

Even then he seemed loth to part from her. He accompanied her to the top of the stairs.—"You'll let me know when you're coming again, won't you?" he asked.

"Yes. Good-bye."

And she tore herself away.

At the first turning of the stairs Amory stood aside to allow a rather untidy young woman to pass. This young woman had a long bare neck that reminded Amory of an artist's model, and

her hands were thrust into the fore-pockets of a brown knitted coat. She was whistling, but she stopped when she saw Amory.

"Do you know whether Mr. Dickinson, the poster artist, is up here?" she asked.

"The next floor, I think," Amory replied.

"Thanks," said the girl, and passed up.

IV

THE OUTSIDERS

"No, not this week," Dorothy said. "Dot wrote a fortnight ago. This one's from Mollie. (You remember Mollie, Katie? She came to that funny little place we had on Cheyne Walk once, but of course she was only about twelve then. She's nearly nineteen now, and *so* tall! They've just gone to Kohat).—Shall I read it, auntie?"

And she read:—

> "'I'm afraid I wrote you a hatefully skimpy letter last time—,'" h'm, we can skip that; here's where they started: "'It was the beastliest journey that I ever made. To begin with, we were the eighteenth tonga that day, so we got tired and wretched ponies; we had one pair for fifteen miles and couldn't get another pair for love or money. We left Murree at two o'clock and got to Pindi at nine. The dust was ghastly. Mercifully Baba slept like a lump in our arms from five till nine, so he was all right. We had from nine till one to wait in Pindi Station, and had dinner, and Baba had a wash and clean-up and a bottle, and we got on board the train and off. Baba's cot, etc.; and we settled down for the night. Nurse and Baba and Mary and I were in one carriage and Jim next door. I slept beautifully till one o'clock, and then I woke and stayed awake. The bumping was terrific, and it made me so angry to look down on the others and see them fast asleep! I had an upper berth. Baba slept from eleven-thirty till six-thirty! So we had no trouble at all with him——'

"Well, and so they got to Kohat. (I hope this isn't boring you, Katie.)"

"'It was most beautifully cool and fresh, and we had the mess tonga and drove to the bungalow. The flowering shrubs here would delight Auntie Grace. I've fallen in love with a bush of hibiscus in the compound, but find it won't live in water, but droops directly one picks it. The trees are mostly the palmy kind, and so green, and the ranges of hills behind are exactly like the Red Sea ranges. The outside of our bungalow is covered with purple convolvulus, and the verandah goes practically all round it. Jim's room is just like him—heads he's shot, study, dressing-room, and workshop, all in one, and it's quite the fullest room in the house. Beyond that there's my room, looking out over the Sinai Range——'

"Then there are the drawing and dining-rooms——"

"'The curtains are a pale terra-cotta pink over the door and dark green in the bay-windows, with white net in front. The drawing-room is all green. The durrie (that's the carpet) is green, with a darker border, and the sofa and chairs and mantelpiece-cover and the screen behind the sofa all green. There's another bay-window, with far curtains of green and the near ones chintz, an awfully pretty cream spotted net with a green hem let in. That makes three lots, two in the window itself and a third on a pole where the arch comes into the room. Then over the three doors there are chintz curtains, cream, with a big pattern of pink and green and blue, just like Harrods' catalogue——'

"Can't you *see* it all!—H'm, h'm!... Then on the Sunday morning they got the mess tonga and went out to Dhoda, with butterfly-nets, and Jim went fishing—h'm, h'm—and she says —

"'It's just like the Old Testament; I shouldn't have been in the least surprised to meet Abraham and Jacob. It's the flatness of it, and the flocks and herds. There are women with pitchers on their heads, and a

man was making scores of bricks with mud and straw —exactly like the pictures of the Children of Israel in "*Line upon Line*." And about a hundred horses and mules and donkeys and carts all stopped at midday, because it was so hot, and it was just what I'd always imagined Jacob doing. But inside cantonments it isn't a bit Biblical, but rather too civilized, etc.'

("Isn't Katie patient, listening to all this, auntie!")

"'But you can't go far afield at Kohat. At Murree you could always get a three or four mile walk round Pindi Point, but here it's just to the Club and back. We go to the Central Godown and the Fancy Godown to shop. The Central is groceries, and the Fancy tooth-powder, Scrubb's Ammonia, etc. On Saturday they were afraid Captain Horrocks had smallpox, and so we all got vaccinated, but now that we've all taken beautifully it seems it isn't smallpox after all, and we've all got swelled arms, but Captain Horrocks is off the sick-list to-morrow. Colonel Wade is smaller than ever. Mrs. Wade is coming out by the "Rewa." Mrs. Beecher came to tea on Sunday——'

("Is that *our* Mrs. Beecher, when Uncle Dick was at Chatham, auntie?")—

"'—and I forgot to say that Dot's parrots stood the journey awfully well, but they've got at the loquat trees and destroyed all the young shoots. Jim saw us safely in and is now off on his Indus trip. The 56th are going in March, and the 53rd come instead. I'm sure the new baby's a little darling; what are you going to call him?——'

"And so on. I *do* think she writes such good letters. Now let's have yours, Aunt Grace (and that really *will* be the end, Katie)."

And Lady Tasker's letters also were "put in."

It was a Sunday afternoon, at Cromwell Gardens. Stan was away with his film company for the week-end, and Dorothy had got Katie to stay with her during his absence and had proposed a call on Lady Tasker. They had brought the third Bit with them, and he now slept in one of the cots upstairs. Lady Tasker sat with her crochet at the great first-floor window that looked over its balcony out along the Brompton Road. On the left stretched the long and grey and red and niched and statued façade of the Victoria and Albert Museum, and the failing of the western flush was leaving the sky chill and sharp as steel and the wide traffic-polished road almost of the same colour. Inside the lofty room was the still glow of a perfect "toasting fire," and Lady Tasker had just asked Katie to be so good as to put more coal on before it sank too low.

Katie Deedes had made no scruple whatever about changing her coat in more senses of the words than one. She had bought a navy-blue costume and a new toque (with a wing in it), and since then had got into the way of expressing her doubts whether Britomart Belchamber's hockey legs and Dawn of Freedom eye were in the truest sense feminine. Nay, that is altogether to understate the change in Katie. She had now no doubt about these things whatever. As Saul became Paul, so Katie now not only reviled that which she had cast off, but was even prepared, like the Apostle at Antioch, to withstand the older Peters of Imperialism to their faces, did she detect the least sign of temporizing in them. And this treason had involved the final giving-way of every one of her old associates. She was all for guns and grim measures; and while she looked fondly on Boy Scouts in the streets, and talked about "the thin end of the wedge of Conscription," she scowled on the dusky-skinned sojourners within London's gates, and advocated wholesale deportations.

And in all this Katie Deedes was only returning to her own fold, though her people were not soldiers, but lawyers. For the matter of that, her father's cousin was a very august personage indeed, for whose comfort, when he travelled, highly-placed railway officials made themselves personally responsible, and whose solemn progress to Assize was snapshotted for the illustrated papers and thrown on five hundred cinema screens.

In the past Katie had been privileged to call this kingpost of the Law "Uncle Joe."...

And then Mr. Strong had got hold of her....

And after Mr. Strong, Mr. Wilkinson....

And according to Mr. Wilkinson, the most ferocious of the hanging-judges had been a beaming humanitarian by comparison with Sir Joseph. Mr. Wilkinson had the whole of Sir Joseph's career at his fingers' ends: the So-and-So judgment—this or that flagrant summing up—the other deliberate and wicked misdirection to the jury. Sir Joseph's heart was black, his law bunkum, and he had only got where he was by self-advertisement and picking the brains of men a hundred times fitter for heaven than himself....

Therefore Katie, hearing this horrible tale, had quailed, and had straightway given away this devil who was the sinister glory of her house. She had agreed that he was a man whom anybody might righteously have shot on sight, and had gathered her Greenaway garments about her whenever she had passed within a mile of Sir Joseph's door....

But now he was "Uncle Joe" again, and—well, it must have been rather funny. For Katie's impressionable conscience had given her no rest day or night until she had sought Uncle Joe out and had made a clean breast of it all before him. Katie had fancied she had seen something like a twinkle in those sinful old eyes, but (this was when she mentioned the name of the "Novum") the twinkle had vanished again. Oh, yes, Sir Joseph had heard of the "Novum." Didn't a Mr. Prang write for it?...

And thereupon Katie had given Mr. Prang away too....

But in the end Sir Joseph had forgiven her, and had told her that she had better not be either a revolutionary, nor yet the kind of Conservative that is only a revolutionary turned inside-out, but just a good little girl, and had asked her how she was getting on, and why she hadn't been to see her Aunt Anne, and whether she would like some tickets for a Needlework Exhibition; and now she was just beginning to forget that he

had ever been anything but "Uncle Joe," who had given her toys at Christmas, and Sunday tickets for the Zoo whenever she had wanted to go there on that particularly crowded day.

Dorothy had had something of this in her mind when she had brought Katie to Cromwell Gardens that Sunday afternoon. From Katie's new attitude to her own Ludlow project was not so far as it seemed. If she could lead the zealous 'vert to such promising general topics as Boy Scouts, Compulsory Service, and the preparation of boys for the Army (topics that Katie constantly brought forward by denunciation of their opposites), her scheme would certainly not suffer, and might even be advanced.

And, as it happened, no sooner had Dorothy tucked her last letter back into its envelope than Katie broke out—earnestly, proselytizingly, and very prettily on the stump.

"There you are!" she exclaimed. "That's all *exactly* what I mean! Why, any one of those letters ought to be enough to convince anybody! Here are all these stupid people at home, ready to believe everything a native tells them, going on as they do, and hardly one of them's ever set foot out of England in his life! Of course the Indians know exactly what *they* want, but don't you see, Dorothy—," very patiently she explained it for fear Dorothy should not see, "—don't you see that it's all so much a matter of course to Mollie and those that they can actually write whole letters about window-curtains! I *love* that about the window-curtains! It's all such an old story to *them*! They *know*, you see, and haven't got to be talking about it all the time in order to persuade themselves! There it *is*!—But these other people don't know anything at all. They don't even see what a perfect answer window-curtains are to them! They go on and on and on—you *do* see what I mean, Dorothy?——"

"Yes, dear," said Dorothy, mildly thinking of the great number of people there were in the world who would take no end of trouble to explain things to her. "Go on."

And Katie continued to urge upon her friend the argument that those know most about a country who know most about it.

Katie had got to the stage of being almost sure that she remembered Mollie's coming into the studio in Cheyne Walk one day, when Lady Tasker, who had not spoken, suddenly looked up from her crochet and said, "Look, Dorothy—that's the girl I was speaking about—coming along past the Museum there."

Dorothy rose and walked to the window.— "Where?" she said.

"Passing the policeman now."

Dorothy gave a sudden exclamation.—"Why," she exclaimed, "—come here, Katie, quick—it's Amory Towers!—It is Amory, isn't it?"

Katie had run to the window, too. The two women stood watching the figure in the mushroom-white hat and the glaucous blue velvet that idled forlornly along the pavement.

"Do you mean Mrs. Pratt?" said Lady Tasker, putting up her glass again. "Are you quite sure?"

Once before in her life, in the days before her marriage, Amory Towers had done the same thing that she was doing now. Then, seeking something, perhaps a refuge from herself, she had walked the streets until she was ready to drop with fatigue, watching faces passing, passing, for ever passing, and slowly gathering from them a hypnotic stupor. Sometimes, for hour after hour, she had seen nothing but eyes—eyes various in shape and colour as the pebbles on a beach, sometimes looking into hers, sometimes looking past her, sometimes tipped with arrow-heads of white as they turned, sometimes only to be seen under their lids as a finger-nail is seen within the finger of a glove. And at other times, weary of her fellow-beings and ceasing to look any more at them, she had seen nothing but doors and windows, or fan-lights, or the numbers of houses, or window-boxes, or the patterns of railings, or the serried shapes of chimneys against the sky. She had been looking, and yet not looking, for Cosimo Pratt then; she was looking, and yet not

looking, for Edgar Strong now. Had she met him she had nothing new to say to him; she only knew that he had taken weak possession of her mind. She was looking for him in South Kensington because he had once told her, when asked suddenly, that he lived in Sydney Street, S.W., and frequently walked to the Indian section of the Imperial Institute in order to penetrate into the real soul of a people through its art; and she was not looking for him, because one day she had remembered that he had said before that he lived in South Kentish Town—which was rather like South Kensington, but not the same—and something deep down within her told her that the other was a lie.

But yet her feet dragged her to the quarter, as to other quarters, and she talked to herself as she walked. She told herself that her husband did not understand her, and that it would be romantic and silencing did she take a lover to her arms; and she could have wept that, of all the flagrant splendours of which she dreamed, London's grey should remain her only share. And she knew that the attendants at the Imperial Institute had begun to look at her. Once she had spoken to one of them, but when she had thought of asking him whether he knew a Mr. Strong who came there to study Indian Art, her heart had suddenly failed her, and the question had stayed unspoken. Nevertheless she had feared that the man had guessed her thought, and must be taking stock of her face against some contingency (to visualize which passed the heavy time on) that had a Divorce Court in it, and hotel porters and chambermaids who gave evidence, and the Channel boat, and two forsaken children, and grimy raptures in the Latin Quarter, and its hectic cafés at night....

And so she walked, feeling herself special and strange and frightened and half-resolved; and thrice in as many weeks Lady Tasker, sitting with her crochet at her window, had seen her pass, but had not been able to believe that this was the woman, with a husband and children, on whom she had once called at that house with the secretive privet hedge away in Hampstead.

"It *is* Amory!" Dorothy exclaimed. "Is she coming here?"

Lady Tasker spoke reflectively.—"I don't know. I don't think so. But—will you fetch her in? I should like to see her."

"If you like, auntie," said Dorothy, though a little reluctantly.

But Lady Tasker seemed to change her mind. She laid down her crochet and rose.

"No, never mind," she said. "I'll fetch her myself."

And the old lady of seventy passed slowly out of the room, and Katie and Dorothy moved away from the window.

Lady Tasker was back again in five minutes, but no Amory came with her. She walked back to her chair, moved it, and took up her work again.—"Switch the table light on," she said.

"Was it Amory?" Dorothy ventured to ask after a silence.

"Yes," Lady Tasker replied.

"And wouldn't she come in?"

"She said she was hurrying back home."

That raised a question so plain that Dorothy thought it tactful to make rather a fuss about finding some album or other that should convince Katie that she really had met the Mollie who had written the letter about the window-curtains. Lady Tasker's needle was dancing rather more quickly than usual. Dorothy found her album, switched on another light, and told Katie to make room for her on her chair.

Amory, dawdling like that, and then, when spoken to, to have the face to say that she was hurrying back home!——

It was some minutes later that Lady Tasker said off-handedly, "Has she any children besides those twins?"

"Amory?" Dorothy replied, looking up from the album. "No."

"How old is she?" Lady Tasker asked.

"Thirty-two, isn't she, Katie?"

"About that."

"Is she very—athletic?" Lady Tasker next wanted to know.

"Not at all, I should say."

"I mean she doesn't go in for marathon races or Channel swimming or anything of that kind?"

"Amory? No," said Dorothy, puzzled.

"And you're sure of her age?" the old lady persisted.

"Well—she may only be thirty-one."

"I don't mean is she younger. Is she *older* than that?"

"No—I know by my own age."

"H'm!" said Lady Tasker; and again her needle danced....

Dorothy was explaining to Katie that Mollie was fair, about her own colour, but of course the hair never came out right in a photograph, when Lady Tasker suddenly began a further series of questions.

"Dorothy——"

"Yes?"

"Did she—develop—early?"

"Who—Amory? I don't know. Did she, Katie? Of course she was quite the cleverest girl at the McGrath."

"Ah!... What did she do at the McGrath?"

"Why, painted. You're awfully mysterious, auntie! It was soon after she left the McGrath that she painted 'Barrage'—you've heard of her feminist picture that made such a stir!"

"Ah, yes. Yes. I didn't see it, but I did hear about it. I don't know anything about art.—Had she any affair before she married young Pratt?"

"No. I'm sure of that. I knew her so well." Dorothy was quite confident on that point, and Katie agreed. Lady Tasker's questions continued.

And then, suddenly, into this apparently aimless catechism the word "doctor" came. Dorothy gave a start.

"Aunt Grace!... Do you mean Amory's ill?" she cried.

Lady Tasker did not look up from her crochet.—"Ill?" she said. "I've no reason to suppose so. I didn't say she was ill. There's no illness about it.... By the way, I don't think I've asked how Stan is."

But for the curiously persistent questions, Dorothy might have seized the opportunity to hint that Stan was made for something more nationally useful than getting himself black and blue by stopping runaway horses for the film or running the risk of double pneumonia by being fished out of the sea on a January day—which was the form his bread-winning was taking on that particular week-end. But the Ludlow design was for the moment forgotten. She would have liked to ask her aunt straight out what she really meant, but feared to be rude. So she turned to the album again, and again Katie, turning from turban to staff-cap and from staff-cap to pith helmet, urged that *those* were the people who really knew what they were talking about—surely Dorothy saw *that*!——

Then, in the middle of Dorothy's bewilderment, once more the questions.... About that painting of her friend's, Lady Tasker wanted to know: did Mrs. Pratt get any real satisfaction out of it?—Any emotional satisfaction?—Was she entirely wrapped up in it?—Or was it just a sort of hitting at the air?—Did it exhaust her to no purpose, or was it really worth something when it was done?——

"If Dorothy doesn't know, surely you do, Katie."

Katie coloured a little.—"I liked 'Barrage' awfully at the time," she confessed, "but—," and she cheered up again, "—I *hate* it now."

"But did her work—what's the expression?—fill her life?"

Here Dorothy answered for Katie.—"I think she rather liked the fame part of it," she said slowly.

"Does she paint now?"

"Very little, I think, Lady Tasker."

"Has her children to look after, I suppose?"

"Well—she has both a nurse and a governess——"

"They're quite well off, aren't they? I seem to remember that Pratt came into quite a lot."

"They seem to spend a great deal."

"But that's only a small house of theirs?"

"Oh, yes, they're rather proud of that. They don't spend their money selfishly. It goes to the Cause, you see."

"What Cause?" Lady Tasker asked abruptly.

This was Katie's cue....

She ceased, and Lady Tasker muttered something. It sounded rather like "H'm! Too much money and not enough to do!" but neither of her companions was near enough to be quite sure.

And thereupon the questions stopped.

But a surmise of their drift had begun to dawn glimmeringly upon Dorothy. She ceased to hear the exposition of Imperialism's real needs into which Katie presently launched, and fell into a meditation. And of that meditation this was about the length and breadth:—

Until the law should allow a man to have more wives than one (if then), of course only one woman in the world could be perfectly happy—the woman who had Stan. That conviction came first, and last, and ran throughout her meditation. And of what Dorothy might compassionately have called secondary happinesses she had hitherto not thought very much. She had merely thanked her stars that she had not married a man like Cosimo, had once or twice rather resented Amory's well-meant

but left-handed kindnesses, and that had been the extent of her concern about the Pratt household. But first Katie, and now her aunt, had set her wondering hard enough about that household now.

What, she asked herself, had the Pratts married on? What discoveries had they made in one another, what resources found within themselves? Apart from their talks and books and meetings and "interests" and that full pack of their theories, what was their marriage? Thrown alone together for an hour, did they fret? Did their yawning cease when the bell rang and a caller was admitted? Did even the same succession of callers become stale and a bore, so that strangers had to be sought to provide a stimulus? And did they call these and half a hundred other forms of mutual boredom by the rather resounding names that blabbing Katie had repeated to her—"wider interests," "the broad outlook," "the breaking down of personal insularity," and the rest?

And for once Dorothy dropped her excusatory attitude towards her friend. She dropped it so completely that by and by she found herself wondering whether Amory would have married Cosimo had he been a poor man. She was aware that, stated in that way, it sounded hideous; nor did she quite mean that perhaps Amory had married Cosimo simply and solely because he had *not* been poor; no doubt Amory had assumed other things to be equal that as a matter of fact had unfortunately proved to be not equal at all; but she *did* doubt now whether Amory had not missed that something, that something made of so many things, that caused her own heart suddenly to gush out to the absent Stan. The thought frightened her a little. Had Amory married and had babies—all, as it were, beside the mark?...

Dorothy did not know.

But an obscurer hint still had seemed to lie behind her aunt's persistent questions. "Was Amory ill?" she herself had asked in alarm when that unexpected word "doctor" had been quietly dropped; and "Ill? I didn't say she was ill; there's no illness about it," Lady Tasker had replied. No illness about what?

Apparently about something Lady Tasker saw, or thought she saw, in Amory.... An old lady whose years had earned her the right to sit comfortably in her chair had gone so far as to descend the stairs and go out into the street to have a closer look at a young one: why? Why ask "Is she a Channel swimmer?" and "Is her painting a mere hitting of the air?" Why this insistence on some satisfaction for labour, as if without that satisfaction the labour wreaked on the labourer some sort of revenge? What sort of a revenge? And why on Amory?

Yes, Dorothy would have liked to ask her aunt a good many questions....

She did not know that Lady Tasker could not have answered them. She did not know that the whole world is waiting for precisely those replies. She did not know that the data of a great experiment have not yet begun to be gathered together. She did not know that, while she and Stan would never see the results of that experiment, little Noel and the other Bits, and Corin and Bonniebell might. She only knew that her aunt was a wise and experienced woman, with an appetite for life and all belonging to it that only grew the stronger as her remaining years drew in, and that apparently Lady Tasker found something to question, if not to fear.

"Is she a Channel swimmer? Does she get any emotional satisfaction out of what she does?"

They were oddly precise questions....

Much less odd was that homely summing-up of Lady Tasker's: "Too much money, and not enough to do."...

Dorothy had often thought that herself.

V

"HOUSE FULL"

The gate in the privet hedge of The Witan had had little rest all the afternoon. It was a Sunday, the one following that on which Lady Tasker had issued bareheaded from her door, had crossed the road, and had caused Amory to start half out of her skin by suddenly speaking to her. The Wyrons had come in the morning; they had been expressly asked to lunch; but it was known that Dickie Lemesurier was coming in afterwards to discuss an advertisement, and if Dickie came the chances were that Mr. Brimby would not be very long after her. As a matter of fact Dickie and Mr. Brimby had encountered one another outside and had arrived together at a little after three, bringing three young men, friends of Mr. Brimby's still at Oxford, with them. These young men wore Norfolk jackets, gold-pinned polo-collars, black brogues and turned-up trousers; and apparently they had hesitated to take Cosimo at his word about "spreading themselves about anywhere," for they stood shoulder to shoulder in the studio, and when one turned to look at a picture or other object on the wall, all did so. Then, not many minutes later, Mr. Wilkinson had entered, in his double-breasted blue reefer, bringing with him a stunted, bowlegged man who did not carry, but looked as if he ought to have carried, a miner's lamp; and by half-past four, of The Witan's habitués, only Mr. Prang and Edgar Strong were lacking. But Edgar was coming. It had been found impossible, or at any rate Amory had decided that it was impossible, to discuss the question of Dickie's advertisement without him. But he was very late.

When Britomart Belchamber came in simultaneously with the tea and the twins at a little before five, the studio was full. The asbestos log purred softly, and Mr. Brimby's three Oxford friends, glad perhaps of something to do, walked here and there, each of them with a plate of bread and butter in either

hand, not realizing that at The Witan the beautiful Chinese rule of politeness was always observed—"When the stranger is in your melon-patch, be a little inattentive." Had Dickie Lemesurier and Laura Wyron eaten half the white and brown that was presented to them, they must have been seriously unwell. It was Cosimo, grey-collared and with a claret-coloured velvet waistcoat showing under his slackly-buttoned tweed jacket, who gave the young men the friendly hint, "Everybody helps themselves here, my dear fellows." Then the Norfolk jackets came together again, and presently their owners turned with one accord to examine the hock and the top-side that hung on the wall over the sofa.

Not so much a blending of voices as an incessant racket of emphatic and independent pronouncements filled the studio. Walter Wyron had fastened upon the man who looked as if he ought to have carried a miner's lamp, and his forefinger was wagging like a gauge-needle as he explained that one of his Lectures had been misrepresented, and that he had *never* taken up the position that a kind of Saturnalia should be definitely state-established. He admitted, nevertheless, that the question of such an establishment ought to be considered, like any other question, on its merits, and that after that the argument should be followed whithersoever it led.—Dickie Lemesurier, excessively animated, and with the whites showing dancingly all round her pupils, was talking Césanne and Van Gogh to Laura, and declaring that something was "quite the" something or other.—Mr. Brimby's hand was fondling Bonniebell's head while he deprecated the high degree of precision of the modern rifle to Mr. Wilkinson. "If only it wasn't so ruthlessly logical!" he was sighing. "If only it was subject to the slight organic accident, to those beautiful adaptations of give-and-take that make judgment harsh, and teach us that we ought never to condemn!"—Corin, drawn by the word "gun," was demanding to be told whether that was the gun that had been taken away from him.—And Britomart Belchamber, indifferent alike to the glances of the Oxford men and their trepidation in her presence, stood like a caryatid under a wall-bracket with an ivy-green replica of Bastianini's Dante upon it.

"No, no, not for a moment, my dear sir!" Walter shouted to the man who looked like (and was) a miner. "That is to ignore the context. I admit I used the less-known Pompeian friezes as a rough illustration of what I meant—but I did *not* suggest that Waring & Gillow's should put them on the market! What I did say was that we moderns must work out our damnation on the same lines that the ancients did. Read your Nietzsche, my good fellow, and see what *he* says about the practical serviceability of Excess! I contend that a kind of general *oubliance*, say for three weeks in the year, to which everybody without exception would have to conform (so that we shouldn't have the superior person bringing things up against us afterwards)——"

"Ah doan't see how ye could mak' fowk——," the miner began, in an accent that for a moment seemed to blast a hole clean through the racket. But the hole closed up again.

"Ah, at present you don't," Walter cried. "The spade-work isn't done yet. We need more education. But every new and great idea——"

But here an outburst from Mr. Wilkinson to Mr. Brimby drowned Walter's voice. Mr. Wilkinson raised his clenched fist, but only for emphasis, and not in order to strike Mr. Brimby.

"Stuff and nonsense! There you go, Brimby, trimming again! We've heard all that: 'A great deal to be said on both sides,'"—(Mr. Wilkinson all but mimicked Mr. Brimby). "There isn't—not if you're going to do anything! There's only one side. You've got to shoot or be shot. I'm a shooter. Give me five hundred real men and plenty of barricade stuff——"

"Oh, oh, oh, my dear friend!" Mr. Brimby protested. "Why, if your principles were universally applied——"

"Who said anything about applying 'em universally? Hang your universal applications! I'm talking about the Industrial Revolution. I'll tell you what's the matter with you, Brimby: you don't like the sight of blood. I'm not blaming you. Some men are like that. But it's in every page of your writing. You've got a bloodless style. I don't mind admitting that I liked some

of your earlier work, while there still seemed a chance of your making up your mind some day——"

But here Mr. Wilkinson in his turn was drowned, this time by an incredulous laugh from Cosimo, who had joined Dickie and Laura.

"Van Gogh says *that*?" his voice mounted high. "Really? You're sure he wasn't joking? Ha ha ha ha!... But it's rather pathetic really. One would think Amory'd never painted 'Barrage,' nor the 'White Slave,' nor that—," he pointed to the unfinished canvas of "The Triumph of Humane Government" on the wall. "By Jove, I must make an Appendix of that!... Here—Walter!—Have you told him, Dickie?—Walter!——"

But Walter was now at deadly grips with the man who had forgotten his miner's lamp.

"I tell you I never used Saturnalia in that sense at all!——"

But the miner stood his ground.

"Happen ye didn't, but I'll ask ye one question: Have ye ever been to Blackpool of a August Bank Holiday?——"

"My good man, you talk as if I proposed to do something with the stroke of a pen, to-morrow, before the world's ready for it ——"

"Have ye ever been to Blackpool of a Bank Holiday?"

"What on earth has Blackpool to do with it?——"

"Well, we'll say Owdham Wakes week at t' Isle o' Man—Douglas——"

"Pooh! You've got hold of the wrong idea altogether! Do you know what Saturnalia *means*?——"

"I know there's a man on Douglas Head, at twelve o'clock i' t' day, wi' t' sun shining, going round wi' a stick an' prodding 'em up an' telling 'em to break away——"

"I shouldn't have thought anybody could have been so *incredibly* slow to grasp an idea—!" cried Walter, his hands aloft.

"Have—you—ever—been—to—Blackpool—when—t' Wakes —is on?"

Then Cosimo called again—

"Walter! I say! Come here!... Dickie's just told me something that makes the '*Life and Work*' *rather* necessary, I think!——"

And Walter turned his back on the miner and joined his wife and Dickie and Cosimo.

Anybody who wasn't anybody might have supposed the noise to be a series of wrangles, but of course it wasn't so at all really. Issues far too weighty hung in the balance. It is all very well for people whose mental range is limited by *matinées* and Brooklands and the newest car to talk in pleasant and unimpassioned voices, but what was going to happen to Art unless Cosimo hurled himself and the '*Life and Work*' against this heretic Van Gogh, and what was to become of England if Walter allowed a pig-headed man who could say nothing but "Blackpool Pier, Blackpool Pier," to shout him down, and what would happen to Civilization if Mr. Wilkinson did not, figuratively speaking, take hold of the dilettante Brimby and shake him as a terrier shakes a rat? No: there would be time enough for empty politenesses when the battle was won.

In the meantime, a mere nobody might have thought they were merely excessively rude to one another.

Then began fresh combinations and permutations of the talk. Mr. Wilkinson, whose square-cut pilot jacket somehow added to the truculence of his appearance, planted himself firmly for conversation before Dickie Lemesurier; the miner, whose head at a little distance appeared bald, but on a closer view was seen to be covered with football-cropped and plush-like bristles, nudged Cosimo's hip, to attract his attention: and Walter Wyron sprang forward with a welcoming "Hallo, Raffinger!" as the door opened and two young McGrath students were

added to the crowd. For a minute no one voice preponderated in the racket; it was—

"Hallo, Raff! Thought you weren't coming!"

"I want a gun!" (This from Corin.)

"My dear Corin" (this from Bonniebell), "Miss Belchamber's told you over and over again guns are anti-social——"

"Anybody smoking? Well, I know they don't mind——"

"But, Miss Lemesurier, where a speaker reaches only a hundred or two, the written word——"

"Ah, but the personal, magnetic thrill——" (This was in Dickie's rather deep voice.)

Then Walter, to somebody else, not the miner—

"I should have thought *anybody* would have known that when I said Saturnalia I meant——"

"Where's Amory?"

"Sweet, in those little tunics!——"

"A subsidy from the State, of course——"

Then the miner, but not to Walter—

"I' t' daylight, proddin' 'em up wi' a stick—to say nowt o' Port Skillian bathin'-place of a fine Sunda'——"

"That hoary old lie, that Socialism means sharing——"

"Oh, at any artists' colourman's——"

"No; it will probably be published privately——"

"Van Gogh——"

"Oh, you're *entirely* wrong!——"

And then, in the middle of a sudden and mysterious lull, the man who had come without his safety-lamp was heard addressing Cosimo again:—

"Well, what about t' new paaper? Owt settled yet?... Nay, ye needn't look; Wilkinson telled me; it's all right; nowt 'at's said 'll go beyond these fower walls. Wilkinson's gotten a rare list together, names an' right, I can tell ye! But t' way I look at it is this——"

Cosimo looked blank.

"But, my dear—I'm afraid I didn't catch your name——," he said.

"Crabtree—Eli Crabtree. This is t' point I want to mak', mister. Ye see, I can't put things grammar; but there's lots about 'at can; so I thowt we'd get a sec'etary, an' I'd sit an' smoke whol' my thowts come, and then I'd tell him t' tale. Ye see, ye want to go slap into t' middle o' t' lives o' t' people. Now comin' up o' t' tram-top I bethowt me of a champion series: '*Back to Back Houses I've Known*.' I'll bet a crahn that wi' somb'dy to put it grammar for me——"

"My dear Crabtree, I'm afraid, don't you know, that there's been some mistake——"

And at this point, everybody becoming conscious at the same moment that they were listening, a fresh wave of sound flowed over the assembly; and presently Mr. Wilkinson was seen to take Cosimo aside and to be making the gestures of a man who is explaining some ridiculous mistake.

Then once more:—

"I beg your pardon—I thought you were Mrs. Pratt——"

"Put grammar—straight to fowk's hearts—sinks and slopstones an' all t' lot——"

"No, Balliol——"

"But listen, Pratt, the way the mistake arose——"

"Ellen Key, of course——"

"The 'Times!'—As if the 'Times' wasn't *always* wrong!——"

"There's a raucousness about her paint——"

"The Caxton Hall, at eight—do come!——"

"But we authors are so afraid of sentiment nowadays!——"

"Bombay, I think—or else Hyderabad——"

"Oh, he talks like a fool!——"

"Raff! Come here and recite '*The King is Duller*'——"

"But Love *is* Law!——"

"Suspend our judgments until we've heard the other side——"

"Only water—but they couldn't break her spirit—she was out again in three days——"

And again there came an unexpected lull.

This time it was broken by, perhaps not the loudest, but certainly the most travelling voice yet—the voice of the caryatid beneath the bracket with the bust upon it. Miss Belchamber was dressed in a sleeveless surcoat chess-boarded with large black and white squares; the skirt beneath it was of dark blue linen; and there were beards of leather on her large brown brogues. One of the young Oxford men, greatly daring, had approached her and asked her a question. She turned slowly; she gave the young man the equal-soul-to-equal-soul look; and then the apparatus of perfect voice-production was set in motion. Easily and powerfully the air came from her magnificent chest, up the splendid six-inch main of her throat, rang upon the hard anterior portion of her palate, and was cut, as it were, to its proper length and shaped into perfect enunciation by her red tongue and beautiful white teeth.

"What?" she said.

The undergraduate fell a little back.

"Only—I only asked if you'd been to many theatres lately."

"Not any."

"Oh!... I—I suppose you know everybody here?"

"Yes."

"Do point them out to me!"

"That's Walter Wyron. That's Mrs. Wyron. That's Miss Lemesurier. I don't know who the little man is. That's Mr. Wilkinson. My name's Belchamber."

"Oh—I say—I mean, thanks awfully. We've heard of them all, of course," the unhappy young man faltered.

"What?"

"All distinguished names, I mean."

"Of course."

"Rather!——"

And again everybody listened, became conscious of the fact, and broke out anew.

But where all this time was Amory?

Demonstrably, exactly where she ought to have been—in her bedroom. She was too dispirited to be accessible to the rational talk of others; she did not feel that she had energy enough to be a source of illumination herself; surely, then, merely because a lot of people, invited and uninvited, chose to come to The Witan, she need not put herself out to go and look after them. They might call themselves her "guests" if they liked; Amory didn't care what form of words they employed; the underlying reality remained—that she was intensely bored, and too fundamentally polite to bore others by going down. Perhaps she would go down when Edgar came. She had left word that she was to be informed of his arrival. But he was very late.

Nevertheless, she knew that he would come. Lately she had grown a little more perspicacious about that. It had dawned on her that, everything else apart, she had some sort of hold on him through the "Novum," and there had been a trace of

command in her summons that he was pretty sure not to disregard. No doubt he would try to get away again almost directly, but she had arranged about that. She intended to keep him to supper. Also the Wyrons. And Britomart Belchamber too would be there. And of course Cosimo.

She moved restlessly between her narrow bed and the window, now polishing her nails, now glancing at her hair in the glass. From the window she could see over the privet hedge and down the road, but there was no sign of Edgar yet. She looked at herself
again in the glass, without favour, and then sat
down on the edge of her bed again.

Her meeting with Lady Tasker the week before had greatly unsettled her. Very stupidly, she had quite forgotten that Lady Tasker lived in Cromwell Gardens. She would have thought nothing at all of the meeting had Lady Tasker had a hat on her head and gloves on her hands; she would have set that down as an ordinary street-encounter; but Dorothy's aunt had evidently seen her from some window, perhaps not for the first time, and, if not for the first, very likely for the third or fourth or fifth. In a word, Amory felt that she had been caught.

And, as she had been thinking of Edgar Strong at the moment when the old lady's voice had startled her so, it was not beyond the bounds of possibility that her start had seemed remarkable. Lady Tasker was so very sharp.

At all events, even Edgar was not going to have everything all his own way.

For she was sure now that she had the hold of the "Novum" on him, and that that hold was not altogether the single-minded devotion to his duty he had made it out to be on that day when she had last gone to the office. Not that she thought too unkindly of him on that account. The labourer, even in the field of Imperial Politics, is still worthy of his hire, and poor Edgar, like the rest of the world, had to make the best compromise he could between what he would have liked to do and what circumstances actually permitted him to do. Of course he would be anxious to keep his job. If he didn't keep it

a worse man would get it, and India would be no better off, but probably worse. She sighed that all work should be subject to compromises of this kind. Edgar, in a word, was no longer a hero to her, but, by his very weakness, something a little nearer and dearer still.

But for all that she had not hesitated to use her "pull" in order to get him to The Witan that day.

She saw him as she advanced to the glass again. He was nearly a quarter of a mile down the road. She found a little secret delight in watching his approach when he was unconscious of her watching. His figure was still very small, and she indulged herself with a fancy, closing her eyes for a moment in order to do so. Suppose he had been, not approaching, but going away —then when she opened her eyes again he would look smaller still.... She opened them, and experienced a little thrill at seeing him nearer and plainer. She could distinguish the red spot of his tie. Now he turned his head to look at some people who passed. Now he stepped off the pavement to make room for somebody. Now he was on the pavement again—now hidden by a tree—now once more disclosed, and quite near ——

She straightened herself, gave a last look into the glass, and descended.

She met him in the hall. They shook hands, but did not speak. There was no need for him to ask whether anybody had come; the babble of noise could be plainly heard through the closed studio door. They walked along the passage, descended the two steps into the garden, and reached the studio.

Strong opened the door, and—

"*Ha, ha, ha!* I shall tell them that at the Nursery!——"

"No—just living together——"

"Corin!—Corin!——"

"The eighteenth, at the Little Theatre——"

Then the voice of Mr. Crabtree vociferating to his friend Mr. Wilkinson.

"I thowt ye telled me 'at Pratt knew all about it——"

"One day in the High, just opposite Queens——"

"Not know the '*Internationale*'!—Debout, les damnés de la terre——!"

Next, sonorously, Miss Belchamber.

"Yes, I dance 'Rufty Tufty' and 'Catching of Quails'——"

"But my good chap, don't you see that the Referendum——"

"Oh, throw it down anywhere—on the hearth——"

"Really, the bosh he talks——"

"The Minority Report——"

"Corin!——"

"Plato——"

"Prang——"

Then, before anybody had had time to notice the entry of Amory and Edgar Strong, an extraordinary, not to say a regrettable thing occurred.

Mr. Eli Crabtree had spent the last twenty minutes in going deliberately from one person to another, often thrusting himself unceremoniously between two people already engaged in conversation, and in subjecting them to questionings that had become less and less reticent the further he had passed round the room. And it appeared that this collier who had forgotten his Davy had yet another lamp with him—the lamp of his own narrow intelligence and inalienable, if worthless, experience. By the help of that darkness within him that he mistook for light, he had added inference to inference and conclusion to conclusion. Cosimo—Wilkinson—Walter Wyron—Brimby—the Balliol men—the young students of the McGrath—he had missed not one of them; but none knew the

portent of his tour of the studio until he had reached the hearth again. Then he was seen to be standing with his hands behind him, as if calmly summing them up.

"By—Gow!" he said half to himself, his football-cropped head moving this way and that and his eyes blinking rapidly as he sought somebody to address.

Then, all in a moment, he ceased his attempt to single out one more than another, and was addressing them in the lump, for all the world as if he had been allowed the entrée of the house, not as a high and memorable privilege and in order that he might learn something he had never suspected before, but as if, finding himself there, *he* might as well tell *them* a thing or two while he was about it. And though his astonishment at what he had seen might well have rendered him dumb, his good temper did not for an instant forsake him.

"By—Gow!" he said again. "But this *is* a menagerie, an' reight!"

The instantaneous dead silence and turn of every head might have disconcerted a prophet, but they made not the slightest impression on Mr. Crabtree.

"It *is* a menagerie!" he continued superbly. "Ding, if onnybody'd told me I wadn't ha' believed 'em!—Let's see how monny of ye there is——"

And calmly he began to count them.

"Fowerteen—fifteen—sixteen countin' them two 'at's just come in an' leavin' out t' barns. Sixteen of ye, grown men an' women, an' not a single one of ye knows ye're born! Nay, it's cappin'!—Him wi' his Salmagundys or whativver he calls 'em, an' niver been on Douglas Head!—T' maister here, 'at doesn't know what a back-to-back is, I'se warrant!—An' yon chap—," Mr. Crabtree's forefinger was straight as a pistol between Mr. Brimby's eyes, "—'at says there's a deeal to be said o' both sides an'll be having his pocket'ankercher out in a minute!—An' these young men thro' t' Collidge!—Nay, if it doesn't beat all! I ne'er thowt to live to see t' day!——"

And he made a T-t-t-ing with his tongue on his palate, while his sharp little eyes looked on them all with amusement and pity.

Out of the silence of consternation that had fallen on the studio Walter Wyron was the first to come. He nudged Cosimo, as if to warn him not to spoil everything, and then, with his hands deep in the pockets of his knickers and an anticipatory relish on his face, said "I say, old chap—make us a speech, won't you?"

But if Walter thought to take a rise out of Mr. Crabtree he was quite, quite mistaken. With good-natured truculence the collier turned on him also.

"A speech?" he said. "Well, I wasn't at t' back o' t' door when t' speechifyin'-powers was given out; it wadn't be t' first time I'd made a speech, nut by a mugfull. Mony's t' time they've put Eeali Crabtree o' t' table i' t' 'Arabian Horse' at Aberford an' called on him for a speech. I'd sooner mak' a speech nor have a quart o' ale teamed down my collar, an' that's all t' choice there is when t' lads begins to get lively!... I don't suppose onny o' ye's ever been i' t' 'Arabian Horse'? Ye owt to come, of a oppenin'-time of a Sunda' morning. Ye'd see a bit o' life. Happen ye might ha' to get at t' back o' t' door—if they started slinging pints about, that is—but it's all love, and ye've got to do summat wi' it when ye can't sup onny more. I should like to have him 'at talks about t' Paraphernalia there; it 'ld oppen his eyes a bit! An' him 'at wor reciting about t' King an' all—t' little bastard i' t' corner there——"

At this word, used in so familiar and cheerful a sense, Laura Wyron stiffened and turned her back; but Walter still hoped for his "rise."

"Go on," he said; "give us some more, old chap."

The child of nature needed no urging.

"Ay, as much as ivver ye like," he said accommodatingly. "But I wish I'd browt my voice jewjewbes. Ay, I willn't be t' only one 'at isn't talking! T' rest on ye talks—ding, it's like a lamb's

tail, waggin' all day and nowt done at neet—so we mud as weel all be friendly-like! Talk! Ay, let's have a talk! Here ye all are, all wi' your fine voices an' fine clothes, an' ivvery one o' ye wi' t' conveeanience i' t' house, I don't doubt, an' I'll bet a gallon there isn't one o' ye's ivver done a hands-turn i' your lives! Nay, ye're waur nor my Aunt Kate! Come down to Aberford an' I'll show ye summat! Come—it's a invitaation—I'll see it doesn't cost ye nowt! T' lads is all working, all but t' youngest, an' we're nooan wi'out! No, we're nooan wi'out at our house! I'll interdewce ye to t' missis, an' ye can help her to peel t' potates, an' ye can go down i' t' cage if ye like! Come, an' I'll kill a pig, just for love. Come of a Sunda' dinner-time, when t' beef's hot. Wilkinson knows what I mean; he knows t' life; he reckons not to when he's wi' his fine friends, but Wilkie's had to lie i' bed while his shirt was being mended afore to-day!... Nay, the hengments!" He broke into a jovial laugh. "Ye know nowt about it, an' ye nivver will! These 'ere young pistills fro' t' Collidge—what are they maalakin' at? It doesn't tak' five thousand pound a year to learn a lad not to write a mucky word on a wall!" (Here Dickie Lemesurier turned her back on the speaker).... "They want to get back to their Collidges. T' gap's ower wide. They'll get lost o' t' road. Same as him 'at wrote t' book about t' pop-shop——," again Mr. Crabtree's forefinger was levelled between Mr. Brimby's eyes. "Brimbyin' about, an' they don't know a black puddin' from a Penny Duck! Has he ivver had to creep up again t' chimley-wall to keep himself warm i' bed, or to pull t' kitchen blinds down while he washed himself of a Saturda' afternooin? But ye can all come an' see if ye like. We've had to tew for it, but we're nooan wi'out now. An' I'll show ye a bit o' sport too. We all have we'r whippets, an' we can clock t' pigeons in, an' see what sort of a bat these young maisters can mak' at knurr-an'-spell—eighteen-and-a-half score my youngest lad does! Ay, we enjoy we'rsens! An' there's quoits an' all. Eighteen yards is my distance if onnybody wants to laake for a beast's-heart supper! Come—ding it, t' lot o' ye come! We can sleep fower o' ye, wed 'uns, heads to tails, if ye don't mind all being i' t' little cham'er——"

But by this time Mr. Crabtree was having to struggle to keep his audience. Mr. Brimby too had turned away, and Mr. Wilkinson, and even Miss Belchamber had spoken several words of her own accord to the young Balliol boy. The tide of sound began to rise again, so that once more Mr. Crabtree's voice was only one among many. Then Walter started forward with an "Ah, Amory!" and "Hallo, Strong!" Mr. Raffinger of the McGrath exclaimed....

"Perseverance Row, fower doors from t' 'Arabian Horse'——," Mr. Crabtree bawled hospitably through the hubbub....

"Oh, you *must* see it—the New Greek Society, on the seventeenth——"

"But I say—what *is* 'Catching of Quails,' Miss Belchamber ——?"

"Mr. Wilkinson brought him, I think——"

"Fellow of All Souls, wasn't he?——"

Then that genial Aberford man again:

"I tell ye t' gap's ower wide, young man—ye'll get lost o' t' road——"

"No, the children take her name——"

"Got a match, old fellow?——"

"Rot, my dear chap!——"

"But what *is* condonation if that isn't?——"

"Oh, the ordinary brainless Army type——"

"I read it in the German——"

"They gained time by paying in pennies——"

"In Père Lachaise——"

"Well, we can talk about it at suppertime——"

"But with cheaper Divorce——"

"One an' all—whenivver ye like—Eeali Crabtree, Perseverance Row, Aberford, fower doors from t' 'Arabian Horse'——"

"Nietzsche——"

"Finot——"

"Weininger——"

"Wadham——"

"Aberford——"

"Rufty Tufty——"

VI

THE SOUL STORM

"I—say!——"

"*Wasn't* he priceless!——"

"You got his address, Cosimo? I *must* cultivate him!——"

"Pure delight!——"

"You had come in, hadn't you, Amory?——"

"He *shot* Brimby!——"

"To all intents and purposes—with his finger——"

"Can you do his accent, Walter?——"

"I will in a week, or perish——"

"His bath in the kitchen!——"

"T' wed 'uns can sleep i' t' little chamber——"

"No—he didn't sound the 'b' in 'chamber,' and there were at least three 'a's' in it——"

"'T' little chaaam'er'——"

"No, you haven't quite got it——"

"Give me a little time——"

The party had dwindled to six—Cosimo and Amory, the Wyrons, and Britomart Belchamber and Mr. Strong. They were still in the studio, but they were only waiting for the supper-gong to ring. Cigarette ends were thickly strewn about the asbestos log. The bandying of short ecstatic phrases had been between Walter and his wife, with Cosimo a little less rapturously intervening; the subject of them was, of course,

Mr. Crabtree. To his general harangue Mr. Crabtree had added, before leaving, more particular words of advice, making a second tour of the studio for the purpose; and he had distinguished Walter above all the rest by inviting him, not merely to the house four doors from the "Arabian Horse," but to spend a warm afternoon with him on Douglas Head also.

But the Wyrons had these raptures pretty much to themselves. Perhaps Cosimo was thinking of Mr. Wilkinson, of some new paper of which he had never heard, and of the assumption that he, apparently, was to find the money for it. Miss Belchamber was rarely rapturous, so that her silence was nothing out of the way. Edgar Strong could be rapturous when he chose, but he evidently didn't choose now. And Amory had far too much on her mind.

Her original idea in asking the Wyrons to stay to supper had been that they, as acknowledged experts in the subject that perplexed her, would be the proper people to keep the ring while the four persons immediately concerned talked the whole situation quietly and reasonably and thoroughly out. But she was rather inclined now to think again before submitting her case to them. It would be so much better, if the case must be submitted to anybody, that Cosimo should do it. Then she herself would be able to shape her course in the light of anything that might turn up. Nothing, she had to admit, had turned up yet, and Amory was not sure that in that very fact there did not lie a sufficient cause for resentment. Had Cosimo pleaded a passion for Britomart Belchamber he would have had Passion's excuse. Lacking Passion, it could only be concluded that he was bored with Amory herself.

And that amounted to an insult....

The booming of the gong, however, cut short her brooding. They passed to the dining-room. Britomart and Walter sat with their backs to the tall black dresser with the willow pattern stretching up almost to the ceiling; Laura and Edgar took the German chairs that had their backs to the copper-hooded fireplace; and Cosimo and Amory occupied either end of the highly-polished clothless table. This absence of cloth, by the

way, gave a church-like appearance to the flames of the candles in the spidery brass sticks that had each of them a ring at the top to lift it up by; the preponderance of black oak and dull black frames on the walls further added to the effect of gloom; and the putting down of the little green pipkins of soup and the moving of the green-handled knives and round-bowled spoons made little knockings from time to time.

Again Walter and Laura, with not too much help from Cosimo, sustained the weight of the conversation; and it was not until Amory asked a question in a tone from which rapture was markedly absent that they sponged, as it were, the priceless memory of Mr. Crabtree from their minds. Amory's question had been about Walter's new Lecture, still in course of preparation, on "*Post-Dated Passion*"; and Walter cursorily ran over its heads for the general benefit.

"I admit I got the idea from Balzac," he said between mouthfuls (whenever they came to The Witan the Wyrons supped almost as heartily as did Edgar Strong himself). "'Comment l'amour revient aux vieillards,' you know. But of course that hasn't any earthly interest for anybody. 'Aux vieilles' it ought to be. Then—well, then you've simply got 'em."

"Why not 'vieillards?'" Amory asked, not very genially.

"I say, Cosimo, I'll have another cutlet if I may.—Why not 'vieillards?' Quite obvious. Men aren't the interest. I've tried men, and you can ask Laura how the bookings went.—But 'vieilles' and I've got 'em. Really, Amory, you're getting quite dull if you don't see that! I'll explain. You see, I've already got the younger ones, like Brit here—shove the claret along, Brit—but the others, of forty or fifty say, well, they've all had their affairs—or if they haven't better still—and it's merely a question of touching the right chord. Regrets, time they've lost, fatal words 'Too late' and so on—it's simply *made* for me! Touch the chord and they do the rest for themselves. They probably won't hear half of it for sobbing.—Of course I shall probably have to modify my style a bit—not quite so—what shall I say——"

"Jaunty," his wife suggested, "—in the best sense, I mean ____"

"Hm—that's not quite the word—but never mind. It's a great field. Certainly women, not men, are the draw."

Amory made a rather petulant objection, and the argument lasted some minutes. In the end Walter triumphantly gained his first point, that women and not men were the "draw" in the box-office sense, and also his second one, namely, that not the Britomarts, but the older women, who would put their hearts into his hands and pay him for exploiting their helplessness and ache and tenderness and regret, and never suspect that they were being practised upon, were "simply made for him...."

"What do you think of my title?" he asked.

And the title was discussed.

Amory was beginning to find Walter just a little grasping. She wished that after all she had not asked the Wyrons to stay to supper. Formerly she had thought that marriage-escapade of theirs big and heroic (that too, by the way, had been in the Latin Quarter, and probably on seven francs a day); but now she was less sure about that. Quite apart from the inapplicability of the Wyrons' experience to her own case, she now wondered whether theirs had in fact been experience at all. Now that she came to think of it, they had taken no risks. They *had* been married, and in the last event could always turn round on their critics and silence them with that fact....

Nor was she quite so ready now to lay even the souls of Britomart and Cosimo on the dissecting-table for the sake of seeing Walter exercise his professional skill upon them. This was not so much that she wanted to spare Cosimo and Britomart as that she did not want to give Walter a gratification. She was inclined to think that if Walter couldn't be a little more careful about contradicting her he might find his advertisement omitted from the "Novum" one week, as Katie Deedes' had been omitted, and where would he be then? The way in which he had just said that she was "getting quite dull" had been next door to a rudeness....

But she had to admit that she felt dull. Edgar, who sat next to her, did not speak, and Cosimo, who faced her, was apparently still brooding on people who planned the spending of his money without thinking it necessary to consult him first. She was tired of the whole of the circumstances of her life. Paris on seven francs a day could hardly be much worse. Nor, if she could but shake off her lethargy, need that sum be fixed as low as seven francs. For she had lately remembered an arrangement made between herself and Cosimo before she had ever consented to become engaged to him. It was a long time since either of them had spoken of this arrangement—so long that Cosimo would have been almost within his rights had he maintained that the circumstances had so altered as to make it no longer binding; but there it was, or had been, and it had never been expressly revoked. It was the arrangement by which they had set apart a fund to insure themselves, either or both of them, against any evils that might arise from incompatibility. Amory had no idea how the matter now stood. She didn't suppose for a moment that Cosimo had actually set a sum by each week or month; but, hard and fast or loose and fluid, he must have made, or be still ready to make, some provision. It was an inherent part of the contract that a solemn affirmation, with reason shown (spiritual, not mere legal reason) by either one or the other, should constitute a sufficient claim on this fund.

Therefore Paris need not necessarily be the worst penury.

But, for all her new inclination to leave the Wyrons out of it, she still thought it a prudent idea to carry the fight (not that there would be any fight—that was only a low way of expressing the high reasonableness that always prevailed at The Witan) to Cosimo and Britomart, rather than to have it centre about Edgar and herself. Walter's eyes were mainly on the box-office nowadays. The original virtue of that fine protest of theirs was—there was no use in denying it—gone. He spread his Lectures frankly now as a net. Well, that was only one net more among the many nets of which she was becoming conscious. Edgar too, poor boy, was compelled to regard even the "Novum" as in some manner a net. Mr. Brimby, Amory more than guessed, had nets to spread. Mr.

Wilkinson, in his own way, was out for a catch; and Dickie fished at the Suffrage Shop; and Katie had fished at the Eden; and the only one who didn't fish was Mr. Prang, who wrote his articles about India for nothing, just to be practising his English.

And all these nets were spread for somebody's money—a good deal of it Cosimo's. It had been the same, though perhaps not quite so bad, at Ludlow. That experiment on the country-side had been alarmingly costly. And all this did not include the dozens and dozens of nets of narrower mesh. The "Novum" might gulp down money by the hundred, but the lesser things were hardly less formidable in the sum of them—subscriptions, contributions, gifts, loans, investments, shares in the Eden and the Book Shop, mortgages, second mortgages, subsidies, sums to "tide over," backings, guarantees, losses cut, more good money sent to bring back the bad, fresh means of spending devised by somebody or other almost every day. It had begun to weary even Amory. The people who came to The Witan became rather curiously better-dressed the longer their visiting continued; but the things they professed to hold dear appeared very little further advanced. All that first brightness and promise had gone. Amory's interest had gone. She wanted to escape from it all, and to go away with Edgar appeared once more to be the readiest way out.

But, though she might now wish to keep Walter Wyron out of it all, that did not necessarily mean that Walter would be kept out. This *ex-officio* specialist on the (preferably female) heart, this professional rectifier of unfortunate marriages, had not done a number of years' platform-work without having discovered the peculiar beauties of the *argumentum ad hominem*, and it was one of his practices to enforce his arguments with "Take the case of Brit here"—or "Let's get down to the concrete: suppose Amory—" And these descents to the particular had always a curiously accusatory effect. Walter, interrupting Amory's meditation, broke into one of them now.

"But my dear chap,"—this was to Cosimo,"—I can't imagine what's come over all of you to-night! First Amory, now you!

You're usually quicker than this! Let's take a case.—Brit here ____"

One sterno-mastoid majestically turned the caryatid's head. Again Miss Belchamber's grand thorax worked as if somebody had put a penny into the slot.

"What?" she said.

"Quiet, Brit; I'm only using you as an illustration.—Suppose Brit here was to develop a passion for somebody—Cosimo, say; yes, Cosimo'll do capitally; awfully good instance of the cant that's commonly talked about 'treachery' and 'under his own roof' and all the rest of it—as if a roof wasn't a roof and it hadn't got to be under somebody's—unless they went out on the Heath!—Well, suppose it was to happen to Cosimo and Brit; what then? We're civilized, I hope. We're a little above the animals, I venture to think. Amory wouldn't fly at Brit's eyes, and Brit's father wouldn't come round with a razor to cut Cosimo's throat. In fact——"

"My fa-ther al-ways uses a safety-razor," said Miss Belchamber with a reminiscent air.

"Don't interrupt, Brit.—I was going to say that the world's got past all that. Nor Brit wouldn't fly at Amory, nor Cosimo kick the old josser out of the house—though we should be much more ready to condone that part of it if they did—if it was only to get quits with the past a bit——"

"My fa-ther's forty-five," Miss Belchamber announced, as the interesting result of an interesting mental process of computation. "Next June," she added.

"More interruptions from the back of the hall.—In fact, I'm not sure that *wouldn't* be entirely defensible—Brit going for Amory and Cosimo kicking the old dodderer out, I mean. That's the justification of the *crime passionel*. It's the Will to Live. And by Live I mean Love. It's the old saying, that kissing lips have no conscience. Or Jove laughs at lovers' oaths. Quite right. It's the New Greek Spirit. But for all that we're modern and rational about these things. If Strong here wanted to take

Laura from me I should simply say, 'All you've got to do, my dear chap, is to table your reasons, and if they're stronger than mine you take her.' See?"

At that Edgar Strong, like Britomart, looked up. He spoke for the first time.—"What's that you're saying?" he asked.

"I don't suppose you'd want her, but suppose you did...."

Mr. Strong dropped his eyes to his plate again.—"Ah, yes," he said. "Ellen Key's got something about that." And he relapsed into silence again.

It sounded to Amory idiotic. Walter was so evidently "trying" it on them in order to see how it would go down with an audience afterwards. She wouldn't have scratched Britomart's eyes out for Cosimo,—but she coloured a little, and bit her lip, at the thought that somebody might want to come between herself and Edgar.... But perhaps that was what Walter meant —real affinities, as distinct from the ordinary vapid assumptions about marriages being made in Heaven. If so, she agreed with him—not that she was much fonder of him on that account. She wished he would keep his personalities for Cosimo and Britomart, and leave herself and Edgar alone.—Walter went on.

"And then, when you've got your New Greek Certificate, so to speak, it's plainly the duty of everybody else, not to put obstacles in your way and to threaten you with razors and cutting off supplies, but to sink their personal feelings and to do everything they can to help you. And without snivelling either. I shouldn't snivel, I hope, if anybody took Laura, and she wouldn't if anybody took me——"

Here Laura interposed softly.—"I don't want any one to take you, dear," she said.

Walter turned sharply.

"Eh?... Now you've put me off my argument.... What was I saying?... Haven't I told you you must *never* do that, Laura?... No, it's quite gone.... You see ..."

Laura murmured that she was very sorry....

"No, it's gone," said Walter, almost cheerfully, as if not sorry that for once the worth of what he had been about to say should be measured by the sense of loss. "So since Laura wishes it I'll shut up."

He passed up his plate for a second helping of trifle.

By this time Amory was perhaps rather glad that she had had the Wyrons after all. That about people not putting obstacles in the way was quite neat. "A plain duty," he had said. She hoped Cosimo'd heard that, and would remember it when she raised the subject of the fund. And so far was she herself from putting obstacles in *his* way that, although she could have sent Britomart Belchamber packing with her wages at any moment, she had not done so. That, as Walter had said, would only have been another way of flying at her eyes.... Besides, Amory had been far too deeply occupied to formulate definitely her charges against Cosimo and Britomart. For all she knew it might have gone much, much further than she had thought. Sometimes, when Amory took breakfast in her own room, she did not see Cosimo until the evening, and Britomart too had heaps of time on her hands when she had finished with Corin and Bonniebell. Cosimo must not tell her that the "*Life and Work*" occupied him during every minute of his time....

Then, presently, she was sorry again that the Wyrons had been asked, for Walter had suddenly remembered the thread of his discourse, and, in continuing it, had been almost rude to Laura. She wondered whether he would have turned with a half angry "Why, what's the matter?" had Laura cried. Perhaps it was really a good thing the Wyrons hadn't any children, for this kind of thing would certainly have been a bad example for them. She herself was never rude to Cosimo before Corin and Bonniebell. She was always markedly polite. There were excuses to be made for Passion, but none for rudeness.

By this time Edgar Strong had finished his last piece of cheese and was wiping his lips with his napkin. Then he looked at his watch, and for the second time during the course of the meal spoke.

"Look here, Cosimo, I've got to be off presently, and we haven't settled about those advertisements yet. And there's something else I want to say to you too. Could we hurry coffee up? Where do we have it? In the studio, I suppose? Or do the others go into the studio and you and Walter and I have ours here?"

"We might as well all go into the studio," said Cosimo, rising; and they left the sombre room and sought the studio, all except Miss Belchamber, who went upstairs.

The sight of the innumerable cigarette-ends about the asbestos log reminded Walter of Mr. Crabtree again; and for a minute or two—that is to say during the time that Walter, taking her aside, told her of the quiet but penetrating side-light Mr. Crabtree had innocently shed on Mr. Wilkinson's scheme for some new paper or other that Cosimo was to finance—Amory was once more glad that the Wyrons had come. But the next moment, as Walter loitered away and Laura came and sat softly down beside her, she was sorry again. Laura was gently crying. That struck Amory as stupid. As if she hadn't enough great troubles of her own, without burdening herself with the Wyrons' trivial ones!

So, as she had nothing really helpful to say to Laura, she left her, and sat down on the footstool she had occupied on the day when Edgar Strong had said that he liked the casts and had asked her whether she had read something or other—she forgot what.

Edgar was talking in low tones to Cosimo, and Amory thought she heard the name of Mr. Prang. Then Cosimo, who always thought more Imperially with a map before him, got out the large atlas, and the two of them bent over it together. Walter joined them, and, after an interlude that appeared to be about the Lectures' advertisement, Walter strolled away again and joined Laura. Amory heard an "Eh?" and a moment later the word "touchy," and Walter went off to the window with his hands in the pockets of his knickers, whistling. Edgar took not the least notice of Amory's eyes intently fixed upon him. He continued to talk to Cosimo. Walter, who was examining a

Japanese print, called over his shoulder, "This a new one, Amory? What is it—Utamaro?" Then he walked up to where Laura sat again. He was speaking in an undertone to her: "Rubbish ... take on like that ... better clear off then"; and a moment later, seeing Edgar Strong buttoning up his coat, he called out, "Wait a minute, Strong—we're going down too—get your hat, Laura——"

Five minutes later Cosimo Pratt and his wife were alone.

It was the first time they had been so for nearly a fortnight. Indeed, for weeks the departure of the last visitor had been the signal for their own good-night, Cosimo going his way, she hers. There had never been anything even remotely approaching a "scene" to account for this. It had merely happened so.

Therefore, finding himself alone with his wife in the studio again, Cosimo yawned and stretched his arms above his head.

"Ah-h-h!... You going to bed?"

As he would hardly be likely to take himself off before she had answered his question, Amory did not reply at once. She sat down on the footstool and stretched her hands out to the asbestos log. Then, after a minute, and without looking up, she broke one of their tacitly accepted rules by asking a direct question.

"What were you and Edgar Strong discussing?" she asked.

He yawned again.—"Oh, the Bookshop advertisement—and advertisements generally. It begins to look as if we should have to be less exclusive about these things. Strong tells me that it's unheard-of for a paper to refuse any advertisement it can get."

"I mean when you got out the atlas."

"Oh—India, of course. The Indian policy. Strong isn't altogether satisfied about Prang. He seems to think he might get us into trouble."

"How? Why?" Amory said, her eyes reflectively on the purring gas-jets.

"Can't make out. Some fancy of his. The policy hasn't changed, and Prang hasn't changed. I wonder whether Wilkinson's right when he says Strong's put his hand to the plough but is now ... *ah!* That reminds me!—Were you here when that preposterous fellow—what's his name—Crabtree—rather let the cat out of the bag about Wilkinson?"

"You mean about another paper? No. But Walter said something about it."

"Yes, by Jove! He seems to have it all cut-and-dried! Crabtree seems to think I knew all about it. Of course I did know that Wilkinson had a scheme, but I'd no idea he was jumping ahead at that rate. I don't want two papers. One's getting rather serious."

Still without looking at her husband, Amory said, "How, serious?"

"Why, the expense. I'm not sure that we didn't take the wrong line about the advertisements. Anyway, something will have to be done. Thirty pounds a week is getting too stiff. I'm seriously thinking of selling out from the Eden and the Bookshop. Do you know that with one thing and another we're down more than three thousand pounds this year?"

Amory was surprised; but she realized instinctively that that was not the moment to show her surprise. Were she to show it, the moment would not be opportune for the raising of the subject of the fund, and she wanted to raise that subject. And she wanted to raise it in connexion with Cosimo and Britomart Belchamber. She continued to gaze at the log. The servants, she thought, might have taken the opportunity of dinner to sweep up the litter of cigarette-ends that surrounded it; and then she had a momentary fancy. It was, that the domestic relations that existed between herself and Cosimo were a thing that, like that mechanical substitute for a more generous fire, could be turned off and on as it were by the mere touching of a tap. She wondered what made her think of that....

Cosimo had taken out his penknife and was scraping his nails, moodily running over items of disbursement as he scraped; and then the silence fell between them again.

It was Amory who broke it, and in doing so she turned her head for the first time. She gave her husband a look that meant that, though he might talk about expenses, she also had a subject.

"Walter was excessively stupid to-night," she said abruptly.

He said "Oh?" and went on scraping.

"At the best he's never a model of tact, but I thought he rather overstepped the mark at dinner."

Again he said "Oh?" and added, "What about?"

"His manners. His ideas are all right, I suppose, but I'm getting rather tired of his platform-tricks."

"His habit of illustration and so on?"

"And his want of tact generally. In fact I'm not sure it isn't more than that. In a strange house it would have been simply a *faux pas*, but he knows us well enough, and the arrangement between us. He might at any rate wait till he's called in."

Cosimo started on another nail.—"What arrangement?" he said.

Again Amory gave him that look that might have told him that, though he might think that only a lot of money had gone, she knew that something far more vital had gone with it.

"Do you mean that you didn't hear what he was saying about you and Britomart Belchamber?"

"Yes, I heard that, of course. Of course I heard it."

"Well?"

"Well!"

And this time their eyes met in a long look....

Cosimo had only himself to thank for what happened to him then. After all, you cannot watch a superb piece of female mechanism playing "Catching of Quails," and openly admire the way in which it can shut up like a clasp-knife and fold itself upon itself like a multiple lever, and pretend to be half in love with it lest sharp eyes should see that you are actually half in love with it, and take it for walks, and discuss Walter's Lectures with it, and tell it frequently how different things might have been had you been ten years younger, and warn it to be a good girl because of dangerous young men, and stroke its hair, and tell it what beautiful eyes it has, and kiss its hand from time to time, and walk with your arm protectingly about its waist, and so on and so forth, day after day—you cannot, after all, do these things and be entirely unflurried when your ever-so-slightly tiresome wife reminds you that, be it only by way of illustration, a young expert in such matters has coupled your name with that of the passive object of your philanderings. Nor can you reasonably be surprised when that wife gives you a long look, that doesn't reproach you for anything except for your stupidity or hypocrisy if you pretend not to understand, and then resumes her meditative gazing into a patent asbestos fire. Appearances *are* for the moment against you. You can*not* help for one moment seeing it as it must have appeared all the time to somebody else. Of course you know that you are in the right really, and the other person entirely wrong, and that with a little reasonableness on that other person's part you could make this perfectly clear; but you *are* rather trapped, you know it, and the state of mind in which you find yourself is called by people who aren't anybody in particular "flurry."

Which is perhaps rather a long way of saying that Cosimo was suddenly and entirely disconcerted.

And his flurry included a certain crossness and impatience with Amory. She was—could be—only pretending. She knew perfectly well that there was nothing really. The least exercise of her imagination must have told her that to press Britomart Belchamber's hand, for example, was the most innocent of creature-comforts. Why, he had pressed it with Amory herself there; he had said, jokingly, and Amory had heard him, that it

was a desirable hand to press, and he had pressed it. And so with Britomart's dancing of "Rufty Tufty." Amory, who, like Cosimo, had had an artist's training, ought to be the last person to deny that any eye so trained did not see a hundred beauties where eyes uneducated saw one only. And that of course meant chaste beauties. Such admiration was an exercise in analysis, not in amorousness.... No, it was far more likely that Amory was getting at him. She was smiling, a melancholy and indifferent little smile, at the asbestos log. She had no right to smile like that. It made him feel beastly. It made him so that he didn't know what to say....

But she continued to smile, and when Cosimo did at last speak he hated himself for stammering.

"But—but—but—oh, come, Amory, this *is* absurd! You're—you're tired! Me and Britomart! Oh, c-c-come!——"

And then it occurred to him that this was a ridiculous answer, and that the proper answer to have made would have been simply to laugh. He did laugh.

"Ha, ha, ha! By Jove, for the moment you almost took me in! You really did get a rise out of me that time! Congratulations. —And I admit it is rather cool of Walter to pounce on the first name that occurs to him and make use of it in that way. Deuced cool when you come to think of it. It seems to me ____"

But again that quite calm and unreproaching look silenced him. There was a loftiness and serenity about it that reminded him of the Amory of four or five years before. And she spoke almost with a note of wonder at him in her tone.

"My dear Cosimo," she said very patiently, "what is the matter? You look at me as if I had accused you of something. Nothing was further from my thoughts. I suppose, when you examine it, it's a matter for congratulation, not accusation at all. As Walter said, I don't want to fly at anybody's eyes. We foresaw this, and provided for it, you know."

At this cool taking for granted of a preposterous thing Cosimo's stammer became a splutter.—"But—but—but—," he broke out: but Amory held up her hand.

"I raise no objection. I've no right to. What earthly right have I, when I concurred before ever we were married?"

"Concurred!... My dear girl, concurred in what? Really this is the most ridiculous situation I was ever in!"

Amory raised her brows.—"Oh?... I don't see anything ridiculous about it. It received my sanction when Britomart stopped in the house, and I haven't changed my mind. As I say, we foresaw it, and provided for it."

"'It!'" Cosimo could only pipe—one little note, high and thin as that of a piccolo. Amory continued.

"I'm not asking a single question about it. I'm not even curious. I didn't become your property when we married, and you're not mine. Our souls are our own, both of us. I think we were very wise to foresee it quite at the beginning.—And don't think I'm jealous. Perfectly truly, I wish you every happiness. Britomart's a very pretty girl, and nobody can say she's always making a display of her cleverness, like some of them. I respect your privacy, and want you to do the best you can with your life."

The piccolo note changed to that of a bassoon.—"Amory—listen to me."

"No. I'd *very* much rather not hear anything about it. As Walter said, Life *is* Love, and I only mentioned this at all to-night because there is one quite small practical detail that doesn't seem to me entirely satisfactory."

She understood Cosimo to ask what that was.

"This: You ought to be fair to her. I know you'll forgive my mentioning anything so vulgar, but it is—about money. She can't be expected to think of such things herself just now,"—there were whole honeymoons in the reasonable little nod Amory gave,"—and so *I* mention it. It's my place to do so. For

us all just to dip our hands into a common purse doesn't seem to me very satisfactory. She's rights too that I shouldn't dream of disputing. And don't think I'm assuming more than there actually is. I only mean that I don't see why, in certain events, you shouldn't, et cetera; that's all I mean. You see?... But I admit that for everybody's sake I should like things put on a proper footing without loss of time."

Cosimo had begun to wander up and down among the saddlebag chairs. His slender fingers rested aimlessly on the backs of them from time to time. Amory thought that he was about to try the remaining notes within the compass of his voice, but instead he suddenly straightened himself. He appeared to have come to a resolution. He strode towards the door.

"Where are you going?" Amory asked.

"I'm going to fetch Britomart," he replied shortly. "This is preposterous."

But again he hesitated, as perhaps Amory surmised he might. His offer, if it meant anything, ought to have meant that his conscience was so clear that Amory might catechize Britomart to her heart's content; but there *had* been those hair-strokings and hand-pattings, and—and—and Britomart, as Amory had said, was "not always making a display of her cleverness." She might, indeed, let fall something even more disconcerting than the rest—

Cosimo was trying a bluff—

In a word, between fetching Britomart and not fetching her, Amory had her husband by the short hairs.

She mused.—"Just a moment," she said.

And then she rose from the footstool, put one hand on the edge of the mantelpiece, and with the other drew up her skirt an inch or two and stretched out her slipper to the log.

"It really isn't necessary to fetch Britomart," she said after a moment, looking up. "Fetch her if you prefer it, of course, but

first I want to say something else—something quite different."

That it was something quite different seemed to be a deep relief to Cosimo. He returned from the door again.

"What's that?" he said.

"It's different," Amory said slowly, "but related. Let me think a moment how to put it.... You were speaking a few minutes ago of selling out from the Eden and the Suffrage Shop. If I understand you, things aren't going altogether well."

"They aren't," said Cosimo, almost grimly.

"And then," Amory continued, "there's Mr. Prang. Neither you nor Strong seem very satisfied about him."

"It's Strong who isn't satisfied. I've no complaints to make about Prang."

"Well, I've been thinking about that too, and I've had an idea. I'm not sure that after all Strong mayn't be right. I admit Prang states a case as well as it could be stated; the question is whether it's quite the case we *want* stated. His case is ours to a large extent, but perhaps not altogether. And as matters stand we're in his hands about India, simply because he knows more about it than we do. You see what I mean?"

"Not quite," said Cosimo.

"No? Well, let me tell you what I've been thinking...."

Those people who are nobodys, and have not had the enormous advantage of being taken by the hand by the somebodys, are under a misconception about daring and original ideas. The ideas seem original and daring to them because the processes behind them are hidden. The inferior mind does not realize of itself that every sudden and miraculous blooming is already an old story to somebody.

But Cosimo occupied a sort of intermediary position between the sources of inspiration and the flat levels of popular understanding. Remember, he was in certain ways one of the public; but at the same time he was the author of the "*Life and*

Work." He took his Amory, so to speak, nascent. Therefore, when she gave utterance to a splendour, he credited himself with just that measure of participation in it that causes us humbler ones, when we see the airman's spiral, to fancy our own hands upon the controls, or, when we read a great book, to sun ourselves in the flattering delusion that we do not merely read, but, in some mysterious sense, participate in the writing of it also.

And so the words which Amory spoke now—words which would have caused you or me to give a gasp of admiration—affected him less extraordinarily.

"Why don't you go to India and see for yourself?" she said.

Nevertheless, Cosimo was not altogether unaffected. Even to his accustomed ear it was rather stupendous, and, if he hadn't been again uneasily wondering whether he dared risk having Britomart down when Amory should return to the former subject again, might have been more stupendous still. He resumed his walk along the saddlebag chairs, and, when at last he did speak, did not mar a high occasion with too much vulgar demonstrativeness.

"That's an idea," he said simply.

"You see, Mr. Chamberlain went to South Africa," Amory replied, as simply.

"Yes," said Cosimo thoughtfully.... "It's certainly an idea."

"And you know how people have been getting at the 'Novum' lately, and even suggesting that Prang was merely a pen-name for Wilkinson himself."

"Yes, yes."

"Well, if you went, for six months, say, or even three, nobody'd be able to say after that that you didn't know all about it."

"No," Cosimo replied.

"The stupid people go. Why not the people with eyes and minds?"

"Exactly," said Cosimo, resuming his walk.

Then, as if he had been a mere you or a simple me, the beauty of the idea did begin to work a little in him. He walked for a space longer, and then, turning, said almost with joy, "I say, Amory—would you *like* to go?"

But Amory did not look up from the slippered foot she had again begun to warm.—"Oh, I shouldn't go," she said absently.

"You mean me to go by myself?" said Cosimo, the joy vanishing again.

Then it was that Amory returned to the temporarily relinquished subject again.

"Well ...," she said, with a return of the quiet and wan but brave smile, "... I've nothing to do with that. I shouldn't set detectives to watch you. I was speaking for the moment purely from the point of view of the 'Novum's' policy.—But I see what you mean."

But Cosimo didn't mean that at all. He interposed eagerly, anxiously.

"You *do* jump to conclusions!"—he began.

"My *dear* Cosimo," she put up her hand, "I'm doing nothing of the kind. As I said, the other isn't my affair. Oh, I do wish you'd believe that I was perfectly calm about it! As Emerson said, soul ought to speak to soul from the top of Olympus or something, and, except that I want you to be happy, it's a matter of indifference to me who you go with. Do try to see that, Cosimo. Let's try to behave like civilized beings. We agreed long ago that sex was only a matter of accident. Don't let's make it so hatefully pivotal. After all, what practical difference would it make?"

But this was too much for Cosimo. He must have Britomart down and take his chance, that was all. At the worst, he did not see how Amory could be so unreasonable that a hand-pat or a hair-stroke or two could not be put before her in the proper light.

Unfortunately, the trouble was, not that she made a fuss, but that she made so little fuss....

Again he moved towards the door.

But Miss Belchamber herself, as it happened, saved him the trouble of fetching her. Their hands were at the door at the same moment, his inside, hers outside. She entered. She was wrapped in the large black-and-gold Chinese dressing-gown Cosimo had given her for a Christmas present, and there were pantofles on her bare feet, and her hair hung down her back in two enormous yellow plaits. She was eating a large piece of cake.

"I've left the hot water tap running," she announced. "I hadn't gone to bed. Does anybody else want a bath? I like lots of hot baths. I came down for a piece of cake."

She crossed to the sofa, crammed the last piece of cake into her mouth, dusted the crumbs from her fingers, tucked the dressing-gown close under her, and with her fingers began softly to perform the motions of *pétrissage* upon herself in the region of the *erectors spinae*. As she did so she again spoke, placidly and syllabically.

"I made a mistake," she said. "Father's forty-six. Next June. And I shall go to Walter's new Lecture. He's in the guard's van. I mean the van-guard. And Prince Ead-mond's is in the van-guard too. Especially Miss Miles. She says the Saturn-alia is a time of great li-cen-tiousness and dancing. Are they going to start it soon?"

Cosimo was nervous again. He cleared his throat.—"Britomart —," he began; but Miss Belchamber went on.

"I hope they are. Walter says it would be a very good thing. I shall dance 'Rufty Tufty.' And 'The Black Nag.' I love 'The Black Nag.' That's why I'm having a hot bath. Hot baths open the pores, or sweat-ducts. Then you close them again with a cold sponge. I always close them again with a cold sponge."

Cosimo cleared his throat again and had another try.—"Listen, Britomart—we were talking about you——"

Miss Belchamber looked complacently at her crossed Parian-marble ankles. Then she raised one of them, and her fingers explored the common tendon of the soleus and gastrocnemius.

"The soleus," she said, "acts when the knee-joint is flexed. In 'Rufty Tufty' it acts. Both of them, of course. And the manage-ment of the breath is very im-portant. It would be a very good thing if every-body opened their windows and took a hun-dred deep breaths before the Saturn-alia begins. I shall, and I shall make Corin and Bonniebell. Or won't they be able to go if it's very late? If it's after their bedtime I could bring them away early and then go back. I am so looking forward to it."

Cosimo made a third attempt.—"Britomart—", he said gravely.

"What?" said Miss Belchamber.

"I want to tell you about a rather important discussion we've been having——"

"Then shall I go and turn the tap off? The water will run cold. Then the sweat-ducts would have to be closed before they are opened, and that's wrong."

But this time Amory had moved towards the door. Cosimo, and not she, had wanted Miss Belchamber down, and now that he had got her he might amuse her. She thought he looked extremely foolish, but that was his look-out; she was going to bed. It seemed an entirely satisfactory moment in which to do so. She had managed better than she had hoped. The question of the fund had been satisfactorily raised, and it was obvious that the "Novum" would gain by having somebody on the spot, somebody perhaps less biassed than Mr. Prang, to advise upon its Indian policy. At the door she turned her nasturtium-coloured head.

"You might think over what I've been saying," she said. "We can talk of it again in a day or two. Especially my second suggestion, that about the 'Novum.' That seems to me very well worth considering. Good night."

And she passed out, leaving Cosimo plucking his lip irresolutely, and Miss Britomart Belchamber deeply interested in the common tendon of the other soleus and gastrocnemius.

Part III

I

LITMUS

It was on an afternoon in May, and the window of Dorothy's flat overlooking the pond was wide open. Ruffles of wind chased one another from moment to moment across the water, and the swans, guarding their cygnets, policed the farther bank, where dogs ran barking. The two elder Bits played in the narrow strip of garden below; again the frieze of the room was a soft net of rippling light; and the brightness of the sun—or so Ruth Mossop declared—had put the fire out.

Ruth was alone in the flat. As she passed between the pond-room and the kitchen, re-lighting the fire, "sweeping in," and preparing tea, she sang cheerfully to herself "*A few more years shall roll, a few more sorrows come*." Ruth considered that the sorrows would probably come by means of the youngest Bit. He ought (she said) to have been a little girl. Then, in after years, he might have been a bit of comfort to his mother. Boys, in Ruth's experience, were rarely that.

As she put the cakes for tea into the oven of the stove there came a milk-call from below. Ruth leaned out of the lift-window, and there ensued a conversation with the white-jacketed milk-boy.

"Saw your guv'nor last night," the boy grinned.

"Where's that cream I ordered, and that quart of nursery milk? You can't mind your business for thinking of picture palaces."

"Keep your 'air on; coming up now.—I say, they put 'is 'ead under a steam-'ammer. I said it was a dummy, but Gwen said it wasn't. *Was* it 'im?"

"You mind your own interference, young man, and leave others to mind theirs; you ought to have something better to do

with your threepences than collecting cigarette cards and taking girls to the pictures."

"It was in '*Bullseye Bill: A Drarmer of Love an' 'Ate*'—'Scoundrel, 'ow dare you speak those words to a pure wife an' mother on the very threshold of the 'Ouse of——'"

"That's enough, young man—we don't want language Taken in Vain here—and you can tell 'em at your place we're leaving soon."

"But *was* that 'im in the long whiskers at the end, when the powder magazine blew up?"

But Ruth, taking her cans, shut down the window and returned to the kitchen.

"'Then O, my Lord, prepare——'" she crooned as she gave a peep into the oven and then clanged the door to again, "'My soul for that blest day——'"

They were leaving soon. Already the sub-letting of the flat was in an agent's hands, and soon Stan would be braving the perils of his career no longer. Dorothy had unfolded her idea to her aunt, and Lady Tasker had raised no objection, provided Dorothy could raise the money by bringing Aunt Eliza into line.

"It's as good as Maypoles and Village Players anyway," she had said, "and I'm getting too old to run about as I have done. —By the way, is it true that Cosimo Pratt's gone to India?"

Dorothy had replied that it was true.

"Hm! What for? To dance round another Maypole?"

"I don't know, auntie. I've seen very little of them."

"Has she gone?"

"No."

"No more babies yet, I suppose?"

"No."

"Well ... you'd better see your Aunt Eliza. She's got all the money that's left.—But I don't see how you're going to get any very much out of Tony and Tim."

"Oh, I'll see they don't impose on me as they've been imposing on you!... So I may move that billiard-table, and alter the gun-room?"

"Yes, if you pay for it."

"Thanks—you are a dear!..."

By what arts Dorothy had contrived to lay Aunt Eliza under contribution doesn't matter very much here. Among themselves the Lennards and Taskers might quarrel, but they presented an unbroken front to the world—and Dorothy, for Aunt Eliza's special benefit, managed to make the world in some degree a party to her project. That is to say, that a paragraph had appeared in certain newspapers, announcing that an experiment of considerable interest, etc., the expenses of which were already guaranteed, and so forth, was about to be tried in the County of Shropshire, where "The Brear," the residence of the late Sir Noel Tasker, was already in course of alteration. And so on, in Dorothy's opinion, neither too much nor too little for her design.... It had been a public committance of the family, and it had worked the oracle with Aunt Eliza. Rather than have a public squabble about it, she had come in with her thousand, the work was now well advanced, and the venerable sinner who had recited the poems printed by Cosimo Pratt's Village Press was in charge of the job. Dorothy, hurriedly weaning the youngest Bit, had run down to Ludlow for the express purpose of announcing to him that it was a job, and not an aesthetic jollification.

Moreover, at that time she had half a hundred other matters to attend to; for Stan, escaping from powder-magazines as the last inch of fuse sputtered, and fervently hoping that the man had made no mistake about the length of stroke of the Nasmyth hammer under which he put his devoted head, could give her little help. Besides her own approaching *déménagement*, she had much of the care of that of her aunt. As Stan's earnings were barely sufficient for the current

expenses of the household, she still had to turn to odds and ends of her old advertisement work. She had—Quis custodiet?—the nurse to look after, and the tradesmen, and letters, and callers, and Ruth. In short, a simple inversion of her aunt's dictum about the Pratts—"Too much money and not enough to do"—would have fitted Dorothy's case to a nicety.

Therefore, as another burden more or less would make little difference to one already so burdened, Dorothy had added still further to her cares. Ever since that day when Lady Tasker had come bareheaded out of her house and had spoken to Amory Pratt outside the Victoria and Albert Museum, Dorothy had had her sometime friend constantly on her mind. She had spoken of her to her aunt, who had again shown herself deplorably illiberal and incisive.

"I don't pretend to understand the modern young woman," she had remarked carelessly. "Half of 'em seem to upset their bodies with too much study, and the other half to play hockey till they're little better than fools. I suppose it's all right, and that somebody knows what they're about.... I often wonder what they'd have done, though, if it hadn't been for Sappho and Madame Curie.... By the way," she had gone irrelevantly on without a break, "does she *want* any more children besides those twins?"...

Nevertheless, Dorothy had had Amory so much on her mind that twice since Cosimo's departure for India she had been up to The Witan in search of her. After all, if anybody was to blame for anything it was Cosimo. But on neither occasion had Amory been at home. Dorothy had left messages, to which she had received no reply; and so she had gone a third time—had gone, as it happened, on that very afternoon when Ruth sang "A few more years shall roll" as she made the hot cakes for tea. This time she had persuaded Katie Deedes to come with her—for Katie had left the Eden, was out of a job, and for the time being had afternoon hours to spare.

But again they had failed to find Amory, and Dorothy and Katie took a turn round the Heath before returning to the flat for tea. As they walked along the hawthorn hedge that runs

towards Parliament Hill and South Hill Park they talked. Kites were flying on the Hill; the Highgate Woods and the white spire showed like a pale pastel in the Spring sunshine; and from the prows of a score of prams growing babies leaned out like the figureheads of ships.

"That's where Billie was born," said Dorothy, nodding towards the backs of the houses that make the loop of South Hill Park.

Katie only said "Oh?" She too had caught the uneasiness about Amory. And what Katie thought was very soon communicated.

"You see, Dot," she broke suddenly out, "you've no idea of what a—what a funny lot they are really.... No, I haven't told you—I haven't told you *half*! It's everything they do. Why, the nurse practised for months and months at a school where they washed a celluloid baby—I'm not joking—she did—a life-sized one—they did it in class, and dressed it, and put it to sleep—as if *that* would be any good at all with a real one!... And really—I'm not prudish, as you know, Dot—but the way they used to sit about, in a dressing-gown or a nightgown or anything—I don't mean when there was a *big* crowd there, of course, but just a few of them—Walter, and Mr. Brimby, and Edgar Strong—and all of them going quite red in the face with puremindedness! At any rate, I never did think *that* was quite the thing!"

She spoke with great satisfaction of the point of the New Law she had not broken. It seemed to make up for those she had.

"And those casts and paintings and things about—it's all right being an artist, of course, but if I ever got married, *I* shouldn't like casts and paintings of me about for everybody to see like that!——"

"Oh, just look at that hawthorn!" Dorothy interrupted.

"Yes, lovely.—And Walter talking about Dionysus, and what Lycurgus thought would be a very good way of preventing jealousy, and a lot more about Greeks and Romans and Patagonians and Esquimaux! Do you know, Dot, I don't believe they know anything at all about it—not *really* know, I

mean! I don't see how they can! One man might know a little bit about a part of it, and another man a little bit about another part—and that would be rather a lot, seeing how long ago it all is—but Walter knows it *all*! At any rate nobody can contradict him. But what does it matter to us to-day, Dorothy? What *does* it matter?... Of course I don't mean they're wicked. But—but—in some ways I can't help thinking it would be better to *be* wicked as long as you didn't say anything about it——!"

"Oh, I don't think they're wicked," said Dorothy placidly. But the 'vert went eagerly on.

"That's just it!" she expounded. "Walter says 'wicked's' only a relative term. If you face the truth boldly, all the time, lots of things wouldn't be wicked at all, he says. And I believe he's really awfully devoted to Laura—in his way—though he does talk about these things with Britomart Belchamber sitting there in her nightgown. But it's always the *same bit* of truth they face boldly. They never think of going in for astronomy—or crystal-what-is-it—crystallography—or something chilly—and face that boldly——"

Dorothy laughed.—"You absurd girl!"

"—but no. It's always whether people wear clothes because they're modest or whether they're modest because they wear clothes, or something like that.—And Walter begins it—and then Laura chimes in, and then Cosimo, and then Amory, and then Dickie—and when they've said it all on Monday they say it again on Tuesday, and Wednesday, and every day—and I don't know what they've decided even yet——"

"Well, here we are," Dorothy said as she reached her own door. "Let's have some tea.... Mr. Miller hasn't been in yet, has he, Ruth?"

"No, m'm."

"Well, we'll have tea now, and you can make some fresh when he comes. And keep some cakes hot."

Mr. Miller's visit that afternoon had to do with a care so trifling that Dorothy merely took it in her stride. She had not

found—she knew that she would never find—the "Idee" that Mr. Miller wanted; but if no Idees except real ones were ever called Idees we should be in a very bad way in this world. She knew that there is always a middling chance that if you state a pseudo-Idee solemnly enough, and trick it out with circumstance enough, and set people talking enough about it, it will prove just as serviceable as the genuine article; and she was equally familiar, as we have seen, with that beautiful and compensating Law by which quick and original minds are refused money when they are producing of their best but overwhelmed with it when their brains have become as dry as baked sponges. She had given Mr. Miller quite good Idees in the past; she had no objection to being paid over again for them now; and if they really had been new ones they would have been of no use to Mr. Miller for at least ten years to come. That is why the art of advertisement is so comparatively advanced. Any other art would have taken twenty years.

Therefore, as she remembered the exceeding flimsiness of the one poor Idee she had, she had resolved that Mr. Miller's eyes should be diverted as much as possible from the central lack, and kept to the bright irrelevancies with which she would adorn it. The Idee was that of the Litmus Layette ... but here we may as well skip a few of Katie's artless betrayals of her former friends, and come to the moment when Mr. Miller, with his Edward the Sixth shoulders, appeared, bowed, was introduced to Katie, bowed again, sat down, and was regaled with hot cakes and conversation. He had risen and bowed again, by the way, when Dorothy, for certain reasons of policy, had mentioned Katie's relationship to the great Sir Joseph Deedes, and Katie had told of a stand-up fight she had had with her uncle's Marshal about admittance to his lordship's private room.

"Well, now, that's something I've learned to-day," Mr. Miller magnanimously admitted, sitting down again. "So your English Judges have Marshals! I was under the impression that that was a military title, like Marshal Macmann and Field-Marshal Sir Evelyn Wood. Well now.... And how might Judge Deedes' Marshal be dressed, Miss Deedes?"

"Not 'Judge' Deedes," said Katie smiling. "That's a County Court Judge." And she explained. Mr. Miller opened his eyes wide.

"Is that so-o-o? Well now, if that isn't interesting! That's noos. He's a Honourable with a 'u' in it, and a Sir, and you call him his Lordship, and he's Mister Justice Deedes! Ain't that English!... Now let me see if I'm on the track of it. 'Your Worship'—that's a Magistrate. 'Your Honour'—that's the other sort of Judge. And 'My Lord'—that's Miss Deedes' uncle. And an English Judge has a Marshal.... Do you recollect our Marshals, Mrs. Stan?——"

Building (as it now appeared) even better than he knew, Mr. Miller had, in the past, granted the rank of Marshal to Messrs. Hallowell and Smiths' shopwalkers.

Dorothy's reason for thus flagrantly introducing Sir Joseph's name was this:—

Katie had left the Eden, and she herself was presently off to Ludlow. Thus there was the possible reversion of a job of sorts going a-begging. Katie might as well have it as anybody else. Dorothy had strictly enjoined upon her impulsive friend that on no account was she to contradict or disclaim anything she, Dorothy, might choose to say on her behalf to Mr. Miller; and she intended that the credit, such as it was, of the last Idee she even intended to propose to Mr. Miller—the Litmus Layette—should be Katie's start. Once started she would have to look after herself.

So when Mr. Miller passed from the subject of Hallowell and Smiths' Marshals to that of his long-hoped-for Idee, Dorothy was ready for him. Avoiding the weak spot, she enlarged on the tradition—very different from a mere superstition—that, in Layettes, blue stood always for a boy and pink for a girl.

"You see," she said, "this is England when all's said, and we're *fright*fully conservative. Don't condemn it just because it wouldn't go in New York.... You've heard of the Willyhams, of course?" she broke off suddenly to ask.

"I cann't say I have, Mrs. Stan. But I'm sitting here. Tell me. They're a Fam'ly, I presoom?"

"Yes. Upshire's their title. Now that title's descended in the female line ever since Charles the First. Ever since then the Willyham Layettes have been pink as a matter of course. And now, not a month ago, there was a boy, and they had to rush off and get blue at the very last moment.... Let me see, your children are little girls, aren't they?" she again interrupted herself to say.

"Three little goils, Mrs. Stan, with black-and-white check frocks and large black bows in their hair."

"Well, and mine are boys. Blue for me and pink for you. But we'll come to that in a moment.—The thing that really strikes me as extraordinary is that in all these ages, with all the countless babies that have been born, we don't know *yet* which it's going to be!... And I don't think we ever shall. Now just think what that means—not just to a Royal House, with a whole succession depending on it, and crowns and dynasties and things—but to *every* woman! You see the *tremendous* interest they take in it at once!—But I don't know whether a man can ever understand that——"

She paused.

"Go on, Mrs. Stan—I want the feminine point of voo," said Mr. Miller.—"The man ain't broken Post Toasties yet that has more reverence for motherhood than what I have——"

"I know," said Dorothy bashfully. "But it isn't the same—being a father. It's—it's different. It's not the same. I doubt whether *any* man knows what it means to us as we wait and wonder—and wait and wonder—day after day—day after day——"

Here she dropped her eyes. Here also Mr. Miller dropped his head.

"It isn't the same—being a father—it's different," Dorothy was heard to murmur.

Mr. Miller breathed something about the holiest spot on oith.

"So you see," Dorothy resumed presently, hoping that Mr. Miller did not see. "It's the nearest subject of all to us. The very first question we ask one another is, 'Do you hope it's a little boy or a little girl?' And as it's impossible to tell, it's impossible for us to make our preparations. Lady Upshire doesn't know one bit more about it than the poorest woman in the streets. And this in an age that boasts of its Science!"

"Well," said Mr. Miller, giving it consideration, "that's ver-ry true. I ain't a knocker; I don't want to get knocking our men of science; but it's a fact they cann't tell. I recollect Mrs. Miller saying to me——"

"Yes—look at it from Mrs. Miller's point of view——"

"I remember Mrs. Miller using the ver-ry woids you've just used, Mrs. Stan. (I hope this don't jolt Miss Deedes too much; it's ver-ry interessting). And that's one sure thing, that it ain't a cinch for Mrs. Bradley Martin any more than what it is for any poor lady stenographer at so many dallars per. But—if you'll pardon me putting the question in that form—where's the *point*, Mrs. Stan? What's the reel prapasition?"

This being precisely what Dorothy was rather carefully avoiding, again she smiled bashfully and dropped her head, as if once more calling on those profound reserves of Mr. Miller's veneration for motherhood. These even profounder reserves, of Mr. Miller's veneration for dallars, were too much to the point altogether.

"I was afraid you wouldn't understand," she sighed.

"But," said Mr. Miller earnestly, "give me something to get a hold of, Mrs. Stan. I ain't calling the psychological prapasition down any; a business man has to be psychologist all the time; but he wants it straight. Straight psychology. The feminine point of voo, but practical. It ain't for Harvard. It's for Hallowell and Smith's."

"Well," said Dorothy, "it's Miss Deedes' idea really—and it would never have occurred to her if it hadn't been for Lady Upshire—would it Katie?"

"No," said Katie.

"Very well. Suppose Lady Upshire had had the Litmus Layette. All she would have had to do would have been to take the ribbons out—the work of a moment—the pink ribbons—dip them in the preparation—and there they'd have been, ready for immediate use. And blue ones would be dipped in the other solution and of course they'd have turned pink.... You see, you can't alter the baby, but you can alter the ribbons. And it isn't only ribbons. A woolly jacket—or a pram-rug—or socks—or anything—I think it's an exceedingly clever Idea of Miss Deedes!——"

Mr. Miller gave it attention. Then he looked up.

"Would it woik?" he asked.

"Well," said Dorothy ... "it works in chemistry. But that's not the principal thing. It's its value as an advertisement that's the real thing. Think of the window-dressing!—Blue and pink, changing before people's very eyes!—Just think how—I mean, it interests *every* woman! They'd stand in front of the window, and think—but you're a man. Mrs. Miller would understand.... Anyhow, you would get crowds of people, and that's what you want—crowds of people—that's its advertisement-value.—And then when you got them inside it would be like having the hooks at one end of the shop and the eyes at the other—a hook's no good without an eye, so they have to walk past half a mile of counters, and you sell them all sort of things on the way. *I* think there's a great deal in it!"

"It's a Stunt," Mr. Miller conceded, as if in spite of himself he must admit thus much. "It's soitainly a Stunt. But I'm not sure it's a reel Idee."

"That," said Dorothy with conviction, "would depend entirely in your own belief in it. If you did it as thoroughly as you've done lots of other things——"

"It's soitainly a Stunt, Miss Deedes," Mr. Miller mused....

He was frowningly meditating on the mystic differences between a Stunt and an Idee, and was perhaps wondering how

the former would demean itself if he took the risk of promoting it to the dignity of the latter, when the bell was heard to ring. A moment later Ruth opened the door.

"Lady Tasker," she said.

Lady Tasker entered a little agitatedly, with an early edition of the "Globe" crumpled in her hand.

II

BY THE WAY

Lady Tasker never missed the "Globe's" *By the Way* column, and there was a curious, mocking, unpleasant By-the-Way-ishness about the announcement she made as she entered. There is a special psychological effect, in the Harvard and not in the Hallowell and Smith's sense, when you come unexpectedly in print upon news that affects yourself. The multiplicity of newspapers notwithstanding, revelation still hits the ear less harshly than it does the eye; telling is still private and intimate, type a trumpeting to all the world at once. Dorothy looked at the pink page Lady Tasker had thrust into her hand as if it also, like the Litmus Layette, had turned blue before her eyes.

"*Not* Sir Benjamin who used to come and see father!" she said, dazed.

Lady Tasker had had time, on her way to the flat, to recover a little.

"There's only one Sir Benjamin Collins that I know of," she answered curtly.

"But—but—it *can't* be!——"

Of course there was no reason in the world why it couldn't. Quite on the contrary, there was that best of all reasons why it could—it had happened. Three bullet-wounds are three undeniable reasons. It was the third, the brief account said, that had proved fatal.

"They say the finest view in Asia's Bombay from the stern of a steamer," said Lady Tasker, with no expression whatever. "I think your friend Mr. Cosimo Pratt will be seeing it before very long."

But Dorothy was white. *Their* Sir Benjamin!... Why, as a little girl she had called him "Uncle Ben!" He had not been an uncle really, of course, but she had called him that. She could remember the smell of his cigars, and the long silences as he had played chess with her father, and his hands with the coppery hair on them, and his laugh, and the way the markhor at the Zoo had sniffed at his old patoo-coat, just as cats now sniffed at her own set of civet furs. And she had married him one day in the nursery, when she had been about ten, and he had taken her to the Pantomime that afternoon for a Honeymoon—and then, when she had really married Stan, he had given her the very rugs that were on her bedroom floor at this moment.

And, if this pink paper was to be believed, an Invisible Man had shot at him three times, and at the third shot had killed him.

She had not heard her aunt's words about Cosimo. She had been standing with her hand in Mr. Miller's, having put it there when he had risen to take himself off and forgotten to withdraw it again. Then Mr. Miller had gone, and Dorothy had stood looking stupidly at her aunt.

"What did you say?" she said. "You said something about Cosimo Pratt."

"Don't you go, Katie; I want to talk to you presently.—Sit down, Dot.—Get her a drink of water."

Dorothy sat heavily down and put out one hand for the paper again.—"What did you say?" she asked once more.

"Never mind just now. Put your head back and close your eyes for a minute."...

That was the rather unpleasant, By-the-Way part of it. For of course it was altogether By-the-Way when you looked at the matter broadly. Amory could have explained this with pellucid

clearness. The murder of a Governor?... Of course, if you happened to have known that Governor, and to have married him in a child's game when you were ten and he forty, and to have gone on writing letters to him telling him all the news about your babies, and to have had letters back from him signed "Uncle Ben"—well, nobody would think it unnatural of you to be a little shocked at the news of his assassination; but Amory could easily have shown that that shock, when you grew a little calmer and came to think clearly about it, would be only a sort of extension of your own egotism. Governors didn't really matter one bit more because you were fond of them. Everybody had somebody fond of them. Why, then, make a disproportionate fuss about a single (and probably corrupt) official, when thousands suffered gigantic wrongs? The desirable thing was to look at these things broad-mindedly, and not selfishly. It was selfish, selfish and egotistical, to expect the whole March of Progress to stop because you happened to be fond of somebody (who probably hadn't been one bit better than he ought to have been). These pompous people of the official classes were always bragging about their readiness to lay down their lives for their country; very well; they had no right to grumble when they were taken at their word. Ruskin had expressed much the same thought rather finely when he had said that a soldier wasn't paid for killing, but for being killed. Some people seemed to want it both ways—to go on drawing their money while they were alive, and then to have an outcry raised when they got shot. In strict justice they ought to have been, not merely shot, but blown from the mouths of guns; but of course neither Amory nor anybody else wanted to go quite so far as that.... Nevertheless, perspective was needed—perspective, and vision of such scope that you had a clear mental picture, not of misguided individuals, who must die some time or other and might as well do so in the discharge of what it pleased them to call their "duty," but of millions of our gentle and dark-skinned brothers, waiting in rows with baskets on their heads (and making simply ripping friezes) while the Banks paid in pennies, and then holding lots of righteous and picturesque Meetings, all about Tyrant England and throwing off the Yoke. Amory would have conceded that she had never had an Uncle

Ben; but if she had had fifty Uncle Bens she would still have hoped to keep some small sense of proportion about these things.

But that again only showed anybody who was anybody how hopelessly behind the noble movements of her time Dorothy was. The sense of proportion never entered her head. She gave a little shiver, even though the day was warm, and then that insufferable old aunt of hers, who might be a "Lady" but had no more tact than to interfere with people's liberty in the street, praised her gently when she came round a bit, and said she was taking it very bravely, when the truth was that she really ought to have condemned her for her absurd weakness and lack of the sense of relative values. No, there would have been no doubt at all about it in Amory's mind: that it was these people, who talked so egregiously about "firm rule," who were the real sentimentalists, and the others of the New Imperialism, with their real grasp of the true and humane principles of government, who were the downright practical folk....

All this fuss about a single Governor, of whom Mr. Prang himself had said (and there was no gentler soul living than Mr. Prang) that his extortions had been a byword and his obstinacy proof positive of his innate weakness!——

But Amory was not in the pond-room that day, and so Dorothy's sickly display of emotion went unchecked. The nurse herded the Bits together, but they were not admitted for their usual tea-time romp. Indeed, Dorothy said presently, "Do you mind if I leave you for a few minutes with Katie, auntie?" She went into her bedroom and did not return. Of all his "nieces" she had been his favourite; her foot caught in one of his Kabuli mats as she entered the bedroom. She lay down on her bed. She longed for Stan to come and put his arms about her.

He came in before Lady Tasker had finished her prolonged questioning of Katie. Aunt Grace told him where Dorothy was. Then she and Katie left together.

The newspapers showed an excellent sense of proportion about the incident. In the earlier evening editions the death of Sir

Benjamin was nicely balanced by the 4.30 winners; and then a popular actor's amusing replies in the witness-box naturally overshadowed everything else. And, to anticipate a little, on the following day the "Times" showed itself to be, as usual, hopelessly in the wrong. Indeed there were those who considered that this journal made a deplorable exhibition of itself. For it had no more modesty nor restraint than to use the harsh word "murder," without any "alleged" about it, which was, of course, a flagrant pre-judging of the case. Nobody denied that at a first glance appearances *were* a little against the gentle and dusky brother, who had been seized with the revolver still in his hand; but that was no reason why a bloated capitalist rag should thus undermine the principles of elementary justice. It ought to have made it all the more circumspect.... But anybody who was anybody knew exactly what was at the bottom of it all. The "Times" was seeking a weapon against the Government. The staff was no doubt secretly glad that it had happened, and was gloating, and already calculating its effect on an impending by-election.... Besides, there was the whole ethical question of capital punishment. It would not bring Sir Benjamin back to life to try this man, find him guilty, and do him barbarously to death in the name of the Law. That would only be two dead instead of one. The proper way would be to hold an inquiry, with the dusky instrument of justice (whose faith in his mission must have been very great since he had taken such risks for it) not presiding, perhaps, but certainly called as an important witness to testify to the Wrongness of the Conditions.... Besides, an assassination is a sort of half-negligible outbreak, regrettable certainly, for which excuse can sometimes be found: but this other would be deliberate, calculated, measured, and in flat violation of the most cardinal of all the principles on which a great Empire should be based—the principle of Mercy stiffened with exactly the right modicum of Justice....

And besides....

And besides....

And besides....

And when all is said, India is a long way off.

The publication of the news produced a curious sort of atmosphere at The Witan that afternoon. Everybody seemed desirous of showing everybody else that they were unconcerned, and yet an observer might have fancied that they overdid it ever such a little. At about the time when Lady Tasker left Dorothy with Stan, Mr. Wilkinson drove up in a cab to the green door in the privet hedge and asked for Amory. He was told that she had given word that she did not want to see anybody. But in the studio he found Mr. Brimby and Dickie Lemesurier, and the three were presently joined by Laura and Walter Wyron. A quorum of five callers never hesitated to make themselves at home at The Witan. They lighted the asbestos log, Walter found Cosimo's cigarettes, and Dickie said she was sure Amory wouldn't mind if she rang for tea. When they had made themselves quite comfortable, they began to chat about a number of things, not the murder.

"Seen Strong?" Mr. Brimby asked Mr. Wilkinson.

Mr. Wilkinson was at his most morose and truculent.

"No," he said. "I called at the office, but he was out. Doesn't put in very much time there, it seems to me. Perhaps he's at the Party's Meeting."

"How is it you aren't there, by the way?"

Mr. Wilkinson made a little sound of contempt.

"Bah! All talk. Day in and day out, talk, talk, talk. I want action. The leadership's all wrong. Want a man. I keep my seat because if I cleared out they'd be no better than a lot of tame Liberal cats, but I've no use for 'em——"

It was whispered that the members of the Party had no use for Mr. Wilkinson, and very little for one another; but it doesn't do to give ear to everything that is whispered.

Then Mr. Brimby appeared suddenly to recollect something.

"Ah yes!... Action. Speaking of action, I suppose you've seen this Indian affair in to-night's papers?"

Mr. Wilkinson was still fuming.

"That Governor? Yes, I saw it.... But it's too far away. Thousands of miles too far away. We want something nearer home. A paper that calls a spade a spade for one thing.... Anybody heard from Pratt this week?"

They discussed Cosimo's latest letter, and then Mr. Brimby said, "By the way—how will this affect him?"

"How will what affect him?"

"This news, to-night. Collins."

"Oh!... Why should it affect him at all? Don't see why it should. The 'Pall Mall' has a filthy article on it to-night. That paper's getting as bad as the 'Times.'"

Here Walter Wyron intervened.—"By the way, who *is* this man Collins? Just pass me 'Who's Who,' Laura."

They looked Sir Benjamin up in "Who's Who," and then somebody suggested that their party wasn't complete without Edgar Strong. "I'll telephone him," said Walter; "perhaps he'll be back by this."—The telephone was in the hall, and Walter went out. Dickie told Laura how well Walter was looking. Laura replied, Yes, he was very well indeed; except for a slight cold, which anybody was lucky to escape in May, he had never been better; which was wonderful, considering the work he got through.—Then Walter returned. Strong had not yet come in, but his typist had said he'd be back soon.—"Didn't know it ran to a typist," Walter remarked, helping himself to more tea.

"It doesn't," Mr. Wilkinson grunted.

"Girl's voice, anyway.... I say, I wonder how old Prang's getting on!"

"I wonder!"

"He's gone back, hasn't he?" Dickie asked.

"Oh, a couple of months ago. Didn't Strong give him the push, Wilkie?"

"Don't suppose Strong ever did anything so vigorous," Mr. Wilkinson growled. "The only strong thing about Strong's his name. He's simply ruined that paper."

"I agree that it was at its best when Prang was doing the Indian notes."

"Oh, Prang knew what he wanted. Prang's all right in his way. But I tell you India's too far away. We want something at our own doors, and somebody made an example of that somebody knows. Now if Pratt had only been guided by me——"

"Hallo, here's Britomart Belchamber.—Why doesn't Amory come down, Brit? She's in, isn't she?"

"What?" said Miss Belchamber.

"Isn't Amory coming down?"

"She's gone out," said Miss Belchamber, adjusting her hair. "A min-ute ago," she added.

Walter Wyron said something about "Cool—with guests——," but Amory's going out was no reason why they should not finish tea in comfort. No doubt Amory would be back presently. Laura confided to Britomart that she hoped so, for the truth was that her kitchen range had gone wrong, and a man had said he was coming to look at it, but he hadn't turned up—these people never turned up when they said they would—and so she had thought it would be nice if they came and kept Amory company at supper....

"We've got some new cheese-bis-cuits," said Miss Belchamber ruminatively. "I like them. They make bone. I like to have bone made. The muscles can't act unless you have bone. That's why these bis-cuits are so good. Good-bye."

And Miss Belchamber, with a friendly general smile, went off to open her sweat-ducts by means of a hot bath and to close them again afterwards with a cold sponge.

Amory had not gone out this time to press amidst strange people and to look into strange and frightening eyes, various in colour as the pebbles of a beach, and tipped with arrow-heads of white as they turned. Almost for the first time in her life she wanted to be alone—quite alone, with her eyes on nobody and nobody's eyes on her. She did not reflect on this. She did not reflect on anything. She only knew that The Witan seemed to stifle her, and that when she had seen Mr. Wilkinson alight from his cab—and Mr. Brimby and Dickie come—and the Wyrons—with all the others no doubt following presently—it had come sharply upon her that these wearisomely familiar people used up all the air. The Witan without them was bad enough; The Witan with them had become insupportable.

It was not the assassination of Sir Benjamin that had disturbed her. Since Cosimo's departure she had glanced at Indian news only a shade less perfunctorily than before, and she had turned from this particular announcement to the account of New Greek Society's production with hardly a change of boredom. No: it was everything in her life—everything. She felt used up. She thought that if anybody had spoken to her just then she could only have given the incoherent and petulant "Don't!" of a child who is interrupted at a game that none but he understands. She hated herself, yet hated more to be dragged out of herself; and as she made for the loneliest part of the Heath she wished that night would fall.

She had to all intents and purposes packed Cosimo off to India in order to have him out of the way. His presence had become as wearisome as that of the Wyrons and the rest of them. And that was as much as she had hitherto told herself. She had taken no resolution about Edgar Strong. But drifting is accelerated when an obstacle is removed, and her heart had frequently beaten rapidly at the thought that, merely by removing Cosimo, she had started a process that would presently bring her up against Edgar Strong. She had pleased and teased and frightened herself with the thought of what was to happen then. So many courses would be open to her. She might actually take the mad plunge from which she had

hitherto shrunk. She might do the very opposite—stare at him, should he propose it, and inform him that, some thousands of miles notwithstanding, she was still Cosimo's wife. She might pathetically urge on him that, now more than ever, she needed a friend and not a lover—or else that, now more than ever, she needed a lover and not a friend. She might say that nothing could be done until Cosimo came back—or that when Cosimo came back would be too late to do anything. Or she might....

Or she might....

Or she might....

Yet when all was said, Edgar and the "Novum's" offices were perilously near....

For it was not what she might do, but what he might do, that set her heart beating most rapidly of all. Her dangerous dreaming always ended in that. Here was no question of that trumpery subterfuge of the Wyrons. It struck her with extraordinary force and newness that she was what was called "a married woman." It was a familiar phrase; it was as familiar as those other phrases, "No, just living together," "Well, as long as there are no children," "Love *is* Law"—familiar as the air. Left to herself, the phrases might have remained both her dissipation and her safeguard.... But he? Would phrases content him? After she had tempted him as she knew she had tempted him? After that stern repression of himself in favour of his duty? Or would he ask her again what she thought he was made off?... It was always the man who was expected to take the decisive step. The woman simply—offered—and, if she was clever, did it in such a way that she could always deny it after the fact. If Edgar should *not* stretch out his hand—well, in that case there would be no more to be said. But if he should?...

A little sound came from her closed lips.

Cosimo had been away for nearly three months, and had not yet said anything about returning; and Amory had smiled when, after many eager protestings that there was no reason (Love being Law) why he should go alone, he had after all

funked taking his splendid turnip of a Britomart with him. Of course: when it had come to the point, he had lacked the courage. Amory could not help thinking that that lack was just a shade more contemptible than his philanderings. Courage!... Images of Cleopatra and the carpet rose in her mind again.... But the images were faint now. She had evoked them too often. Her available mental material had become stale. She needed a fresh impulse—a new experience——

But—she always got back to the same point—suppose Edgar should take her, not at her word, nor against her word, but with words, for once, left suddenly and entirely out of the question?...

Again the thumping heart——

It was almost worth the misery and loneliness for the sake of that painful and delicious thrill.

She was sitting on a bench under the palings of Ken Wood, watching a saffron sunset. A Prince Eadmond's girl in a little green Florentine cap passed. She reminded Amory of Britomart Belchamber, and Amory rose and took the root-grown path to the Spaniards Road and the West Heath. She intended to take a walk as far as Golders Green Park; but, as it happened, she did not get so far. A newsboy, without any sense of proportion whatever, was crying cheerfully, "Murder of a Guv'nor—Special!" This struck Amory. She thought she had read it once before that afternoon, but she bought another paper and turned to the paragraph. Yes, it was the same—and yet it was somehow different. It seemed—she could not tell why—a shade more important than it had done. Perhaps the newsboy's voice had made it sound more important: things did seem to come more personally home when they were spoken than when they were merely read. She hoped it was not very important; it might be well to make sure. She was not very far from home; her Timon-guests would still be there; somebody would be able to tell her all about it....

She walked back to The Witan again, and, still hatted and dressed, pushed at the studio door.

Nobody had left. Indeed, two more had come—young Mr. Raffinger of the McGrath, and a friend of his, a young woman from the Lambeth School of Art, who had Russianized her painting-blouse by putting a leather belt round it, and who told Amory she had wanted to meet her for such a long time, because she had done some designs for Suffrage Christmas Cards, and hoped Amory wouldn't mind her fearful cheek, but hoped she would look at them, and say exactly what she thought about them, and perhaps give her a tip or two, and, if it wasn't asking too much, introduce her to the Manumission League, or to anybody else who might buy them.... Young Raffinger interrupted the flow of gush and apologetics.

"Oh, don't bother her just yet, Eileen. Let her read her cable first."

Amory turned quickly.—"What do you say? What cable?" she asked.

"There's a cable for you."

It lay on the uncleared tea-table, and everybody seemed to know all about the outside of it at all events. As it was not in the usual place for letters, perhaps it had been passed from hand to hand. Quite unaffectedly, they stood round in a ring while Amory opened it, with all their eyes on her. They most frightfully wanted to know what was in it, but of course it would have been rude to ask outright. So they merely watched, expectantly.

Then, as Amory stood looking at the piece of paper, Walter was almost rude. But in the circumstances everybody forgave him.

"Well?" he said; and then with ready tact he retrieved the solecism. "Hope it's good news, Amory?"

For all that there was just that touch of *schadenfreude* in his tone that promised that he for one would do his best to bear up if it wasn't.

Amory was a little pale. It was the best of news, and yet she was a little pale. Perhaps she was faint because she had not had

any tea.

"Cosimo's coming home," she said.

There was a moment's silence, and then the congratulations broke out.

"Oh, good!"

"Shall be glad to see the old boy!"

"Finished his work, I suppose?"

"Or perhaps it's something to do with this Collins business?"

It was Mr. Brimby who had made this last remark. Amory turned to him slowly.

"What is this Collins business?" she asked.

Mr. Brimby dropped his sorrowing head.

"Ah, poor fellow," he murmured. "I'm afraid he went to work on the wrong principles. A *little* more conciliation ... but it's difficult to blame anybody in these cases. The System's at fault. Let us not be harsh. I quite agree with Wilkinson that the 'Pall Mall' to-night is very harsh."

"Cowardly," said Mr. Wilkinson grimly. "Rubbing it in because they have some sort of a show of a case. They're always mum enough on the other side."

Amory lifted her head.

"But you say this might have something to do with Cosimo's coming back. Tell me at once what's happened.—And put that telegram down, Walter. It's mine."

They had never heard Amory speak like this before. It was rather cool of her, in her own house, and quite contrary to the beautiful Chinese rule of politeness. And somehow her tone seemed, all at once, to dissipate a certain number of pretences that for the last hour or more they had been laboriously seeking to keep up. That, at any rate, was a relief. For a minute

nobody seemed to want to answer Amory; then Mr. Wilkinson took it upon himself to do so—characteristically.

"Nothing's happened," he said, "—nothing that we haven't all been talking about for a year and more. What the devil—let's be plain for once. To look at you, anybody'd think you hadn't meant it! By God, if *I'd* had that paper of yours!... I told you at the beginning what Strong was—neither wanted to do things nor let 'em alone; but *I'd* have shown you! I'd have had a dozen Prangs! But he didn't want one—and he didn't want to sack him—afraid all the time something 'ld happen, but daren't stop —doing too well out of it for that ... and now that it's happened, what's all the to-do about? You're always calling it War, aren't you? And it *is* War, isn't it? Or only Brimby's sort of War—like everything else about Brimby?——"

Here somebody tried to interpose, but Mr. Wilkinson raised his voice almost to a shout.

"Isn't it? Isn't it?... Lookee here! A little fellow came here one Sunday, a little collier, and he said 'Wilkie knows!' And by Jimminy, Wilkie does know! I tell you it's everybody for himself in this world, and I'm out for anything that's going! (Yes, let's have a bit o' straight talk for a change!) War? Of course it's War! What do we all mean about street barricades and rifles if it isn't War? It's War when they fetch the soldiers out, isn't it? Or is that a bit more Brimby? And you can't have War without killing somebody, can you? I tell you we want it at home, not in India! I've stood at the dock gates waiting to be taken on, and I know—no fear! To hell with your shillyshallying! If Collins gets in the way, Collins must get out o' the way. We can't stop for Collins. I wish it had been here! I can just see myself jumping off a bridge with a director in my arms—the fat hogs! If I'd had that paper! There'd have been police round this house long ago, and then the fun would have started!... Me and Prang's the only two of all the bunch that *does* know what we want! And Prang's got his all right—my turn next—and I shan't ask Brimby to help me——"

Through a sort of singing in her ears Amory heard the rising cries of dissent that interrupted Mr. Wilkinson—"Oh no—hang

it—Wilkinson's going too far!" But the noise conveyed little to her. Stupidly she was staring at the blue and yellow jets of the asbestos log, and weakly thinking what a silly imitation the thing was. She couldn't imagine however Cosimo had come to buy it. And then she heard Mr. Wilkinson repeating some phrase he had used before: "There'd have been police round this house and then the fun would have begun!" Police round The Witan, she thought? Why? It seemed very absurd to talk like that. Mr. Brimby was telling Mr. Wilkinson how absurd it was. But Mr. Brimby himself was rather absurd when you came to think of it....

Then there came another shouted outburst.—"Another Mutiny? Well, what about it? It *is* War, isn't it? Or is it only Brimby's sort of War?——"

Then Amory felt herself grow suddenly cold and resolved. Cosimo was coming back. Whether he had made India too hot to hold him, as now appeared just possible, she no longer cared, for at last she knew what she intended to do. Her guests were wrangling once more; let them wrangle; she was going to leave this house that Mr. Wilkinson apparently wanted to surround with police as a preliminary to the "fun." Edgar might still be at the office; if he was not, she would sleep at some hotel and find him in the morning. Then she would take her leap. She had hesitated far too long. She would not go and look at the twins for fear lest she should hesitate again....

Just such a sense of rest came over her as a swimmer feels who, having long struggled against a choppy stream, suddenly abandons himself to it and lets it bear him whither it will.

Unnoticed in the heat of the dispute, she crossed to the studio door. She thought she heard Laura call, "Can I come and help, Amory?" No doubt Laura thought she was going to see about supper. But she no longer intended to stay even for supper in this house of wrangles and envy and crowds and whispering and crookedness.

Her cheque-book and some gold were in her dressing-table drawer upstairs. She got them. Then she descended again, opened the front door, closed it softly behind her again, passed

through the door in the privet hedge, and walked out on to the dark Heath.

III

DE TROP

Those who knew Edgar Strong the best knew that the problem of how to make the best of both worlds pressed with a peculiar hardship on him. The smaller rebel must have the whole of infinity for his soul to range in—and, for all the practical concern that man has with it, infinity may be defined as the condition in which the word of the weakest is as good as that of the wisest. Give him scope enough and Mr. Brimby cannot be challenged. There is no knowledge of which he says that it is too wonderful for him, that it is high and he cannot attain unto it.

But Edgar Strong knew a little more than Mr. Brimby. He bore his share of just such a common responsibility as is not too great for you or for me to understand. Between himself and Mr. Prang had been a long and slow and grim struggle, without a word about it having been said on either side; and it had not been altogether Edgar Strong's fault that in the end Mr. Prang had been one too many for him.

For, consistently with his keeping his three hundred a year (more than two-thirds of which by one means and another he had contrived to save), he did not see that he could have done much more than he had done. Things would have been far worse had he allowed Mr. Wilkinson to oust him. And now he knew that this was the "Novum's" finish. Whispers had reached him that behind important walls important questions were being asked, and a ponderous and slow-moving Department had approached another Body about certain finportations (Sir Joseph Deedes, Katie's uncle, knew all about these things). And this and that and the other were going on behind the scenes; and these deep mutterings meant, if they meant anything at all, that it was time Edgar Strong was packing up.

Fruit-farming was the line he fancied; oranges in Florida; and it would not take long to book passages—passages for two ——

He had heard the news in the early afternoon, and had straightway sent off an express messenger to the person for whom the second passage was destined. Within an hour this person had run up the stairs, without having met anybody on a landing whom it had been necessary to ask whether Mr. So-and-So, the poster artist, had a studio in the building. Edgar Strong's occupation as she had entered had made words superfluous. He had been carrying armfuls of papers into the little room behind the office and thrusting them without examination on the fire. The girl had exchanged a few rapid sentences with him, had bolted out again, hailed a taxi, sought a Bank, done some business there on the stroke of four, and had driven thence to a shipping office. Edgar Strong, in Charing Cross Road, had continued to feed his fire. The whole place smelt of burning paper. A mountain of ashes choked the grate and spread out as far as the bed and the iron washstand in the corner.

The girl returned. From under the bed she pulled out a couple of bags. Into these she began to thrust her companion's clothes. Into a third and smaller bag she crammed her own dressing-gown and slippers, a comb and a couple of whalebone brushes, and other things. She had brought word that the boat sailed the day after to-morrow....

"There's the telephone—just answer it, will you?" Strong said, casting another bundle on the fire....

"Wyron," said the girl, returning.

"Never mind those boots; they're done; and you might get me a safety-razor; shall want it on the ship.... By the way—I think we'd better get married."

The girl laughed.—"All right," she said as she crammed a nightdress-case into the little bag....

Amory walked quickly down the East Heath. As she walked she could not help wondering what there had been to make such a fuss about. Indeed she had been making quite a bugbear of the thing she was now doing quite easily. What, after all, would it matter? Would a single one of the people she passed so hurriedly think her case in the least degree special? Had they not, each one of them, their own private and probably very similar affairs? Was there one of them of whom it could be said with certainty that he or she was not, at that very moment, bound on the same errand? She looked at the women. There was nothing to betray them, but it was quite as likely as not. Nor could they tell by looking at her. For that matter, the most resolute would hide it the most. And a person's life was his own. Nobody would give him another one when he had starved and denied the one he had. There might not be another one. Some people said that there was, and some that there wasn't. Meetings were held about that too, but so far they hadn't seemed to advance matters very much....

Nor was it the urge of passion that was now driving her forward at such a rate. She could not help thinking that she had been rather silly in her dreams about carpets and Nubians and those things. If Edgar was passionate, very well—she would deny him nothing; but in that case she would feel ever so slightly superior to Edgar. She rather wished that that was not so; she hoped that after all it might not be so; on the whole she would have preferred to be a little his inferior. She had not been inferior to Cosimo. They, she and Cosimo, had talked a good deal about equality, of course, but, after all, equality was a balance too nice for the present stressful stage of the struggle between man and woman; a theoretical equality if you liked, but in practice the thing became a slight temporary feminine preponderance, which would, no doubt, settle down in time. Virtually she had been Cosimo's master. She did not want to be Edgar's. Rather than be that he might—her tired sensibilities gave a brief flutter—he might even be a little cruel to her if he wished....

A Tottenham Court Road bus was just starting from the bottom of Pond Street. She ran to catch it. It moved forward again, with Amory sitting inside it, between a man in a white muffler

and opera-hat and a flower-woman returning home with her empty baskets.

Many, many times Amory Pratt, abusing her fancy, had rehearsed the scene to which she was now so smoothly and rapidly approaching; but she rehearsed nothing now. It would suffice for her just to appear before Edgar; no words would be necessary; he would instantly understand. Of course (she reflected) he might have left the office when she got there; it was even reasonably probable that he would have left; it was not a press-night; twenty to one he would have left. But her thoughts went forward again exactly as if she had not just told herself this.... He would be there. She would go up to him and stand before him. As likely as not not a word would pass between them. She felt that she had used too many words in her life. She and her set had discussed subjects simply out of existence. Often, by the time they had finished talking, not one of them had known what they had been talking about. It had been sheer dissipation. Men, she had heard, took drinks like that, and by and by were unable to stand, and then made hideous exhibitions of themselves. Nobody could say exactly at what point they, the men, became incapable, nor the point at which the others, Amory and her set, became word-sodden; in the one case the police (she had heard) made them walk a chalk-line; but there was no chalk-line for the others. Their paths were crooked as scribble....

But she was going straight at last—as straight as a pair of tram-lines could take her—and so far was she from wishing that the tram would go more slowly, that she would have hastened it had she been able.

The "Mother Shipton"—the Cobden Statue—Hampstead Road—the "Adam and Eve." At this last stopping-place she descended, crossed the road, and boarded a bus. She remembered that once before, when she had visited the office in a taxi, the cab had seemed to go at a terrifying speed; now the bus seemed to crawl. A fear took her that every stop might cause her to miss him by just a minute. She tapped with her foot. She looked almost angrily at those who got in or out. That flower-woman: why couldn't she have got out at the

proper stopping-place, instead of upsetting everything with her baskets hardly a hundred yards further on?... Off again; she hoped to goodness that was the last delay. She had been stupid not to take a taxi after all.

She descended opposite the "Horse Shoe," not three minutes' walk from the "Novum's" offices. Then again she called herself stupid for not having sat where she was, since the bus would go straight past the door. But she could be there as soon as the bus if she walked quickly.——

The bus overtook her and beat her by twenty yards.

The bookseller's shutters were down, and in the window of the electric-fittings shop could be dimly seen a ventilating fan, a desk-lamp, and a switchboard or two. Amory turned in under the arch that led to the yard behind. Her eyes had gone up to the third floor almost before she had issued from the narrow alley——

Ah!... So she was not too late. There was a light.

Through the ground-floor cavern in which the sandwich-boards were stacked she had for the first time to slacken her pace; the floor was uneven, and the place was crowded with dim shadows. A man smoking a pipe over an evening paper turned as she entered, but, seeing her make straight for the stairs, he did not ask her her business. The winding wooden staircase was black as a flue. On the first landing she paused for a moment; the man with the pipe had, after all, challenged her, "Who is it you want, Miss?" he called from below.... But he did not follow her. A vague light from the landing window showed her the second flight of wedge-shaped wooden steps. She mounted them, and gained the corridor hung with the specimens of the poster-artist's work. Ahead along the passage a narrow shaft of light crossed the floor. She gave one more look behind, for fear the man below had, after all, followed her; she was determined, but that did not mean that she necessarily wished to be seen....

Her life was her own, to do what she liked with. Nobody would give her another one....

And Edgar might be cruel if he wished....

For one instant longer she hesitated. Then she pushed softly at the door from which the beam of light came.

The quietness of her approach was wasted after all. There was nobody in the office. The floor was untidy with scattered leaves of paper, and Edgar had carelessly left every drawer of his desk open; but that only meant that he could not be very far away. Probably he was in the waiting-room. She approached the door of it.

But, as she did so, some slight unfamiliarity about the place struck her. The first room of the three, or waiting-room, she knew, from having once or twice pushed at the first door of the passage and having had to pass through that ante-room. Of the third room she knew nothing save that it was used as a sort of general lumber-room. But the rooms seemed somehow to have got changed about. It was from this third room, and not from the waiting-room, that a bright light came, and the smell of charred paper. The door was partly open. Amory advanced to it.

As she did so somebody spoke.

For so slight a cause, the start that Amory gave was rather heartrending. She stopped dead. Her face had turned so chalky a white that the freckles upon it, which ordinarily scarcely showed, looked almost unwholesome.

In her mind she had given Edgar Strong leave to be cruel to her, but not with this cruelty. The cruelty we choose is always another cruelty. Once a man, who miraculously survived a flogging, said that by comparison with the anguish of the second stroke that of the first was almost a sweetness; and after the third, and fourth, men, they say, have laughed. It happened so to Amory. The voices she heard were not loud; so much the worse, when a few ordinary, grunted, half expressions could so pierce her.

"——months ago, but I wasn't ready. I stayed on here for nobody's convenience but my own, I can tell you." It was

Edgar who said this.

Then a woman's voice—

"I don't think this waistcoat's worth taking; I've patched and patched it——"

"Oh, chuck it under the bed. And I say—we've had nothing to eat. Make the cocoa, will you?"

"Just a minute till I finish this bag.—What'll Pratt say when he comes back?"

"As I shan't be here to hear him, it's hardly worth while guessing."

"Will Wilkinson take it over?"

"The 'Novum'?... I don't think there'll be any more 'Novum.' I suppose these London Indians will be holding a meeting. I don't like 'em, but let's be fair to them: most of 'em are all right. They've got to dissociate themselves from this Collins business somehow. But I expect some lunatic will go and move an amendment.... Well, it won't matter to us. We shall be well down the Channel by that time."

Then the girl gave a low laugh.—"I *do* think you might buy me a trousseau, Ned—the way it's turned out——"

The man's voice grunted.

"I thought that would be the next. Give you something and you all want something else immediately.... Can't afford it, my dear. I've only pulled between three and four hundred out of this show, living here, paying myself space-rates and all the lot; and we shall want all that."

Again the low voice—very soft and low.

"But you'll be a little sorry to leave here, won't you—m'mmm? ——" (This was the second stroke, by comparison with which the first had been sweet.)

Strong spoke brusquely.—"Look here, old girl—we've heaps of things to do to-night—lots of time before us—don't let's have any nonsense——"

"No-o-o?"——

Amory, besides hearing, might have seen; but she did not. Something had brought into her head her own words to Walter Wyron of an hour or two before, when Walter had picked up the cable announcing Cosimo's return: "Put that down, Walter; it's mine." This other, that was taking place in that inner room, was theirs. It would have been perfectly easy to strike them dumb by appearing, just for one moment, in the doorway of this—lumber-room; but she preferred not to do it. If she had, she felt that it would have been the remains of a woman they would have seen. There is not much catch in striking anybody dumb when the process involves their seeing—that. Much better to steal out quietly....

Noiselessly she turned her back to the half-open door. She tiptoed out into the corridor again. For a dozen yards she continued to tiptoe—in order to spare them; and then she found herself at the head of the steep stairs. She descended. She had not made a single sound. Down below the man was still reading the paper, and again he looked round. At another time Amory might have questioned him; but again she did not. There was nothing to learn. She knew.

It was the first thing she had ever really known.

Bowed with the strangeness of knowledge, she walked slowly out into Charing Cross Road.

IV

GREY YOUTH

She continued to walk slowly; the slowness was as remarkable as her haste had been. She had intended, had she missed Edgar, to go to an hotel; but home was hotel enough, hotel home. Home—home to a house without privacy—home to children of whom she was not much more than technically the mother —home to an asbestos log and to the absence of a husband that was at least as desirable as his presence: nothing else remained.

For her lack seemed total—so total as hardly to be a lack. She desired no one thing, and a desire for everything is an abuse of the term "desire." So she walked slowly, stopping now and then to look at a flagstone as if it had been a remarkable object. And as she walked she wondered how she had come to be as she was.

She could not see where her life had gone wrong. She did not remember any one point at which she had taken a false and crucial step. For example, she did not think this grey and harmonious totality of despondency had come of her marrying Cosimo. They were neither outstandingly suited nor unsuited to one another, and a thousand marriages precisely similar were made every day and turned out well enough. No; it could not be that she had expected too much of marriage. She had not courted disappointment that way.... (But stay: had the trouble come of her not expecting largely enough? Of her not having assumed enough? Of her not having said to Life, "Such and such I intend to have, and you shall provide it?" Would she have fared better then?)... And if Cosimo had brought her no wonder, neither had her babes. People were in the habit of saying astonishing things about the miracle of the babe at the breast, but Amory could only say that she had never experienced these things. She had wondered that she should not, when so many others apparently did, but the fact

remained, that bearing had been an anguish and nursing an inconvenience. And so at the twins she had stopped.

Would it have been better had she not stopped? Would she have been happier with many children? Without children at all? Or unmarried? Or ought her painting to have been husband, home and children to her?...

It was a little late in the day to ask these questions now——

And yet there had been no reason for asking them earlier——

It had needed that, her first point of knowledge, to bring it home into her heart....

But do not suppose that she was in any pain. As a spinally-anaesthetized subject may have a quite poignant interest in the lopping off of one of his own limbs, and may even wonder that he feels no local pain, so she assisted at her own dismemberment. Home, husband, babes, her art—one after another she now seemed to see them go—or rather, seemed to see that they had long since gone. She saw this going, in retrospect. It was as if, though only degree by degree had the pleasant things of life ticked away from her, the escapement was now removed from her memory, allowing all with a buzz to run down to a dead stop. She could almost hear that buzz, almost see that soft rim of whizzing teeth....

Now all was stillness—stillness without pain. She knew now what Edgar Strong had been doing. She knew that he had been making use of her, pocketing Cosimo's money, using the "Novum's" office as his lodging, had had his bed there, his slippers in the fender, his kettle, his cocoa, his plates, his cups, his.... And she knew now that Edgar Strong was only one of those who had clustered like leeches about Cosimo.... She forgot how much Cosimo had said that from first to last it had all cost. She thought twenty thousand pounds. Twenty thousand pounds, all vanished between that first Ludlow experiment and that last piece of amateur sociology, three revolver shots in a man's back! As a price it was stiffish. She did not quite know what the provider of the money had had out of it all. At any rate she herself had this curious stilly state of

painless but rather sickening knowledge. And knowledge, they say, is above rubies. So perhaps it was cheap after all....

But where had she gone wrong? Had she simply been born wrong? Would it have made any difference whatever she had done? Or had all this been appointed for her or ever her mother had conceived her?

She asked herself this as she passed Whitefield's Tabernacle; still walking slowly, she was well up Hampstead Road and still no answer had occurred to her. But somewhere near the gold-beater's arm on the right-hand side of the road a thought did strike her. She thought that she would not go home after all. This was not because to go home now would be inglorious; it was no attempt to keep up appearances; it was merely that she would have preferred anything to this horrible numbness. Pain would be better. It is at any rate a condition of pain that you must be alive to feel it, and she did not feel quite alive. This might be a dream from which she would presently wake, or a waking from which she would by and by drop off to sleep again. In either case it was more than she could bear for much longer, and, did she go home, she would have to bear it throughout the night—for days—until Cosimo came back—after that——

But where else to go, if not to The Witan? To Laura's? To Dickie's? That would be the same thing as going home: little enough change from spinal anaesthesia in that! They could not help. Of all her old associates, there was hardly one but might—that was to say if anything extraordinary ever happened to them, like suddenly getting to know something—there was hardly one of them but might experience precisely this same hopeless perfection of wrongness, and fail to discover any one point at which it had all begun. It was rather to be hoped (Amory thought) that they never would get to know anything. They were happier as they were, in a self-contained and harmonious ignorance. Knowledge attained too late was rather dreadful; people ought to begin to get it fairly early or not at all. They ought to begin at about the age of Corin and Bonniebell....

A month ago the last person she would have gone to with a trouble would have been Dorothy Tasker. They had not a single view in common. Moreover, it would have been humiliating. But now that actually became, in a curious, reflex sort of way, a reason for going. She did not know that she actually wished to be humiliated; she did not think about it; but she had been looking at herself, and at people exactly like herself, for a long, long, long time, and, when you have looked at yourself too much you can sometimes actually find out something new about yourself by looking for a change at somebody else as little like you as can possibly be found. Amory had tried a good many things, but she had never tried this. It might be worth trying. She hesitated for one moment longer. This was when she feared that Dorothy might offer her, not the change from numbness to pain, but a sympathy and consolation that, something deep down within her told her, would not help her.... A little more quickly, but not much, she walked up Maiden Road. She turned into Fleet Road, and reached the tram-terminus below Hampstead Heath Station. Thence to Dorothy's was a bare five minutes. What she should say when she got to Dorothy's she did not trouble to think.

And at first it looked as if she would not be allowed to say anything at all to her, for when she rang the bell of the hall-floor flat Stan himself opened the door, looked at her with no great favour, and told her that Dorothy was not to be seen. From that Amory gathered that Dorothy was at least within.

Now when your need of a thing is very great, you are not to be put off by a young man who admits that his wife is at home, but tells you that she has some trifling affair—is in her dressing-gown perhaps, or has not made her hair tidy—that makes your call slightly inconvenient. Therefore Amory, in her need, did what the young man would no doubt have called "an infernally cheeky thing." She repeated her request once more, and then, seeing another refusal coming, waited for no further reply, but pushed past Stan and made direct for Dorothy's bedroom. Why she should have supposed that Dorothy would be in her bedroom she could not have told. She might equally well have been in the dining-room, or in the pond-room. But

along the passage to the bedroom Amory walked, while Stan stared in stupefaction after her.

Dorothy was there. She had not gone to bed, but, early as it was, appeared to have been preparing to do so. Amory knew that because, though in Britomart Belchamber's case a dressing-gown and plaited hair might merely have meant that she wanted to listen to Walter Wyron's talk in looseness and comfort, or else that a plaster cast was to be taken, they certainly did not mean that in Dorothy's. And she supposed that differences of that kind were more or less what she had come to see.

Dorothy was gazing into the fire before which the youngest Bit had had his bath. Close to her own chair was drawn the chair that had evidently been lately occupied by Stan. The infant Bit's cot was in a corner of the room. At first Dorothy did not look up from the fire. Probably she supposed the person who was looking at her from the doorway to be Stan.

But as that person neither spoke nor advanced, she turned her head. The next moment a curious little sound had come from her lips. You see, in the first place, she had expected nobody less, and in the second place, she wholeheartedly shared many of her worldly old aunt's prejudices, among which was the monstrous one that established a connexion between recently-bibbed politicians in this country and revolver shots in another. And there was no doubt whatever that her presentable but brainless young husband had fostered this fallacious conviction. He might even have gone so far as to say that Amory herself was not altogether unresponsible....

And that, too, in a sense, was what Amory had come for.

The eyes of the two women met, Amory's at the door, Dorothy's startled ones looking over her shoulder; blue ones and shallow brook-brown ones; and then Dorothy half rose.

But whatever the first expression of her face had been, it hardly lasted for a quarter of an instant. Alarm instantly took its place. She had begun to get up as a person gets up who would ask another person what he is doing there. Now it was

as if, though she did not yet know what it was, there was something to be done, something practical and with the hands, without a moment's delay.

"What's the matter?" she cried. "Cried" is written, but her exclamation actually gained in emphasis from the fact that, not to wake the Bit, she voiced it in a whisper.

For a moment Amory wondered why she should speak like that. Then it occurred to her that the face of a person under spinal anaesthesia might in itself be a reason. She had forgotten her face.

"May I come in?" she asked.

She took Dorothy's "Shut the door—and speak low, please—what do you want?" as an intimation that she might. Amory entered. But she was not asked to sit down. The man who runs with a fire-call, or fetches a doctor in the night, is not asked to sit down, and some urgency of that kind appeared to be Dorothy's conception of Amory's visit.

"What do you want?" she demanded again.

Amory herself felt foolish at her own reply. It was so futile, so piteous, so true. She stood as helpless as a Bit before Dorothy.

"I—I don't know," she said.

"What's the matter? What are you looking like that for? Has anything happened to Cosimo?"

"No. No. No. He's coming home. No. Nothing's happened."

"Can I be of use to you?" She was prepared to be that.

"No—yes—I don't know——"

Dorothy's eyes had hardened a little.—"*Do* you want something—and if you don't—*had* you to come—to-night?"

Amory spoke quite quickly and eagerly.

"Oh yes—to-night—it had to be to-night—I had to come to-night——"

Dorothy's eyes grew harder still.

"Then I think I know what you mean.... I don't think we'll talk about it. There's really nothing to be said.—So——"

Amory was vaguely puzzled. Of Dorothy's relation to Sir Benjamin she knew nothing. Dorothy appeared to be waiting for her to go. That would mean back to The Witan. But she had come here expressly to avoid going back to The Witan. Again she spoke foolishly.

"Cosimo's coming back," she said.

"My aunt thought he might be," said Dorothy in an even voice.

"And I was going away—but I'm not now——"

"Oh?"

"May I sit down?"

She did so, with her doubled fists thrust between her knees and her head a little bowed. Then her eyes wandered sideways slowly round the room. Dorothy's blouse was thrown on the wide bed; from under the bed the baby Bit's bath peeped; and on the blouse lay Dorothy's hairbrushes.

Amory was thinking of another bed, a bed she had never seen, with portmanteaus on it, and a patched old waistcoat cast underneath it, and a girl busily packing at it, a girl whose voice she had heard pouting "You might buy me a trousseau—"

Dorothy also had sat down, but only on the edge of her chair. And she thought it would be best to speak a little more plainly.

"If you'll come to-morrow I shall know better what to say to you," she said. "You see, you've taken me by surprise. I didn't think you'd come, and I don't know now what you've come for. It isn't a thing to talk about, certainly not to-day. I should have liked to-day to myself. But if you feel that you must—will you come in again to-morrow?"

But Amory hardly seemed to hear. Her eyes were noting the appointments of the bedroom again. The time had been when

she would at once have denounced the room as overcrowded and unhygienic. A cot, and a bed with two pillows ... in some respects her own plan was to be preferred. But this again was the kind of thing she had come to see, and she admitted that these things were more or less governed by what people could afford. From the kicked and scratched condition of the front of the chest of drawers she imagined that Dorothy's children must romp all over the flat. A parti-coloured ball lay under the cot where the baby slept. There was a rubber bath-doll near it. The two older boys would be sleeping in the next room.

She spoke again.—"I was going away," she said, dully, "with somebody."

Once more Dorothy merely said "Oh?"

Then it occurred to Amory that perhaps Dorothy did not quite understand.

"I mean with—with somebody not my husband."

She had half expected that Dorothy would be shocked, or at least surprised; but she seemed to take it quite coolly. Dorothy, as a matter of fact, was not surprised in the very least. She too guessed at the futility of looking for a starting-point of things that grow by inevitable and infinitesimal degrees. It was rather sad, but not at all astonishing. On Amory's own premises, there was simply no reason why she shouldn't. So again she merely said "Oh?" and added after a moment, "But you're not?"

"No."

"How's that? Has what we've heard to-day made you change your mind?"

Again Amory was slightly puzzled; and at Dorothy's question she had, moreover, a sudden little hesitation. *Was* it after all necessary that Dorothy should know everything? Would it not be sufficient, without going into details, to let Dorothy suppose she had changed her mind? It came to the same thing in the end.... Besides, Edgar Strong had not refused her that night. He had not even known of her presence in the office. Of the rest she would make a clean breast, but it was no good bothering

Dorothy with that other.... She was still plunged into a sort of stupor, but these reflections stirred ever so slightly under the surface of it....

Then "what we've heard to-day" struck her. She repeated the words.

"What we've heard to-day?"

"Oh, if you haven't heard.... I only mean about the murder of my uncle," said Dorothy coldly.

This was far more than Amory could take in. She reflected for a moment. Then, "What do you say, Dorothy?" she asked slowly.

"At least he wasn't my uncle really. I liked him better than any of my uncles."

"Do you mean Sir Benjamin Collins?"

It was as if Amory had not imagined that Sir Benjamin could by any possibility have been anybody's uncle.

"I called him uncle," said Dorothy, in a voice that she tried to keep steady. "Before I could say the word—I called him——." But she decided not to risk the baby-word she had used —"Unnoo"——

It seemed to Amory a remarkable little coincidence.

"I—I didn't know," she said stupidly.

"No."

"You—you mean you—knew him?——"

"Oh ... oh yes."

Amory said again that she hadn't known....

"Then why," Dorothy would have liked to cry aloud, "*have* you come, if it isn't to make matters worse by talking about it? That wouldn't have surprised me very much! I should have been quite prepared for you to apologize! It's the kind of thing

you would do. I don't think very much of you, you see"... But again that worse than frightened look on her visitor's face struck her sharply, and again a remark of her aunt's returned to her: "They puzzle their brains till their bodies suffer, and overwork their bodies till they're little better than fools." Suddenly she gave her sometime friend more careful attention.

"Amory—," she said all at once.

Amory had her fists between her knees again.—"What?" she said without looking up.

"You just said something about—going away. I want to ask you something. You haven't ...?"

The meaning was quite plain.

As if she had been galvanized, Amory looked sharply up. —"How dare——", she began.

But it was only a flash in the pan. Dorothy was looking into her eyes.

"You're telling me the truth?" She hated to ask the question.

"Yes," Amory mumbled, dropping her head again.

"Has Cosimo been unkind to you?"

"No."

"Nor neglected you?"

"No."

"Has—has anybody been unkind to you?" She could not speak of "somebody" by name.

Here Amory hesitated, and finally lied. It was rather a good sign that she did so. It meant returning animation....

"No," she said.

"Then what *has* happened?"

"Nothing. That's what I asked myself. That's just it. Nothing. Nothing at all's happened."

Dorothy spoke in a low voice, as if to herself.—"I know," she murmured....

And, on the chance that she really did know, Amory clutched at the sleeve of Dorothy's dressing-gown almost excitedly.

"Yes, that's what I mean ... you do know?" she asked in a quick whisper.

"Yes—no—I'm not sure——"

"But you *do* know that—nothing happening, nothing at all, and everything happening—everything? That's what I mean—that's what I want to know—that's why I came——"

"Don't speak so loudly. Put your hands to the fire; they're like ice. Wait; I'll get you a shawl; you're shivering.... Now I want you to tell me some things...."

And, first wrapping her up and putting Stan's pillow behind her back, she began to question her.

What, again, was the purport of her questions? What of those of her aunt? What of those of a good many others in an age that is producing, and for some mysterious reason or other counts it a sign of progress to produce, innumerable Amorys—so many that, stretch out your hand where you will, and you will touch one?

All is guessing: but it will pass on the time if we hold a Meeting about it now. Everybody is agreed that the way to arrive at the best conclusions is to hold a Meeting, and this will be only one more Meeting added to the cloud of Meetings in which the "Novum" went up and out—the Meeting which, as Edgar Strong had prophesied, the loyal London Indians held (in the Imperial Institute) in order to dissociate themselves from the Collins affair (as Edgar Strong had also prophesied,

Mr. Wilkinson moved an amendment, "That this Meeting declines to dissociate itself, etc. etc.")—the numerous secondary Meetings that arose out of that Meeting—the Meetings of the "Novum's" creditors (for Edgar Strong in his haste to be off had omitted to pay all the bills)—the Meetings at which (Cosimo Pratt having withdrawn his support) the Eden and the Suffrage Shop had to be reconstructed—the Meetings convened to talk about this, that and the other—as many of them as you like.

Let us too, then, hold a nice, jolly Meeting, in order to find out what was the matter with Amory—a Meeting with Mr. Brimby in the Chair, to tell us that there is a great deal to be said on both sides, and that no party has a monopoly of Truth, and that the words that ought always to be on our lips as we hurl ourselves into the thickest and hottest of the fray, whatever it may be, are "To know all is to forgive all."

But let us keep our Meeting as quiet as we can, for we shall have no end of a crowd of Meeting-lovers there if we don't. The Wyrons will of course have to be admitted, and Mr. Wilkinson, and Dickie Lemesurier, and a few of the older students of the McGrath; but we do not particularly want the others—those who feel that in a better and brighter world they would have been students of the McGrath, but, as matters stand, are merely young clerks who can draw a little, young salesmen who can write a little, young auctioneers with an instinct for the best in sculpture, young foremen who yearn to express themselves in music, young governesses (or a few of them) who have heard of the enormous sums of money to be made by playwriting, New Imperialists, amateur regenerators, social prophets after working-hours, and, in a word, all the people who have just heard that it is not true that Satan is yet bound up for his promised stretch of a thousand years. A terrible number of them will get in whether we wish it or not; but let the rest be our own little party; and you shall sit next to Britomart Belchamber, and I will stand by to open the windows in case we feel the need of a little fresh air.

So Mr. Brimby will open the proceedings. He will say the things above-mentioned, and presently, with emotion and his

sense of the world's sorrow gaining on him, will come to the case of their dear friend Amory Pratt. Here, he will say, is a young woman, one of themselves, who does not know what is the matter with her—who does not know what has become of her joy—who cannot understand (if Mr. Brimby may be allowed to express himself a little poetically) why the bloom of her life has turned to an early rime. And so (Mr. Brimby will continue), knowing that if two heads are better than one, two hundred heads must be just one hundred times better still, their friend has submitted her case to the Meeting. He will beg them to approach that case sympathetically. Let the extremists of the one part (if there be any) balance the extremists of the other, leaving as an ideal and beautiful middle nullity those words he had used before, but did not apologize for using again—to know all is to forgive all. And with these few remarks (if we are lucky), Mr. Brimby will say no more, but will call upon their friend Mr. Walter Wyron to state his view of their friend's case.

Then Walter will get up, with his hands in the pockets of his knickers, and it will not be his fault if he does not get off an epigram or two of the "Love is Law" kind. But you will not fail to notice that Walter is not his ordinary jaunty self. The withdrawal of Cosimo's support is going to hit him rather hard, and glances will be exchanged, and one or two will whisper behind their hands, "Isn't Walter beginning to live a little on his reputation?" Still, Walter will contribute his quotum. We shall hear that, in his opinion, the Cause of Synthetic Protoplasm is making such vast strides to-day that we must revise every one of our estimates in the light of the most recent knowledge, having done which we shall probably find that what is really the matter with Amory is that, by comparison with the mechanical appliances of Loeb and Delage—appliances which he will take leave to call the Womb of the Workshop—their friend Amory is over-vitalized.

Then Mr. Wilkinson will spring to his feet. And Mr. Wilkinson also will be more than a little sore about Cosimo's cowardly backsliding. He will say first of all that their Chairman, as usual, is talking out of his hat, and that anybody with a grain of sense knew that to know all was to have a contempt for all;

and then he will point out that all the trouble had come of shillyshallying with the wrong policy. Under Strong's direction of the "Novum," he will say, Amory had been hitting the air to no purpose; whereas had he, Mr. Wilkinson, been allowed a chance, they would have had the proletariat armed with rifles by this, and Pratt's wife would have been a *tricoteuse*, doing a bit of knitting conspiratoriably and domestically useful at one and the same time—would have worn a Phrygian cap, and carried a pike, and sung "A la Lanterne," and put a bit of fire into the men! That's what she ought to have done, and have had a bit of a run for her money, instead of shillyshallying about with that idiot Strong——

And then a maiden speech will be given us. Mr. Raffinger, of the McGrath, will get timidly but resolutely up, and we shall all applaud him when he says that the bad old *régime* at the McGrath was at the bottom of all the mischief. The stupid old Professors of the past had tried to drill instruction into the students instead of allowing each one to do exactly as he pleased and so to find his own soul. Amory had been crushed under the cruel old Juggernaut of discipline. But that, happily, was a thing of the past at the McGrath. Now they went on the more enlightened principles laid down by Séguin, who cured a child of destructiveness by giving it a piece of priceless Venetian glass to play with, and when he broke it gave it another unique piece, and then another, and another after that, and another, until by degrees the child learned, *and would never have to unlearn* (that was the important thing!) that it was very naughty to break valuable Venetian glass. (A "Hear hear" from Mr. Brimby, which will probably prove so disconcerting to young Mr. Raffinger that he will sit down as suddenly as if Mr. Wilkinson had discharged two bullets at him).

And then Laura Wyron will speak, saying tremulously that she can't understand why Amory isn't happy when she has those two lovely babies; but she is not happy, and never will be again, because she has turned her back on her art; and Britomart Belchamber (who will be hoisted to her feet because she has lived in the same house with Amory, and may have something interesting and intimate to say) will doubt whether

Amory has always quite closed the sweat-ducts with a cold sponge; and then the crowd will rush in—the governess playwrights will say what they think, the clerk sculptors what they think, and everybody else what he or she thinks—and presently they will have strayed a little from the business in hand, and will be discussing Cubism, or Matriarchy, or Toe-posts, or the Revival of the Ballad, or Rufty Tufty, quite beyond Mr. Brimby's power to hale them back to the proper subject. And so the Meeting will have to be adjourned, and we shall all go again to-morrow night, when Mr. Wilkinson will be in the Chair, and there ought to be some fun——

But Edgar Strong will not be there, because he will be on the water, and Cosimo will not be there, because he will be anxiously counting what money remains to him, and Mr. Prang will not be there, because he will be under arrest in Bombay. But, except for these absences, it will be a perfectly ripping Meeting——

But none of these things were Dorothy's business. Instead, by the time she had finished her questioning of Amory, there was no thought at all in her breast, save only the pitiful desire to help. She saw before her an old young woman, more drained and disillusioned and with less to look forward to at thirty-odd than her aunt had at seventy. Her very presence in Dorothy's house that night was a confession of it. It was the last house she would willingly have gone to, and yet there she was, begging Dorothy to tell her what had happened to her. And there was nothing for Dorothy to say in reply....

She knew that Stan, in the dining-room, was waiting to come to bed, but he must wait; Dorothy had the fire to mend, and Amory's cold hands to chafe, and to get her something hot to drink, and a dozen other things to do that had never had a beginning either, yet there they were, mere helpful habit and nothing more. Presently she set a cup of hot soup to Amory's lips.

"Drink this," she said, "and when you're rested my husband will take you home."

But that did not happen either. Amory spoke very tiredly.

"I should like—I don't want to trouble you—anywhere would do—but I don't want to go home to-night——"

Dorothy made a swift and doubting mental calculation. Where could she put her?——

"I'm simply done up," muttered Amory closing her eyes.

"I'm afraid we could only give you a shakedown in the dining-room——"

"Yes—that would do——"

Dorothy went out to give Stan his orders. Stan swore. "Rather cool, one of *that* crew coming here, to-night of all nights!" But Dorothy was peremptory.

"It isn't cool at all. You don't know anything about it. You'll find blankets in the chest in your dressing-room, and mind you don't wake Noel. Then get some cushions—I'll air a pillowcase—and then you must go up there and tell them where she is—they'll be anxious——"

"Shall I bring those twins of hers back with me while I'm about it?" Stan asked satirically. "May as well put the lot up."

When he heard Dorothy's reply he thought that his wife really had gone mad.

"I've arranged that," she said. "We shall be putting the twins up for a time at Ludlow by and by while she and her husband go away somewhere for a change. It's the least we can do. Don't stand gaping there, Stan——"

"Hm! May I ask what's up?"

"You may if you like, but I shan't tell you."

"Hm!... Well—it's a dog's life—but I suppose it's no good my saying anything——"

"Not a bit."

So Amory was put to bed, most unhygienically, in Dorothy's dining-room; but in the middle of the night she woke, quite unable to remember where she was. There was a narrow opening between the drawn curtains; through it a glimmer of light shone on the Venetian blinds from the street-lamp outside; and without any other light Amory got out of her improvised couch. She felt her way along the wall to a switch, and then suddenly flooded the room with light.

Blinking, she looked around. She herself wore one of Dorothy's nightgowns. On Stan's armchair, near his pipe-rack, was her hat, and her clothing lay in a heap where she had stepped out of it. Dorothy's slippers lay by the fender, and Dorothy had been too occupied to remember to remove the photograph of Uncle Ben from the mantelpiece. It seemed to be watching Amory as she stood, only half awake, in her borrowed nightgown.

It was odd, the way things came about——

If you had asked Amory at six o'clock the evening before where she intended to spend the night, she would not have replied "In Dorothy Tasker's flat——"

But she felt frightfully listless, and the improvised bed was very warm——

She switched off the light and crept back.

TAILPIECE

Along the terrace of the late Sir Noel Tasker's house—"The Brear," Ludlow—there rushed a troop of ten or twelve urchins. They were dressed anyhow, in variously-coloured jerseys, shirts, jackets and blazers, and the legs of half of them were bare, and brown as sand. Their ages varied from five to fifteen, and it is hardly necessary to say that as they ran they shouted. A retriever, two Irish terriers, an Airedale and a Sealyham tore barking after them. It was a July evening, amber and windless, and the shouting and barking diminished as the horde turned the corner of the long low white house and disappeared into the beech plantation. Their tutor was enjoying a well-earned pipe in the coach-house.

From the tall drawing-room window there stepped on to the terrace a group of older people. The sound of wheels slowly ascending the drive could be heard. Lady Tasker came out first; she was followed by Cosimo and Amory and Dorothy and Stan. A little pile of labelled bags stood under the rose-grown verandah; the larger boxes had already gone on to the station by cart.

Stan took a whistle from his pocket and blew two shrill blasts; then he drew out his watch. The sounds of shouting drew near again.

"I give 'em thirty seconds," Stan remarked.... "Twenty-five, twenty-six—leg it, Corin!—ah; twenty-eight!... Company—fall in!"

The young Tims and the young Tonys, Corin and Bonniebell and the terriers, stood (dogs and all, save for their tails) stiff as ramrods. Stan replaced his watch. He had been fishing, and still wore his tweed peaked cap, with a spare cast or two wound round it.

"Company—'Shun! Stand a-a-at—ease! 'S you were! Stand a-a-at—ease! Stand easy.... Tony, fall out and see to the bags.

Tim, hold the horse. Corin—Corin!—What do you keep in the trenches?"

"Silence," piped up Corin. He had a rag round one brown knee, his head was half buried in an old field-service cap, and he refused to be parted, day nor night, from the wooden gun he carried.

"Not so much noise then.—Who hauls down the flag to-night?"

"Billie."

"Billie stand by. The rest of you dismiss, but don't go far —'Evening, Richards——"

The trap drew up in front of the house. Tim held the horse's head, Tony stood among the bags. The leavetaking began.

Amory and Cosimo were going to Cumberland for the rest of the summer. They would have liked to go to Norway, but the money would no longer run to it. They seemed a little shy of one another. They had been at the Brear a fortnight, and had had the little room over the porch. The twins were remaining behind for the present. Dorothy had said they would be no trouble. This was entirely untrue. They were more trouble than all the rest put together. Corin, near the schoolroom window, was wrangling with an eight years old Woodgate now.

"They do, there! On Hampstead Heath! I've seen them, an' they've hats, an' waterbottles, an' broomsticks!"

"Pooh, broomsticks! My father has a big elephant-gun!"

"Well ... mine goes to great big Meetings, an' says 'Hear hear!'"

"My father's in India!"

"Well, so was mine!"

"*I've* seen them troop the Colour at the Horse Guards' Parade!"

"So've I!" Corin mendaciously averred.

The other boy opened his eyes wide and protruded his mouth. It is rarely that one boy does not know when another boy is lying.

"Oh, what a big one! *You'd* catch it if Uncle Stan heard you!"

"Well," Corin pouted, "—I will—or else I'll cry all night—hard—and I'll make Bonnie cry too!—"

"Well, an' so shall I, again, an' then I'll have seen it twice, an' you'll only have seen it once, an' if I see it every time you do you'll *never* have seen it as often as me!"

Then Stan's voice was heard.

"Corin, come here."

It was an atmosphere of insensate militarism, but the Pratts were content to leave their offspring to breathe it for the present. They had another matter to attend to—their own marital relations. It had at last occurred to them that you cannot rule others until you can govern yourself, and they were going to see what could be done about it. They had secured a cottage miles away from anywhere, at the head of a narrow-gauge railway, and it remained to be seen whether quiet and privacy and the resources they might find within themselves would avail them better than the opposites of these things had done. There was just the chance that they might—their only chance. The twins, if all went well, would join them by and by. In the meantime they must see red, and learn to do things with once telling.

So Amory took the struggling Corin into her arms—he wanted to go to the armoury of wooden guns—and kissed him. Then he ran unconcernedly off. Dorothy saw the sad little lift of Amory's bosom, guessed the cause, and laughed.

"Shocking little ingrates!" she said. "Noel's joy when I go away is sometimes indecent.—But don't be afraid they'll be any trouble to us here. You see the rabble we have in any case."

"It's very good of you," Amory murmured awkwardly.

"Nothing of the sort. Stan loves to manage them—it keeps his hand in for managing me, he says.... Now, I don't want to hurry you, but you'd better be off if you're going to get as far as Liverpool to-night. Good-bye, dear——"

"Good-bye, Dorothy——"

"So long, Pratt—up with those bags, Tim——"

"Good-bye, Bonnie——"

"Corin! Corin!—(Hm! See if I don't have you in hand in another week or two, my boy!)—Come and say good-bye to your father."

"Good-bye, Lady Tasker——"

"All right?"

The wheels crunched; hands were waved; the rabble gave a shockingly undisciplined cheer; and young Arthur Woodgate, who had run along the terrace and stood holding the gate at the end open, saluted. Stan took out his watch again.

"Four minutes to sunset," he announced.

But there was no need to tell Billie to stand by to strike the flag that hung motionless above the gable where the old billiard-room and gun-room had been thrown together to make the schoolroom. The halyards were already in his hands.

"Here, Corin," Stan called, "you shall fire the gun to-night."

Corin gave a wild yell of joy. Well out of reach, there was an electric button on one of the rose-grown verandah posts. Stan lifted his newest recruit to it, who put a finger-tip on it and shut his eyes——

"BANG!" went the little brass carronade in the locked enclosure behind the woodshed——

And hand over hand Billie hauled the flag down.

But it would be run up again in the morning.

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SPRING 1914

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This is a story of a very modern marriage following the author's previous story, *The Two Kisses*, of a very modern courtship. In it two *ménages* are contrasted, the one run on new and liberal and enlightened lines, the other still dominated by the ideas of the benighted past. What the difference between them comes to in the end depends entirely on the interpretation put upon the story, but the comedy 'note' speaks for itself. It may be remembered that *The Two Kisses* touches on the foibles of certain artists. *A Crooked Mile* deals with the vagaries of a certain airy amateurism in Imperial Politics.

THE SEA CAPTAIN

By H. C. Bailey, Author of 'The Lonely Queen.'

One of the great company of Elizabethan seamen is the hero of this novel. There is, however, no attempt at glorifying him or his comrades. Mr. Bailey has endeavoured to mingle realism with the romance of the time. Captain Rymingtowne is presented as no crusader but something of a merchant,

something of an adventurer and a little of a pirate. He has nothing to do with the familiar tales of the Spanish Main and the Indies. His voyages were to the Mediterranean when the Moorish corsairs were at the height of their power, and of them and their great leaders, Kheyr-éd-din Barbarossa and Dragut Reis, the story has much to tell. Captain Rymingtowne was concerned in the famous Moorish raid to capture the most beautiful woman in Europe and in the amazing affair of the Christian prisoners at Alexandria.

FIREMEN HOT

By C. J. Cutcliffe Hyne, Author of 'The Adventures of Captain Kettle.'

In *Firemen Hot*, Mr. Cutcliffe Hyne has added three clearly etched portraits to a gallery which already contains those marine 'musketeers,' Thompson, McTodd, and Captain Kettle. The marine fireman is probably at about the bottom of the social scale, but, in Mr. Hyne's pages, he is very much the human being. In each chapter the redoubtable trio play before a different background, but whether they are in New Orleans or Hull, in Vera Cruz or Marseilles, one can tell in a paragraph that the author is writing of his ground from first-hand knowledge, and his characters from intimate and joyous study of them. A few Captain Kettle stories have been added.

SIMPSON

By Elinor Mordaunt, Author of 'The Cost of It.'

Simpson is a retired business man in the prime of life, who, beneath a rugged exterior, possesses a sympathetic heart. Yet, finding no woman to fill it, he organizes a bachelor's club of congenial spirits and leases a fine old English country estate, there to live in *dolce far niente* untroubled by feminism in any form. How first one member of the club and then another drops away for sentimental reasons until only Simpson is left, and then his final capitulation to the only woman—all this makes a delightful bit of comedy. The book, however, is more

than a comedy. Running through it is a sound knowledge of human life and character, and the writing is always brilliant. It is a book out of the ordinary in every way.

TWO WOMEN

By MAX PEMBERTON, Author of 'The Mystery of the Green Heart.'

DAVID AND JONATHAN IN THE RIVIERA

By L. B. WALFORD, Author of 'Mr. Smith.'

Two simple, unsophisticated bachelors, respectively minister and elder of a Scotch country parish, go to the Riviera for health's sake, and the rich and jovial 'Jonathan,' older by fifteen years than his friend, means to have a merry time, and to force the reluctant, shy, and sensitive 'David' into having a merry time too. He 'opines' that David needs waking up. Jonathan Buckie reminds us of Mrs. Walford's earlier hero 'Mr. Smith,' but unluckily his heart of gold is not united to the latter's personal charms, and he continually jars upon his companion, especially when making new acquaintances. His habit of doing this in and out of season eventually leads to disaster, and both men pass through a never-to-be-forgotten experience of the sirens of the South before they return home. An old Scotch serving-man, who attends Mr. Buckie as valet, plays no small part in the story, and his sardonic comments, grim humour, and the way in which he handles his master, whose measure he has taken to a nicety, make many amusing episodes.

THE ORLEY TRADITION

By RALPH STRAUS.

The Orleys are an old noble family, once powerful, but now living quietly in a corner of England (Kent). They do nothing at all, in spite of people's endeavours to make them reach to

the older heights. But they are happy in their retirement, and the real reason for this is that they have few brains. John Orley, the hero, has all the family characteristics, and is preparing himself for a humdrum country life, when he meets with an accident which prevents him from playing games, etc. He becomes ambitious, goes out into the world, and—fails at everything. He recovers his strength, and sees the mistake he has made, and the book ends as it began, the Orley Tradition holding true.

ON THE STAIRCASE

By Frank Swinnerton.

The scene of Mr. Frank Swinnerton's new novel is set in the heart of London, in the parish of Holborn. The reproduction of manners, and the revelation by this means of the spirit underlying those manners, forms the framework of a story of passion. In the main, therefore, *On the Staircase* is a romance with a clearly defined setting of commonplace happenings, in which the loves of Barbara Gretton and Adrian Velancourt are shown in conflict with the action of circumstance. The book is in no sense photographic, but it has value as a social picture, being based upon genuine observation.

MAN AND WOMAN

By L. G. Moberly, Author of 'Joy.'

This story, which is based on Tennyson's lines—'The woman's cause is man's, they rise or sink together'—has for its chief character a woman who takes the feminist view that man is the enemy; a view from which she is ultimately converted. Another prominent character is one whose love is given to a weak man, her axiom being that love takes no heed of the worthiness or unworthiness of its object. The scene is laid partly in London, partly in a country cottage, and partly in India during the Durbar of the King-Emperor.

MAX CARRADOS

By Ernest Bramah, Author of 'The Wallet of Kai Lung.'

Max Carrados is blind, but in his case blindness is more than counter-balanced by an enormously enhanced perception of the other senses. How these serve their purpose in the various difficulties and emergencies that confront the wealthy amateur when, through the instigation of his friend Louis Carlyle, a private inquiry agent, he devotes himself to the elucidation of mysteries, is the basis of Mr. Ernest Bramah's new book. The adventures that ensue range from sensational tragedy to romantic comedy as the occasions rise.

THE MAN UPSTAIRS

By P. G. Wodehouse, Author of 'The Little Nugget.'

Under this title Mr. Wodehouse has collected nineteen of the short stories written by him in the past four years. Mr. Wodehouse is one of the few English short-story writers with an equally large public on both sides of the Atlantic: but only two of these stories have an American setting. All except one of this collection are humorous, and some idea of the variety of incident of the remainder may be gathered from the fact that their heroes include a barber, a gardener, an artist, a playwriter, a tramp, a waiter, an hotel clerk, a golfer, a stockbroker, a butler, a bank clerk, an assistant master at a private school, an insurance clerk, a peer's son who is also a leading member of a First League Association football team, and a Knight of King Arthur's Round Table who is neither brave nor handsome.

SQUARE PEGS

By Charles Inge, Author of 'The Unknown Quantity.'

This novel raises again the absorbing question as to what is failure and what success. It tells how a big man from South Africa sets out to conquer London—the London of the Lobby and the Clubs—with a threepenny weekly paper and sympathy for the unemployed; how he fails, but in failure wins his woman; how she too suffers in the London of women workers. There is, on the other side, the little solicitor who calculates for and succeeds by the other's failure; but in succeeding loses. The background includes the life drama of an enthusiast for Labour reform.

MESSENGERS

By Margaret Hope, Author of 'Christina Holbrook.'

A story of the sudden yielding to temptation of a woman of good position. She suffers for her fault in prison, but her sufferings on release are ten times greater. She tries her utmost to keep the knowledge of her guilt from her daughter, a girl just left school, but in vain. The girl, in a painful scene, demands to be told the truth, and the mother, unable to bear the sight of her child's misery, flies from home, hoping still in some way to retrieve the past. But the net of circumstance is too strongly woven.

ENTER AN AMERICAN

By E. Crosby-Heath, Author of 'Henrietta taking Notes.'

The hero of Miss Crosby-Heath's new novel is a self-made American, who comes to London and enters a Home for Paying Guests. He is an optimistic philanthropist, and he contrives to help all the English friends he makes. His own crudity is modified by his London experiences, and the dull minds of his middle-class English friends are broadened by contact with his untrammelled personality. A humorous love interest runs through the book.

THE FRUITS OF THE MORROW

By AGNES JACOMB, Author of 'The Faith of his Fathers.'

The Fruits of the Morrow is a novel showing the consequences of a man's and a woman's conduct in the past and how it affects the lives of their two sons. The other characters of the story are in different degrees involved in the results of the old romance, but not irredeemably. There is no hero in the ordinary sense of the word, the four male characters being of almost equal importance. The action takes place mainly in East Anglia and during the months of one summer.

A GIRL FROM MEXICO

By R. B. TOWNSHEND, Author of 'Lone Pine.'

Adventures are to the adventurous, and a very young Oxford man who strikes out for himself in the wild and woolly West is apt to come in for some lively developments. He gets an exciting start by going partners with a Mormon-eating American desperado, and when the unsophisticated youth falls in love with a velvet-eyed Mexican senorita, and then finds himself called upon in honour to play the part of Don Quixote, things begin to get tangled up. Finally he becomes involved in a struggle, not only with Mormons but with Mexican self-torturers in a great scene on the Calvary of the Penitentes which forms the climax of the story.

SARAH MIDGET

By LINCOLN GREY.

In the sedate atmosphere of a quiet country town there develop the later phases of a man's sin, when he has become rich and powerful, and the woman whom he thrust aside in his early manhood learns, all unconsciously, to love the son of her successful rival. How Sarah Midget rises, in the shock of a

great tragedy, to supreme heights of self-sacrifice, is shown in poignant and moving scenes.

AN ASTOUNDING GOLF MATCH

By 'STANCLIFFE,' Author of 'Fun on the Billiard Table' and 'Golf Do's and Dont's.'

The narrative of the adventures of two golfers of equal handicaps, but different styles, who being dissatisfied with the result of two home and home matches, decide that golf across country from links to links, would be more scientific and interesting than golf where all the hazards are known. The troubles that befell them, and how the match came to an abrupt termination, to the discomfort of one and the joy of the other, are told in this book.

BLACKLAW

By Sir GEORGE MAKGILL.

This is a study in temperaments—a contrast between the old and the new views of the relations between parent and child. Lord Blacklaw throws up rank and fortune, takes his children to the Colonies to live 'the Patriarchal Life,' and sacrifices their future to his own impulses. John Westray, on the other hand, gives up happiness, even life itself, for what he deems his son's welfare. Each from his own point of view fails, yet neither life is wholly wasted. The scenes are laid in Scotland, New Zealand, and in a Cornish Art Colony.

POTTER AND CLAY

By Mrs. STANLEY WRENCH, Author of 'Love's Fool,' 'Pillars of Smoke,' 'The Court of the Gentiles,' etc.

In this story the author returns to the peasant folk of the Midlands whom she knows so well, and of whom she has written with sympathetic frankness in several books already. Just now, when the land question is so much discussed, this

novel, dealing in the main with tillers of the soil, should receive careful attention.

A ROMAN PICTURE

By Paul Waineman, Author of 'A Heroine from Finland.'

Mr. Paul Waineman, the Finnish novelist who has so far allowed his pen only to describe his native land Finland, has in his latest work essayed a new and also very old hunting ground for those in search of romance. *A Roman Picture* is a romantic love story, set in the Mother City of the world, Rome. The author, from personal experience, shows up in a daring manner the hatred that still exists between the old and the new Rome. The heavy shadows and many memories within the vast decaying Roman palace, haunted by the living presence of the young and beautiful Donna Bianca Savelli, the last representative of an ancient line, form a pen-picture which will appeal to the many lovers of Rome.

THE GIRL ON THE GREEN

By Mark Allerton, Author of 'Such and Such Things.'

The atmosphere of the links pervades Mark Allerton's new novel. The wind from the sea blows fresh through its pages. The heroine is a charming, high-spirited girl who on her way from college to Bury St. Dunstan's, has an unexpected excursion into Militancy. The author has no views to present on the Suffrage Movement; nor, indeed, has his heroine, whose not-to-be-explained week-end in a police cell gives ample scope for a highly amusing and exciting story. While *The Girl on the Green* makes a bid for general popularity, golfers will find it of particular interest. Mark Allerton is well known as a writer on the game, and his description of the great golf match between the hero and heroine will be found full of sly allusions to topics in the knowledge of all golfers, as well as an uncommonly racy and exciting finish to a breezy story.

DICKIE DEVON

By JOHN OVERTON, Author of 'Lynette.'

Mr. John Overton's second novel is laid in Worcestershire in the summer of 1644, and is the story of a young Cavalier, forced by adverse circumstances to become a spy among the Roundheads. His position is a difficult and dangerous one, and matters are made worse by the advent of a spoilt Court beauty, who—mistaking him for another man—imagines herself to be his wife. Readers of *Lynette* will welcome the reappearance of the happy-go-lucky Irishman, Michael Fleming, who plays a leading part in this romance of love and war.

THE STORY OF A CIRCLE

By M. A. CURTOIS, Author of 'A Summer in Cornwall.'

A story of an experiment in the Occult, in which some ladies who began by being idly interested in psychical research, find themselves in dangerous contact with the material necessities of mediums. Much light is cast upon that strange population of charlatans who grow fat on the credulity of the foolish in London.

LOTTERIES OF CIRCUMSTANCE

By R. C. LYNEGROVE.

This story is laid in Germany, and describes the matrimonial adventures of two sisters belonging to the impoverished German aristocracy. The elder, gentle and unselfish, marries into the vulgar domineering family of Gubbenmeyer. The other, flirtatious and attractive, saves herself and her family from penury by securing a rich officer, only to jeopardize everything through her undisciplined and sensuous temperament.

FOOTNOTE:

[1]I have been charged with the invention of these facetiæ. Here is the Synthetic Protoplasm idea:—

"The dream of creating offspring without the concurrence of woman has always haunted the imagination of the human race. The miraculous advances which the chemical synthesis has accomplished in these latter days seem to justify the boldest hopes, but we are still far from the creation of living protoplasm. The experiences of Loeb or of Delage are undoubtedly very confounding. But in order to produce life these scientists were obliged, nevertheless; to have recourse to beings already organized. Thousands of centuries undoubtedly separate us from any possibility of realizing the most magnificent and most disconcerting dream ever engendered in the human brain. In the meantime, as the Torch of Life must be transmitted to the succeeding generations, woman will continue gloriously to fulfil her character of mother."—"Problems of the Sexes," Jean Finot; 12*s.* 6*d.* net; p. 352.

Lightly worked up and chattily treated, this theme, as Katie said, drew quiet smiles of appreciation from every cultured audience which Walter addressed.

Transcriber's Notes:

Obvious punctuation errors repaired.

Printer's errors repaired, including:

- Page 128, "interestng" corrected to be "interesting" (really interesting detail)
- Page 129, "advertisments" corrected to be "advertisements" (advertisements had not)
- Page 217, "necesarily" corrected to be "necessarily" (did not necessarily)
- Page 219, "relasped" corrected to be "relapsed" (relapsed into silence)
- Page 227, "if" corrected to be "it" (take it for)
- Page 233, "ideals" corrected to be "ideas" (ideas seem original)
- Page 295, "premisses" corrected to be "premises" (own premises)
- Page 296, "what "what" corrected to be "what" ("what we've heard)

- Page 302, "consspiratoriably" corrected to be "conspiratoriably" (knitting conspiratoriably)

Other variable spellings within the text retained, including:

- The same word with and without apostrophe, for example: "Golder's Green" and "Golders Green"
- The same word with and without accent, for example: "régime" and "regime"
- The same word with and without hyphen, for example: "off-handedly" and "offhandedly"
- Inconsistent spelling, for example: "by and by" and "by and bye"

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