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THE WORKS OF JOHN GALSWORTHY
GROVE EDITION

Volume **ii**

THE INN **OF TRANQUILLITY**

THE
INN OF TRANQUILLITY
AND OTHER IMPRESSIONS

VERSES NEW **AND OLD**

By

JOHN GALSWORTHY

LONDON
WILLIAM HEINEMANN LTD.

THE INN OF TRANQUILLITY

FIRST PUBLISHED 1912

REPRINTED (TWICE) 1912, 1914

UNIFORM EDITION 1922

REPRINTED 1924

CHEAP 2S. EDITION 1924, 1925, 1928

POPULAR 3S. 6d. EDITION
1927

VERSES NEW AND OLD

FIRST PUBLISHED 1912
UNDER THE TITLE OF
" MOODS, SONGS AND DOGGERELS "

REPRINTED 1913

NEW EDITION (VERSES NEW AND OLD)
1926

FIRST PRINTED IN
THE GROVE
EDITION
1027
REPRINTED 1931, 1934, 1930, 1950

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN
AT THE WINDMILL PRESS
KINGSWOOD, SURREY

IN THIS VOLUME

IMPRESSIONS I-XV AND MEMORIES

ARE DEDICATED TO JOHN WALLER HILLS

IMPRESSIONS XVI-XXVII TO E. V. LUCAS

FLOTSAM AND JETSAM TO MORLEY ROBERTS

IMPRESSIONS XXIX-XXXII TO ELIZABETH LUCAS

HATHOR TO H. W. NEVINSON

THE POEMS ARE DEDICATED TO MY WIFE

J. G.

CONTENTS

		PAGE
I.	THE INN OF TRANQUILLITY	5
II.	MAGPIE OVER THE HILL	11
III.	SHEEP-SHEARING	16
IV.	EVOLUTION	22
V.	RIDING IN MIST	27
VI.	THE PROCESSION	33
VII.	A CHRISTIAN	38
VIII.	WIND IN THE ROCKS	45
IX.	MY DISTANT RELATIVE	50
X.	THE GRAND JURY—IN TWO PANELS AND A FRAME	59
XI.	GONE	71
XII.	THRESHING	76
XIII.	THAT OLD-TIME PLACE	81
XIV.	ROMANCE—THREE GLEAMS	85
XV.	FELICITY	90
XVI.	THE MEETING	94
XVII.	JOY OF LIFE	99
XVIII.	BEL COLORE	101
XIX.	A PILGRIMAGE	103
XX.	THE KINGS	105
XXI.	THE WORKERS	107

PAGE

XXII. A PARTING 112

XXIII. A BEAST OF BURDEN 117

XXIV. THE LIME TREE 119

XXV. THE RUNAGATES 123

XXVI. FOR EVER 128

XXVII. DELIGHT 135

XXVIII. FLOTSAM AND JETSAM 138

XXIX. THE MUFFLED SHIP 155

XXX. " A GREEN HILL FAR AWAY " 158

XXXI. FAIRYLAND 163

XXXII. BUTTERCUP NIGHT 166

XXXIII. HATHOR : A MEMORY 174

XXXIV. MEMORIES 178

VERSES NEW AND OLD

DEDICATION 199

I. COURAGE 201

II. ERRANTRY 202

III. THE PRAYER 204

IV. TIME 205

V. ACCEPTATION 206

VI. THE DOWNS 207

VII. THE SEEDS OF LIGHT 208

VIII. I ASK 209

IX. HIGHLAND SPRING 210

X. OLD YEAR'S NIGHT 211

PAGE

XI. THE MOON AT DAWN 212

XII. SERENITY 213

XIII. NIGHTMARE 214

XIV. LET 215

XV. RHYME OF THE LAND AND SEA 216

XVI. AUTUMN BY THE SEA 217

XVII. MAGPIE 218

XVIII. SILVER POINT 219

XIX. AUTUMN 220

XX. STREET LAMPS 221

XXI. GAULZERY MOOR 222

XXII. THE MOOR GRAVE 223

XXIII. DEVON TO ME ! 224

XXIV. COUNTING THE STARS 226

XXV. LAND SONG OF THE WEST COUNTRY 227

XXVI. VILLAGE SLEEP SONG 229

XXVII. WEMBURY CHURCH 230

XXVIII. A MOOD 231

XXIX. STRAW IN THE STREET 232

XXX. PAST 233

XXXI. WIND 234

XXXII. ROSE AND YEW 235

XXXIII. PROMENADE 236

XXXIV. TO MY DOG 237

XXXV. " THE BIRTH OF VENUS " 238

XXXVI. REMINDER 239

	PAGE
XXXVII. VALLEY OF THE SHADOW	240
XXXVIII. BREATH OF MAN	241
XXXIX. PICARDY	242
XL. YOUTH'S OWN	243
XLI. MERLE	244
XLII. THE FRANCE FLOWER	245
XLIII. UNKNOWN	246
XLIV. THE BELLS OF PEACE	248
XLV. DESERT SONG	249
XLVI. SAN YSIDRO	251
XLVII. AT SUNSET	252
XLVIII. DREAM HOUSE	253
XLIX. MOUNTAIN AIR	254
L. TO BEAUTY	255

THE INN OF TRANQUILLITY

AND OTHER IMPRESSIONS

I

THE INN OF TRANQUILLITY

UNDER a burning blue sky, among the pine-trees and junipers, the cypresses and olives of that Odyssean coast, we came one afternoon on a pink house bearing the legend : " Osteria di Tranquillita " ; and, partly because of the name, and partly because we did not expect to find a house at all in those goat-haunted groves above the waves, we tarried for contemplation. To the familiar simplicity of that Italian building there were not lacking signs of a certain spiritual change, for out of the olive-grove which grew to its very doors a skittle-alley had been formed, and two baby cypress-trees were cut into the effigies of a cock and hen. The song of a gramophone, too, was breaking forth into the air, as it were the presiding voice of a high and cosmopolitan mind. And, lost in admiration, we became conscious of the odour of a full-flavoured cigar. Yes—in the skittle-alley a gentleman was standing who wore a bowler hat, a bright brown suit, pink tie, and very yellow boots. His head was round, his cheeks fat and well-coloured, his lips red and full under a black moustache, and he was regarding us through very thick and half-closed eyelids.

Perceiving him to be the proprietor of the high and cosmopolitan mind, we accosted him.

" Good-day ! " he replied ; " I spik English. Been in Amurrica—yes."

" You have a lovely place here."

Sweeping a glance over the skittle-alley, he sent forth a long puff of smoke ; then turning to my companion (of the politer sex) with the air of one who has made himself a perfect master of a foreign tongue, he smiled, and said :

" Too bloody quiet! "

" Precisely; the name of your inn, perhaps, suggests—

" I change all that—soon I call it Anglo-American hotel"

" Ah ! yes ; you are very up-to-date already."

He closed one eye and smiled.

Having passed a few more compliments, we saluted and walked on; and, coming presently to the edge of the cliff, lay down on the thyme and the crumbled leaf-dust. All the small singing birds had long been shot and eaten; there came to us no sound but that of the waves swimming in on a gentle south wind. The wanton creatures seemed stretching out white arms to the land, flying desperately from a sea of such stupendous serenity; and over their bare shoulders their hair floated back, pale in the sunshine. If the air was void of sound, it was full of scent—that delicious and enlivening perfume of mingled gum, and herbs, and sweet wood being burned somewhere a long way off; and a silky golden warmth slanted onto us through the olives and umbrella pines. Large wine-red violets were growing near. On such a cliff might Theocritus have lain, spinning his songs ; on that divine sea Odysseus should have passed. And we felt that presently the goat-god must put his head forth from behind a rock. It seemed a little queer that our friend **in** the bowler hat should move and breathe within one

short flight of a cuckoo from this home of Pan. One could not but at first feelingly remember the old Boer saying : " O God, what things man sees when he goes out without a gun ! " But soon the infinite incongruity of this juxtaposition began to produce within one a curious eagerness, a half-philosophical delight. It began to seem too good, too romantic, to be true. To think of the gramophone wedded to the thin sweet singing of the olive leaves in the evening wind; to remember the scent of his rank cigar marrying with this wild incense ; to read that enchanted name, " Inn of Tranquillity," and hear the bland and affable remark of the gentleman who owned it—such were, indeed, phenomena to stimulate souls to speculation. And all unconsciously one began to justify them by thoughts of the other incongruities of existence—the strange, the passionate incongruities of youth and age, wealth and poverty, life and death ; the wonderful odd bed-fellows of this world ; all those lurid contrasts which haunt a man's spirit till sometimes he is ready to cry out: " Rather than live where such things can be, let me die!"

Like a wild bird tracking through the air, one's meditation wandered on, following that trail of thought till the chance encounter became spiritually luminous. That Italian gentleman of the world, with his bowler hat, his skittle-alley, his gramophone, who had planted himself down in this temple of wild harmony, was he not Progress itself—the blind figure with the stomach full of new meats and the brain full of raw notions ? Was he not the very embodiment of the wonderful child, Civilization, so possessed by a new toy each day that she has no time to master its use—naive creature lost amid her own discoveries ! Was he not

the very symbol of that which was making economists thin, thinkers pale, artists haggard, statesmen bald—the symbol of Indigestion Incarnate ! Did he not, delicious, gross, unconscious man, personify beneath his Americo-Italian polish all those rank and primitive instincts, whose satisfaction necessitated the million miseries of his fellows ; all those thick rapacities which stir the hatred of the humane and thin-skinned I And yet, meditation could not stop there—it was not convenient to the heart I

A little above us, among the olive-trees, two blue-clothed peasants, man and woman, were gathering the fruit—from some such couple, no doubt, our friend in the bowler hat had sprung; more " virile" and adventurous than his brothers, he had not stayed in the home groves, but had gone forth to drink the waters of hustle and commerce, and come back—what he was. And he, in turn, would beget children, and having made his pile out of his " Anglo-American hotel " would place those children beyond the coarser influences of life, till they became, perhaps, even as ourselves, salt of the earth, and despised him. And I thought: * I do not despise those peasants—far from it. I do not despise myself—no more than reason; why, then, despise my friend in the bowler hat, who is, after all, but the necessary link between them and me ? ' I did not despise the olive-trees, the warm sun, the pine scent, all those material things which had made him so hick and strong ; I did not despise the golden, tenuous imaginings which the trees and rocks and sea were starting in my own spirit. Why, then, despise the skittle-alley, the gramophone, those expressions of the spirit of my friend in the billy-cock hat? To despise them was ridiculous !

And suddenly I was visited by a sensation only to be described as a sort of smiling certainty, emanating from, and, as it were, still tingling within every nerve of myself, but yet vibrating harmoniously with the world around. It was as if I had suddenly seen what was the truth of things, not perhaps to anybody else, but at all events to me. And I felt at once tranquil and elated, as when something is met with which rouses and fascinates in a man all his faculties.

' For,' I thought, ' if it is ridiculous in me to despise my friend—that perfect marvel of disharmony—it is ridiculous in me to despise anything. If *he* is a little bit of continuity, as perfectly logical an expression of a necessary phrase or mood of existence as I myself am, then, surely, there is nothing in all the world that is not a little bit of continuity, the expression of a little necessary mood. ' Yes,' I thought, ' he and I, and those olive-trees, and this spider on my hand, and everything in the Universe which has an individual shape, are all fit expressions of the separate moods of a great underlying Mood or Principle, which must be perfectly adjusted, volving and revolving on itself. For if It did not volve and revolve on itself, It would peter out at one end or the other, and the image of this petering out no man with his mental apparatus can conceive. Therefore, one must conclude It to be perfectly adjusted and everlasting. But if It is perfectly adjusted and everlasting, we are all little bits of continuity, and if we are all little bits of continuity it is ridiculous for one of us to despise another. So,' I thought,' I have now proved it from my friend in the billy-cock hat up to the Universe, and from the Universe down, back again to my friend.'

And I lay on my back and looked at the *sky*. It seemed friendly to my thought with its smile, and

few white clouds, saffron-tinged like the plumes of a white duck in sunlight. ' And yet,' I wondered, ' though my friend and I may be equally necessary, I am certainly irritated by him, and shall as certainly continue to be irritated, not only by him, but by a thousand other men and things. And as to the things that I love and admire, am I to suppress these loves and admirations because I know them merely to be the necessary expressions of the moods of an underlying Principle that turns and turns on Itself? Docs not this way nullity lie ? ' But then I thought: ' Not so ; for you cannot believe in the great adjusted Mood or Principle without believing in each little and individual part of It. And you are yourself a little individual part; therefore you must believe in that little individual part which is *you,* with all its natural likings and dislikings, and, indeed, you cannot show your belief except by expression of those likings and dislikings. And so, with a light heart, you may go on being irritated with your friend in the bowler hat, you may go on loving those peasants and this sky and sea. But, since you have this theory of life, *you may not despise* any one or any thing, not even a skittle-alley, for they are all threaded to you, and to despise them would be to blaspheme against continuity, and to blaspheme against continuity would be to deny Eternity. Love you cannot help, and hate you cannot help ; but contempt is—for you—the sovereign idiocy, the irreligious fancy ! '

There was a bee weighing down a blossom of thyme close by, and underneath the stalk a very ugly little centipede. The wild bee, with his little dark body and his busy bear's legs, was lovely to me, and the creepy centipede gave me shudderings ; but it was pleasant to feel so sure that he, no less than the bee, was a little

mood expressing himself out in harmony with Design—a tiny thread of the miraculous quilt. And I looked at him with a sudden zest and curiosity ; it seemed to me that in the mystery of his queer little creepings I was enjoying the Supreme Mystery ; and I thought: ' If I knew all about that wriggling beast, then, indeed, I might despise him; but, truly, if I knew all about him I should know all about everything—Mystery would be gone, and I could not bear to live ! '

So I stirred him with my finger and he went away.

' But how '—I thought—' about such as do not feel it ridiculous to despise; how about those whose temperaments and religions show them all things so plainly that they know they are right and others wrong ? They must be in a bad way ! ' And for some seconds I felt sorry for them, and was discouraged. But then I thought: ' Not at all—obviously not! For if they do not find it ridiculous to feel contempt, they are perfectly right to feel contempt, It being natural to them ; and you have no business to be sorry for them, for that is, after all, only your euphemism for contempt. They are all right, being the expressions of contemptuous moods, having religions and so forth, suitable to these moods ; and the religion of your mood would be Greek to them, and probably a matter for contempt. But this only makes it the more interesting. For though to you, for instance, it may seem impossible to worship Mystery with one lobe of the brain, and with the other to explain it, the thought that this may not seem impossible to others should not discourage you; it is but another little piece of that Mystery which makes life so wonderful and sweet.'

The sun, fallen now almost to the level of the cliff, was slanting upward on to the burnt-red pine boughs,

which had taken to themselves a quaint resemblance to the great brown limbs of the wild men Titian drew in his pagan pictures, and down below us the sea-nymphs, still swimming to shore, seemed eager to embrace them in the enchanted groves. All was fused in that golden glow of the sun going down—sea and land gathered into one transcendent mood of light and colour, as if Mystery desired to bless us by showing how perfect was that worshipful adjustment, whose secret we could never know. And I said to myself: ' None of those thoughts of yours are new, and in a vague way even you have thought them before ; all the same, they have given you some little feeling of tranquillity.'

And at that word of fear I rose and invited my companion to return toward the town. But as we stealthily crept by the " Osteria di Tranquillita," our friend in the bowler hat came out with a gun over his shoulder and waved his hand toward the Inn.

" You come again in two week—I change all that ! And now," he added, " I go to shoot little bird or two," and he disappeared into the golden haze under the olive-trees.

A minute later we heard his gun go off, and returned homeward with a prayer.

1910.

II

MAGPIE OVER THE HILL

I LAY often that summer on a slope of sand and coarse grass, close to the Cornish sea, trying to catch thoughts ; and I was trying very hard when I saw those two coming hand in hand.

She was dressed in blue linen, and a little cloud of honey-coloured hair; her small face had serious eyes the colour of the chicory flowers she was holding up to sniff at—a clean sober little maid, with a very touching upward look of trust. Her companion was a strong active boy of perhaps fourteen, and he, too, was serious —his deep-set, black-lashed eyes looked down at her with a queer protective wonder, the while he explained, in a soft voice broken up between two ages, that exact process which bees adopt to draw honey out of flowers. Once or twice this hoarse but charming voice became quite fervent, when she had evidently failed to follow; it was as if he would have been impatient, only he knew he must not, because she was a lady and younger than himself, and he loved her.

They sat down just below my nook, and began to count the petals of a chicory flower, and slowly she nestled in to him, and he put his arm round her. Never did I see such sedate, sweet lovering, so trusting on her part, so guardianlike on his. They were like, in miniature—though more dewy—those sober couples who have long lived together, yet whom one still

catches looking at each other with confidential tenderness, and in whom, one feels, passion is atrophied from never having been in use.

Long I sat watching them in their cool communion, half-embraced, talking a little, smiling a little, never once kissing. They did not seem shy of that; it was rather as if they were too much each other's to think of such a thing. And then her head slid lower and lower down his shoulder, and sleep buttoned the lids over those chicory-blue eyes. How careful he was, then, not to wake her, though I could see his arm was getting stiff! He still sat, good as gold, holding her, till it began quite to hurt me to see his shoulder thus in chancery. But presently I saw him draw his arm away ever so carefully, lay her head down on the grass, and lean forward to stare at something. Straight in front of them was a magpie, balancing itself on a stripped twig of thorn-tree. The agitating bird, painted of night and day, was making a queer noise and flirting one wing, as if trying to attract attention. Rising from the twig, it circled, vivid and stealthy, twice round the tree, and flew to another a dozen paces off. The boy rose, looked at his little mate, looked at the bird, and began quietly to move toward it; but uttering again its queer call, the bird glided on to a third thorn-tree. The boy hesitated then—but once more the bird flew on, and suddenly dipped over the hill. I saw the boy break into a run; and getting up quickly, I ran too.

When I reached the crest there was the black and white bird flying low into a dell, and there the boy, with hair streaming back, was rushing helter-skelter down the hill. He reached the bottom and vanished into the dell. I, too, ran down the hill. For all that 1 was prying and must not be seen by bird or boy, I crept

warily in among the trees to the edge of a pool that could know but little sunlight, so thickly arched was it by willows, birch-trees, and wild hazel. There, in a swing of boughs above the water, was perched no pied bird, but a young, dark-haired girl with dangling, bare, brown legs. And on the brink of the black water goldened with fallen leaves, the boy was crouching, gazing up at her with all his soul. She swung just out of reach and looked down at him across the pool. How old was she, with her brown limbs, and her gleaming, slanting eyes ? Or was she only the spirit of the dell, this elf-thing swinging there, entwined with boughs and the dark water, and covered with a shift of wet birch leaves. So strange a face she had, wild, almost wicked, yet so tender ; a face that I could not take my eyes from. Her bare toes just touched the pool, and flicked up drops of water that fell on the boy's face.

From him all the sober steadfastness was gone; already he looked as wild as she, and his arms were stretched out trying to reach her feet. I wanted to cry to him : " Go back, boy, go back ! " but could not; her elf eyes held me dumb—they looked so lost in tender wildness.

And then my heart stood still, for he had slipped and was struggling in deep water beneath her feet. What a gaze was that he was turning up to her—not frightened, but so longing, so desperate; and hers—how triumphant, and how happy !

And then he clutched her foot, and clung, and climbed ; and bending down, she drew him up to her, all wet, and clasped him in the swing of boughs.

I took a long breath then. An orange gleam of sunlight had flamed in among the shadows and fell round those two where they swung over the dark water,

with lips close together and spirits lost in one another's, and in their eyes a drowning ecstasy ! And then—they kissed ! All round me pool, and leaves, and air seemed suddenly to swirl and melt—I could see nothing plain ! . . . What time passed—I do not know—before their faces slowly again became visible ! His face—the sober boy's—was turned away from her, and he was listening; for above the whispering of leaves a sound of weeping came from over the hill. It was to that he listened.

And even as I looked he slid down from out of her arms, back into the pool, and began struggling to gain the edge. What grief and longing in her wild face then ! But she did not wail. She did not try to pull him back ; that elfish heart of dignity could reach out to what was coming, it could not drag at what was gone. Unmoving as the boughs and water, she watched him abandon her.

Slowly the struggling boy gained land, and lay there, breathless. And still that sound of lonely weeping came from over the hill.

Listening, but looking at those wild, mourning eyes that never moved from him, he lay. Once he turned back toward the water, but fire had died within him; his hands dropped, nerveless—his young face was all bewilderment.

And the quiet darkness of the pool waited, and the trees, and those lost eyes of hers, and my heart. And ever from over the hill came the little fair maiden's lonely weeping.

Then, slowly dragging his feet, stumbling, half-blinded, turning and turned to look back, the boy groped his way out through the trees toward that sound ; and, as he went, that dark spirit-elf, abandoned,

clasping her own lithe body with her arms, never moved her gaze from him.

I, too, crept way, and when I was safe outside in the pale evening sunlight, peered back into the dell. There under the dark trees she was no longer, but round and round that cage of passion, fluttering and wailing through the leaves, over the black water, was the magpie, flighting on its twilight wings.

I turned and ran and ran till I came over the hill and saw the boy and the little fair, sober maiden sitting together once more on the open slope under the high blue heaven. She was nestling her tear-stained face against his shoulder and speaking already of indifferent things. And he—he was holding her with his arm and watching over her with eyes that seemed to see something else.

And so I lay, hearing their sober talk and gazing at their sober little figures, till I awoke and knew I had dreamed all that little allegory of sacred and profane love, and from it had returned to reason, knowing no more than ever which was which.

1912.

III

SHEEP-SHEARING

FROM early morning there had been bleating of sheep in the yard, so that one knew the creatures were being sheared, and toward evening I went along to see. Thirty or forty naked-looking ghosts of sheep were penned against the barn, and perhaps a dozen still inhabiting their coats. Into the wool of one of these bulky ewes the farmer's small, yellow-haired daughter was twisting her fist, hustling it toward Fate ; though pulled almost off her feet by the frightened, stubborn creature, she never let go, till, with a despairing cough, the ewe had passed over the threshold and was fast in the hands of a shearer. At the far end of the barn, close by the doors, I stood a minute or two before shifting up to watch the shearing. Into that dim, beautiful home of age, with its great rafters and mellow stone archways, the June sunlight shone through loopholes and chinks, in thin glamour, powdering with its very strangeness the dark cathedraled air, where, high up, clung a fog of old grey cobwebs so thick as ever were the stalactites of a huge cave. At this end the scent,of sheep and wool and men had not yet routed that home essence of the barn, like the savour of acorns and withering beech leaves.

They were shearing by hand this year, nine of them, counting the postman, who, though farm-bred, " did'n

putt much to the shearing" but had come to round the sheep up and give general aid.

Sitting on the ctarures, or with a leg firmly crooked over their heads, each shearer, even the two boys, had an air of going at it in his own way. In their white canvas shearing suits they worked very steadily, almost in silence, as if drowsed by the " click-clip, click-clip " of the shears. And the sheep, but for an occasional wriggle of legs or head, lay quiet enough, having an inborn sense perhaps of the fitness of things, even when, once in a way, they lost more than wool; glad too, mayhap, to be rid of their matted vestments. From time to time the little damsel offered each shearer a jug and glass, but no man drank till he had finished his sheep; then he would get up, stretch his cramped muscles, drink deep, and almost instantly sit down again on a fresh beast. And always there was the buzz of flies swarming in the sunlight of the open doorway, the dry rustle of the pollarded lime-trees in the sharp wind outside, the bleating of some released ewe, upset at her own nakedness, the scrape and shuffle of heels and sheep's limbs on the floor, together with the " click-clip, click-clip " of the snears.

As each ewe, finished with, struggled up, helped by a friendly shove, and bolted out dazedly into the pen, I could not help wondering what was passing in her head—in the heads of all those unceremoniously treated creatures ; and, moving nearer to the postman, I said :

" They're really very good, on the whole."

He looked at me, I thought, queerly.

" Yaas," he answered; " Mr. Molton's the best of them."

I looked askance at Mr. Molton; but, with his knee crooked round a young ewe, he was shearing calmly.

" Yes," I admitted, " he is certainly good."

" Yaas," replied the postman.

Edging back into the darkness, away from that uncomprehending youth, I escaped into the air, and passing the remains of last year's stacks under the tall, toppling elms, sat down in a field under the bank. It seemed to me that I had food for thought. In that little misunderstanding between me and the postman was all the essence of the difference between that state of civilisation in which sheep could prompt a sentiment and that state in which sheep could not.

The heat from the dropping sun, not far now above the moorline, struck full into the ferns and long grass of the bank where I was sitting, and the midges rioted on me in this last warmth. The wind was barred out, so that one had the full sweetness of the clover, fast becoming hay, over which the swallows were wheeling and swooping after flies. And far up, as it were the crown of Nature's beautiful devouring circle, a buzzard hawk, almost stationary on the air, floated, intent on something pleasant below him. A number of little hens crept through the gate one by one, and came round me. It seemed to them that I was there to Feed them; and they held their neat red or yellow heads to one side, inquiring with their beady eyes, surprised at my stillness. They were pretty with their speckled feathers, and as it seemed to me, plump and young, so that I wondered how many of them would in time feed me. Finding, however, that I gave them nothing to eat, they went away, and there arose, in place of their clucking, the thin singing of air passing through some long tube. I knew it for the whining of my dog, who had nosed me out, but could not get through the padlocked gate. And as I lifted him over, I was glad

the postman could not see me—for I felt that to lift a dog over a gate would be against the principles of one for whom the connection of sheep with good behaviour had been too strange a thought. And it suddenly rushed into my mind that the time would no doubt come when the conduct of apples, being plucked from the mother tree, would inspire us, and we should say : " They're really very good ! " And I wondered were those future watchers of apple-gathering farther from me than I, watching sheep-shearing, from the postman ? I thought, too, of the pretty dreams being dreamt about the land, and of the people who dreamed them.

And I looked at that land, covered with the sweet pinkish-green of the clover, and considered how much of it, through the medium of sheep, would find its way into me, to enable me to come out here and be eaten by midges, and speculate about things, and conceive the sentiment of how good the sheep were. And it all seemed queer. I thought, too, of a world entirely composed of people who could see the sheen rippling on that clover, and feel a sort of sweet elation at the scent of it, and I wondered how much clover would be sown then ? Many things I thought of, sitting there, till the sun sank below the moor-line, the wind died off the clover, and the midges slept. Here and there in the iris-coloured sky a star crept out; the soft-hooting owls awoke. But still I lingered, watching how, one after another, shapes and colours died into twilight; and I wondered what the postman thought of twilight, that inconvenient state when things were neither dark nor light; and I wondered what the sheep were thinking this first night without their coats. Then I saw, slinking along the hedge, noiseless, unheard by my

sleeping spaniel, a tawny dog. He passed without seeing us, licking his lean chops.

' Yes, friend,' I thought, ' you have been after something very unholy ; you have been digging up buried lamb, or some desirable person of that kind ! '

Sneaking past, in this sweet night, which stirred in one such sentiment, that ghoulish cur was like the omnivorousness of Nature. And it came to me, how wonderful and queer was a world which embraced within it, not only this red gloating dog, fresh from his feast, on the decaying flesh of lamb, but all those hundreds of beings in whom the sight of a fly with one leg shortened produced a quiver of compassion. For in this savage, slinking shadow, I knew that I had beheld a manifestation of divinity no less than in the smile of the sky, each minute growing more starry. With what Harmony—I thought—can these two be enwrapped in this round world so fast that it cannot be moved 1 What secret, marvellous, all-pervading Principle can harmonise these things ! And the old words " good " and " evil" seemed to me more than ever quaint.

It was almost dark, and the dew falling fast; I roused my spaniel to go in.

Over the high-walled yard, the barns, the moon-white porch, dusk had brushed its velvet. Through an open window came a roaring sound. Mr. Molton was singing " The Happy Warrior," to celebrate the finish of the shearing. The big doors into the garden, passed through, cut off the full sweetness of that song ; for there the owls were already masters of night with their music.

On the dew-whitened grass of the lawn, we came on a little dark beast. My spaniel, liking its sawir, stood

with his nose at point; but, being called off, I could feel him obedient, still quivering, under my hand.

In the field, a wan huddle in the blackness, the dismantled sheep lay under a holly hedge. The wind had died ; it was mist-warm.

1910.

IV

EVOLUTION

COMING out of the theatre, we found it utterly impossible to get a taxi-cab ; and, though it was raining slightly, walked through Leicester Square in the hope of picking one up as it returned down Piccadilly. Numbers of hansoms and four-wheelers passed, or stood by the curb, hailing us feebly, or not even attempting to attract our attention, but every taxi seemed to have its load. At Piccadilly Circus, losing patience, we beckoned to a four-wheeler and resigned ourselves to a long, slow journey. A sou'-westerly air blew through the open windows, and there was in it the scent of change, that wet scent which visits even the hearts of towns and inspires the watcher of their myriad activities with thought of the restless Force that forever cries : " On, on ! " But gradually the steady patter of the horse's hoofs, the rattling of the windows, the slow thudding of the wheels, pressed on us so drowsily that when, at last, we reached home we were more than half asleep. The fare was two shillings, and, standing in the lamplight to make sure the coin was a half-crown before handing it to the driver, we happened to look up. This cab-man appeared to be a man of about sixty, with a long, thin face, whose chin and drooping grey moustaches seemed in permanent repose on the up-turned collar of his old blue overcoat. But the remarkable features of

his face were the two furrows down his cheeks, so deep and hollow that it seemed as though that face were a collection of bones without coherent flesh, among which the eyes were sunk back so far that they had lost their lustre. He sat quite motionless, gazing at the tail of his horse. And, almost unconsciously, one added the rest of one's silver to that half-crown. He took the coins without speaking; but, as we were turning into the garden gate, we heard him say :

" Thank you ; you've saved my life."

Not knowing, either of us, what to reply to such a curious speech, we closed the gate again and came back to the cab.

" Are things so very bad ? "

" They are," replied the cabman. " It's done with —is this job. We're not wanted now." And, taking up his whip, he prepared to drive away.

" How long have they been as bad as this ? "

The cabman dropped his hand again, as though glad to rest it, and answered incoherently :

" Thirty-five year I've been drivin' a cab."

And, sunk again in contemplation of his horse's tail, he could only be roused by many questions to express himself, having, as it seemed, no knowledge of the habits.

"I don't blame the taxis, I don't blame nobody. It's come on us, that's what it has. I left the wife this morning with nothing in the house. She was saying to me only yesterday : ' What have you brought home the last four months ? ' ' Put it at six shillings a week,' I said. ' No,' she said, ' seven.' Well, that's right— she enters it all down in her book."

" You are really going short of food ? "

The cabman smiled; and that smile between those

two deep hollows was surely as strange as ever shone on a human face.

" You may say that," he said. " Well, what does it amount to? Before I picked you up, I had one eighteenpenny fare to-day; and yesterday I took five shillings. And I've got seven bob a day to pay for the cab, and that's low, too. There's many and many a proprietor that's broke and gone—every bit as bad as us. They let us down as easy as ever they can; you can't get blood from a stone, can you ? " Once again he smiled. " I'm sorry for them, too, and I'm sorry for the horses, though they come out best of the three of us, I do believe."

One of us muttered something about the Public.

The cabman turned his face and stared down through the darkness.

" The Public ? " he said, and his voice had in it a faint surprise. " Well, they all want the taxis. It's natural. They get about faster in them, and time's money. I was seven hours before I picked you up. And then you was lookin' for a taxi. Them as take us because they can't get better, they're not in a good temper, as a rule. And there's a few old ladies that's frightened of the motors, but old ladies aren't never very free with their money—can't afford to be, the most of them, I expect."

" Everybody's sorry for you; one would have thought that——"

He interrupted quietly : " Sorrow don't buy bread. … I never had nobody ask me about things before." And, slowly, moving his long face from side to side, he added : " Besides, what could people do ? They can't be expected to support you; and if they started askin' you questiors they'd feel it very awkward. They

know that, I suspect. Of course, there's such a lot of us; the hansoms are pretty nigh as bad *off* as we are. Well, we're gettin' fewer every day, that's one thing."

Not knowing whether or no to manifest sympathy with this extinction, we approached the horse. It was a horse that " stood over " a good deal at the knee, and in the darkness seemed to have innumerable ribs. And suddenly one of us said : " Many people want to see nothing but taxis on the streets, if only for the sake of the horses."

The cabman nodded.

" This old fellow," he said, " never carried a deal of flesh. His grub don't put spirit into him nowadays; it's not up to much in quality, but he gets enough of it."

" And you don't ? "

The cabman again took up his whip.

" I don't suppose," he said without emotion, " any one could ever find another job for me now. I've been at this too long. It'll be the workhouse, if it's not the other thing."

And hearing us mutter that it seemed cruel, he smiled for the third time.

" Yes," he said slowly," it's a bit 'ard on us, because we've done nothing to deserve it. But things are like that, so far as I can see. One thing comes pushin' out another, and so you go on. I've thought about it—you get to thinkin' and worryin' about the rights o' things, sittin' up here all day. No, I don't see anything for it. It'll soon be the end of us now—can't last much longer. And I don't know that I'll be sorry to done with it. It's pretty well broke my spirit."

" There was a fund got up."

" Yes, it helped a few of us to learn the motor-drivin';

but what's the good of that to me, at my time of life ? Sixty, that's my age; I'm not the only one—there's hundreds like me. We're not fit for it, that's the fact; we haven't got the nerve now. It'd want a mint of money to help us. And what you say's the truth—people want to see the end of us. They want the taxis—our day's over. I'm not complaining; you asked me about it yourself."

And for the third time he raised his whip.

" Tell me what you would have done if you had been given your fare and just sixpence over ? "

The cabman stared downward, as though puzzled by that question.

"Done? Why, nothing. What could I have done ? "

" But you said that it had saved your life."

" Yes, I said that," he answered slowly; " I was feelin' a bit low. You can't help it sometimes; it's the thing comin' on you, and no way out of it—that's what gets over you. We try not to think about it, as a rule."

And this time, with a " Thank you, kindly! " he touched his horse's flank with the whip. Like a thing aroused from sleep the forgotten creature started and began to draw the cabman away from us. Very slowly they travelled down the road among the shadow of the trees broken by lamplight. Above us, white ships of cloud were sailing rapidly across the dark river of sky on the wind which smelled of change. And after the cab was lost to sight, that wind still brought to us the dying sound of the slow wheels.

1910.

V

RIDING IN MIST

WET and hot, having her winter coat, the mare exactly matched the drenched fox-coloured beech-leaf drifts. As was her wont on such misty days, she danced along with her head held high, her neck a little arched, her ears pricked, pretending that things were not what they seemed, and now and then vigorously trying to leave me planted on the air. Stones which had rolled out of the lane banks were her especial goblins, for one such had maltreated her nerves before she came into this ball-room world, and she had not forgotten.

There was no wind that day. On the beech-trees were still just enough of coppery leaves to look like fires lighted high-up to air the eeriness ; but most of the twigs, pearled with water, were patterned very naked against universal grey. Berries were few, except the pink spindle one, so far the most beautiful, of which there were more than Earth generally vouchsafes. There was no sound in the deep lanes, none of that sweet, overhead sighing of yesterday at the same hour, but there was a quality of silence—a dumb mist murmuration. We passed a tree with a proud pigeon sitting on its top spire, quite too heavy for the twig delicacy below ; undisturbed by the mare's hoofs or the creaking of saddle leather, he let us pass, absorbed in his world of tranquil turtle-doves. The mist had thickened to a white, infinitesimal rain-dust, and in it

the trees began to look strange, as though they had lost one another. The world seemed inhabited only by quick, soundless wraiths as one trotted past.

Close to a farm-house the mare stood still with that extreme suddenness peculiar to her at times, and four black pigs scuttled by and at once became white air. By now we were both hot and inclined to cling closely together and take liberties with each other; I telling her about her nature, name, and appearance, together with comments on her manners; and she giving forth that sterterous, sweet snuffle, which begins under the star on her forehead. On such days she did not sneeze, reserving those expressions of her joy for sunny days and the crisp winds. At a forking of the ways we came suddenly on one grey and three brown ponies, who shied round and flung away in front of us, a vision of pretty heads and haunches tangled in the thin lane, till, conscious that they were beyond their beat, they faced the bank and, one by one, scrambled over to join the other ghosts out on the dim common.

Dipping down now over the road, we passed hounds going home. Pied, dumb-footed shapes, padding along in that soft-eyed, remote world of theirs, with a tall riding splash of red in front, and a tall splash of riding red behind. Then through a gate we came on to the moor, amongst whitened furze. The mist thickened. A curlew was whistling on its invisible way, far up; and that wistful, wild calling seemed the very voice of the day. Keeping in view of the glint of the road, we galloped; rejoicing, both of us, to be free of the jog-jog of the lanes.

And at first the voice of the curlew died; then the glint of the road vanished; and we were quite alone.

Even the furze was gone ; no shape of anything left, only the black, peaty ground, and the thickening mist. We might as well have been that lonely bird crossing up there in the blind white nothingness, like a human spirit wandering on the undiscovered moor of its own future.

The mare jumped a pile of stones, which appeared, as it were, after we had passed over; and it came into mymind that, if we happened to strike one of the old quarry pits, we should infallibly be killed. Somehow, there was pleasure in this thought, that we might, or might not, strike that old quarry pit. The blood in us being hot, we had pure joy in charging the white, impalpable solidity, which made way, and at once closed in behind us. There was great fun in this yard-by-yard discovery that we were not yet dead, this flying, shelterless challenge to whatever might lie out there, five yards in front. We felt supremely above the wish to know that our necks were safe ; we were happy, panting in the vapour that beat against our faces from the sheer speed of our galloping. Suddenly the ground grew lumpy and made up-hill. The mare slackened pace : we stopped. Before us, behind, to right and left, white vapour. No sky, no distance, barely the earth. No wind in our faces, no wind anywhere. At first we just got our breath, thought nothing, talked a little. Then came a chilliness, a faint clutching over the heart. The mare snuffled ; we turned and made down-hill. And still the mist thickened, and seemed to darken ever so little; we went slowly, suddenly doubtful of all that was in front. There came into our minds visions, so distant in that darkening vapour, of a warm stall and manger of oats ; of tea and a log fire. The mist seemed to have

fingers now, long, dark-white, crawling fingers; it seemed, too, to have in its sheer silence a sort of muttered menace, a shuddery lurkingness, as if from out of it that spirit of the unknown, which in hot blood we had just now so gleefully mocked, were creeping up at us, intent on its vengeance. Since the ground no longer sloped, we could not go down-hill; there were no means left of telling in what direction we were moving, and we stopped to listen. There was no sound, not one tiny noise of water, wind in trees, or man ; not even of birds or the moor ponies. And the mist darkened. The mare reached her head down and walked on, smelling at the heather; every time she sniffed, one's heart quivered, hoping she had found the way. She threw up her head, snorted, and stood still; and there passed just in front of us a pony and her foal, shapes of scampering dusk, whisked like blurred shadows across a sheet. Hoof-silent in the long heather—as ever were visiting ghosts—they were gone in a flash. The mare plunged forward, following. But, in the feel of her gallop, and the feel of my heart, there was no more that ecstasy of facing the unknown ; there was only the cold, hasty dread of loneliness. Far asunder as the poles were those two sensations, evoked by this same motion. The mare swerved violently and stopped. There, passing within three yards, *from the same direction as before,* the soundless shapes of the pony and her foal flew by again, more intangible, less dusky now against the darker screen. Were we, then, to be haunted by those bewildering uncanny ones, flitting past ever from the same direction ? This time the mare did not follow, but stood still; knowing as well as I that direction was quite lost. Soon, with a whimper, she picked her way

on again, smelling at the heather. And the mist darkened!

Then, out of the heart of that dusky whiteness, came a tiny sound; we stood, not breathing, turning our heads. I could see the mare's eyes fixed and straining at the vapour. The tiny sound grew till it became the muttering of wheels. The mare dashed forward. The muttering ceased untimely ; but she did not stop ; turning abruptly to the left, she slid, scrambled, and dropped into a trot. The mist seemed whiter below us ; we were on the road. And involuntarily there came from me a sound, not quite a shout, not quite an oath. I saw the mare's eye turn back, faintly derisive, as who should say: Alone I did it! Then slowly, comfortably, a little ashamed, we jogged on, in the mood of men and horses when danger is over. So pleasant it seemed now, in one short half-hour, to have passed through the circle-swing of the emotions, from the ecstasy of hot recklessness to the clutching of chill fear. But the meeting-point of those two sensations we had left out there on the mysterious moor 1 Why, at one moment, had we thought it finer than anything on earth to risk the breaking of our necks ; and the next shuddered at being lost in the darkening mist with the winter night fast coming on ?

And very luxuriously we turned once more into the lanes, enjoying the past, scenting the future. Close to home, the first little eddy of wind stirred, and the song of dripping twigs began; an owl hooted, honey-soft, in the fog. We came on two farm hands mending the lane at the turn of the avenue, and, curled on the top of the bank, their cosy red collie pup, waiting for them to finish work for the day. He raised his sharp nose and looked at us dewily. We turned down, padding softly

in the wet fox-red drifts under the beech-trees, whereon the last leaves still flickered out in the darkening whiteness, that now seemed so little eerie. We passed the grey-green skeleton of the farm-yard gate. A hen ran across us, clucking, into the dusk. The mare drew her long, home-coming snuffle, and stood still.

1910.

VI

THE PROCESSION

IN one of those corners of our land canopied by the fumes of blind industry, there was, on that day, a lull in darkness. A fresh wind had split the customary heaven, or roof of hell; was sweeping long drifts of creamy clouds across a blue still pallid with reek. The sun even shone—a sun whose face seemed white and wondering. And under that rare sun all the little town, among its slag heaps and few tall chimneys, had an air of living faster. In those continuous courts and alleys, where the women worked, smoke from each little forge rose and dispersed into the wind with strange alacrity; amongst the women, too, there was that same eagerness, for the sunshine had crept in and was making pale all those dark-raftered, sooted ceilings which covered them in, together with their immortal comrades, the small open furnaces. About their work they had been busy since seven o'clock ; their feet pressing the leather lungs which fanned the conical heaps of glowing fuel, their hands poking into the glow a thin iron rod till the end could be curved into a fiery hook ; snapping it with a mallet; threading it with tongs on to the chain ; hammering, closing the link and, without a second's pause, thrusting the iron rod again into the glow. And while they worked they chattered, laughed sometimes, now and then sighed. They seemed of all ages and all types ; from her who looked like a peasant of Provence, broad, brown, and strong, to the weariest white consumptive wisp ; from

old women of seventy, with straggling grey hair, to fifteen-year-old girls. In the cottage forges there would be but one worker, or two at most; in the shop forges four, or even five, little glowing heaps; four or five of the grimy, pale lung-bellows; and never a moment without a fiery hook about to take its place on the growing chains, never a second when the thin smoke of the forges, and of those lives consuming slowly in front of them, did not escape from out of the dingy, white-washed spaces past the dark rafters, away to freedom.

But there had been in the air that morning something more than the white sunlight. There had been anticipation. And at two o'clock began fulfilment. The forges were stilled, and from court and alley forth came the women. In their ragged working clothes, in their best clothes—so little different; in bonnets, in hats, bareheaded, with babies born and unborn, they swarmed into the high street and formed across it behind the band. A strange, magpie, jay-like flock; black, white, patched with brown and green and blue, shifting, chattering, laughing, seeming unconscious of any purpose. A thousand and more of them, with faces twisted and scored by those myriad deformings which a desperate town-toiling and little food fasten on human visages; yet with hardly a single evil or brutal face. Seemingly it was not easy to be evil or brutal on a wage that scarcely bound soul with body. A thousand and more of the poorest-paid and hardest-worked human beings in the world.

On tbe pavement alongside this strange, acquiescing assembly of revolt, about to march in protest against the conditions of their lives, stood a young woman without a hat and in poor clothes, but with a sort of

beauty in her rough-haired, high-cheek-boned, dark-eyed face. She was not one of them ; yet by a stroke of Nature's irony, there was graven on her face alone of all those faces, the true look of rebellion ; a haughty, almost fierce, uneasy look—an untamed look. On all the other thousand faces, one could see no bitterness, no fierceness, not even enthusiasm; only a half-stolid, half-vivacious patience and eagerness as of children going to a party.

The band played ; and they began to march. Laughing, talking, waving flags, trying to keep step ; with the same expression slowly but surely coming over every face; the future was not, only the present—this happy present of marching behind the discordance of a brass band ; this strange present of crowded movement and laughter in open air.

We others—some dozen accidentals like myself, and the tall, grey-haired lady interested in " the people," together with those few kind spirits in charge of " the show "—marched too, a little self-conscious, desiring with a vague military sensation to hold our heads up, but not too much, under the eyes of the curious bystanders. These—nearly all men—were well-wishers, it was said, though their faces, paje from their own work in shop or furnace, expressed nothing but apathy. They wished well, very dumbly, in the presence of this new thing, as if they found it queer that women should be doing something for themselves; queer and rather dangerous. A few, indeed, shuffled along between the column and the little hopeless shops and grimy factory sheds, and one or two accompanied their women, carrying the baby. Now and then there passed us some better-to-do citizen—a housewife, or lawyer's clerk, or iron-

monger, with lips pressed rather tightly together and an air of taking no notice of this disturbance of traffic, as though the whole thing were a rather poor joke which they had already heard too often.

So, with laughter and a continual crack of voices our jay-like crew swung on, swaying and stumping in the strange ecstasy of irreflection, happy to be moving, they knew not where, nor greatly why, under the visiting sun, to the sound of murdered music. Whenever the band stopped playing, discipline became as tatterdemalion as the very flags and garments ; but never once did they lose that look of essential order, as if indeed they knew that, being the worst-served creatures in the Christian world, they were the chief guardians of the inherent dignity of man.

Hatless, in the very front row, marched a tall slip of a girl, arrow-straight, and so thin, with dirty fair hair, in a blouse and skirt gaping behind, ever turning her pretty face on its pretty slim neck from side to side, so that one could see her blue eyes sweeping here, there, everywhere, with a sort of flower-like wildness, as if a secret embracing of each moment forbade her to let them rest on anything and break this pleasure of just marching. It seemed that in the never-still eyes of that anæmic, happy girl the spirit of our march had elected to enshrine itself and to make thence its little excursions to each ecstatic follower. Just behind her marched a little old woman—a maker of chains, they said, for forty years—whose black slits of eyes were sparkling, who fluttered a bit of ribbon, and reeled with her sense of the exquisite humour of the world. Every now and then she would make a rush at one of her leaders to demonstrate how immoderately glorious was life. And each time she spoke the woman next **to**

her, laden with a heavy baby, went off into squeals of laughter. Behind her, again, marched one who beat time with her head and waved a little bit of stick intoxicated by this noble music.

For an hour the pageant wound through the dejected street, pursuing neither method nor set route, till it came to a deserted slag-heap, selected for the speech-making. Slowly the motley regiment swung into that grim amphitheatre under the pale sunshine; and, as I watched, a strange fancy visited my brain. I seemed to see over every ragged head of those marching women a little yellow flame, a thin, flickering gleam, spiring upward and blown back by the wind. A trick of the sunlight, maybe ? Or was it that the life in their hearts, the inextinguishable breath of happiness, had for a moment escaped prison, and was fluttering at the pleasure of the breeze ?

Silent now, just enjoying the sound of the words thrown down to them, they stood, unimaginably patient, with that happiness of they knew not what gilding the ai above them between the patchwork ribands of their poor flags. If they could not tell very much why they had come, nor believe very much that they would gain anything by coming; if their demonstration did not mean to the world quite all that oratory would have them think; if they themselves were but the poorest, humblest, least learned women in the land—for all that, it seemed to me that in those tattered, wistful figures, so still, so trustful, I was looking on such beauty as I had never beheld. All the elaborated glory of things made, the perfected dreams of aesthetes, the embroideries of romance, seemed as nothing beside this sudden vision of the wild goodness native in humble hearts,

1910.

Vll

A CHRISTIAN

ONE day that summer, I came away from a luncheon in company of an old College chum. Always exciting to meet those one hasn't seen for years ; and as we walked across the Park together I kept looking at him askance. He had altered a good deal. Lean he always was, but now very lean, and so upright that his parson's coat was overhung by the back of his long and narrow head, with its dark grizzled hair, which thought had not yet loosened on his forehead. His clean-shorn face, so thin and oblong, was remarkable only for the eyes : dark-browed and lashed, and coloured like bright steel, they had a fixity in them, a sort of absence, on one couldn't tell what business. They made me think of torture. And his mouth always gently smiling, as if pinched curly sweetness had been commanded, was the mouth of a man crucified—yes, crucified !

Tramping silently over the parched grass, I felt that if we talked, we must infallibly disagree ; his straight-up, narrow forehead so suggested a nature divided within itself into compartments of iron.

It was hot that day, and we rested presently beside the Serpentine. On its bright waters were the usual young men, sculling themselves to and fro with their usual sad energy, the usual promenaders loitering and watching them, the usual dog that swam when it did not bark, and barked when it did not swim; and my

friend sat smiling, twisting between his thin fingers the little gold cross on his silk vest.

Then all of a sudden we did begin to talk; and not of those matters of which the well-bred naturally converse—the habits of the rarer kinds of ducks, and the careers of our College friends, but of something never mentioned in polite society.

At lunch our hostess had told me the sad story of an unhappy marriage, and I had itched spiritually to find out what my friend, who seemed so far away from me, felt about such things. And now I determined to find out.

" Tell me," I asked him, " which do you consider most important—the letter or the spirit of Christ's teachings ? "

" My dear fellow," he answered gently, " what a question ! How can you separate them ? "

" Well, is it not the essence of His doctrine that the spirit is all important, and the forms of little value ? Does not that run through all the Sermon on the Mount ? "

" Certainly."

" If, then," I said, " Christ's teaching is concerned with the spirit, do you consider that Christians are justified in holding others bound by formal rules of conduct, without reference to what is passing in their spirits ? "

" If it is for their good."

"What enables you to decide what is for their good?"

" Surely, we are told."

" Not to judge, that ye be not judged."

" Oh ! but we do not, ourselves, judge ; we are but impersonal ministers of the rules of God."

" Ah ! Do general rules of conduct take account of the variations of the individual spirit ? "

He looked at me hard, as if he began to scent heresy.

" You had better explain yourself more fully," he said. " I really don't follow."

" Well, let us take a concrete instance. We know Christ's saying of the married that they are one flesh ! But we also know that there are wives who continue to live the married life with dreadful feelings of spiritual revolt—wives who have found out that, in spite of all their efforts, they have no spiritual affinity with their husbands. Is that in accordance with the spirit of Christ's teaching, or is it not ? "

" We are told——" he began :

" I have admitted the definite commandment: ' They twain shall be one flesh.' There could not be, seemingly, any more rigid law laid down ; how do you reconcile it with the essence of Christ's teaching ? Frankly I want to know is there or is there not a spiritual coherence in Christianity, or is it only a gathering of laws and precepts, with no inherent connected spiritual philosophy ? "

" Of course," he said, in his long-suffering voice, " we don't look at things like that—for us there is no questioning."

" But how *do* you reconcile such marriages as I speak of, with the spirit of Christ's teaching ? I think you ought to answer me."

"Oh I I can, perfectly," he answered; "the reconciliation is through suffering. What a poor woman in such a case must suffer makes for the salvation of her spirit. That is the spiritual fulfilment, and in such a case the justification of the law."

"So then," I said, "sacrifice or suffering is the coherent thread of Christian philosophy ? "

" Suffering cheerfully borne," he answered.

" You do not think," I said, " that there is a touch of extravagance in that ? Would you say, for example, that an unhappy marriage is a more Christian thing than a happy one, where there is no suffering, but only love? "

A line came between his brows. " Well ! " he said at last, " I would say, I think, that a woman who crucifies her flesh with a cheerful spirit in obedience to God's law, stands higher in the eyes of God than one who undergoes no such sacrifice in her married life." And I had the feeling that his stare was passing through me, on its way to an unseen goal.

" You would desire, then, I suppose, suffering as the greatest blessing for yourself ? "

" Humbly," he said, " I would try to."

" And naturally, for others ? "

" God forbid ! "

" But surely that is inconsistent."

He murmured : " You see, ,' *have suffered"*

We were silent. At last I said : " Yes, that makes much which was dark quite clear to me."

" Oh ? " he asked.

I answered slowly: " Not many men, you know, even in your profession, have really suffered. That is why they do not feel the difficulty which *you* feel in desiring suffering for others."

He threw up his head exactly as if I had hit him on the jaw : " It's weakness in me, I know," he said.

" I should have rather called it weakness in them. But suppose you are right, and that it's weakness not to be able to desire promiscuous suffering for others, would you go further and say that it is Christian for

those who have not experienced a certain kind of suffering, to force that particular kind on others ? "

He sat silent for a full minute, trying evidently to reach to the bottom of my thought.

" Surely not," he said at last, " except as ministers of God's laws."

" You do not then think that it is Christian for the husband of such a woman to keep her in that state of suffering—not being, of course, a minister of God ? "

He began stammering at that: " I—I——" he said. " No; that is, I think not—not Christian. No, certainly."

" Then, such a marriage, if persisted in, makes of the wife indeed a Christian, but of the husband—the reverse."

" The answer to that is clear," he said quietly:

" The husband must abstain."

" Yes, that is, perhaps, coherently Christian, on your theory: They would then both suffer. But the marriage, of course, has become no marriage. They are no longer one flesh."

He looked at me, almost impatiently, as if to say: ' Do not compel me to enforce silence on you ! '

" But, suppose," I went on, " and this, you know, is the more frequent case, the man refuses to abstain. Would you then say it was more Christian to allow him to become daily less Christian through his unchristian conduct, than to relieve the woman of her suffering at the expense of the spiritual benefit she thence derives ? Why, in fact, do you favour one case more than the other ? "

" All question of relief," he replied, " is a matter for Caesar ; it cannot concern me."

There had come into his face a rigidity—as if I might

hit it with my questions till my tongue was tired, and it be no more moved than the bench on which we were sitting.

" One more question," I said, " and I have done- Since the Christian teaching is concerned with the spirit and not forms, and the thread in it which binds all together and makes it coherent, is that of suffering—"

" Redemption by suffering," he put in.

" If you will—in one word, self-crucifixion—I must ask you, and don't take it personally, because of what you told me of yourself: In life generally, one does not accept from people any teaching that is not the result of first-hand experience on their parts. Do you believe that this Christian teaching of yours is valid from the mouths of those who have not themselves suffered—who have not themselves, as it were, been crucified ? "

He did not answer for a minute ; then he said, with painful slowness : " Christ laid hands on his apostles and sent them forth; and they in turn, and so on, to our day."

" Do you say, then, that this guarantees that they have themselves suffered, so that in spirit they are identified with their teaching ? "

He answered bravely : " No—I do not—I cannot say that in fact it is always so."

" Is not then their teaching born of forms, and net of the spirit ? "

He rose; and with a sort of deep sorrow at my stubbornness said : " We are not permitted to know the way of this; it is so ordained; we must have faith."

As he stood there, turned from me, with his hat off,

and his neck painfully flushed under the sharp outcurve of his dark head, a feeling of pity surged up in me, as if I had taken an unfair advantage.

" Reason—coherence—philosophy," he said suddenly. " You don't understand. All that is nothing **to** me—nothing—nothing I "

1911.

VIII

WIND IN THE ROCKS

THOUGH dew-dark when we set forth, there was stealing into the frozen air an invisible wan light—born beyond the mountains, and already harbouring grey-white high up on the snowy sky-caves of Monte Christallo; and within us, tramping over the valley meadows, was the incredible elation of those who set out before the sun has risen ; every minute of the precious day before us—we had not lost one !

At the mouth of that enchanted chine, across which for a million years the howdahed rock elephant has marched, but never yet passed from sight, we crossed the stream, and among the trees began our ascent. Very far away the first cow-bells chimed; and, over the dark heights, we saw the thin, sinking moon, looking like the white horns of some devotional beast watching and waiting up there for the god of light. That god came slowly, stalking across far over our heads from top to top; then, of a sudden, his flame-white form was seen standing in a gap of the valley walls; the trees flung themselves along the ground before him, and censers of pine gum began swinging in the dark aisles, releasing their perfumed steam. Throughout these happy ravines where no man lives, he shows himself naked and unashamed, the colour of pale honey ; on his golden hair a shining ; his eyes like old wine on fire. And already he had swept his hand

across the invisible strings, for there had arisen the music of uncurling leaves and flitting things.

A legend runs that, driven from land to land by Christians, Apollo hid himself in Lower Austria, but those who aver they saw him there in the thirteenth century were wrong ; it was to these enchanted chines, frequented only by the mountain shepherds, that he certainly came.

And as we were lying on the grass of the first alp, with the star gentians—those fallen drops of the sky—and the burnt-brown dandelions, and scattered shrubs of alpen-rose round us, we were visited by one of these very shepherds, passing with his flock—the fiercest-looking man who ever spoke in a gentle voice ; six feet high, with an orange cloak, bare knees, burnt as the very dandelions, a beard blacker than black, and eyes more glorious than if sun and night had dived and were lying imprisoned in their depths. He spoke in an unknown tongue, and could certainly not understand any word of ours ; but he smelled of the good earth, and only through interminable watches under sun and stars could so great a gentleman have been perfected.

Presently, while we rested outside that Alpine hut which faces the three sphinx-like mountains, there came back, from climbing the smallest and most dangerous of those peaks, one, pale from heat, and trembling with fatigue; a tall man, with long brown hands, and a long, thin, bearded face. And, as he sipped cautiously of red wine and water, he looked at his little conquered mountain. His kindly, screwed-up eyes, his kindly, bearded lips, even his limbs seemed smiling : and not for the world would we have jarred with words that rapt, smiling man, enjoying the sacred hour of him who

has just proved himself. In silence we watched, in silence left him smiling, knowing somehow that we should remember him all our days. For there was in his smile the glamour of adventure just for the sake of danger ; all that high instinct which takes a man out of his chair to brave what he need not.

Between that hut and the three mountains lies a saddle—astride of all beauty and all colour, master of a titanic chaos of deep clefts, tawny heights, red domes, far snow, and the purple of long shadows ; and, standing there, we comprehended a little of what Earth had been through in her time, to have made this playground for most glorious demons. Mother Earth ! What travail undergone, what long heroic throes, had brought on her face such majesty !

Hereabout edelweiss was clinging to the smoothed-out rubble; but a little higher, even the everlasting plant was lost, there was no more life. And presently we lay down on the mountain side, rather far apart. Up here above trees and pasture the wind had a strange, bare voice, free from all outer influence, sweeping along with a cold whiffling sound. On the warm stones, in full sunlight, uplifted over all the beauty of Italy, one felt at first only delight in space and wild loveliness, in the unknown valleys, and the strength of the sun. It was so good to be alive ; so ineffably good to be living in this most wonderful world, drinking air nectar.

Behind us, from the three mountains, came the frequent thud and scuffle of falling rocks, loosened by rains: The wind, mist, and winter snow had ground the powdery stones on which we lay to a pleasant bed, but once on a time they, too, had clung up there. And very slowly, one could not say how or when, the sense of joy began changing to a sense of fear. The awful

impersonality of those great rock-creatures, the terrible impartiality of that cold, clinging wind which swept by, never an inch lifted above ground ! Not one tiny soul, the size of a midge or rock flower, lived here. Not one little " I " breathed here, and loved !

And we, too, some day would no longer love, having become part of this monstrous, lovely earth, of that cold, whiffling air. To be no longer able to love ! It seemed incredible, too grim to bear ; yet it was true ! To become powder, and the wind; no more to feel the sunlight; to be loved no more ! To become a whiffling noise, cold, without one's self 1 To drift on the breath of that noise, homeless ! Up here, there were not even those little velvet, grey-white flower-comrades we had plucked. No life ! Nothing but the creeping wind, and those great rocky heights, whence came the sound of falling—symbols of that cold, untimely state into which we, too, must pass. Never more to love, nor to be loved I One could but turn to the earth, and press one's face to it, away from the wild loveliness. Of what use loveliness that must be lost; of what use loveliness when one could not love ? The earth was warm and firm beneath the palms of the hands; but there still came the sound of the impartial wind, and the careless roar of the stones falling.

Below, in those valleys amongst the living trees and grass, was the comradeship of unnumbered life, so that to pass out into Peace, to step beyond, to die, seemed but a brotherly act, amongst all those others; but up here, where no creature breathed, we saw the heart of the desert that stretches before each little human soul. Up here, it froze the spirit; even Peace seemed mocking—hard as a stone. Yet, to try and hide, to tuck **one's** head under one's own wing, was not possible in

this air so crystal clear, so far above incense and the narcotics of set creeds, and the fevered breath of prayers and protestations. Even to know that between organic and inorganic matter there is no gulf fixed, was of no peculiar comfort. The jealous wind came creeping over the lifeless limestone, removing even the poor solace of its warmth; one turned from it, desperate, to look up at the sky, the blue, burning, wide, far sky.

Then slowly, without reason, that icy fear passed into a feeling, not of joy, not of peace, but as if Life and Death were exalted into what was neither life nor death, a strange and motionless vibration, in which one had been merged, and rested, utterly content, equipoised, divested of desire, endowed with life and death.

But since this moment had come before its time, we got up, and, close together, marched on rather silently, in the hot sun.

1910.

IX

MY DISTANT RELATIVE

THOUGH I had not seen my distant relative for years—not, in fact, since he was obliged to give Vancouver Island up as a bad job—I knew him at once, when, with head a little on one side, and tea-cup held high, as if to confer a blessing, he said : " Hallo ! " across the Club smoking-room.

Thin as a lath—not one ounce heavier—tall, and very upright, with his pale forehead, and pale eyes, and pale beard, he had the air of a ghost of a man. He had always had that air. And his voice—that matter-of-fact and slightly nasal voice, with its thin, pragmatical tone—was like a wraith of optimism, issuing between pale lips. I noticed, too, that his town habiliments still- had their unspeakable pale neatness, as if, poor things, they were trying to stare the daylight out of countenance.

He brought his tea across to my bay window, with that wistful sociability of his, as of a man who cannot always find a listener.

" But what are you doing in town ? " I said. " ! thought you were in Yorkshire with your aunt."

Over his round, light eyes, fixed on something in the street, the lids fell quickly twice, as the film falls over the eyes of a parrot.

" I'm after a job," he answered. " Must be on the spot just now."

And it seemed to me that I had heard those words from him before.

" Ah, yes," I said, " and do you think you'll get it ? "

But even as I spoke I felt sorry, remembering how many jobs he had been after in his time, and how soon they ended when he had got them.

He answered :

" Oh, yes ! They ought to give it me," then added rather suddenly : " You never know, though. People are so funny ! "

And crossing his thin legs, he went on to tell me, with quaint impersonality, a number of instances of how people had been funny in connection with jobs he had not been given.

" You see," he ended, " the country's in such a state—capital going out of it every day. Enterprise being killed all over the place. There's practically nothing to be had ! "

" Ah! " I said, " you think it's worse, then, than it used to be ? "

He smiled; in that smile there was a shade of patronage.

" We're going down-hill as fast as ever we can. National character's losing all its backbone. No wonder, with all this molly-coddling going on 1"

" Oh I " I murmured, " molly-coddling ? Isn't that excessive ? "

" Well! Look at the way everything's being done for them ! The working classes are losing their self-respect as fast as ever they can. Their independence is gone already I "

" You think ? "

" Sure of it! I'll give you an instance——" and he went on to describe to me the degeneracy of certain

working men employed by his aunt and his eldest brother Claud and his youngest brother Alan.

" They don't do a stroke more than they're obliged," he ended; " they know jolly well they've got their Unions, and their pensions, and this Insurance, to fall back on."

It was evidently a subject on which he felt strongly.

" Yes," he muttered, " the nation is being rotted down."

And a faint thrill of surprise passed through me. For the affairs of the nation moved him so much more strongly than his own. His voice already had a different ring, his eyes a different look. He eagerly leaned forward, and his long, straight backbone looked longer and straighter than ever. He was less the ghost of man. A faint flush even had come into his pale cheeks, and he moved his well-kept hands emphatically.

" Oh, yes ! " he said : " The country is going to the dogs, right enough; but you can't get them to see it. They go on sapping and sapping the independence of the people. If the working man's to be looked after, whatever he does—what on earth's to become of his go, and foresight, and perseverance ? "

In his rising voice a certain piquancy was left to its accent of the ruling class by that faint twang, which came, I remembered, from some slight defect in his tonsils.

" Mark my words ! So long as we're on these lines, we shall do nothing. It's going against evolution. They say Darwin's getting old-fashioned; all I know is, he's good enough for me. Competition is the only thing."

" But competition," I said, " is bitter cruel, and some people can't stand against it ! " And I looked at him

rather hard : " Do you object to putting any sort of floor under the feet of people like that ? "

He let his voice drop a little, as if in deference to my scruples.

" Ah ! " he said ; " but if you once begin this sort of thing, there's no end to it. It's so insidious. The more they have, the more they want; and all the time they're losing fighting power. I've thought pretty deeply about this. It's shortsighted ; it really doesn't do!"

" But," I said, " surely you're not against saving people from being knocked out of time by old age, and accidents like illness, and the fluctuations of trade ? "

" Oh ! " he said, " I'm not a bit against charity. Aunt Emma's splendid about that. And Claud's awfully good. I do what I can, myself." He looked at me, so queerly deprecating, that I quite liked him at that moment. At heart—I felt—he was a good fellow. " All I think is," he went on, " that to give them something that they can rely on as a matter of course, apart from their own exertions, is the wrong principle altogether," and suddenly his voice began to rise again, and his eyes to stare. " I'm convinced that all this doing things for other people, and bolstering up the weak, is rotten. It stands to reason that it must be."

He had risen to his feet, so preoccupied with the wrongness of that principle that he seemed to have forgotten my presence. And as he stood there in the window the light was too strong for him. All the thin incapacity of that shadowy figure was pitilessly displayed ; the desperate narrowness in that long, pale face; the wambling look of those pale, well-kept hands—all that made him such a ghost of a man. But his nasal, dogmatic voice rose and rose.

" There's nothing for it but bracing up ! We must cut away all this State support; we must teach them to rely on themselves. It's all sheer pauperisation."

And suddenly there shot through me the fear that he might burst one of those little blue veins in his pale forehead, so vehement had he become; and hastily I changed the subject.

" Do you like living up there with your aunt ? " I asked : " Isn't it a bit quiet ? "

He turned, as if I had awakened him from a dream.

" Oh, well ! " he said, " it's only till I get this job."

" Let me see—how long is it since you——? "

" Four years. She's very glad to have me, of course."

" And how's your brother Claud ? "

" Oh ! All right, thanks ; a bit worried with the estate. The poor old gov'nor left it in rather a mess, you know."

" Ah ! Yes. Does he do other work ? "

" Oh ! Always busy in the parish."

" And your brother Richard ? "

" He's all right. Came home this year. Got just enough to live on, with his pension—hasn't saved a rap of course."

" And Willie ? Is he still delicate ? "

" Yes."

" I'm sorry."

" Easy job, his, you know. And even if his health does give out, his college pals will always find him some sort of sinecure. So jolly popular, old Willie 1 "

" And Alan ? I haven't heard anything of him since bis Peruvian thing came to grief. He married, didn't he ? "

" Rather ! One of the Burleys. Nice girl—heiress;

lot of property in Hampshi
her now."

" Doesn't do anything else, I suppose ? "

" Keeps up his antiquarianism."

I had exhausted the members of his family.

Then, as though by eliciting the good fortunes of his brothers I had cast some slur upon himself, he said suddenly : " If the railway had come, as it ought to have, while I was out there, I should have done quite well with my fruit farm."

" Of course," I agreed ; " it was bad luck. But after all, you're sure to get a job soon, and—so long as you can live up there with your aunt—you can afford to wait, and not bother."

" Yes," he murmured. And I got up.

" Well, it's been very jolly to hear about you all ! "

He followed me out.

" Awfully glad, old man," he said, " to have seen you, and had this talk. I was feeling rather low. Waiting to know whether I get that job—it's not lively."

He came down the Club steps with me. By the door of my cab a loafer was standing; a tall tatterdemalion with a pale, bearded face. My distant relative fended him away, and leaning through the window, murmured : " Awful lot of these chaps about now ! "

For the life of me I could not help looking at him very straight. But no flicker of apprehension crossed his face.

"Well, good-bye agaia!" he said: "You've cheered me up a lot ! "

I glanced back from my moving cab. Some monetary transaction was passing between him and the loafer, but, short-sighted as I am, I found it difficult to decide which of those tall, pale, bearded figures was

giving the other one a penny. And by some strange freak an awful vision shot up before me—of myself, and my distant relative, and Claud, and Richard, and Willie, and Alan, all suddenly relying on ourselves. I took out my handkerchief to mop my brow; but a thought struck me, and I put it back. Was it possible for me, and my distant relatives, and their distant relatives, and so on to infinity of those who belonged to a class provided by birth with a certain position, raised by Providence on to a platform made up of money inherited, of interest, of education fitting us for certain privileged pursuits, of friends similarly endowed, of substantial homes, and substantial relatives of some sort or other, on whom we could fall back—was it possible for any of us ever to be in the position of having to rely absolutely on ourselves. For several minutes I pondered that question ; and slowly I came to the conclusion that, short of crime, or that unlikely event, marooning, it was not possible. Never, never —try as we might—could any single one of us be quite in the position of one of those whose approaching pauperisation my distant relative had so vehemently deplored. We were already pauperised. If we served our country, we were pensioned. If we inherited land, it could not be taken from us. If we went into the Church, we were there for life, whether we were suitable or no. If we attempted the more hazardous occupations of the law, medicine, the arts, or business, there were always those homes, those relations, those friends of ours to fall back on, if we failed. No 1 We could never have to rely entirely on ourselves ; we could never be pauperised—more than we were already I And a light burst in on me. That explained why my relative felt so keenly. It bit him, for he saw,

of course, how dreadful it would be for these poor people of the working classes when legislation had succeeded in placing them in the humiliating position in which we already were—the dreadful position of having something to depend on apart from our own exertions, some sort of security in our lives. I saw it now. It was his secret pride, gnawing at him all the time, that made him so rabid on the point. He was longing, doubtless, day and night, not to have had a father who had land, and had left a sister well enough off to keep him while he was waiting for his job. He must be feeling how horribly degrading was the position of Claud—inheriting that land ; and of Richard, who, just because he had served in the Indian Civil Service, had got to live on a pension all the rest of his days ; and of Willie, who was in danger at any moment, if his health—always delicate—gave out, of having a sinecure found for him by his college friends ; and of Alan, whose educated charm had enabled him to marry an heiress and live by managing her estates. All, all sapped of go and foresight and perseverance by a cruel Providence ! That was what he was really feeling, and concealing, because he was too well-bred to show his secret grief. And I felt suddenly quite warm toward him, now that I saw how he was suffering. I understood how bound he felt in honour to combat with all his force this attempt to place others in his own distressing situation. At the same time I was honest enough to confess to myself—sitting there in the cab—that I did not personally share that pride of his, or feel that I was being rotted by my own position ; Ieven felt some dim gratitude that if my powers gave out at any time, and I had not saved anything, I should still not be left destitute to face the prospect of a bleak and im-

poverished old age; and I could not help a weak pleasure in the thought that a certain relative security was being guaranteed to those people of the working classes who had never had it before. At the same moment I quite saw that to a prouder and stronger heart it must indeed be bitter to have to sit still under your own security, and even more bitter to have to watch that pauperising security coming closer and closer to others—for the generous soul is always more concerned for others than for himself. No doubt, I thought, if truth were known, my distant relative is consumed with longing to change places with that loafer who tried to open the door of my cab—for surely he must see, as I do, that that is just what he himself—having failed to-stand the pressure of competition in his life—would be doing if it were not for the accident of his birth, which has so lamentably insured him against coming to that.

' Yes,'! thought,' you have learnt something to-day ; it does not do, you see, hastily to despise those distant relatives of yours, who talk about pauperising and molly-coddling the lower classes. No, no! One must look deeper than that ! One must have generosity ! '

And with that I stopped the cab and got out, for I wanted a breath of air.

1911.

X

THE GRAND JURY—IN TWO PANELS AND A FRAME

I READ that piece of paper, which summoned me to sit on the Grand Jury at the approaching Sessions, lying in a scoop of the shore close to the great rollers of the sea—that span of eternal freedom, deprived just there of too great liberty by the word " Atlantic." And I remember thinking, as I read, that in each breaking wave was some particle which had visited every shore in all the world—that in each sparkle of hot sunlight stealing that bright water up into the sky, was the microcosm of all change, and of all unity.

PANEL !

In answer to that piece of paper, ! presented myself at the proper place in due course and with a certain trepidation. What was it that I was about to do ? For I had no experience of these things. And, being too early, I walked a little to and fro, looking at all those my partners in this matter of the purification of Society. Prosecutors, witnesses, officials, policemen, detectives, undetected, pressmen, barristers, loafers, clerks, cadgers, jurymen. And I remember having something of the feeling that one has when one looks into a sink without holding one's nose. There was such uneasy hurry, so strange a disenchanted look, a sort of spiritual dirt, about all that place, and there were—faces ! And I

thought: ' To them my face must seem as their faces seem to me !'

Soon I was taken with my accomplices to have my name called, and to be sworn. I do not remember much about that process, too occupied with wondering what these companions of mine were like ; but presently we all came to a long room with a long table, where nineteen lists of indictments and nineteen pieces of blotting paper were set alongside nineteen pens. We did not, I recollect, speak much to one another, but sat down, and studied those nineteen lists. We had eighty-seven cases on which to pronounce whether the bill was true or no ; and the clerk assured us we should get through them in two days at most. Over the top of these indictments I regarded my eighteen fellows. There was in me a hunger of inquiry, as to what they thought about this business ; and a sort of sorrowful affection for them, as if we were all a ship's company bound on some strange and awkward expedition. I wondered, till I thought my wonder must be coming through my eyes, whether they had the same curious sensation that I was feeling, of doing something illegitimate, which I had not been born to do, together with a sense of self-importance, a sort of unholy interest in thus dealing with the lives of my fellow men. And slowly, watching them, I came to the conclusion that I need not wonder. All—with the exception perhaps of two, a painter and a Jew—looked such good citizens. I became gradually sure that they were not troubled with the lap and wash of speculation; undogged by any devastating sense of unity; pure of doubt, and undefiled by an uneasy conscience.

But now they began to bring us in the evidence. They brought it quickly. And at first we looked at it,

whatever it was, with a sort of solemn excitement. Were we not arbiters of men's fates, purifiers of Society, more important by far than judge or Common Jury ? For if we did not bring in a true bill there was an end ; the accused would be discharged.

We set to work, slowly at first, then faster and still faster, bringing in true bills ; and after every one making a mark in our lists so that we might know where we were. We brought in true bills for burglary and false pretences, larceny, and fraud ; we brought them in for manslaughter, rape, and arson. When we had ten or so, two of us would get up and bear them away down to the Court below and lay them before the Judge. " Thank you, gentlemen ! " he would say, or words to that effect; and we would go up again, and go on bringing in true bills. I noticed that at the evidence of each fresh bill we looked with a little less excitement, and a little less solemnity, making every time a shorter tick and a shorter note in the margin of our lists. All the bills we had—fifty-seven—we brought in true. And the morning and the afternoon made that day, till we rested and went to our homes.

Next day we were all back in our places at the appointed hour, and, not greeting each other much, at once began to bring in bills. We brought them in, not quite so fast, as though some lurking megrim, some microbe of dissatisfaction with ourselves was at work within us. It was as if we wanted to throw one out, as if we felt our work too perfect. And presently it came. A case of defrauding one Sophie Liebermann, or Laubermann, or some such foreign name, by giving her one of those five-pound Christmas-card banknotes just then in fashion, and receiving from her, as she alleged, three real sovereigns change. There was

a certain piquancy about the matter, and I well remember noticing how we sat a little forward and turned in our seats when they brought in the prosecutrix to give evidence. Pale, self-possessed, dressed in black, and rather comely, neither brazen nor furtive, speaking but poor English, her broad, matter-of-fact face, with its wide-set grey eyes and thickish nose and lips, made on me, I recollect, an impression of rather stupid honesty. I do not think they had told us in so many words what her calling was, nor do I remember whether she actually disclosed it, but by our demeanour I could tell that we had all realised what was the nature of the service rendered to the accused, in return for which he had given her this worthless note. In her rather guttural but pleasant voice she answered all our questions—not very far from tears, I think, but saved by native stolidity, and perhaps a little by the fear that purifiers of Society might not be the proper audience for emotion. When she had left us we recalled the detective, and still, as it were, touching the delicate matter with the tips of our tongues, so as not, being men of the world, to seem biassed against anything, we definitely elicited from him her profession and these words: " If she's speaking the truth, gentlemen; but, as you know, these women, they don't always, specially the foreign ones I " When he, too, had gone, we looked at each other in unwonted silence. None of us quite liked, it seemed, to be first to speak. Then our foreman said: " There's no doubt, I think, that he gave her the note—mean trick, of course, but we can't have him on that alone—bit too irregular—no consideration in law, I take it."

He smiled a little at our smiles, and then went on: " The question, gentlemen, really seems to be, are we

to take her word that she actually gave him change ? " Again, for quite half a minute, we were silent, and then, the fattest one of us said, suddenly : " Very dangerous —goin' on the word of these women."

And at once, as if he had released something in our souls, we all (save two or three) broke out. It wouldn't do 1 It wasn't safe ! Seeing what these women were ! It was exactly as if, without word said, we had each been swearing the other to some secret compact to protect Society. As if we had been whispering to each other something like this : ' These women—of course, we need them, but for all that we can't possibly recognise them as within the Law ; we can't do that without endangering the safety of every one of us. In this matter we are trustees for all men—indeed, even for ourselves, for who knows at what moment we might not ourselves require their services, and it would be exceedingly awkward if their word were considered the equal of our own !' Not one of us, certainly *said* anything so crude as this ; none the less did many of us feel it. Then the foreman, looking slowly round the table, said : " Well, gentlemen, I think we are all agreed to throw out this bill" ; and all, except the painter, the Jew, and one other, murmured : " Yes." And, as though, in throwing out this bill we had cast some trouble off our minds, we went on with the greater speed, bringing in true bills. ,About two o'clock we finished, and trooped down to the Court to be released. On the stairway the Jew came close, and, having examined me a little sharply with velvety slits of his eyes, as if to see that he was not making a mistake, said : " Ith fonny—we bring in eighty-thix bills true, and one we throw out, and the one we throw out we know it to be true, and the dirtieth job of the whole lot.

fonny I " " Yes," I answered him, " our sense of respectability does seem excessive." But just then we reached the Court, where, in his red robe and grey wig, with his clear-cut, handsome face, the judge seemed to shine and radiate, like sun through gloom. " I thank you, gentlemen," he said, in a voice courteous and a little mocking, as though he had somewhere seen us before : " I thank you for the way in which you have performed your duties. I have not the pleasure of assigning to you anything for your services except the privilege of going over a prison, where you will be able to see what sort of existence awaits many of those to whose cases you have devoted so much of your valuable time. You are released, gentlemen."

Looking at each other a little hurriedly, and not taking too much farewell, for fear of having to meet again, we separated.

I was, then, free—free of the injunction of that piece of paper reposing in my pocket. Yet its influence was still upon me. I did not hurry away, but lingered in the courts, fascinated by the notion that the fate of each prisoner had first passed through my hands. At last I made an effort, and went out into the corridor. There I passed a woman whose figure seemed familiar. She was sitting with her hards in her lap looking straight before her, pale-faced and not uncomely, with thickish mouth and nose—the woman whose bill we had thrown out. Why was she sitting there ? Had she not then realised that we had quashed her claim ; or was she, like myself, kept here by mere attraction of the Law ? Following I know not what impulse, I said . " Your case was dismissed, wasn't it ? " She looked up at me stolidly, and a tear, which had evidently been long gathering, dropped at the movement. "I do nod

know ; I waid to see," she said in her thick **voice** ; **" I** tink there has been mistake." My face, no doubt, betrayed something of my sentiments about her case, for the thick tears began rolling fast down her pasty cheeks, and her pent-up feeling suddenly flowed forth in words : " I work 'ard ; Gott! how I work hard ! And there gomes dis liddle beastly man, and rob me. And they say : ' Ah ! yes ; but you are a bad woman, we don't trust you—you speak lie,' But I speak druth, I am nod a bad woman—I gome from Hamburg." " Yes, yes," I murmured ; " yes, yes." " I do not know this country well, sir. I speak bad English. Is that why they do not drust my word ? " She was silent for a moment, searching my face, then broke out again : " It is all 'ard work in my profession, I make very liddle, I cannot afford to be rob. Without the men I cannod make my living, I must drust them—and they rob me like this, it is too 'ard." And the slow tears rolled faster and faster from her eyes on to her hands and her black lap. Then quietly, and looking for a moment singularly like a big, unhappy child, she asked : " Will you blease dell me, sir, why they will not give me the law of that dirty little man ? "

I knew—and too well; but I could not tell her.

" You see," I said, " it's just a case of your word against his."

" Oh ! no ; but," she said eagerly, " he give me the note—I would not have taken it if I 'ad not thought it good, would I ? That is sure, isn't it ? But five pounds it is not my price. It must that I give 'im change 1 Those gentlemen that heard my case, they are men of business, they must know that it is not my price. If I could tell the judge—I think he is a man of business too—he would know that too, for sure. I

am not so young. I am not so veree beautiful as all that; he must see, mustn't he, sir ? "

At my wits' end how to answer that most strange question, I stammered out: " But, you know, your profession is outside the law."

At that a slow anger dyed her face. She looked down ; then, suddenly lifting one of her dirty, ungloved hands, she laid it on her breast with the gesture of one baring to me the truth in her heart. " I am not a bad woman," she said : " Dat beastly little man, he do the same as me—I am free-woman, I am not a slave bound to do the same to-morrow night, no more than he. Such like him make me what I am; he have all the pleasure, I have all the work. He give me noding—he rob my poor money, and he make me seem to strangers a bad woman. Oh, dear ! I am not happy ! "

The impulse I had been having to press on her the money, died within me; I felt suddenly it would be another insult. From the movement of her fingers about her heart I could not but see that this grief of hers was not about the money. It was the inarticulate outburst of a bitter sense of deep injustice ; of all the dumb wondering at her own fate that went about with her behind that broad stolid face and bosom. This loss of the money was but a symbol of the furtive, hopeless insecurity she lived with day and night, now forced into the light, for herself and all the world to see. She felt it suddenly a bitter, unfair thing. This beastly little man did not share her insecurity. None of us shared it—none of us, who had brought her down to this. And, quite unable to explain to her how natural and proper it all was, I only murmured: " I am sorry, awfully sorry," and fled away.

PANEL II

It was just a week later when, having for passport my Grand Jury summons, I presented myself at that prison where we had the privilege of seeing the existence to which we had assisted so many of the eighty-six.

" I'm afraid," I said to the guardian of the gate, " that I am rather late in availing myself—the others, no doubt——? "

" Not at all, sir," he said, smiling. " You're the first, and if you'll excuse me, I think you'll be the last. Will you wait in here while I send for the chief warder to take you over ? "

He showed me then to what he called the Warder's Library—an iron-barred room, more bare and brown than any I had seen since I left school. While I stood there waiting and staring out into the prison court-yard, there came, rolling and rumbling in, a Black Maria. It drew up with a clatter, and I saw through the barred door the single prisoner—a young girl of perhaps eighteen—dressed in rusty black. She was resting her forehead against a bar and looking out, her quick, narrow dark eyes taking in her new surroundings with a sort of sharp, restless indifference; and her pale, thin-lipped, oval face quite expressionless. Behind those bars she seemed to me for all the world like a little animal of the cat tribe being brought in to her Zoo. Me she did not see, but if she had I felt she would not shrink—only give me the same sharp, indifferent look she was giving all else. The policeman on the step behind had disappeared at once, and the driver now got down from his perch and, coming round, began to gossip with her. I saw her slink her eyes and smile at him, and he smiled back ; a large man, not

unkindly. Then he returned to his horses, and she stayed as before, with her forehead against the bars, just staring out. Watching her like that, unseen, I seemed to be able to see right through that tight-lipped, lynx-eyed mask. I seemed to know that little creature through and through, as one knows anything that one surprises off its guard, sunk in its most private moods. I seemed to see her little restless, furtive, utterly unmoral soul, so stripped of all defence, as if she had taken it from her heart and handed it out to me. I saw that she was one of those whose hands slip as indifferently into others' pockets as into their own ; incapable of fidelity, and incapable of trusting ; quick as cats and as devoid of application; ready to scratch, ready to purr, ready to scratch again; quick to change, and secretly as unchangeable as a little pebble. And I thought: ' Here we are, taking her to the Zoo (by no means for the first time, if demeanour be any guide), and we shall put her in a cage, and make her sew, and give her good books which she will not read; and she will sew, and walk up and down, until we let her out; then she will return to her old haunts, and at once go prowling and do exactly the same again, whatever it was, until we catch her and lock her up once more. And in this way we shall go on purifying Society until she dies.' And I thought: ' If indeed she had been created cat in body as well as in soul, we should not have treated her thus, but should have said : " Go on, little cat, you scratch us sometimes, you steal often, you are as sensual as the night. All this we cannot help. It is your nature. So were you made—we know you cannot change—you amuse us ! Go on, little cat I " Would it not then be better, and less savoury of humbug if we said the same to her whose cat-soul has chanced into this human

shape ? For assuredly she will but pilfer, and scratch a little, and be mildly vicious, in her little life, and do no desperate harm, having but poor capacity for evil behind that petty, thin-lipped mask. What is the good of all this padlock business for such as she ; are we not making mountains out of her molehills ? Where is our sense of proportion, and our sense of humour ? Why try to alter the make and shape of Nature with our petty chisels ? Or, if we must take care of her, to save ourselves, in the name of Heaven *let us do it in a better way than this* ,' And suddenly I remembered that I was a Grand Juryman, a purifier of Society, who had brought her bill in true ; and, that I might not think these thoughts unworthy of a good citizen, I turned my eyes away from her and took up my list of indictments. Yes, there she was, at least so I decided : Number 42, " Pilson, Jenny : Larceny, pocket-picking," And I turned my memory back to the evidence about her case, but I could not remember a single word. In the margin I had noted : " Incorrigible from a child up ; bad surroundings." And a mad impulse came over me to go back to my window and call through the bars to her : " Jenny Pilson ! Jenny Pilson ! It was I who bred you and surrounded you with evil 1 It was I who caught you for being what I made you ! I brought your bill in true ! I judged you, and I caged you ! Jenny Pilson ! Jenny Pilson ! " But just as I reached the window, the door of my waiting-room was fortunately opened, and a voice said : " Now, sir; at your service ! " . . .

! sat again in that scoop of the shore by the long rolling seas, burying in the sand the piece of paper which had summoned me away to my Grand Jury; and

the same thoughts came to me with the breaking of the waves that had come to me before : How, in every wave was a particle that had known the shore of every land ; and in each sparkle of the hot sunlight stealing up that bright water into the sky, the microcosm of all change and of all unity !

1912.

XI

GONE

NOT possible to conceive of rarer beauty than that which clung about the summer day three years ago when first we had the news of the poor Herds. Loveliness was a net of golden filaments in which the world was caught. It was gravity itself, so tranquil; and it was a sort of intoxicating laughter. From the top field that we crossed to go down to their cottage, all the far sweep of those outstretched wings of beauty could be seen. Very wonderful was the poise of the sacred bird, that moved nowhere but in our hearts. The lime-tree scent was just stealing out into air for some days already bereft of the scent of hay ; and the sun was falling to his evening home behind our pines and beeches. It was no more than radiant warm. And, as we went, we wondered why we had not been told before that Mrs. Herd was so very ill. It was foolish to wonder—these people do not speak of suffering till it is late. To speak, when it means what this meant—loss of wife and mother—was to flatter reality too much. To be healthy or—die ! That is their creed. To go on till they drop —then very soon pass away ! What room for states between—on their poor wage, in their poor cottages ?

We crossed the mill-stream in the hollow—to their white, thatched dwelling ; silent, already awed, almost resentful of this so-varying Scheme of Things. At the gateway Herd himself was standing, just in from his

work. For work in the country does not wait on illness—even death claims from its onlookers but a few hours, birth none at all. And it is as well; for what must be must, and in work alone man rests from grief. Sorrow and anxiety had made strange alteration already in Herd's face. Through every crevice of the rough, stolid mask the spirit was peeping, a sort of quivering suppliant, that seemed to ask all the time : " Is it true ? " A regular cottager's figure this of Herd's—a labourer of these parts—strong, slow, but active, with just a touch of the untamed somewhere, about the swing and carriage of him, about the strong jaw, and wide thick-lipped mouth ; just that something independent, which, in great variety, clings to the natives of these still remote, half-pagan valleys by the moor.

We all moved silently to the lee of the outer wall, so that our voices might not carry up to the sick woman lying there under the eaves, almost within hand reach. " Yes, sir." " No, sir." " Yes, ma'am." This, and the constant, unforgettable supplication of his eyes, was all that came from him ; yet he seemed loth to let us go, as though he thought we had some mysterious power to help him—the magic, perhaps of money, to those who have none. Grateful at our promise of another doctor, a specialist, he yet seemed with his eyes to say that he knew that such were only embroideries of Fate. And when we had wrung his hand and gone, we heard him coming after us. His wife had said she would like to see us, please. Would we come up ?

An old woman and Mrs. Herd's sister were in the sitting-room; they showed us to the crazy, narrow stairway. Though we lived distant but four hundred yards of a crow's flight, we had never seen Mrs. Herd before, for that is the way of things in this land of

minding one's own business—a slight, dark, girlish-looking woman, almost quite refined away, and with those eyes of the dying, where the spirit is coming through, as it only does when it knows that all is over except just the passing. She lay in a double bed, with clean white sheets. A white-washed room, so low that the ceiling almost touched our heads, some flowers in a bowl, the small lattice window open. Though it was hot in there, it was better far than the rooms of most families in towns, living on a wage of twice as much; for here was no sign of defeat in decency or cleanliness. In her face, as in poor Herd's, was that same strange mingling of resigned despair and almost eager appeal, so terrible to disappoint. Yet, trying not to disappoint it, one felt guilty of treachery. What was the good, the kindness, in making this poor bird flutter still with hope against the bars, when fast prison had so surely closed in round her? But what else could we do? We could not give her those glib assurances that naive souls make so easily to others concerning their after state.

Secretly, I think, we knew that her philosophy of calm reality, that queer and unbidden growing tranquillity which precedes death, was nearer to our own belief, than would be any gilt-edged orthodoxy; but nevertheless (such is the strength of what is expected), we felt it dreadful that we could not console her with the ordinary presumptions.

"You mustn't give up hope," we kept on saying: "The new doctor will do a lot for you; he's a specialist—a very clever man."

And she kept on answering: "Yes, sir," "Yes, ma'am." But still her eyes went on asking, as if there were something else she wanted. And then to one of us came an inspiration:

" You mustn't let your husband worry about expense. That will be all right."

She smiled then, as if the chief cloud on her soul had been the thought of the arrears her illness and death would leave weighing on him with whom she had shared this bed ten years and more. And with that smile warming the memory of those spirit-haunted eyes, we crept downstairs again, and out into the fields.

It was more beautiful than ever, just touched already with evening mystery—it was better than ever to be alive. And the immortal wonder that has haunted man since he first became man, and haunts, I think, even the animals—the unanswerable question, why joy and beauty must ever be walking hand in hand with ugliness and pain—haunted us across those fields of life and loveliness. It was all right, no doubt, even reasonable, since without dark there is no light. It was part of that unending sum whose answer is not given; the merest little swing of the great pendulum 1 And yet——! To accept this violent contrast without a sigh of revolt, without a question ! No sirs, it was not so jolly as all that ! That she should be dying there at thirty, of a creeping malady which she might have checked, perhaps, if she had not had too many things to do for her children and husband, to do anything for herself—if she had not been forced to hold the creed : Be healthy, or die ! This was no doubt perfectly explicable and in accordance with the Supreme Equation ; yet we, enjoying life, and health, and ease of money, felt horror and revolt on this evening of such beauty. Nor at the moment did we derive great comfort from the thought that life slips in ana out of sheath, like sun-sparks on water, and that of all the

cloud of summer midges dancing in the last gleam, not one would be alive to-morrow.

It was three evenings later that we heard uncertain footfalls on the flagstones of the verandah, then a sort of brushing sound against the wood of the long, open window. Drawing aside the curtain, one of us looked out. Herd was standing there in the bright moonlight, bareheaded, with roughened hair. He came in, and seeming not to know quite where he went, took stand by the hearth, and putting up his dark hand, gripped the mantelshelf. Then, as if recollecting himself, he said : " Gude evening sir ; beg pardon, m'm." No more for a full minute ; but his hand, taking some little china thing, turned it over and over without ceasing, and down his broken face tears ran. Then, very suddenly, he said : " She's gone." And his hand turned over and over that little china thing, and the tears went on rolling down. Then, stumbling, and swaying like a man in drink, he made his way out again into the moonlight. We watched him across the lawn and path, and through the gate, till his footfalls died out there in the field, and his figure was lost in the black shadow of the holly hedge.

And the night was so beautiful, so utterly, glamourously beautiful, with its star-flowers, and its silence, and its trees clothed in moonlight. All was tranquil as a dream of sleep. But it was long before our hearts, wandering with poor Herd, would let us remember that she had slipped away into so beautiful a dream.

The dead do not suffer from their rest in beauty. But the living——!

1911.

XII

THRESHING

WHEN the drone of the thresher breaks through the autumn singing of trees and wind, or through that stillness of the first frost, I get restless and more restless, till, throwing down my pen, I have gone out to see. For there is nothing like the sight of threshing for making one feel good—not in the sense of comfort, but at heart. There, under the pines and the already leafless elms and beech-trees, close to the great stacks, is the big, busy creature, with its small black puffing engine astern ; and there, all around it, is that conglomeration of unsentimental labour which invests all the cries of farm work with such fascination. The crew of the farm is only five all told, but to-day they are fifteen, and none strangers, save the owners of the travelling thresher.

They are working without respite and with little speech, not at all as if they had been brought together for the benefit of someone else's corn, but as though they, one and all, had a private grudge against Time and a personal pleasure in finishing this job, which, while it lasts, is bringing them extra pay and most excellent free feeding. Just as after a dilatory voyage a crew will brace themselves for the run in, recording with sudden energy their consciousness of triumph over the elements, so on a farm the harvests of hay and corn, sheep-shearing, and threshing will bring out in all a common sentiment, a kind of sporting energy, a defiant

spurt, as it were, to score off Nature ; for it is only a philosopher here and there among them, I think, who sees that Nature is eager to be scored off in this fashion, being anxious that someone should eat her kindly fruits.

With ceremonial as grave as that which is at work within the thresher itself, the tasks have been divided. At the root of all things, pitchforking from the stack, stands the farmer, moustached, and always upright—was he not in the Yeomanry ?—dignified in a hard black hat, no waistcoat, and his working coat so ragged that it would never cling to him but for pure affection. Between him and the body of the machine are five more pitchforks, directing the pale flood of raw material. There, amongst them, is poor Herd, still so sad from his summer loss, plodding doggedly away. To watch him even now makes one feel how terrible is that dumb grief which has never learned to moan. And there is George Yeoford, almost too sober; and Murdon plying his pitchfork with a supernatural regularity that cannot quite dim his queer brigand's humours, his soft, dark corduroys and battered hat. Occasionally he stops, and taking off that hat, wipes his corrugated brow under black hair, and seems to brood over his own regularity.

Down here, too, where I stand, each separate function of the thresher has its appointed slave. Here Cedric rakes the chaff pouring from the side down into the chaff-shed. Carting the straw that streams from the thresher bows, are Michelmore and Neck—the little man who cannot read, but can milk and whistle the hearts out of his cows till they follow him like dogs. At the thresher's stern is Morris, the driver, selected because of that utter reliability which radiates from his

broad, handsome face. His part is to attend the sacking of the three kinds of grain for ever sieving out. He murmurs : " Busy work, sir I " and opens a little door to show me how " the machinery does it all," holding a sack between his knees and some string in his white teeth. Then away goes the sack—four bushels, one hundred and sixty pounds of " genuines, seconds, or seed"—wheeled by Cedric on a little trolley thing, to where George-the-Gaul or Jin-the-Early-Saxon is waiting to bear it on his back up the stone steps into the corn chamber.

It has been raining in the night; the ground is a churn of straw and mud, and the trees still drip ; but now there is sunlight, a sweet air, and clear sky, wine-coloured through the red, naked, beech-twigs tipped with white untimely buds. Nothing can be more lovely than this late autumn day, so still, save for the droning of the thresher and the constant tinny chuckle of the grey, thin-headed Guinea-fowl, driven by this business away from their usual haunts.

And soon the feeling that I knew would come begins creeping over me, the sense of an extraordinary sanity in this never-ceasing harmonious labour pursued in the autumn air faintly perfumed with wood-smoke, with the scent of chaff, and whiffs from that black puffing-Billy ; the sense that there is nothing between this clean toil—not too hard but hard enough—and the clean consumption of its clean results ; the sense that nobody except myself is in the least conscious of how sane it all is, The brains of these sane ones are all too busy with the real affairs of life, the disposition of their wages, anticipation of dinner, some girl, some junketing, some wager, the last rifle match, and, more than all, with that pleasant rhythmic nothingness,

companion of the busy swing and play of muscles, which of all states is secretly most akin to the deep unconsciousness of life itself. Thus to work in the free air for the good of all and the hurt of none, without worry or the breath of acrimony—surely no phase of human life so nears the life of the truly civilised community—the life of a hive of bees. Not one of these working so sanely—unless it be Morris, who will spend his Sunday afternoon on some high rock just watching sunlight and shadow drifting on the moors—not one, I think, is distraught by perception of his own sanity, by knowledge of how near he is to Harmony, not even by appreciation of the still radiance of this day, or its innumerable fine shades of colour. It is all work, and no moody consciousness—all work, and will end in sleep.

I leave them soon, and make my way up the stone steps to the " corn chamber," where tranquillity is crowned. In the whitewashed room the corn lies in drifts and ridges, three to four feet deep, all silvery-dun, like some remote sand desert, lifeless beneath the moon. Here it lies, and into it, staggering under the sacks, George-the-Gaul and Jim-the-Early-Saxon tramp up to their knees, spill the sacks over their heads, and out again ; and above where their feet have plunged the patient surface closes again, smooth. And as I stand in the doorway, looking at that silvery corn drift, I think of the whole process, from seed sown to the last sieving into this tranquil resting-place. I think of the slow, dogged ploughman, with the crows above him on the wind ; of the swing of the sower's arm, dark up against grey sky on the steep field. I think of the seed snug-burrowing for safety, and its mysterious ferment under the warm Spring rain, of the soft green shoots tapering up so shyly toward the first sun, and

hardening in air to thin wiry stalk. I think of the unnumerable tiny beasts that have jungled in that pale forest; of the winged blue jewels of butterfly risen from it to hover on the wild-rustling blades; of that continual music played there by the wind; of the chicory and poppy flowers that have been its light-o'-love, as it grew tawny and full of life, before the appointed date when it should return to its captivity. I think of that slow-travelling hum and swish which laid it low, of the gathering to stack, and the long waiting under the rustle and drip of the sheltering trees, until yesterday the hoot of the thresher blew, and there began the falling into this dun silvery peace. Here it will lie with the pale sun narrowly filtering in on it, and by night the pale moon, till slowly, week by week, it is stolen away, and its ridges and drifts sink and sink, and the beasts have eaten it all. ...

When the dusk is falling, I go out to them again. They have nearly finished now; the chaff in the chaff-shed is mounting hillock-high; onlythe little barley stack remains unthreshed. Mrs. George-the-Gaul is standing with a jug to give drink to the tired ones. Some stars are already netted in the branches on the pines; the Guinea-fowl are silent. But still the harmonious thresher hums and showers from three sides the straw, the chaff, the corn; and the men fork, and rake, and cart, and carry, sleep growing in their muscles, silence on their tongues, and the tranquillity of the long day nearly ended in their souls. They will go on till it is quite dark.

1911.

XIII

THAT OLD-TIME PLACE

" YES, suh—here we are at that old-time place ! " And our dark driver drew up his little victoria gently. Through the open doorway, into a dim, cavernous, ruined house of New Orleans we passed. The mildew and dirt, the dark denuded dankness of that old hostel, rotting down with damp and time !

And our guide, the tall, thin, grey-haired dame, who came forward with such native ease and moved before us touching this fungused wall, that rusting stairway, and telling, as it were, no one in her soft, slow speech, things that any one could see—what a strange and fitting figure!

Before the smell of the deserted, oozing rooms, before that old creature leading us on and on, negligent of all our questions, and talking to the air, as though we were not, we felt such discomfort that we soon made to go out again into such freshness as there was on that day of dismal heat. Then realising, it seemed, that she was losing us, our old guide turned; for the first time looking in our faces, she smiled, and said in her sweet, weak voice like the sound from the strings of a spinet long unplayed on: " Don' you wahnd to see the dome-room : an' all the other rooms right here, of this old-time place ? "

Again those words I We had not the hearts to disappoint her. And as we followed on and on, along

the mouldering corridors and rooms where the black peeling papers hung like stalactites, the dominance of our senses gradually dropped from us, and with our souls we saw its soul—the soul of this old-time place ; this mustering house of the old South, bereft of all but ghosts and the grey pigeons niched in the rotting gallery round a narrow courtyard open to the sky.

" This is the dome-room, suh and lady; right over the slave-market it is. Here they did the business of the State—sure; old-times heroes up there in the roof—Washington, Hamilton, Jefferson, Davis, Lee—there they are ! All gone—now ! Yes, suh ! "

A fine—yea, even a splendid room, of great height, and carved grandeur, with hand-wrought bronze sconces and a band of metal bordering, all blackened with oblivion. And the faces of those old heroes encircling that domed ceiling were blackened too, and scarred with damp, beyond recognition. Here, beneath their gaze, men had banqueted and danced and ruled. The pride and might and vivid strength of things still fluttered their uneasy flags of spirit, moved disherited wings ! Those old-time feasts and grave discussions—we seemed to see them printed on the thick air, imprisoned in this great chamber built above their dark foundations. The pride and the might and the vivid strength of things—gone, all gone ! "

We became conscious again of that soft, weak voice.

" Not hearing very well, suh, I have it all printed, lady—beautifully told here—yes, indeed ! "

She was putting cards into our hands ; then, impassive, maintaining ever her impersonal chant, the guardian of past glory led us on.

" Now we shall see the slave-market—down-stairs

underneath ! It's wet for the lady—the water comes in now—yes, suh ! "

On the crumbling black and white marble floorings the water indeed was trickling into pools. And down in the halls there came to us wandering—strangest thing that ever strayed through deserted grandeur—a brown, broken horse, lean, with a sore flank and a head of tremendous age. It stopped and gazed at us, as though we might be going to give it things to eat, then passed on, stumbling over the ruined marbles. For a moment we had thought him ghost—one of the many. But he was not, since his hoofs sounded. The scrambling clatter of them had died out into silence before we came to that dark, crypt-like chamber whose marble columns were ringed in iron, veritable pillars of foundation. And then we saw that our old guide's hands were full of newspapers. She struck a match; they caught fire and blazed. Holding high that torch she said : " See ! Up there's his name, above where he stood. The auctioneer. Oh, yes, indeed ! Here's where they sold them ! "

Below that name, decaying in the wall, we had the slow, uncanny feeling of someone standing there in the gleam and flicker from that paper torch. For a moment the whole shadowy room seemed full of forms and faces. Then the torch died out, and our old guide, pointing through an archway with the blackened stump of it, said:

" 'Twas here they kept them—indeed, yes I "

We saw before us a sort of vault, stone-built, and low, and long. The light there was too dim for us to make out anything but walls and heaps of rusting scrap-iron cast away and mouldering down. But trying to pierce that darkness we become conscious as it

seemed, of innumerable eyes gazing not at us, but through the archway where we stood; innumerable white eyeballs gleaming out of blackness. From behind us came a little laugh. It floated past through the archway, toward those eyes. Who was that? Who laughed in there? The old South itself—that incredible, fine, lost soul! That "old-time" thing of old ideals, blindfolded by its own history! That queer proud blend of simple Chivalry and tyranny, of piety and the abhorrent thing! Who was it laughed there in the old slave-market—laughed at these white eyeballs glaring from out of the blackness of their dark cattle-pen? What poor departed soul in this House of Melancholy? But there was no ghost when we turned to look—only our old guide with her sweet smile.

"Yes, suh. Here they all came—'twas the finest hotel—before the war-time; old Southern families—buyin' an' sellin' their property. Yes, ma'am, very interesting I This way! And here were the bells to all the rooms. Broken you see—all broken!"

And rather quickly we passed away, out of that "old-time place"; where something had laughed, and the drip, drip, drip of water down the walls was as the sound of a spirit grieving.

1912.

XIV

ROMANCE—THREE GLEAMS

I

ON that New Year's morning when I drew up the blind it was still nearly dark, but for the faintest pink flush glancing out there on the horizon of black water. The far shore of the river's mouth was just soft dusk ; and the dim trees below me were in perfect stillness. There was no lap of water. And then—I saw her, drifting in on the tide—the little ship, passaging below me, a happy ghost. Like no thing of this world she came, ending her flight with sailings closing and her glowing lantern eyes. There was I know not what of stealthy joy about her thus creeping in to the unexpecting land. And I wished she would never pass, but go on gliding by down there for ever with her dark ropes, and her bright lanterns, and her mysterious felicity, so that I might have for ever in my heart the blessed feeling she brought me, coming like this out of that great mystery the sea. If only she need not change to solidity, but ever be this visitor from the unknown, this sacred bird, telling with her half-seen, trailing-down plume-sails the story of uncharted wonder. If only I might go on trembling, as I was, with the rapture of all I did not know and could not see, yet felt pressing against me and touching my face with its lips 1 To think of her at anchor in cold light was like flinging-to a door in the

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face of happiness. And just then she struck her bell ; the faint silvery-far-down sound fled away before her, and to every side, out into the hush, to discover the echo. But nothing answered, as if fearing to break the spell of her coming to brush with reality the dark sea dew from her sailwings. But within *me,* in response, there began the song of all unknown things ; the song so tenuous, so ecstatic, which seems to sweep and quiver across such thin golden strings, and like an eager dream dies too soon. The song of the secret-knowing wind that has peered through so great forests and over such wild sea ; blown on so many faces, and in the jungles of the grass—the song of all that the wind has seen and felt. The song of lives that I should never live; of the loves that I should never love—singing to me as though I should ! And suddenly I felt that I could not bear my little ship of dreams to grow hard and grey, her bright lanterns drowned in the cold light, her dark ropes spidery and taut, her sea-wan sails all furled, and she no more enchanted; and turning away I let fall the curtain.

II

Then what happens to the moon ? She, who, shy and veiled slips out before dusk to take the air of heaven, wandering timidly among the columned clouds, and fugitive from the staring of the sun ; she, who, when dusk has come, rules the sentient night with such chaste and icy spell—whither and how does she retreat ?

I came on her one morning—I surprised her. She was stealing into a dark wintry wood, and five little stars were chasing her. She was orange-hooded, a

light-o'-love dismissed—unashamed and unfatigued, having taken all. And she was looking back with her almond eyes, across her dark-ivory shoulder at Night where he still lay drowned in the sleep she had brought him. What a strange, slow, mocking look I So might Aphrodite herself have looked back at some weary lover, remembering the fire of his first embrace. Insatiate, smiling creature, slipping down to the rim of the world to her bath in the sweet waters of dawn, whence emerging, pure as a water lily, she would float in the cool sky till evening came again ! And just then she saw me looking, and hid behind a holm-oak tree ; but I could still see the gleam of one shoulder and her long narrow eyes pursuing me. I went up to the tree and parted its dark boughs to take her ; but she had slipped behind another. I called to her to stand if only for one moment. But she smiled and went slipping on, and I ran thrusting through the wet bushes, leaping the fallen trunks. The scent of rotting leaves disturbed by my feet leaped out into the darkness, and birds, surprised, fluttered away. And still I ran—she slipping ever further into the grove, and ever looking back at me. And I thought: ' But I will catch you yet, you nymph of perdition ! The wood will soon be passed, you will have no cover then I ' And from her eyes, and the scanty gleam of her flying limbs, I never looked away, not even when I stumbled or ran against tree trunks in my blind haste. And at every clearing I flew more furiously, thinking to seize all of her with my gaze before she could cross the glade; but ever she found some little low tree, some bush of birch ungrown, or the far top branches of the next grove to screen her flying body and preserve allurement. And all the time she was dipping, dipping to the rim

of the world. And then I tripped ; but, as I rose, I saw that she had lingered for me ; her long sliding eyes were full, it seemed to me, of pity, as if she would have liked for me to have enjoyed the sight of her. I stood still, breathless, thinking that at last she would consent; but flinging back, up into the air, one dark-ivory arm, she sighed and vanished. And the breath of her sigh stirred all the birch-tree twigs just coloured with the dawn. Long I stood in that thicket gazing *at* the spot where she had leapt from me over the edge of the world —my heart quivering.

Ill

We embarked on the estuary steamer that winter morning just as daylight came full. The sun was on the wing scattering little white clouds, as an eagle might scatter doves. They scurried up before him with their broken feathers tipped and tinged with gold. In the air was a touch of frost, and a smoky mist-drift clung here and there above the reeds, blurring the shores of the lagoon so that we seemed to be steaming across boundless water, till some clump of trees would fling its top out of the fog, then fall back into whiteness.

And then, in that thick vapour, rounding I suppose some curve, we came suddenly into we knew not what —all white and moving it was, as if the mist were crazed ; murmuring, too, with a sort of restless beating. We seemed to be passing through a ghost—the ghost of all the life that had sprung from this water and its shores ; we seemed to have left reality, to be travelling through live wonder.

And the fantastic thought sprang into my mind: I have died. This is the voyage of my soul in the wild. I am in the final wilderness of spirits—lost in the ghost robe that wraps the earth. There seemed in all this white murmuration to be millions of tiny hands stretching out to me, millions of whispering voices, of wistful eyes. I had no fear, but a curious baffled eagerness, the strangest feeling of having lost myself and become part of this around me; exactly as if my own hands and voice and eyes had left me and were groping, and whispering, and gazing out there in the eeriness. I was no longer a man on an estuary steamer, but part of sentient ghostliness. Nor did I feel unhappy; it seemed as though I had never been anything but this Bedouin spirit wandering.

We passed through again into the stillness of plain mist, and all those eerie sensations went, leaving nothing but curiosity to know what this was that we had traversed. Then suddenly the sun came flaring out, and we saw behind us thousands and thousands of white gulls dipping, wheeling, brushing the water with their wings, bewitched with sun and mist. That was all. And yet—that white-winged legion through whom we had ploughed our way were not, could never be, to me just gulls—there was more than mere sun-glamour gilding their misty plumes; there was the wizardry of my past wonder, the enchantment of romance.

1912.

XV

FELICITY

WHEN God is so good to the fields, of what use are words—those poor husks of sentiment 1 There is no painting Felicity on the wing ! No way of bringing on to the canvas the flying glory of things ! A single buttercup of the twenty million in one field is worth all these dry symbols—that can never body forth the very spirit of that froth of May breaking over the hedges, the choir of birds and bees, the lost-travelling down of the wind-flowers, the white-throated swallows in their Odysseys. Just here there are no skylarks, but what joy of song and leaf; of lanes lighted with bright trees, the few oaks still golden brown, and the ashes still spiritual! Only the blackbirds and thrushes can sing-rp this day, and cuckoos over the hill. The year has flown so fast that the apple-trees have dropped nearly all their bloom, and in " long meadow " the " daggers " are out early, beside the narrow bright streams. Orpheus sits there on a stone, when nobody is by, and pipes to the ponies ; and Pan can often be seen dancing with his nymphs in the raised beech-grove where it is always twilight, if you lie still enough against the far bank.

Who can believe in growing old, so long as we are wrapped in this cloak of colour and wings and song; so long as this unimaginable vision is here for us to gaze at—the soft-faced sheep about us, and the wool-

bags drying out along the fence, and great numbers of tiny ducks, so trustful that the crows have taken several.

Blue is the colour of youth, and all the blue flowers have a " fey " look. Everything seems young—too young to work. There is but one thing busy, a starling, fetching grubs for its little family, above my head—it must take that flight at least two hundred times a day. The children should be very fat.

When the sky is so happy, and the flowers so luminous, it does not seem possible that the bright angels of this day shall pass into dark night, that slowly these wings shall close, and the cuckoo praise himself to sleep, mad midges dance-in the evening; the grass shiver with dew, wind die, and no bird sing. . . .

Yet it is so. Day has gone—the song and glamour and swoop of wings. Slowly has passed the daily miracle. It is night. But Felicity has not withdrawn ; she has but changed her robe for silence, velvet, and the pearl fan of the moon. Everything is sleeping, save only a single star, and the pansies. Why they should be more wakeful than the other flowers, I do not know. The expressions of their faces, if one bends *down* into the dusk, are sweeter and more cunning than ever. They have some compact, no doubt, in hand.

What a number of voices have given up the ghost to this night of but one voice—the murmur of the stream out there in darkness !

With what religion all has been done! Not one buttercup open ; the yew-trees already with shadows flung down ! No moths are abroad yet; it is too early in the year for nightjars ; and the owls are quiet. But who shall say that in this silence, in this hovering wan light, in this air bereft of wings, and of all scent save

freshness, there is less of the ineffable, less of that before which words are dumb ?

It is strange how this tranquillity of night, that seems so final, is inhabited, if one keeps still enough. A lamb is bleating out there on the dim moor ; a bird somewhere, a little one, about three fields away, makes the sweetest kind of chirruping ; some cows are still cropping. There is a scent, too, underneath the freshness—sweet-brier, I think, and our Dutch honeysuckle ; nothing else could so delicately twine itself with air. And even in this darkness the roses have colour, more beautiful perhaps than ever. If colour be, as they say, but the effect of light on various fibre, one may think of it as a tune, the song of thanksgiving that each form puts forth, to sun and moon and stars and fire. These moon-coloured roses are singing a most quiet song. I see all of a sudden that there are many more stars beside that one so red and watchful. The flown kite is there with its seven pale worlds ; it has adventured very high and far to-night—with a company of others remoter still.

This serenity of night! What could seem less likely ever more to move, and change again to day ? Surely now the world has found its long sleep ; and the pearly glimmer from the moon will last, and the precious silence never again yield to clamour ; the grape-bloom of this mystery never more pale out into gold. . . .

And yet it is not so. The nightly miracle has passed. It is dawn. Faint light has come. I am waiting for the first sound. The sky as yet is like nothing but grey paper, with the shadows of wild geese passing. The. trees are phantoms. And then it comes—that first call of a bird, startled at discovering day! Just one call—and now, here, there, on all the trees, the sudden

answers swelling, of that most sweet and careless choir. Was irresponsibility ever so divine as this, of birds waking ? Then—saffron into the sky, and once more silence 1 What is it birds do after the first Chorale ? Think of their sins and business ? Or just sleep again ? The trees are fast dropping unreality, and the cuckoos begin calling. Colour is burning up in the flowers already ; the dew smells of them.

The miracle is ended, for the starling has begun its job ; and the sun is fretting those dark, busy wings with gold. Full day has come again. But the face of it is a little strange, it is not like yesterday. Queer —to think, no day is like to a day that's past and no night like a night that's coming ! Why, then, fear death, which is but night ? Why care, if next day have different face and spirit ?

The sun has lighted buttercup-field now, the wind touches the lime-tree. Something passes over me away up there.

It is Felicity on her wings !

1912.

XVI

THE MEETING

WALKING one day in Kensington Gardens, I strolled into the enclosure of the tea kiosque and sat down on the side sheltered from the east, where fashionable people never go.

The new-fledged leaves were swinging in a breeze that kept stealing up in puffs under the half-bare branches ; sparrows and pigeons hunted on the grass for crumbs ; and all the biscuit-coloured chairs and little round-topped marble tri-pods, with thick inverted cups and solitary bowls of sugar, were sending out their somewhat bleak invitation. A few of these tables were occupied ; at one sat a pale, thin child in an enormous white hat, in the company of a cheery little red-cross nurse and a lady in grey, whose pathetic, half-thankful eyes betokened a struggling convalescence; at another, two ladies—Americans, perhaps—with pleasant, keen, brown faces, were munching rolls ; at a third, an old square man, bald and grey, sat smoking. At short intervals, like the very heart's cry of that Spring day, came the scream of the peacocks from across the water.

Presently there strolled along the gravel space from right to left a young man in a fashionable cut-away coat, shining top-hat, and patent boots, swinging a cane. His face was fresh and high-coloured, with little

twisted dark moustaches, and bold, bright eyes. He walked like an athlete, whose legs and loins are hard with muscle; and he looked about him with exaggerated nonchalance. But under his swagger I detected expectation, anxiety, defiance. He repassed, evidently looking for someone, and I lost sight of him.

But presently he came back, and this time he had *her* with him. Oh ! She was a pretty soul, with her veil, and her flower-like face behind it, and her quick glances to left and right; and her little put-on air of perfect ease, of perfect—how shall we call it ?—justification. And yet behind all this, too, was a subtle mixture of feelings—of dainty displeasure at her own position, of unholy satisfaction, of desire not to be caught. And he ? How changed ! His eyes, no longer bold and uneasy, were full of humble delight of deferential worship ; his look of animal nonchalance was gone.

Choosing a table not far from mine, which had, as it were, a certain strategic value, he drew her chair back for her, and down they sat. I could not hear their talk, but I could watch them, and knew as well as if they had told me in so many words that this was their first stolen meeting. That first meeting, *which must not be seen,* or rather the first meeting that both *felt* must not be seen—a very different thing. They had stepped in their own minds over the unmarked boundary of convention. It was a moment that had perhaps been months in coming, the preliminary moment that in each love affair comes only once, and makes all the after poignancy so easy.

Their eyes told the whole story—her restlessly watchful of all around, with sudden clingings to his;

and his, with their attempt at composure, and obvious devotion. And it was psychologically amusing to see the difference between the woman and the man. In the midst of the stolen joy she had her eye on the world, instinctively deferring to its opinion, owning, so to speak, that she was in the wrong ; while he was only concerned with striving not to lower himself in his own estimation by looking ridiculous. His deference to the world's opinion had gone by the board, now that he was looking into her eyes.

' D—n the world ! ' he said to himself; while she, still watching the world as a cat watches some bullying dog, knew she need not trouble about looking ridiculous—she would never look that. And when their eyes met, and could not for a moment tear themselves apart, it gave one an ache in the heart, the ache that the cry of the peacock brings, or the first Spring scent of the sycamores.

And I began wondering. The inevitable life of their love, just flowering like the trees, the inevitable life with its budding, and blossom, and decay, started up before me. Were they those exceptional people that falsify all expectation and prove the rule ? Not they 1 They were just the pair of lovers, the man and woman, clean, and vigorous, and young, with the Spring in their blood—fresh-run, as they say of the salmon, and as certain to drift back to the sea at the appointed time. On that couple bending their heads together, morals and prophecies were as little likely to take effect as a sleet shower on the inevitable march of Spring.

I thought of what was in store—for him, the hours of waiting, with his heart in his mouth, tortured by not knowing whether she would come, or why she did not

come. And for her the hours of doubt: "Does he really love me? He cannot really love me!" The stolen meetings, whose rapture has gone almost as soon as come, in thought of the parting; the partings themselves—the tearing asunder of eyes, the terrible blank emptiness in the heart; and the beginning of waiting again. And then for her, the surreptitious terrors and delights of the "post," that one particular delivery agreed on for safety; the excuses for going out, for secrecy, for solitude. And for him, the journeys past the house after dark to see the lights in the windows, to judge from them what was going on; and the cold perspirations and furies of jealousy and terror; the hours of hard walking to drive away the fit; the hours of sleepless desire.

And then the hour, the inevitable hour of some stolen day on the river, or under the sheltering cover of a wood; and that face of hers on the journey home, and his offer to commit suicide,to relieve her of his presence; and the hard-wrung promise to meet once more. And the next meeting, the countless procession of meetings. The fierce delights, the utter lassitudes—and always like the ground bass of an accompaniment, the endless subterfuge. And then—the slow gradual process of cooling—the beginning of excuses, the perpetual weaving of self-justification; the solemn and logical self-apologies; the finding of flaws in each other; humiliating oaths and protestations; and finally the day when she did not come, or he did not come. And, then—the letters; the sudden *rapprochement,* and the still more sudden—end.

It all came before the mind, like the scenes of a cinematograph; but beneath the table I saw their hands steal together, and solemn prophetic visions vanished.

Wisdom, and knowledge, and the rest, what were they all to that caress !

So, getting up, I left them there, and walked away under the chestnut trees, with the cry of the peacock following.

1904.

XVII

JOY OF LIFE

IT was in the neighbourhood of Berkeley Square, and I had come out of a drawing-room, warm, scented and full of " portable property." The hall door was closed behind me, the East wind caught me in the face, and I walked into a child.

She may have been five years old. With a scanty red petticoat widespread over her humped-up knees, she was sitting on the pavement and beating it with a bit of withered branch decorated with three or four brown leaves. In time to the beating she chanted a song. Blackish-brown curls hung all about her round, smutty little face ; the remains of a hat rested beside her on the pavement; and two reckless, little black devils looked out of her eyes.

She was so delightful a contrast to the " portable property " that it was impossible not to stare at her.

So I went down the street crabwise.

She knew I was going crabwise, she knew the position of the " bobby" at the corner, she knew everything all round her. And when she saw me vanishing she began to flirt with me. She put her head on one side like a terrier asking for cake, and looked up through her tangle of curls. She smiled—I smiled, and went round the corner. There was a little patter of hobnails, and *she* came round the corner. If she was queer on the ground, she was queerer on her feet; she

had clapped her hat—the last bit of a large girl's hat—on the back of her head ; her short, red petticoat gaped, her bare brown legs were thrust into a woman's boots. She shuffled along behind, beating the railings with her branch. Sometimes she ranged up alongside, shot a shy glance at my top-hat, and fell back again.

People passed and stared at her, but she paid no attention.

In Oxford Street we stopped and held a conversation. It began and ended thus :

" Would you like some sweets ? " I left her sucking a sixpence, staring after me with her great black eyes, and beating a shop window with her branch.

But when I looked round again she was dancing to a barrel-organ with some other children, her petticoat a little red teetotum in the crowded street.

1899.

XVIII

BEL COLORE

ON one side of the road, a grove of olives ; on the other a rose-hung villa, maize-coloured, with faded shutters, and a vanished name on the gate. In front, a tall palm lurching unpruned out of tangled shrubs ; at the side, a crimson garment on a line. The *dishabille* of an eternal siesta !

Overhead the sky sapphire, with a western blaze of gold ; the breeze rustling in the palm leaves ; a goat's bell tinkling, a scent of burning wood, the croaking of frogs.

In a tarnished cage, at a second story window, a parrot, with a yellow head, nasally chanting : " Niculi ni-co-la ! "

Three children pass, and lift their faces. The sun throws a glow under their hats. They call: " Scratch -a-Poll, poll I " The eldest, a fair-haired English boy, lingers, and as he looks, a young girl with cheeks like poppies and eyes like jet, with a short red dress and bushy black-brown hair, comes out, and stands in the doorway. He wavers, snatches at his hat, blushes and stands still. She walks off, swinging in her rounded hand a little strap-full of books. She turns her head for just a second. Her voice rings out clear ; repeating what she has heard, like her own parrot:

" Go to bed im-me-diate-lee you *naugh-tee* lee-tie *bambino* " ; and she laughs a mocking little laugh.

The boy hangs his head, clutches his hat, breaks into a run. The little girl moves sunwards, swaying her hips demurely like a grown woman. She looks with half-closed eyes straight at the road in front of her; and slowly her grave little figure—symbol of the South's languor, cruelty, and love—fades to a crimson stain on the line of the dusty road.

XIX

A PILGRIMAGE

I SAW them from the top of a Hammersmith 'bus, sitting on the smart white doorstep of a house opposite the Albert Memorial. It was a very hot, bright day, the cabs and carriages of the fashionable were streaming by, and people loitered in the sunshine, while these three small pilgrims sat on that doorstep.

The biggest, a boy of six, held on his slippery lap a baby with a huge head and an aspect of measles, whose fist, like a lump of paste, was thrust into its cheek, whose eyes were screwed up, whose feet emerged limply from the bundle of its body. And now and then the boy heaved it up, and looked into its face.

A girl, younger than the boy, with a fair, patient, dirty little face, and large circles round her eyes, in a short loose frock of faded blue, which showed her little bare knees, leaned against the doorpost; she had no hat, and was fast asleep. The boy himself stared before him with big brown eyes. His hair was dark and his ears projected ; his clothes were decent, but dusty from head to foot. His eyes were those of people who get through the day somehow, and are very tired at the end. I spoke to him.

" Is that your sister ? "

" No."

" What then ? "

" A friend ! "

" And that ? "

" My brother."

" Where do you live ? '

" Regent's Pawk."

" How did you get as far as this ? "

" Came to see Albert Mermorial."

" Are you very tired ? "

No answer.

" Here's a shilling ; now you can go home in a 'bus."

No answer, no smile; but a grubby hand closing over the shilling.

" Do you know how much that is ? "

His face twinkled with contempt; he heaves his brother slowly.

" Twelve pennies."

Glancing back I saw him holding his brother very tight, and stirring up his " friend " with his boot to look at the shilling.

1900,

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XX

THE KINGS

LONDON sun has robbed the leaves of freshness. No watercart passes. My dog pants with the heat, his tongue lolling from his dripping mouth. No traffic in this quiet backwater, with its steep ascent, its studios, its stables, its trees.

In the road, before a high house, stands a flushed and ragged woman clutching some sprigs of lavender, and on the curbstone sits another. Out of her dirty rag of shawl peeps the weazened little face of a baby, sucking at the twisted, ragged rubber of an unclean empty bottle. This baby is staring out at the world—so vast, so full of heat and dust and hunger—with eyes that seem full of knowledge. This baby has found out all there is to know. Its eyes are patient, close to the lean breast of her whose eyes also are patient.

" My sister—poor thing—an' her little byby. 'Er 'usband's left her. We've walked from Brighton, so 'elp me ! Gawd love you sir, buy a sprig o' lavender I "

Two feet from the street dust and dirt, the mother and the baby look up.

" Gawd love you, sir, buy a sprig o' lavender I "

Of lavender ! . . .

In the hall of the high house the sun dances through the chinks of the blinds ; in that dancing, shadowy light, people glide, and whisper, and smile.

Upstairs, where everything is cool, a new mother lies in her white bed. By her feet the nurse stands, with the new baby in her arms, fat, sleek, cowled like a bishop ; round him are faces, awed and delighted, wondering at this snug atom in its speckless wool and dimity.

A sound ; all tremble I

The clock ticks, the nurse's shoes patter, the hum of worship rises. With the evening drifts in the scent of limes ; and on the pillows of her white bed the mother is smiling.

King out there in the heat—King in here in the cool —You have come into your Kingdoms !

1904.

XXI

THE WORKERS

THE little, squat, dark houses with snow-sprinkled roofs, having windows like the blurred eyes of old people, ran curving away from the thoroughfare. Built so long ago that they seemed as the ghosts of departed dwellings, they harboured countless workers, who could be seen plying their needles by the afternoon light, gleaming yellowish under a snowladen sky. Indeed, in some windows tallow candles were already burning.

Unlike the doors of the shiftless, these street doors, to which clung the memory of paint, were religiously closed, and it was necessary to tap before one could enter. The woman who opened the last of those doors was about fifty-five years of age, and dressed in very crumpled clothes as of one always sitting down, with a face dissected by deep furrows so that no two features seemed to belong to one another. She held in one hand a threaded needle, in the other a pair of trousers, to which she had been adding the accessories demanded by our civilisation. One had never seen her without a pair of trousers in her hand, because she could only manage to supply them with decency at the rate of seven or eight pairs a day, working twelve hours. For each pair she received seven farthings and used nearly one farthing's worth of cotton; and this gave her an income, in good times, of six to seven shillings a week. But some weeks there were no trousers to be had, and

then it was necessary to live on the memory of those which had been, together with a little sum put by from weeks when trousers were more plentiful. Deducting two shillings and threepence for rent of the little back room, there was therefore, on an average, about two shillings and ninepence left for the sustenance of herself and husband, who was fortunately a cripple, and somewhat indifferent whether he ate or not. And looking at her face, so furrowed, and at her figure, of which there was not much, one could well understand that she, too, had long established within her such internal economy as was suitable to one who had been " in trousers " twenty-seven years, and, since her husband's accident fifteen years before, in trousers only, finding her own cotton.

Her face was long and narrow, her eyes grey, and they looked at one as though they knew she ought to ask whether anything could be done for her, and knew, too, that she would not.

She spoke, indeed, very little except about her trousers. Oh ! they *were* so common I so *pa,'try,* no quality at all ! And lately they had been giving her boys' knickerbockers. She had " no patience " with *them,* which took every bit as much cotton, and brought you less money. In old days it had been a better class of trousers altogether, but now there seemed no heart in them—no heart at all ! And they were so irregular ! But you couldn't blame the woman who had them of the tailors, and gave them out—she let you have as many as she could, and only got a farthing a pair for herself. So there it was !

A bed which had neither legs, nor clothes that could be recognised as clothes, took up the greater part of the little room, which was fuller of rags, charred pans,

chipped crockery, and trousers, than any room of its size ever seen. On this bed a black cat with a white nose was sleeping. Bits of broken wooden boxes were heaped up, waiting to feed the small fire. And on the wall by the side of this fire hung the ghost of a toasting fork. Very lonely and thin was that wispy piece of iron, as though for many days it had lacked bread. Hooked to the wall, with its prongs turned upwards, it was like the black shrivelled husk of an arm and hand, asking for more with its spidery fingers.

Its owners were seated with their backs to it; she just under the tightly-closed window, so as to use as long as possible a kind of light for which she had not to pay ; and her husband with his crippled leg almost in the fire. He was a man with a round, white face, a little grey moustache curving down like a parrot's beak, and round whitish eyes. In his aged and unbuttoned suit of grey, with his head held rather to one side, he looked like a parrot—a bird clinging to its perch, with one grey leg shortened and crumpled against the other. He talked, too, in a toneless, equable voice, looking sideways at the fire, above the rims of dim spectacles, and now and then smiling with a peculiar disenchanted patience.

No—he said—it was no use to complain; did no good 1 Things had been like this for years, and so, he had no doubt, they always would be. There had never been much in trousers ; not. this common sort that anybody'd wear, as you might say. Though he'd never seen anybody wearing such things; and where they went to he didn't know—out of England, he should think. Yes, he had been a carman; run over by a dray. Oh I yes, they had given him something—four bob a week; but the old man had died and the four

bob had died too. Still, there he was, sixty years old—not so very bad for his age. *She* couldn't get through half the work but for him holding the things for her, and pressing them, and one thing and another—not up to much, of course—but he could do all that !

With those words he raised his right hand, which clasped a pair of linings, and there passed between his whitish eyes and the grey eyes of his wife one of those looks which people who have long lived together give each other. It had no obvious gleam of affection, but just the matter-of-fact mutual faith of two creatures who from year's end to year's end can never be out of arm's length of one another. For, as he said, they were not much of goers-out, though he did get out once in a way when the weather was fine, and *she* had to go out to get her work and come back again. His eyes, travelling round the chaotic, grimy little room, which was as much the whole world to them as ever was his cell to a prisoner, rested on the cat, coiled up on the ragged bedclothes. Oh, yes ! The cat. There she was, always asleep. She was a bit of company. They didn't see much company; kept themselves to themselves. Low neighbourhood—people very funny. Yes, there was nice enough buildings round the corner. But you had to be in a good position to live in them. Seven-and-six a week—and pay it sharp. Not but what they weren't sharp after their rent here ! Just a working man—their landlord—who'd got to pay his rent himself, so what could you expect ? A little spurt of work just now, of course, owing to Christmas. Soon drop down again to nothing afterwards—oh, yes !

Smiling his strange smile, as of a man almost amused at what Fate had devised for him, he reached down and fed the fire with a piece of broken box ; then resumed

his upright posture, with his head bent a little to one side so that it favoured his withered leg. They were talking, he had heard said, about doing something for trousers. But what could you do for things like these, at half-a-crown a pair? People must have 'em, so you'd got to make 'em. There you were, and there you would be! *She* went and heard them talk. They talked very well, she said. It was intellectual for her to go. He couldn't go himself, owing to his leg. He'd like to hear them talk. Oh, yes! And he was silent, staring sideways at the fire, as though in the thin crackle of the flames attacking the fresh piece of wood, he were hearing the echo of that talk from which he was cut off. " Lor bless you ! " he said suddenly, " they'll do nothing ! Can't! " And, stretching out his dirty hand he took from his wife's lap a pair of trousers, and held it up. " Look at 'cm ! Why, you can see right through 'em, linings and all. Who's goin' to pay more than 'alf-a-crown for that? Where they go to I can't think. Who wears 'em? Some Institution I should say. They talk, but dear me, they'll never do anything so long as there's thousands, like us, glad to work for what we can get. Best not to think about it, I say."

And laying the trousers back on his wife's lap, he resumed his sidelong stare into the fire.

The snow-laden sky seemed to have drawn nearer, so little light was there in the room ; and there was no sound, as though the last word had been spoken, and the fire exhausted. In that motionless and soundless twilight the toasting fork on the wall alone seemed to be alive, with its thin, tortured prongs asking for that for which those two had never asked.

1909.

XXII

A PARTING

WHEN one is walking languidly under those trees where a few gold leaves are still hanging, and the scent of brown drying leaves underfoot, and the sweet, pungent scent of leaf bonfires is in the air, and the pursuing rustle of one's dog padding amongst leaf-mortality steals along close behind ; then the beauty, and the pale, lingering sunshine, and trie sadness are almost more than one can bear. It is all a Tristful incarnation of the ghost that will sometimes visit even the sanest soul, with the words : Death ! And then ?

On such a day there is no refuge. It does not seem worth while to take interest in a world touched with mortality, it is even impossible to differentiate between the prosperous and the unfortunate ; for the pleasures and pains of the body, riches and destitution, seem like twin sisters in the presence of that rustling of dead leaves. The pale candles of life are flickering, waiting to resign, and join darkness.

On such a day the sky is the greatest comfort a man can have ; for though he feels terribly that it will never part, and let his eyes peer on and on till they see the top of eternity, still it is high, free, has a semblance of immortality, and perhaps is made up of all the spirit breath that has abandoned dead leaves and the corpses of men.

On such a day, when love, like a discouraged bird,

moves her wings faintly, it is well to stand still, and look long at the sky. The haunting scents, the pursuing rustle, may then for a brief while become deserters ; for up there it seems as though the wings of Harmony were still moving.

It was on such a day that in Kensington Gardens I saw the parting of two poor souls. They had been sitting side by side in the dim alley of chestnut trees which leads down past the Speke monument to the Serpentine—a tall, burly, bearded man, and a white wisp of a girl. There was nothing in any way remarkable about them; the man just an ordinary business type, the girl, probably, a governess. And they sat so motionless, talking in such low voices, that I had quite forgotten them; for on that day, the tide of interest in one's fellow creatures was at low ebb. But suddenly I became conscious that they had risen. Half-hidden by the trunk of the chestnut tree, whose few broad leaves were so like hands stretched out to the pale sunlight, they stood close together, indifferent to my presence ; and there was that in the way they were looking at each other which made one's heart ache. Deep down in the eyes of both, life was surely dying—dying quietly as ever were leaves just about to fall. And I knew, as certainly as though all their little history had been made plain, that this was a last meeting. Some fatal force was severing them, and though neither confessed, both knew that it was for ever.

" And you'll write to me ? "

," And when I come back ? "

But the words were spoken as though all words had the same lack of meaning to two desperate hearts each trying to comfort the other. From their talk it was clear that they were not man and wife, but it was cer-

tain too, by the way they touched and looked at one another, that this was the parting of those who had been lovers ; the least of their looks and touches was full of passion, quivering, alive. The girl had a little gold crucifix bound on her breast, and while the man talked, his thick fingers kept playing with it, turning it over and over, evidently without knowing what they were handling. She wore, too, a narrow band of ruby-coloured velvet at her neck ; and when he stroked it, her eyes, of that pale blue the colour of flax flowers, darkened as if with delight. Her face, which was rather foreign-looking, with its high cheek-bones and ashen hair, had something of the wilted whiteness of a flower, turned up to him, and her hands, stroking and twisting at his sleeves, could no more keep still than her rapid, whispering voice with its little un-English accent. And he—that burly fellow—it was queer to see the twitching and quivering of his face, as though all the memories common to these two were trying to break through the thick mask of his flesh.

It must have been something very fateful to drag them apart in the full tide of their passion; or was this perhaps only one more of those most pitiful of all episodes, when the twin grim facts of money and reputation have tramped in on love ? It was hard to tell which was the stronger emotion on those faces so close to one another, pity for self, or pity for the other heart, about to be left lonely, to be bereft of its little share of immortality.

And then, without even a glance round to see if any one were looking, they clung together. There could—they felt—be no doing that in the street or at the railway nation ; but here, in shadow, under trees that knew well enough what partings were like, with no one to

see them except one indifferent stranger and a spaniel dog stirring the dead leaves with its long, black nose—here they could try once again to forget.

Whatever their poor story—commonplace and little noble in the world's eye—they, thus clinging together, in their love and in the presence of its death, were symbolic of that autumn day, touched with mortality, when all things seemed to love, and yet lose love, and pass out into nothingness. There was no statue in all those Gardens like this dark, pitiful group of two blotted into each other's arms, trying for a last moment to crush sorrow to death within the prison of their joined lips.

But when that kiss was over—what then ? Would they have courage to turn and walk different ways, leaving their hearts hanging there in the air, framed by the sparse, wan leaves, and taking away, instead, within each of them a little hollow of rustling sound ?

They had not that courage. They went together, their arms listless, the man trying to bear himself indifferently, the girl crying ever so quietly. And as they came nearer and nearer to the Gate, they walked always slower, till they had passed through it, and stood still on the edge of the pavement. And as though, indeed, they had left their hearts clinging in the air of the Gardens, evermore to haunt under those trees, they hardly even touched one another, but with one long, pitiful look, parted.

The sky had changed It was still high, but grey as a dove's wing ; sunless, compounded of unshed tears. And a little cold, talking wind had risen, so that when a leaf fell, it fled away, turned over, fluttered," and dropped. **In** this wind people hurried as though it were telling them things they wished not to hear; and the

numbers of little birds balancing on the bared boughs seemed very silent; one could not tell whether they were happy.

In the alley of chestnut trees I tried to find the place where those two hearts had been left. The wind had blown over; it was lost in the wilderness of grey air. But though I could not see it, I knew it was there, that kiss for ever imprinted on the pale sunlight. And I hunted for it, desiring its warmth on this day that was like the death of love. I could not find it, and slowly walked home, the chill scents dying round me, the pursuing rustle of my dog, padding in leaf-mortality, crept along behind.

1909.

XXIII

A BEAST OF BURDEN

I WAS sitting, on a winter afternoon, in a second-class compartment of the Paris train. There was one empty seat, and presently a French sailor got in and filled it, carrying his luggage in a bundle—a heavy, thick young fellow, bolster-like in his dark blue clothes, and round cap with a dark-red fuzzy ball. He sat humped forward with a fist on either of his thighs ; and his leathery shaven face, as of an ugly and neglected child, so motionless, that there seemed no activity at all on his brain. Suddenly he coughed, long almost silently, behind his hand.

The train started ; we settled down to sleep or read but the sailor sat motionless, coughing now and then his smothered, wheezing cough.

At Amiens, a collector looked at our tickets, and demanded from the sailor the difference between a second and third class fare. He fumbled it slowly, sadly, out of an old leather purse.

Again we started, but as though this incident had broken up his stoicism, the sailor stirred and spoke to me in French. He talked in a turgid, Flemish accent, not easy to understand, and at the end of every phrase dropped his lower lip as though he had spoken his last word. He was on his way—it seemed—from Dunkerque to join his ship at Cherbourg; and this had been the last train he could catch, to be in time. He had

left his widowed mother without money, so that to pay this extra fare seemed terrible to him. For eighteen months he had been on foreign service—for eighteen days he had been at home ; and he was now going back, to serve the remainder of his time on the China station. His brother had been killed by the Japanese, accidentally, being taken for a Russian. His father had been drowned off Iceland, in the summer fishing.

" *C'est me qui a une mere, c'est me qui est seul a la maison. C'est elle qui n'a pas le sou."*

It was his only perfect sentence, and, as he finished it, he spat. Then, seeing from the faces of the company that this was not the thing to do, he smeared it over with a slow, gritting movement of his foot. Looking up at me with his little, deepset eyes, he then said : " *C'est me qui est malade"* and slowly : " *Cest mauvais pour les malades* —I'cl*imat en Chine ? "*

I tried to reassure him, but he shook his head ; and after a long pause said again: " *Cest me qui a une mere, c'est me qui est seul a la maison. C'est elle qui n'a pas le sou"* Tell me—his eyes seemed to ask, why are these things so ? Why have I a mother who depends on me alone, when I am being sent away to die ?

He rubbed his fists on his rounded thighs, then rested them ; and so, humped forward over his outspread arms, sat silent, staring in front of him with deep dark, tiny eyes. He troubled me with no further speech; he had relieved his soul. And, presently, like a dumb, herded beat, patient, mute, carrying his load, he left me at the terminus ; but it was long before I lost the memory of his face and of that chant of his : " *C'est me qui est seul a la maison. . . . C'est me qui a une mere. C'est elle qui n'a pas le sou I"*

1905.

XXIV

THE LIME TREE

I WAS lying on a bank one July afternoon close to a large lime-tree. The bees were busy among her long, drooping, honey-coloured blossoms ; the wind was fluttering all her leaves, swaying her boughs, and drifting her scent towards me. And I was thinking, as I watched her, of the Hindu theory of Art—how, according to that theory, her external shape was of no significance to the artist, and all that mattered was the idea of " tree," only to be realised by long and devoted contemplation. For some minutes I myself tried to contemplate her, gazing through her green-clothed branches to see if I could indeed see her spirit; then, as is the habit in Western minds, my thoughts went wandering off chasing each other like the little buff or blue butterflies that were all round me skimming between the spikes of grass and the soft tops of the clover.

There were some red cattle in the field beyond, and they too distracted my attention, and in the distance a line of moorland, with a pile of stones, like the figure of a man on the hillside. But presently my gaze came back to the lime-tree. She was in a tumult now, the wind had entered her heart, and her shivering gust of emotion was such that one could not choose but look at her. It was the passion one sees when bees are swarming—a fierce, humming swirl of movement,

as though she had suddenly gone mad with life and love. But soon this tumult died away ; she was once more a perfumed, gracious, delicately alluring tree.

' Ah !' I thought, ' when will you reveal your soul to me ? Are you " the essential tree " when you are cool and sweet, vaguely seductive, as now, or when you are being whirled in the arms of the wind and seem so furiously alive ? When shall I see your very spirit ? '

And again my thoughts went straying. This time they did not race like the butterflies, but drifted drowsily as the black bumble-bees were drifting among the foxgloves and purple vetches. And slowly the sweetness of that lime-tree seemed to gather round and imprison my senses, taking all strength from the wings of meditation, and dragging my head lower and lower to the grass. The uncanny, twilight state—half sleep—sweetest of all moments in life, when the world is still with you, yet moonlight-coloured with the coming fantasy of dreams, wrapped me as in the folds of a swoon.

And suddenly I saw lying close to me—yet separated by a gulf of nothingness—a woman, with amber-coloured hair falling over her breast and over creamy flowers growing stiffly round her, as might asphodels. Her fingers held a big black bee to her neck. Her body, though nearly hidden by those stiff, tall flowers, seemed very lovely; and her face was wonderfully sweet, of a perfect oval, so tender as to make one's heart throb. The lips were smiling, and beneath the eyebrows—arched and delicate—her eyes looked at me—velvety, dark, dewy eyes ! All round her were falling innumerable petals of pink and honey colours ; but her eyes kept stealing between them and fixing themselves on mine. There was at one corner of her mouth a

tiny tuck or dimple, as might cling to the lips of a child when some one has been rough with her; and one ear, lying close to a big buttercup, was coloured by it, and looked like a little golden shell. The petals as they fluttered down were stirred by her breath, which seemed to me visible, of a silver hue, and full of strange, soft music.

Her eyes so shone with love, that I tried to raise myself and go to her. But I could not; and each time I failed there came into them such mournfulness, that I almost cried out. Yet in spite of this mournful look, her lips continued to smile, and her form quivered all over amongst the tall, creamy, asphodel-like flowers ; the hand which held the great black bee to her neck never ceased to stroke the creature with a finger like a moonbeam, so pale was it and long and soft.

And I thought: ' It is she I have looked for all my life !' For so it seemed to me !

But the more I tried to raise myself and go to her, the less I could.

While I was thus looking and longing, a grey bird with a narrow tail, like a cuckoo, swept down, and, lodging in the crook of her bare arm, stared into her face with bright round eyes. The shivers that passed down her bare arm, the colour of pearl, seemed to be caressing this bird, as the moonbeam of her finger was caressing the bee against her neck. I could see very well that these two creatures, so close to her heart, were happy; and jealousy grew in me, till with all my might I threw myself towards her; but the nothingness between us resisted me, so that I fell back exhausted.

Then I saw her lift the finger, which caressed the bee; on her lips came a sweet, strange smile, her breast

heaved, her eyes grew deeper, darker. Straining with a strength I never thought to have had against the colourless, impalpable barrier, I crept forward inch by inch; and as I came nearer and nearer her eyes livened, and Legan to glow sweet and warm as heather honey or burnt wine ; shivers ran through her limbs, a lock of her hair floated towards me, and there was love in her face such as no mortal has seen. The bee left her neck, and flying poised within an inch of it, let forth from his wings a gentle humming; the bird on her arm, unafraid, moved its head up and down, and fastened its black eyes on my face as though aware that I had triumphed. I stretched out my arms, and at the touch of them she laughed. No sound was ever heard so tender. Her hair brushed my lips; a drift of perfume smothered me. I sank into a delicious darkness, losing all sense of everything, as if I had been drowned. . . .

A lime-blossom loosened by the bees and the wind had drifted across my lips ; its scent was in my nostrils. There was nothing before me but the fields and the moor, and, close by, the lime-tree. I looked at her. She seemed to me far away, coldly fair, formal in her green beflowered garb; but, for all that, I knew that, in my dream, I had seen and touched her soul.

1909.

XXV

THE RUNAGATES

EVERYTHING was still. It was sundown, and not the faintest breeze stirred the warm, sleepy ait.

Along the straggling street, the light lay soft on whitewashed houses, rounding the angles, and tingeing the walls, roofs, doorways with a faint, lustrous pink. In the open space of the Chapel of Ease, or at the doors of shops and houses were figures—lolling, or gossiping drowsily in the soft, Devonshire drawl.

In front of the Inn sprawled a spaniel pup all head and legs, playing with its own ears, and gaping helplessly at the children who ran out of by-streets, chased each other lazily, and disappeared. An old man in fustian, with a bushy projecting beard, leaned heavily on a stick against the wall, turning to mutter sleepily to some one within. There was a faint, distant cawing of rooks, a smell of bacon and old hay, of burning wood, of honeysuckle.

Then on the nodding village came the sound of van-wheels, and with it a kind of stir and rustle. That sound of wheels grew louder, then ceased; opposite the Chapel of Ease stood a gypsy van, cavernous, black, weather-stained, with baskets, strings of onions, pans, a tiny blue thread of rising smoke, a smell of old clothes.

The horse stood where it was pulled up, without movement, drooping its tired head; by its side a gypsy

girl stretched herself, resting on one leg, with her hands at the back of her head, where the light played tricks with her blue-black hair, giving it the colour of bronze.

Lithe as a snake, she glanced from side to side with dark eyes, hitching at her skirt, and settling a dingy scarf across her chest. Her angular features had the oblique cat-like cast of her race.

A broad old man with iron-grey hair and coppery visage leaned over the shaft, and talked to some one inside.

The stir and rustle began again.

Children were running out of houses, shops, alleys, everywhere—boys and girls. In white frocks, coloured frocks, with clean faces, and dirty faces ; hustling each other on, then standing quite still.

Their hands were clasped in each others', their mouths wide open. They stood in a half-ring, many-coloured, hushed, a yard or two from the van, shuffling up the dust with their feet, whispering. Sometimes they would break a little, as if for flight, then close up nearer. An old woman, with thick hair and hooked nose, emerged from the van with a baby in her arms. A little girl clutching at her dress hid behind her. Continual quivers of sound like the trembling of telegraph wires ran through the ring of children.

The old woman put the baby into the man's arms, lifted the child to the front of the van, and moved away, talking quickly to the girl in a low voice. Their figures disappeared amongst the houses, and the ring of children sagged nearer to the van; fingers began to creep out, and point; on the outskirts boys took little runs to and fro.

Slowly the pink flush died out of the light, forms

took harder outlines ; a faint humming of gnats began ; and suddenly the sound of voices broke forth, high-pitched in argument.

The old fellow against the Inn wall spat over the bush of his beard, stretched, called in an angry mutter, and stumped away, leaning on his stick; the spaniel puppy retreated uneasily into the Inn, uttering shrill barks over its shoulder ; people came out of doorways, stared at the van, and turning on their heels abruptly vanished.

That foreign thing which had come into the village, had brought with it changes as subtle as the play of light.

The old gypsy stood with his arms leaning on the shaft, whistling and filling a pipe; over against him on the edge of the driving board, sat the child and the baby, flaxen-haired mites with sunburnt faces ; both were silent as dolls, and had something doll-like in their looks, as if set out for inspection.

So the ring of children seemed to think, nudging one another and whispering ; one or two of the elder girls stretched out their hands to the baby, and drew them back with frightened giggles.

The boys began to play—familiarity had bred contempt in them already ; but the girls stood fascinated, their yellow heads bobbing and twisting, their fingers beckoning or pointing.

The light was softening again, becoming greyer, mysterious ; things lost certainty in the gloom, receded and wavered; the fitful glimmer of a window lamp grew steady.

The old gypsy's voice began, clear and persuasive, talking to the children. Up the street a concertina had started " Rule Britannia " in polka time; there were

sounds of scuffling and dancing; two voices were raised in the courtyard of the Inn.

A cart came rattling out between the dim houses. A dog barked ; the voices of the boys at play grew shriller ; there broke out the wailing of a baby, and the skirl of a concertina rising and falling. A woman came out scolding, and dragged two of the girls away :

" What d'yu want with gypsies then ? Yu pair of fules."

A group of men surged in a doorway, voluble, laughing; their faces mere blurs, and the bowls of their pipes glowing and sending forth a splutter of sparks. Across the bluish darkness the house-lamps threw out their fan-shaped gleams. In one of them the heads of the old gypsy and the two children were outlined ruddy and gold-coloured against the grim cavern of the van.

Then, as if starting from the earth, the forms of the two women reappeared ; the old gypsy withdrew his arms from the shaft, there was a confused mutter, a rapid stir, a girl's uneasy laugh; the old horse gave a jerk forward—the van moved. In front, dragging at the horse's bridle, the bent figure of the gypsy girl slipped, dark and noiseless, into the night; with a heavy rumbling the black van disappeared.

There was a sound like a sigh in the street, a patter of footsteps. A man yawned slowly, another called :

" Yu mind that ther', wull'ee ? "

A pipe was knocked out against wood with a sharp tap.

" Waal, mebbe yure raight. Tis main 'ot zurely—gude avenin'."

"Gude naight, Wellium."

"Gude naight."

" Yu'le tak' the ole 'arse then ? "

" That's as mebbe—waal, gude naight."

" Gude naight."

The sound of voices and receding footsteps yielded to a hush, soft and deep as the blackness of the harvest night. The scent of the freshening earth filled all the drowsy air ; a faint breeze like the passing of a spirit went shivering through the village.

A dim form stood noiseless in the street, listening to the concertina drawling out the last notes of " Home, Sweet Home." One by one the fanshaped splashes flickered off the walls ; blackness took their place.

1900.

XXVI.

FOR EVER

THERE came the sound of singing from the forepart of the emigrant train, of patriotic songs in half-drunken voices. The guards consulted their watches; the great Paddington clock recorded fourteen minutes of a new day.

The carpenter looked at me.

" It'sh too bad of them," he said.

The hand of the clock crept towards the quarter, the guards began closing the doors, the carpenter climbed back into his carriage; his pale, round face wore a very blank and dismal look.

" I'll 'ave to go alone, it seems," he said.

Suddenly, at the end of the long platform, a little crowd of men and women appeared, running. The soldier first, then Henry Augustus, very white and out of breath; they scrambled in as the train began to move.

" All along," said Henry Augustus, " o' what we calls a glass o' trouble, sir."

The train gathered speed; the waving caps of the soldier's pals, the face of Henry Augustus's wife, the red hat of her woman friend, faded from our gaze. The carpenter did not look back—he had no one to look back for.

When, after that night in the train, I went to look at the three " out o' works " at Chester Station, they

were already sitting up ; the soldier and the carpenter back to the engine, Henry Augustus opposite, perfuming the air with his clay pipe. The soldier pointed to the carpenter, and said with a cheerful smile : " All right, sir, our friend's been lookin' after us."

The carpenter smiled weakly ; an odour of whisky was wafted from him.

" I been blowin' the fog-horn of the steamer all night," said Henry Augustus ; his eyes, with the little red rings round the edges of the iris, looked quite dead in the early light; his fish-white face was contorted in a grin ; he pointed his pipe at the carriage window : " Wot price Canada, now ? "

It had been bitterly cold that night; the snow was drifted thick and soft into the hollows along the line; on the roofs of the houses at Port Sunlight it was like white thatching with blunted ends ; there was the hush, too, in the air that comes only with heavy snow ; and above it all a wonderful, thick, soft, icy sky, torn into opal shreds by the sun.

Half an hour later we had run into Birkenhead, and were filing down to the ferry amongst the crowd of quiet emigrants. The carpenter in his long coat, carrying a brown rug and his straw tool-bag, sewn up with string, walked in front with a solemn air, as though his legs had been tied on to his somewhat protruding stomach, and he knew that he must move them carefully. He stared ahead with round, blue eyes, above his flabby cheeks, exhaling at every step the perfume of his night's debauch. By my side came the soldier, thrusting his face a little forward, prematurely grizzled, high-coloured, high-cheekboned, with eyes that from staring at great spaces and at death had acquired a peculiar glittering light. Behind, his lips

raised jeeringly above his blackened teeth, with his coat unbuttoned and his tie screwed round under the flap collar of his flannel shirt, lurched Henry Augustus, at his care-for-nobody gait.

A quarter of a mile away, on the grey, gleaming water, was the bulky one-funnelled steamer, with shreds of the night's snow-wrap still clinging to her.

Articulating his words with difficulty, the carpenter spoke:

" Well, she'll 'ave us in an hour or two."

We turned to look at the inanimate monster so soon to swallow up those hundreds on hundreds of men ; and, from behind, the voice of Henry Augustus added :

" It's to be 'oped we'll never 'ave to be brought 'ome again."

We crossed the river and set off into the town for breakfast, the carpenter and I in front.

" It all seems like a dream to me," he said ; and the odour of his whisky enveloped me like a blessing. The door, the passage, the staircase, the one small dining-room of the little hotel were all crowded with emigrants; bearded men, boys, women, babies, sitting round the one long table, or leaning against the walls, waiting for their turns.

A spectacled woman of middle age, with an absent expression and infrequent smiles, was pouring tea out of a huge tin can into coarse, round cups; she gave orders in a sour voice to two small, red-cheeked slaveys, who bore up and down plates of eggs and bacon. Neither round the long table nor in the passage nor on the stairs was there any sound of talking. An uncanny patience, a long strange silence brooded over all; the loud crying of a baby, the continual rattle

of the plates alone broke that silence. There was no room for us all to sit together, but Henry Augustus and I found places side by side. We were served with plates of eggs and bacon, slices of stale bread, cuts of pallid butter, cups of washy tea. Henry Augustus took knife and fork, set them akimbo to his plate, poured half the contents of a vinegar bottle over his eggs, for a long time neither ate nor spake, then suddenly began:

" I'm a-going to do what I can out there ; and if I get on I'm goin' to send you such a letter as'll open your eyes a bit. You don't know my character—I've got a bad name, but a lot o' the black that's on me's a-comin' off." He breathed hard; and his breath, that smelt like the breath of a furnace, smoked in little puffs from his mouth, as though in truth there were a fire alight within him; then slowly he began to eat.

" No, sir," he repeated in a surlier voice, " you don't know me. I never turned my back on a chance yet. I'm a-goin' for ever," he gave me a strange, slow look out of his dead eyes.

The carpenter came up. " We can't get a smell of anything over there," he said querulously. The spactacled woman turned on him at once: " Your turn'll come in a minute." The carpenter went meekly back to his seat, fixing his eyes before him and manoeuvring his legs with care. The baby that had been shaken into silence again began to cry. A boy in a half-bred livery, with a Pompeian face, came in suddenly and announced that the " break" for the landing-stage was at the door.

Some of the emigrants got up; their places were at once taken by others.

"I'm a man that mixes with men," began Henry Augustus again, slowly masticating bacon, with his eyes fixed on his plate; " but I've brought up my children to answer to that," he held up his black-nailed finger. " I'm respected as a father all through Netting Dale, I am. An' all what my wife'll tell you about black eyes and cut throats, well—my letter'll throw another light on that." He made a movement of the fork in his hand, and looked at me, as though with those words he had relieved his soul. " They'll 'ave to bring me back dead if they wants to ; I'm a-goin' for ever, and I 'ope where I'm going I'll get more to eat than wot I've been gettin' 'ere." He grinned, and in a lighter vein began to tell me of occasions on which he had been bolder than other men. On the far side of the room the carpenter and soldier were devouring their breakfast at a tremendous rate.

The Pompeian boy returned. " Any more for the ' break ' ? " he said in his squeaky voice. We four went out and took the last three places. The carpenter was obliged to stand, holding to the roof. A little town urchin ran along behind, bare-footed, through the snow. Henry Augustus jerked his thumb : " A pair o' boots wouldn't come amiss to 'im," he said; and all the drive he went on cracking jokes in a thick voice, but no one else joined in.

The tender put off just as we arrived, and, standing in the slush at the edge of the shelter-shed, we waited a long time for her return. The sun was shining; along the riverside small boats were outlined white in thick bright snow, and every now and then a gull swooped out of the icy sky and swept alone above the wide grey river.

The knots of emigrants kept multiplying round us.

There was no animation, no hurry, no eagerness, no grief. A strange long patience was on them all. One man alone, a bearded Irishman, seemed to have a grievance, which he vented from time to time in a hard, creaking voice. Close to us a grey-haired father stood quite silent beside his stolid, insensible, red-cheeked boy. Behind them a family were gathered in a little circle round a young woman with a baby ; and seated under the shed two comely, black-eyed girls, in patched black skirts, with their mittened hands in their laps, were staring sulkily before them.

The carpenter began asking us conundrums. The soldier said with a laugh," You don't seem very low ! " The carpenter answered, " Must 'ave something to keep our spirits up." Henry Augustus joined in ; he knew as many conundrums as the carpenter, but the carpenter's were of better quality. The soldier remained silent, turning his eyes from side to side ; the expression on his face was that of a man whose thoughts are far away; he stood a little apart, only now and then joining in our laughter.

" And what's mortar do between bricks ? " asked the carpenter.

" Sticks 'em together," replied Henry Augustus.

" Wrong," said the carpenter ; " keeps 'em apart !"

Out on the water puffs of steam wreathed out along the ship's side; the tender was starting back towards us. The crowd of emigrants thickened, but still there was neither hurry, eagerness, nor grief; only two youths, close to us on the right, began to chaff each other coarsely.

The grey-haired father said to his boy: " Take your place, Jo."

Faster came the carpenter's conundruns, as though

he were pouring forth his swan song before for ever being dumb. Faster came Henry Augustus's thick retorts. The soldier's eyes turned faster from side to side, but still they seemed to look at nothing. They saw, perhaps, four small children in Industrial Schools, and a wife who was " on the streets." They saw that London which he had scoured for work, its lights flaring on the open stalls, its long close rows of houses shut against him, its parks where he had flung him down to rest. And yet from side to side the eyes turned as though greedy of this last look before for ever they lost sight. A fine sleet had begun to fall.

Suddenly Henry Augustus said in his jeering voice : " 'Ere she comes."

The carpenter gazed at me and smiled; there was moisture in his eyes, and behind that moisture the very soul of him seemed to be looking forth. The soldier caught my hand in a feverish grip. Henry Augustus glanced slowly round with his dead-fish eyes. " Leavin' old England, for ever," he said.

There was a minute for hurried handshakes, then one behind the other they took their places. So closely packed, so many hundreds, so silent—long were they passing the ticket inspector on the plank. No hurry, no eagerness, no animation, no grief; the long strange patience on them all.

The tender whistled, and, one by one, those hundreds of faces turned in the sunlight and the sleet towards the shore. No joy, no grief, no cry, no cheer; in that weird silence they slipped away.

1906.

XXVII

DELIGHT

I WAS taken by a friend one afternoon to a theatre. When the curtain was raised, the stage was perfectly empty save for tall grey curtains which enclosed it on all sides, and presently through the thick folds of those curtains children came dancing in, singly, or in pairs, till a whole troop of ten or twelve were assembled. They were all girls ; none, I think, more than fourteen years old, one or two certainly not more than eight. They wore but little clothing, their legs, feet and arms being quite bare. Their hair, too, was unbound ; and their faces, grave and smiling, were so utterly joyful, that in looking on them one felt transported to some Garden of Hesperides, where self was not, and the spirit floated in pure ether. Some of these children were fair and rounded, others dark and elf-like ; but one and all looked entirely happy, and quite unself-conscious, giving no impression of artifice, though they had evidently had the highest and most careful training. Each flight and whirling movement seemed conceived there and then out of the joy of being—dancing had surely never been a labour to them, either in rehearsal or performance. There was no tiptoeing and posturing, no hopeless muscular achievement; all was rhythm, music, light, air, and above all things, happiness. Smiles and love had gone to the fashioning of their performance; and smiles and love shone from every

one of their faces and from the clever white turnings of their limbs.

Amongst them—though all were delightful—there were two who especially riveted my attention. The first of these two was the tallest of all the children, a dark thin girl, in whose every expression and movement there was a kind of grave, fiery love.

During one of the many dances, it fell to her to be the pursuer of a fair child, whose movements had a very strange soft charm ; and this chase, which was like the hovering of a dragon-fly round some water-lily, or the wooing of a moonbeam by the June night, had in it a most magical sweet passion. That dark, tender huntress, so full of fire and yearning, had the queerest power of symbolising all longing, and moving one's heart. In her, pursuing her white love with such wistful fervour, and ever arrested at the very moment of conquest, one seemed to see the great secret force that hunts through the world, on and on, tragically unresting, immortally sweet.

The other child who particularly enchanted me was the smallest but one, a brown-haired fairy crowned with a half-moon of white flowers, who wore a scanty little rose-petal-coloured shift that floated about her in the most delightful fashion. She danced as never child danced. Every inch of her small head and body was full of the sacred fire of motion ; and in her little *pas seul* she seemed to be the very spirit of movement. One felt that Joy had flown down, and was inhabiting there; one heard the rippling of Joy's laughter. And, indeed, through all the theatre had risen a rustling and whispering; and sudden bursts of laughing rapture.

I looked at my friend; he was trying stealthily to remove something from his eyes with a finger. And

to myself the stage seemed very misty, and all things in the world lovable; as though that dancing fairy had touched them with tender fire, and made them golden.

God knows where she got that power of bringing joy to our dry hearts : God knows how long she will keep it I But that little flying Love had in her the quality that lies in deep colour, in music, in the wind, and the sun, and in certain great works of art—the power to set the heart free from every barrier, and flood it with delight.

1910,

XXVIII

FLOTSAM AND JETSAM

A REMINISCENCE

THE tides of the war were washing up millions of wrecked lives on all the shores ; what mattered such flotsam as a conscripted deep-sea Breton fisherman, slowly pining away for lack of all he was accustomed to ; or the jetsam of a tall glass-blower from the " invaded countries," drifted into our mountain hospital—no one quite knew why—prisoner for twenty months with the Boches, released at last because of his half-paralysed tongue—what mattered they ? What mattered anything, or any one, in days like those ?

Corporal Mignan, wrinkling a thin, parchmenty face, full of suffering and kindly cynicism, used to call them " *mes deux phenomlnes"* Riddled to the soul by gastritis, he must have found them trying room-mates, with the tricks and manners of sick and naughty children towards a long-suffering nurse. To understand all is to forgive all, they say : but, though he had suffered enough to understand much, Mignan was tempted at times to deliver judgment—for example, when Roche, the Breton fisherman, rose from his bed more than ten times in the night, and wandered out into the little court-yard of the hospital, to look at the stars, because he could not keep still within four walls—so unreasonable of the " *type"* Or when Gray, the tall glass-blower—his grandfather had been English—refused with all

the tenacity of a British workman to wear an undervest, with the thermometer below zero Centigrade.

They inhabited the same room, Flotsam and Jetsam, but never spoke to one another. And yet in all that hospital of French soldiers they were the only two who, in a manner of speaking, had come from England. Fourteen hundred years have passed since the Briton ancestors of Roche crossed in their shallow boats. Yet he was as hopelessly un-French as a Welshman of the hills is to this day un-English. His dark face, shy as a wild animal's, his peat-brown eyes, and the rare, strangely-sweet smile which once in a way strayed up into them; his creased brown hands always trying to tie an imaginary cord ; the tobacco pouched in his brown cheek ; his improperly-buttoned blue trousers , his silence eternal as the stars themselves ; his habit of climbing trees—all marked him out as no true Frenchman. Indeed, that habit of climbing trees caused every soul who saw him to wonder if he ought to be at large : monkeys alone pursue this pastime. And yet—surely one might understand that trees were for Roche the masts of his far-off fishing barque, each hand-grip on the branch of plane or pine-tree solace to his overmastering hunger for the sea. Up there he would cling, or stand with hands in pockets, and look out, far over the valley and the yellowish-grey-pink of the pantiled town roofs, a mile away, far into the mountains where snow melted not, far over this foreign land of " *midi trots quarts"* to an imagined Breton coast and the seas that roll from there to Cape Breton where the cod are. Since he never spoke unless spoken to—no, not once—it was impossible for his landsmen comrades to realise why he got up those trees, and they would summon each other to observe this " *phenornkne?*

this human ourang-outang, who had not their habit of keeping firm earth beneath their feet. They understood his other eccentricities better. For instance, he could not stay still even at his meals, but must get up and slip out, because he chewed tobacco, and since the hospital regulations forbade his spitting on the floor, he must naturally go and spit outside. For "*ces types-la*" to chew and drink was—life! To the presence of tobacco in the cheek and the absence of drink from the stomach they attributed all his un-French ways, save just that one mysterious habit of climbing trees.

And Gray—though only one-fourth English—how utterly British was that "arrogant civilian," as the "*poilus*" called him. Even his clothes, somehow, were British—no one knew who had given them to him; his short grey workman's jacket, brown dingy trousers, muffler and checked cap; his long, idle walk, his absolute *sans-gene,* regardless of any one but himself; his tall, loose figure, with a sort of grace lurking somewhere in its slow, wandering movements, and long, thin fingers. That wambling, independent form might surely be seen any day outside a thousand British public-houses, in time of peace. His face, with its dust-coloured hair, projecting ears, grey eyes with something of the child in them, and something of the mule, and something of a soul trying to wander out of the forest of misfortune; his little tip-tilted nose that never grew on pure-blooded Frenchman; under a scant moustache his thick lips, disfigured by infirmity of speech, whence passed so continually a dribble of saliva—sick British workman was stamped of him. Yet he was passionately fond of washing himself; his teeth, his head, his clothes. Into the frigid winter he would go, and stand at the "*source*" half an hour at

a time, washing and washing. It was a cause of constant irritation to Mignan that his *"phenomlne"* would never come to time, on account of this disastrous habit; the hospital corridors resounded almost daily with the importuning of close shapeless lips for somethirg clean—a shirt, a pair of drawers, a bath, a handkerchief. He had a fixity of purpose ; not too much purpose, but so fixed—yes, he was English !

For " *les deux phenontines* " the soldiers, the servants and the " Powers " of the hospital—all were sorry ; yet they could not understand to the point of quite forgiving their vagaries. The twain were outcast, wandering each in a dumb world of his own, each in the endless circle of one or two hopeless notions. It was irony—or the French system—which had ordered the Breton Roche to get well in a place whence he could see nothing flatter than a mountain, smell no sea, eat no fish. And God knows what had sent Gray there. His story was too vaguely understood, for his stumbling speech simply could not make it plain. " *Les Boches—*ils *vont en payer cher—les Boches,"* muttered fifty times a day, was the burden of his song. Those Boches had come into his village early in the war, torn him from his wife and his *"petite fille"* Since then he had "had fear," been hungry, been cold, eaten grass ; eyeing some fat little dog he would leer and mutter: " *J'ai mangi cela, c'est bon ! "* and with fierce triumph add : " Ils *ont faim, les Boches ! "* The " arrogant civilian " had never done his military service, for his infirmity, it seemed, had begun before the war.

Dumb, each in his own way, and differing in every mortal thing except the reality of their misfortunes, never were two beings more lonely. Their quasi-lurse, Corporal Mignan, was no doubt right in his

estimate of their characters. For him, so patient in the wintry days, with his " *deux phtnowenes"* they were - divested of all that halo which misfortune sets round the heads of the afflicted. He had too much to do with them, and saw them as they would have been if undogged by Fate. Of Roche he would say : " Il *n'est pas won reve. Je n'aime pas ces types tacitumes ; quand meme, il n'est pas mauvais. II est marin—les marins*—! " and he would shrug his shoulders, as who should say : " Those poor devils—what can you expect ? " " *Mais ce Gray* "—it was one bitter day when Gray had refused absolutely to wear his greatcoat during a motor drive—" *c'est un mauvals type! II est malin*—il *salt tres bien ce qu'il veut. C'est un egolste I"* An egoist ! Poor Gray ! No doubt he was, instinctively conscious that if he did not make the most of what little personality was left within his wandering form it would slip and he would be no more. Even a winter fly is mysteriously anxious not to become dead. That he was " *matin* "—cunning—became the accepted view about Gray ; not so " *malin* " that he could " cut three paws off a duck," as the old grey Territorial, Grandpere Poirot, would put it, but " *malin "* enough to know very well what he wanted, and how, by sticking to his demand, to get it. Mignan, typically French, did not allow enough for the essential Englishman in Gray. Besides, one *must* be " *matin* " if one has only the power to say about one-tenth of what one wants, and then not be understood once in twenty times. Gray did not like his greatcoat—a fine old French-blue military thing with brass buttons—the arrogant civilian would have none of it ! It was easier to shift the Boches on the Western front than to shift an idea, once in his head. In the poor soil of his soul the following plants of

thought alone now flourished : Hatred of the Bodies ; love of English tobacco—" Il *est bon—il est bon !* " he would say, tapping his Virginian cigarette ; the wish to see again his *"petite felle"* ; to wash himself; to drink a " *cafe natur* " and bottled beer every day after the midday meal, and to go to Lyons to see his uncle and work for his living. And who shall say that any of these fixed ideas were evil in him ?

But back to Flotsam, whose fixed idea was Brittany ! Nostalgia is a long word, and a malady from which the English do not suffer, for they carry their country on their backs, walk the wide world in a cloud of their own atmosphere, making that world England. The French have eyes to see, and, when not surrounded by houses which have flatness, shutters and subtle colouring—yellowish, French-grey, French-green—by *cafes,* by plane-trees, by Frenchwomen, by scents of wood-smoke and coffee roasted in the streets ; by the wines, and infusions of the herbs of France ; by the churches of France and the beautiful, silly chiming of their bells —when not surrounded by all these, they know it, feel it, suffer. But even they do not suffer so dumbly and instinctively, so like a wild animal caged, as that Breton fisherman, caged up in a world of hill and valley—not the world as he had known it. They called his case " shell-shock "—for surely no system would send a man to convalescence for anything so essentially civilian as home-sickness, even when it had taken a claustrophobic turn. A system recognises only causes which you can see ; holes in the head, hamstrung legs, frost-bitten feet, with other of the legitimate consequences of war. But it was not shell-shock. Roche was really possessed by the feeling that he would never get out, never get home, smell fish and the sea, watch the

bottle-green breakers roll in on his native shore, the sun gleaming through wave-crests lifted and flying back in spray, never know the accustomed heave and roll under his feet, or carouse in a seaport cabaret, or see his old mother—*la veuve* Roche. And, after all, there was a certain foundation for his fear. It was not as if this war could be expected to stop some day. There they were, in the trenches, they and the enemy set over against each other, " like china dogs," in the words of Grandpere Poirot; and there they would be, so far as Roche's ungeared nerves could grasp, for ever. And while like china dogs they sat, he knew that he would not be released, not allowed to go back to the sea and the smells and the sounds thereof; for he had still all his limbs, and no bullet-hole to show under his thick dark hair. No wonder he got up the trees and looked out for sight of the waves, and fluttered the weak nerves of the hospital " Powers " till they saw themselves burying him with a broken spine, at the expense of the subscribers. Nothing to be done for the poor fellow, except to take him motor drives, and to insist that he stayed in the dining-room long enough to eat some food.

Then, one bright day, a " Power," watching his hands, conceived the idea of giving him two balls of string, one blue, the other buff, and all that afternoon he stayed up a single tree, and came down with one of his rare sweet smiles and a little net, half blue, half buff, with a handle covered with a twist of Turkey-red twill—such a thing as one scoops up shrimps with. He was paid for it, and his eyes sparkled. You see, he had no money—the "*poilu"* seldom has ; and money meant drink, ind tobacco in his cheek. The) gave him more string, and for the next few days it rained

little nets, beautifully if simply made. They thought that his salvation was in sight. It takes an eye to tell salvation from damnation, sometimes. … In any case, he no longer roamed from tree to tree, but sat across a single branch, netting. The " Powers" began to speak of him as " rather a dear," for it is characteristic of human nature to take interest only in that which by some sign of progress makes you feel that you are doing good.

Next Sunday a distinguished doctor came, and, when he had been fed, some one conceived the notion of interesting him, too, in Flotsam. A learned, kindly, influential man—well-fed—something might come of it, even that " *reforms"* that sending home, which all agreed was what poor Roche needed to restore his brain. He was brought in, therefore, amongst the chattering party, and stood, dark, shy, his head down, like the man in Millet's " Angelus," his hands folded on his cap, in front of his unspeakably buttoned blue baggy trousers, as though in attitude of prayer to the doctor, who, uniformed and grey-bearded, like an old somnolent goat, beamed on him through spectacles with a sort of shrewd benevolence. The catechism began. So he had something to ask, had he ? A swift, shy lift of the eyes : " Yes." " What then ? " " To go home." " To go home ? What for ? To get married ? " A swift, shy smile. " Fair or dark ? " No answer, only a shift of hands on his cap. " What I Was there no one—no ladies at home ? " " *Ce n'est pas ca qui manque I"* At the laughter greeting that dim. flicker of wit, the uplifted face was cast down again. That lonely, lost figure must suddenly have struck the doctor, for his catechism became a long, embarrassed scrutiny; and with an " *Eh bien ! mon vieux, nous*

verrons!" ended. Nothing came of it, of course. " *Cas de reforme?* " Oh, certainly, if it had depended on the learned, kindly doctor. But the system—and all its doors to be unlocked ! Why, by the time the last door was prepared to open, the first would be closed again ! So the " Powers " gave Roche more string—so good, you know, to see him interested in something ! … It does take an eye to tell salvation from damnation ! For he began to go down now of an afternoon into the little old town—not smell-less, but most quaint—all yellowish-grey, with rosy-tiled roofs. Once it had been Roman, once a walled city of the Middle Ages ; never would it be modern. The dogs ran muzzled ; from a first-floor a goat, munching green fodder, hung his devilish black beard above your head ; and through the main street the peasant farmers, above military age, looking old as sun-dried roots, in their dark *pelerines,* drove their wives and produce in little slow carts. Parched oleanders in pots one would pass, and old balconies with parched flowers hanging down over the stone, and perhaps an umbrella with a little silver handle, set out to dry. Roche would go in by the back way, where the old town gossips sat on a bench in the winter sunshine, facing the lonely cross shining gold on the high hill-top opposite, placed there in days when there was some meaning in such things; past the little " Place " with the old fountain and the brown plane-trees in front of the Mairie ; past the church, so ancient that it had unfortunately been forgotten, and remained unfinished and beautiful. Did Roche, Breton that he was—half the love-ladies in Paris, the sergeant used to say, are Bretonnes—ever enter the church in passing ? Some rascal had tried to burn down its beautiful old door from the inside, and the flames had

left on all that high western wall smears like the finger-marks of hell, or the background of a Velasquez Crucifixion. Did he ever enter and stand knotting his knot which never got knotted, in the dark loveliness of that grave building, where in the deep silence a dusty-gold little angel blows on his horn from the top of the canopied pulpit, and a dim carved Christ of touching beauty looks down on His fellow-men from above some dry chrysanthemums ; and a tall candle burned quiet and lonely here and there, and the flags of France hung above the altar, that men might know how God—though resting—was with them and their country ? Perhaps I But more likely he passed it, with its great bell riding high and open among scrolls of ironwork, and—Breton that he was—entered the nearest cabaret, kept by the woman who would tell you that her soldier husband had passed " within two fingers " of death. One cannot spend one's earnings in a church, nor appease there the inextinguishable thirst of a sailor.

And lo !—on Christmas Day Roche came back so drunk that his nurse Mignan took him to his bedroom and turned the key of the door on him. But you must not do this to a Breton fisherman full of drink and claustrophobia. It was one of those errors even Frenchmen may make, to the after-sorrow of their victims. One of the female " Powers," standing outside, heard a roar, the crash of a foot against the panel of a door, and saw Roche, " like a great cat" come slithering through the hole. He flung his arm out, brushed the " Power " back against the wall, cried out fiercely : " *La boite—je ne veux pas la boite !* " and rushed for the stairs. Here were other female " Powers " ; he dashed them aside and passed down. But in the bureau at the foot was a young corporal of

the " Le*gion Étrangere "*—a Spaniard who had volunteered for France—great France; he ran out, took Roche gently by the arm and offered to drink with him. And so they sat, those two, in the little bureau, drinking black coffee, while the young corporal talked like an angel and Roche like a wild man—about his mother; about his dead brother who had been sitting on his bed, as he said ; about " *la boite"* and the turning of that key. And slowly he became himself—or so they thought—and all went in to supper. Ten minutes later one of the " Powers," looking for the twentieth time to make sure he was eating, saw an empty place: he had slipped out like a shadow and was gone again. A big cavalryman and the corporal retrieved him that night from a *cafe* near the station; they had to use force at times to bring him in. Two days later he was transferred to a town hospital, where discipline would not allow him to get drunk or climb trees. For the " Powers " had reasoned thus : To climb trees is bad ; to get drunk is bad; but to do both puts on us too much responsibility; he must go ! They had, in fact, been scared. And so he passed away to a room under the roof of a hospital in the big town miles away—*la Wife* indeed !—where for liberty he must use a courtyard without trees, and but little tobacco came to his cheek; and there he eats his heart out to this day, perhaps. But some say he had no heart—only the love of drink, and climbing. Yet, on that last evening, to one who was paying him for a little net, he blurted out: " Some day I will tell you something—not now —in a year's time. *Vous etes le seul*—! " What did he mean by that, if he had no heart to eat ? … The night after he had gone, a little black dog strayed up, and among the trees barked and barked at some

portent or phantom. " Ah ! the camel ! Ah ! the pig ! I had him on my back all night ! " Grandpere Poirot said next morning. That was the very last of Flotsam. . . .

And now to Jetsam ! It was on the day but one after Roche left that Gray was reported missing. For some time past he had been getting stronger, clearer in speech. They began to say of him : " It's wonderful—the improvement since he came—wonderful! " His salvation also seemed in sight. But from the words " He's rather a dear ! " all recoiled, for as he grew stronger he became more stubborn and more irritable —" cunning egoist" that he was ! According to the men, he was beginning to show himself in his true colours. He had threatened to knife any one who played a joke on him—the arrogant civilian ! On the day he was missing it appears that after the midday meal he had asked for a " *cafe natur* " and for some reason had been refused. Before his absence was noted it was night already, clear and dark; all day something as of spring had stirred in the air. The corporal and a " Power " set forth down the wooded hill into the town, to scour the *cafes* and hang over the swift, shallow river, to see if by any chance Gray had been overtaken by another paralytic stroke and was down there on the dark sand. The sleepy gendarmes, too, were warned and given his description. But the only news next morning was that he had been seen walking on the main road up the valley. Two days later he was found, twenty miles away, wandering towards Italy. " *Perdu"* was his only explanation, but it was not believed, for now began that continual demand: " *Je voudrais aller a Lyon, voir mon oncle—travailler I "* As the big cavalryman put it, " He is bored here ! " It was considered

unreasonable by soldiers who found themselves better off than in other hospitals ; even the " Powers " considered it ungrateful almost. See what he had been like when he came—a mere trembling bag of bones, only too fearful of being sent away. And yet, who would not be bored, crouching all day long about the stoves, staunching his poor dribbling mouth, rolling his inevitable cigarette, or wandering down, lonely, to hang over the bridge parapet, having thoughts in his head and for ever unable to express them. His state was worse than dumbness, for the dumb have resigned all hope of conversation. Gray would have liked to talk if it had not taken about five minutes to understand each thing he said—except the refrain which all knew by heart: " *Les Bocbes*—il*s vont en payer cber—les Boches !* " The idea that he could work and earn his living was fantastic to those who watched him dressing himself, or sweeping the courtyard, pausing every few seconds to contemplate some invisible difficulty, or to do over again what he had just not done. But with that new access of strength, or perhaps the open weather—as if spring had come before its time—his fixed idea governed him completely; he began to threaten to kill himself if he could not go to work and see his uncle at Lyons ; and every five days or so he had to be brought back from far up some hill road. The situation had become so ridiculous that the " Powers " said in despair. " Very well, my friend ! Your uncle says he can't have you, and you can't earn your own living yet; but you shall go and see for yourself ! " And go he did, a little solemn now that it had come to his point—in specially bought yellow boots—he refused black—and a specially bought overcoat with sleeves—he would have none *of a pelerine,* the

arrogant civilian, no more than of a military *capote*. For a week the hospital knew him not. Deep winter set in two days before he went, and the whole land was wrapped in snow. The huge, disconsolate crows seemed all the life left in the valley, and poplar trees against the rare blue sky were dowered with miraculous snow-blossoms, beautiful as any blossom of spring. And still in the winter sun the town gossips sat on the bench under the wall, and the cross gleamed out, and the church bell, riding high in its whitened ironwork, tolled almost every day for the passing of some wintered soul, and long processions, very black in the white street, followed it, followed it—home. Then came a telegram from Gray's uncle : " Impossible to keep Aristide (the name of the arrogant civilian). Takes the evening train to-morrow.—Albert Gray." So Jetsam was coming back ! What would he be like now that his fixed idea had failed him ? Well ! He came at mid-day; thinner, more clay-coloured in the face, with a bad cold ; but he ate as heartily as ever, and at once asked to go to bed. At four o'clock a " Power," going up to see, found him sleeping like a child. He slept for twenty hours on end. No one liked to question him about his time away; all that he said—and bitterly—was : " They wouldn't let me work ! " But the second evening after his return there came a knock on the door of the little room where the " Powers " were sitting after supper, and there stood Gray, long and shadowy, holding on to the screen, smoothing his jaw-bone with the other hand, turning eyes like a child's from face to face, while his helpless lips smiled. One of the " Powers " said : " What do you want, my friend ? "

" *Je voudrais alkr a Paris, voir ma petite fille."*

" Yes, yes ; after the war. Your *petite fille* is not in Paris, you know."

"Non?" The smile was gone; it was seen too plainly that Gray was not as he had been. The access of vigour, stirring of new strength, " improvement " had departed, but the beat of it, while there, must have broken him, as the beat of some too strong engine shatters a frail frame. His " improvement " had driven him to his own un-doing. With the failure of his pilgrimage he had lost all hope, all " egoism." … It takes an eye, indeed, to tell salvation from damnation I He was truly Jetsam now—terribly thin and ill and sad; and coughing. Yet he kept the independence of his spirit. In that bitter cold, nothing could prevent him stripping to the waist to wash, nothing could keep him lying in bed, or kill his sense of the proprieties. He would not wear his overcoat—it was invalidish; he would not wear his new yellow boots and keep his feet dry, except on Sundays : " Ils *sont bons ! "* he would say. And before he would profane their goodness, his old worn-out shoes had to be reft from him. He would not admit that he was ill, that he was cold, that he was—anything. But at night, a " Power " would be awakened by groans, and, hurrying to his room, find him huddled nose to knees, moaning. And now, every evening, as though craving escape from his own company, he would come to the little sitting-room, and stand with that deprecating smile, smoothing his jaw-bone, until some one said : " Sit down, my friend, and have some coffee." " *Merci, ma saur*—il *est bon, il est bon !* " and down he would sit, and roll a cigarette with his long fingers, tapering as any artist's, while his eyes fixed themselves intently on anything that moved. But soon they would stray off to another world, and he

would say thickly, sullenly, fiercely : " *Les Roches—Us vont en payer cher—les Roches !* " On the walls were some trophies from the war of 'seventy. His eyes would gloat over them, and he would get up and finger a long pistol, or the spike of an old helmet. Never was a man who so lacked *gene*—at home in any company; it inspired reverence, that independence of his, which had survived twenty months of imprisonment with those who, it is said, make their victims salute them—to such a depth has their civilisation reached. One night he tried to tell about the fright he had been given. The Boches—it seemed—had put him and two others against a wall, and shot those other two. Holding up two tapering fingers, he mumbled : " *Assassins—assassins ! Ils vont en payer cher—les Roches I"* But sometimes there was something almost beautiful in his face, as if his soul had rushed from behind his eyes, to answer some little kindness done to him, or greet some memory of the days before he was " done for *"—foutu,* as he called it.

One day he admitted a pain about his heart; and time, too, for at moments he would look like death itself. His nurse, Corporal Mignan, had long left his ' *deux phenomenes"* having drifted away on the tides of the system, till he should break down again and drag through the hospitals once more. Gray had a room to himself now—the arrogant civilian's groaning at night disturbed the others. Yet, if you asked him in the morning if he had slept well, he answered invariably, " *Old—out—toujours, toujours ! "* For, according to him, you see, he was still strong; and he would double his arm and tap his very little muscle **to** show that he could work. But he did not believe it now, for one day a " Power," dusting the men's writing-room,

saw a letter on the blotter, and with an ashamed eye read these words:—

" *Cher Oncle,*

" J'ai eu la rage contre toi' mais c'est passe maintenant. Je veux seulement me reposer. Je ne peux pas me battre pour la France—j'ai voulu travailler pour elle ; mais on ne m'a pas per mi.

" *Votre neveu, qui fembrasse de loin"*

Seulement me reposer—only to rest! Rest he will, soon, if eyes can speak. Pass, and leave for ever that ravished France for whom he wished to work—pass, without having seen again his *petite fille.* No more in the corridor above the stove, no more in the little dining-room or the avenue of pines will be seen his long, noiseless, lonely figure, or be heard his thick stumbling cry:

" *Les Boches*—ils *vont en payer cber—les Bocbes I "*

1917.

XXIX

THE MUFFLED SHIP

IT was cold and grey at Halifax, but the band on shore was playing, and the flags on shore were fluttering, and the long double-tiered wharf crowded with welcomers in each of its open gaps, when our great ship drew in, packed with cheering, chattering crowds of khaki figures, letting go all the pent-up excitement of getting home from the war. The air was full of songs and laughter, of cheers and shouted questions, the hooting of the launches' sirens, the fluttering of flags and hands and handkerchiefs ; and there were faces of old women and of girls, intent, expectant, and the white gulls were floating against the grey sky where our ship, listed slightly by those thousands of figures straining towards the land which had bred them, gently slurred up against the high wharf and was made fast.

The landing went on till night had long fallen and the band was gone. At last the chatter, the words of command, the snatches of song, and that most favourite chorus : " Me and my girl! " died away, and the wharf was silent and the ship silent, and a wonderful clear, dark beauty usurped the spaces of the sky. By the light of the stars and a half moon the far harbour shores were just visible, and the huddled buildings on the near shore, and the spiring masts and feathery apanage of ropes on the moored ship, and one blood-red light above the black water. The night had all that breath'

less beauty which steeps the soul in quivering, quiet rapture. . . .

Then it was that clearly, as if I had been a welcomer standing on land in one of the wharf gaps, I saw her come—slow, slow, creeping up the narrow channel, in beside the wharf, a great grey, silent ship. At first I thought her utterly empty, deserted, possessed only by the thick coiled cables forward, the huge rusty anchors, the piled-up machinery of structure and funnel and mast, weird in the blue darkness. A lantern on the wharf cast a bobbing golden gleam deep into the oily water at her side. Gun-grey, perfectly mute, she ceased to move, coming to rest against the wharf. And then, with a shiver, I saw, round her, a grey film or emanation, which shifted and hovered, like the invisible wings of birds in a thick mist. Gradually to my straining eyes that filmy emanation granulated and became faces attached to grey, filmy forms, thousands on thousands, and every face bent towards the shore, staring, as it seemed, through me, at all that was behind me. Slowly, very slowly, I made them out—faces of helmeted soldiers, bulky with the gear of battle, their arms outstretched and the lips of every one opened, so that I expected to hear the sound of cheering ; but no sound came. Now I could see their eyes. They seemed to beseech—like the eyes of a little eager boy who asks his mother something she cannot tell him, and their outstretched hands seemed trying to reach her, lovingly, desperately trying to reach her. And those opened lips, terribly seemed trying to speak. As if I had heard, I knew what they were saying—lips which could speak no more: " Mother Canada! Homel Home! . . ."

Away down the wharf someone chanted : " Me and

my girl I " And, silent as she had come, the muffled ship vanished in all her length, with those grey forms and those mute faces ; and I was standing again in the bows beside a huge hawser; below me the golden gleam bobbing deep in the oily water and above me the cold stars in beauty shining.

!9!9.

XXX

"A GREEN HILL FAR AWAY"

WAS it indeed only last March, or in another life, that I climbed this green hill on that day of dolour, the Sunday after the last great German offensive began? A beautiful sun-warmed day it was, when the wild thyme on the southern slope smelled sweet and the distant sea was a glitter of gold. Lying on the grass, pressing my cheek to its warmth, I tried to get solace for that new dread which seemed so cruelly unnatural after four years of war-misery.

" If only it were all over I" I said to myself; " and I could come here, and to all the lovely places I know, without this awful contraction of the heart, and this knowledge that at every tick of my watch some human body is being mangled or destroyed. Ah, if only I could ! Will there never be an end ? "

And now there is an end, and I am up on this green hill once more, in December sunlight, with the distant sea a glitter of gold. And there is no cramp in my heart, no miasma clinging to my senses, Peace ! It is still incredible. No more to hear with the ears of the nerves the ceaseless roll 'of gunfire, or see with the eyes of the nerves drowning men, gaping wounds, and death. Peace, actually peace ! The war has gone on so long that many of us have forgotten the sense of outrage and amazement we had those first days of August,

1914, when it all began. But I have not forgotten, nor ever shall.

In some of us—I think in many who could not voice it—the war has left chiefly this feeling : " If only I could find a country were men cared less for all that they seem to care for, where they cared more for beauty, for nature, for being kindly to each other. If only I could find that green hill far away ! " Of the songs of Theocritus, of the life of St. Francis, there is no more among the nations than there is of dew on grass in an east wind. If we ever thought otherwise, we are disillusioned now. Yet there is peace again, and the souls of men fresh-murdered are not flying into our lungs with every breath we draw.

Each day this thought of peace becomes more real and blessed. I can lie on this green hill and praise Creation that I am alive in a world of beauty. I can go to sleep up here with the coverlet of sunlight warm on my body, and not wake to that old dull misery. I can even dream with a light heart, for my fair dreams will not be spoiled by waking and my bad dreams will be cured the moment I open my eyes. I can look up at that blue sky without seeing trailed across it a mirage of the long horror, a film picture of all the things that have been done by men to men. At last I can gaze up at it, limpid and blue, without a dogging melancholy ; and I can gaze down at that far gleam of sea, knowing that there is no murk of murder on it any more.

And the flight of birds, the gulls and rooks and little brown wavering things which flit out and along the edge of the chalk-pits, is once more refreshment to me, utterly untempered. A merle is singing in a bramble thicket; the dew has not yet dried off the bramble

leaves. A feather of a moon floats across the sky ; the distance sends forth homely murmurs ; the sun warms my cheeks. And all of this is pure joy. No hawk of dread and horror keeps swooping down and bearing off the little birds of happiness. No accusing conscience starts forth and beckons me away from pleasure. Everywhere is supreme and flawless beauty. Whether one looks at this tiny snail-shell, marvellously chased and marked, a very elf's horn whose open mouth is coloured rose, or gazes down at the flat land between here and the sea, under the smile of the afternoon sunlight, the island, hedgeless, with its many watching trees, and silver gulls hovering above the mushroom-coloured " ploughs," and fields green in manifold hues ; whether one muses on this little pink daisy born so out of time, or watches that valley of brown-rose-grey woods, under the drifting shadows of low-hanging chalky clouds—all is perfect, as only Nature can be perfect on a lovely day, when the mind of him who looks on her is at rest.

On this green hill I am nearer than I have been yet to realisation of the difference between war and peace. In our civilian lives hardly anything has been changed —we do not get more butter or more petrol, the garb and machinery of war still shrouds us, journals still drip hate; but in our spirits there is all the difference between gradual dying and gradual recovery from sickness.

At the beginning of the war a certain artist, so one heard, shut himself away in his house and garden, taking in no newspaper, receiving no visitors, listening to no breath of the war, seeing no sight of it. So he lived, buried in his work and his flowers—I know not for how long. Was he wise, or did he suffer even more

man the rest of us who shut nothing away ? Can man, indeed, shut out the very quality of his firmament, or bar himself away from the general misery of his species ?

This gradual recovery of the world—this slow re-opening of the great flower, Life—is beautiful to feel and see. I press my hand flat and hard down on those blades of grass, then take it away, and watch them very slowly raise themselves and shake off the bruises. So it is, and will be, with us for a long time to come. The cramp of war was deep in us, as an iron frost in the earth. Of all the countless millions who have fought and nursed and written and spoken and dug and sewn and worked in a thousand other ways to help on the business of killing, hardly any have laboured in real love of war. Ironical, indeed, that perhaps the most beautiful poem written these four years, Julian GrenfelFs " Into Battle ! " was in heartfelt praise of fighting. But if one could gather the sighs and curses breathed by man and woman upon war since the first bugle was blown, the dirge of them could not be contained in the air which wraps this earth.

And yet the " green hill," where dwell beauty and kindliness, is still far away. Will it ever be nearer ? Men have fought even on this green hill where I am lying. By the rampart markings on its chalk and grass it has surely served for an encampment. The beauty of day and night, the lark's song, the sweet-scented growing things, the rapture of health and of pure air, the majesty of the stars, and the gladness of sunlight, of song and dance and simple friendliness, have never been enough for men. We crave our turbulent fate. Can wars, then, ever cease ? Look in men's faces, read their writings, and beneath masks and hypocrisies note the restless creeping of the tiger spirit ! There

has never been anything to prevent the millennium except the nature of the hu*man* being. There are not enough lovers of beauty among men. It all comes back to that. Not enough who want the green hill far away—-who of their nature hate disharmony and the greed, ugliness, restlessness, cruelty, which are its parents and its children.

Will there ever be more lovers of beauty in proportion to those who are indifferent to beauty? Who shall answer that question? Yet on the answer depends peace. Men may have a mint of sterling qualities—be vigorous, adventurous, brave, upright, and self-sacrificing; be preachers and teachers; keen, cool-headed, just, industrious—if they have not the love of beauty, they will still be making wars. Man is a fighting animal with sense of the ridiculous enough to know that he is a fool to fight, but not sense of the sublime enough to stop him. Well! we have peace!

It is happiness greater than I have known for four years and four months to lie here and let that thought go on its wings, quiet and free as the wind stealing soft from the sea, and blessed as the sunlight on this green hill.

1918.

XXXI

FAIRYLAND

IT was about three o'clock, this November afternoon, when I rode down into " Fairyland," as it is called about here. The birch trees there are more beautiful than any in the world ; and when the clouds are streaming over in rain-grey, and the sky soaring above in higher blue, just seen, those gold and silver creatures have such magical loveliness as makes the hearts of mortals ache. The fairies, who have been driven off the moor, alone watch them with equanimity, if they be not indeed the birch trees themselves—especially those little very golden ones which have strayed out into the heather on the far side of the glen. " Revenge ! " the fairies cried, when a century ago those whom they do not exist just to amuse made the new road over the moor, cutting right through the home of twilight, that wood above the " Falls," where till then they had always enjoyed inviolable enchantment. They trooped forthwith in their multitudinous secrecy down into the glen, to swarm about the old road. In half a century or so they had it almost abandoned, save for occasional horsemen and harmless persons seeking beauty, for whom the fairies have never had much feeling of aversion. And now, after a hundred years, it is all theirs ; the ground so goldened with leaves and bracken that the old track is nothing but a vague hardness beneath a horse's feet, nothing but a runnel for the rains to gather in. There is everywhere that glen scent of mouldering leaves, so sweet when the wind comes

down and stirs it and the sun frees and livens it. Not very many birds, perhaps because hawks are fond of hovering here. This was once the only road up to the village, the only communication with all that lies to the south and east. Now the fairies have got it indeed, they have witched to skeletons all the little bridges across the glen streams ; they have mossed and thinned the gates to wraiths. With their dapple-gold revelry in sunlight, and their dance of pied beauty under the moon, they have made all their own.

I have ridden many times down into this glen, and slowly up among the beeches and oaks into the lanes again, hoping and believing that, some day, I should see a fairy take shape to my thick mortal vision; and to-day, at last, I have seen.

I heard it first about half-way up the wood, a silvery voice piping out very true what seemed like mortal words, not quite to be caught. Resolved not to miss it this time, I got off quietly and tied my mare to a tree. Then, tiptoeing in the damp leaves which did not rustle, I stole up till I caught sight of it from behind an oak.

It was sitting in yellow bracken as high as its head, under a birch tree which had a few branches still gold-feathered. It seemed to be clothed in blue and to be swaying as it sang. There was something in its arms, as it might be a cieature being nursed. Cautiously I slipped from that tree to the next till I could see its face, just like a child's, fascinating, very very delicate, the little open mouth poised and shaped ever so neatly to the words it was singing; the eyes wide apart and ever so wide open, fixed on nothing mortal. The song, end the little body, and the spirit in the eyes, all seemed to sway—sway together, like a soft wind that goes

" sough-sough," swinging, in the tops of the ferns. And now it stretched out one arm and now the other, beckoning in to it those to which it was singing, so that one seemed to feel the invisible ones stealing up closer and closer.

These were the words which came so silvery and slow through that little mouth : " Chil-dren, chil-dren Hus-s-h!"

It seemed as if the very rabbits must come and sit up there, the jays and pigeons settle above, everything in all the wood gather. Even one's own heart seemed to be drawn in by those beckoning arms, the slow enchantment of that tinkling voice, and the look in those eyes, which, lost in the unknown, were seeing no mortal glen, but only that mazed wood where friendly wild things come, who have no sound to their padding, no whirr to the movement of their wings ; whose gay whisperings have no noise, whose eager shapes no colour—the fairy dream-wood of the unimaginable.

" Chil-dren, chil-dren ! Hus-s-h ! "

For just a moment I could see that spirit company, ghosts of the ferns and leaves, of butterflies and bees and birds, and four-footed things innumerable, ghosts of the wind, the sunbeams, and the rain-drops, and tiny flickering ghosts of moon-rays. For just a moment I saw what the fairy's eyes were seeing, without knowing what they saw.

And then my mare trod on a dead branch and all vanished. My fairy was gone, and there was only little " Connemara," as we call her, nursing her doll, and smiling up at me from the fern where she had come to practise her new school-song.

1912.

XXXII

BUTTERCUP NIGHT

WHY is it that in some places one has such a feeling of life being, not merely a long picture-show for human eyes, but a single breathing, glowing, growing thing, of which we are no more important a part than the swallows and magpies, the foals and sheep in the meadows, the sycamores and ash trees and flowers in the fields, the rocks, and little bright streams, or even than the long fleecy clouds and their soft-shouting drivers, the winds ?

True we register these parts of being, and they—so far as we know—do not register us ; yet it is impossible to feel, in such places as I speak of, the busy, dry, complacent sense of being all that matters, which in general we humans have so strongly.

In these rare spots, which are always in the remote country, untouched by the advantages of civilization, one is conscious of an enwrapping web or mist of spirit —is it, perhaps, the glamorous and wistful wraith of all the vanished shapes once dwelling there in such close comradeship ?

It was Sunday of an early June when I first came on one such, far down in the West Country. I had walked with my knapsack twenty miles, and there being no room at the tiny inn of the very little village, they directed me to a wicket gate, through which, by a path leading down a field, I would come to a farm-

house, where I might find lodging. The moment I got into that field I felt within me a special contentment, and sat down on a rock to let the feeling grow. In an old holly tree rooted to the bank about fifty yards away two magpies evidently had a nest, for they were coming and going, avoiding my view as much as possible, yet with a certain stealthy confidence which made one feel that they had long prescriptive right to that dwelling-place. Around, far as one could see, was hardly a yard of level ground ; all hill and hollow, long ago reclaimed from the moor ; and against the distant folds of the hills the farmhouse and its thatched barns were just visible, enbowered amongst beeches and some dark trees, with a soft bright crown of sunlight over the whole. A gentle wind brought a faint rustling up from those beeches and from a large lime tree which stood by itself; on this wind some little snowy clouds, very high and fugitive in that blue heaven, were always moving over. But I was most struck by the buttercups. Never was field so lighted up by those tiny lamps, those little bright pieces of flower china out of the Great Pottery. They covered the whole ground, as if the sunlight had fallen bodily from the sky, in millions of gold patines ; and the fields below as well, down to what was evidently a stream, were just as thick with the extraordinary warmth and glory of them.

Leaving the rock at last, I went towards the house. It was long and low and rather sad, standing in a garden all mossy grass and buttercups, with a few rhododendrons and flowery shrubs below a row of fine old Irish yews. On the stone verandah a grey sheep-dog and a very small golden-haired child were sitting close together, absorbed in each other. A woman came in answer to my knock, and told me, in a pleasant,

soft, slurring voice, that I might stay the night; and dropping my knapsack, I went out again. Through an old gate under a stone arch I came on the farmyard, quite deserted save for a couple of ducks moving slowly down a gutter in the sunlight, and noticing the upper half of a stable-door open, I went across, in search of something living. There, in a rough loose-box, on thick straw, lay a chestnut, long-tailed mare, with the skin and head of a thoroughbred. She was swathed in blankets, and her face, all cut about the cheeks and over the eyes, rested on an ordinary human's pillow, held by a bearded man in shirt-sleeves, while, leaning against the whitewashed walls, sat fully a dozen other men, perfectly silent, very gravely and intently gazing. The mare's eyes were half-closed, and what could be seen of them was dull and blueish, as though she had been through a long time of pain. Save for her rapid breathing, she lay quite still, but her neck and ears were streaked with sweat, and every now and then her hind legs quivered. Seeing me at the door, she raised her head, uttering a queer, half-human noise ; but the bearded man at once put his hand on her forehead, and with a " Woa, my dear, woa, my pretty ! " pressed it down again, while with the other hand he plumped up the pillow for her cheek. And as the mare obediently let fall her head, one of the men said in a low voice : " I never see anything so like a Christian ! " and the others echoed him, in chorus, " Like a Christ'an —like a Christian ! " It went to one's heart to watch her, and I moved off down the farm lane into an old orchard, cohere the apple trees were still in bloom, with bees—very small ones—busy on the blossoms, whose petals were dropping onto the dock leaves and buttercups in the long grass. Climbing over the bank

at the far end, I found myself in a meadow the like of which—so wild and yet so lush—I think I have never seen. Along one hedge of its meandering length were masses of pink mayflower; and between two little running streams quantities of yellow water iris—" daggers," as they call them—were growing; the " print-frock" orchis, too, was all over the grass, and everywhere the buttercups. Great stones coated with yellowish moss were strewn among the ash trees and dark hollies ; and through a grove of beeches on the far side, such as Corot might have painted, a girl was running with a youth after her, who jumped down over the bank and vanished. Thrushes, blackbirds, yaffles, cuckoos, and one other very monotonous little bird were in full song; and this, with the sound of the streams and the wind, and the shapes of the rocks and trees, the colours of the flowers, and the warmth of the sun, gave one a feeling of being lost in a very wilderness of Nature. Some ponies came slowly from the far end, tangled, gypsy-headed little creatures, stared and went off again at speed. It was just one of those places where any day the spirit of all Nature might start up in one of those white gaps that separate the trees and rocks. But though I sat a long time waiting, hoping, Pan did not come.

They were all gone from the stable when I went back to the farm, except the bearded nurse, and one tall fellow, who might have been the " Dying Gaul," as he crouched there in the straw ; and the mare was sleeping —her head between her nurse's knees.

That night I woke at two o'clock, to find it bright as day, almost, with moonlight coming in through the flimsy curtains. And, smitten with the feeling which comes to us creatures of routine so rarely—of what

beauty and strangeness we let slip by without ever stretching out hand to grasp it—I got up, dressed, stole down stairs, and out.

Never was such a night of frozen beauty, never such dream-tranquillity. The wind had dropped and the silence was such that one hardly liked to tread even on the grass. From the lawn and fields there seemed to be a mist rising—in truth, the moonlight caught on the dewy buttercups ; and across this ghostly radiance the shadows of the yew trees fell in dense black bars. Suddenly I bethought me of the mare. How was she faring, this marvellous night ? Very softly opening the door into the yard, I tiptoed across. A light was burning in her box, and I could hear her making the same half-human noise she had made in the afternoon, as if wondering at her feelings; and instantly the voice of the bearded man talking to her as one might talk to a child : " Cover, me darlin'; yu've a-been long enough o' that side. Wa-ay, my swate—yu let old Jack turn 'u, then ! " Then came a scuffling in the straw, a thud, again that half-human sigh, and his voice : " Putt your 'ead to piller, that's my dandy gel. Old Jack wouldn't 'urt 'u; no more'n ef 'u was the Queen! " Then only her quick breathing could be heard and his cough and mutter, as he settled down once more to his long vigil. I crept very softly up to the window, but she heard me at once; and at the movement of her head the old fellow sat up, blinking his eyes out of the bush of his grizzled hair and beard. Opening the door, I said :

" May I come in ? "

" Oo, ay ! Come in, zurr, if 'u'm a mind to."

I sat down beside him on a sack, and for some time we did not speak, taking each other in. One of his legs

was lame, so that he had to keep it stretched out all the time; and awfully tired he looked, grey-tired.

" You're a great nurse! " I said at last. " It must be hard work, watching out here all night."

His eyes twinkled ; they were of that bright grey kind through which the soul looks out.

" Aw, no ! " he said. " Ah don't grudge it vur a dumb animal. Poor things—they can't 'elp theirzelves. Many's the naight ah've zat up with 'orses and beasts tu. 'Tes en me—can't bear to zee dumb creatures zuffer ! " And, laying his hand on the mare's ears : " They zay 'orses 'aven't no souls. 'Tes my belief they'm gotten souls, zame as us. Many's the Christian ah've seen ain't got the soul of an 'orse. Zame with the beasts—an' the sheep ; 'tes only they can't spake their minds,"

" And where," I said, " do you think they go to when they die ? " He looked at me a little queerly, fancying, perhaps, that I was leading him into some trap ; making sure, too, that I was real stranger, without power over him, body or soul—for humble folk in the country must be careful; then, reassured, and nodding in his bushy beard, he answered knowingly :—

" Ah don't think they goes zo very far ! "

" Why ? Do you ever see their spirits ? "

" Naw, naw ; I never zeen none; but, for all they zay, ah don't think none of us goes such a brave way off. There's room for all, dead or alive. An' there's Christians ah've zeen—well, ef they'm not dead for gude, then neither aren't dumb animals, for sure."

" And rabbits, squirrels, birds, even insects ? How about them ? "

He was silent, as if I had carried him a little beyond the confines of his philosophy, then shook his head:

' 'Tes all a bit dimsy—like. But yu watch dumb animals, zurr, even the laste littlest one, and yu'll zee they knows a lot more'n what us thenks ; an' they du's the things, tu, that putts shame on a man 's often as not. They've a got that in 'em as passes show." And not noticing my stare at that unconscious plagiarism, he added. " Ah'd zuner zet up of a naight with an 'orse than with an 'uman ; they've more zense and patience." And stroking the mare's forehead, he added : " Now my dear, time for yu t' 'ave yure bottle."

I waited to see her take her draught, and lay her head down once more on the pillow. Then, hoping he would get a sleep, I rose to go.

" Aw, tes nothin' much," he said, " this time o' year; not like in winter. 'Twill come day before yu know, these buttercup nights ; " and twinkling up at me out of his kindly bearded face, he settled himself again into the straw. I stole a look back at his rough figure propped against the sack, with the mare's head down beside his knee, at her swathed russet body and the gold of the straw, the white walls and dusky nooks and shadows of that old stable, illumined by the " dimsy " light of the old lantern. And with the sense of having seen something holy I crept away up into the field where I had lingered the day before, and sat down on the same half-way rock. Close on dawn it was, the moon still sailing wide over the moor and the flowers of this " buttercup night" fast closed, not taken in at all by her cold glory !

Most silent hour of all the twenty-four—when the soul slips half out of sheath and hovers in the cool; when the spirit is most in tune with what soon or late, happens to all spirits; hour when a man cares least whether or no he be alive, as we understand the word.

…" None of us goes such a brave way off—there's room for all, dead or alive." Though it was almost unbearably colourless and cmiet, there was warmth in thinking of those words of his ; in the thought too, of the millions of living things snugly asleep all round; warmth in realising that unanimity of sleep. Insects and flowers, birds, men, beasts, the very leaves on the trees—away in slumberland. Waiting for the first bird to chirrup, one had, perhaps, even a stronger feeling than in daytime of the unity and communion of all life, of the subtle brotherhood of living things that fall all together into oblivion, and, all together, wake.

When dawn comes, while moonlight is still powdering the world's face, quite a long time passes before one realises how the quality of the light has changed ; and so, it was day before I knew it. Then the sun came up above the hills; dew began to sparkle and colour to stain the sky. That first praise of the sun from every bird and leaf and blade of grass, the tremulous flush and chime of dawn I One has strayed far from the heart of things that it should come as something strange and wonderful ! Indeed, I noticed that the beasts and birds gazed at me as if I simply could not be there at this hour which so belonged to them. And to me, too, they seemed strange and new—with that in them " which passeth show," and as of a world where man did not exist, or existed only as just another sort of beast or bird.

But just then began the crowning glory of that dawn—the opening and lighting of the buttercups. Not one did I actually see unclose, yet of a sudden, they were awake, and the fields once more a blaze of gold.

1913.

XXXIII

HATHOR: A MEMORY

HATHOR of the old Egyptians ! Divine cow, with the mild, lustrous eyes, the proud and gentle step ; immortally desirable, ever fruitful; veiled and radiant with that soft devotional glow which wraps all the greatest works of art, causing all who behold to feel the thrill and sweetness, a longing to put out hands and worship. Far from earthly lust; divine cow with the crescent horns—Hathor of the old Egyptians ! ...

In camp at Sennoures of the Fayoum it has fallen dark, and dinner is over when the dancer summoned by Mahmoud Ibrahim arrives. Pretty she is as the dusk, as a tiger-cat, a firefly, a flower of the hibiscus, her skin but little darker than our own; her eyes clear agate-green, her teeth whiter than milk, a gold crescent through her right nostril, and her fine chin blue from tattooing. Quite a woman of the world too, in her greetings.

In the tent made holy by embroidered texts from the Koran, ourselves and Hallilah (parent of all the gods) ; Mahmoud Ibrahim in dragoman's best robes ; Sadik in white waiter's dress ; and the ten Arabs in black night-cloaks—camel-boy " Daisy" with his queei. child-voice and his quaint ear-wrappings ; Mabrouk, imp with a past and a fututе; dusky, sweet-tempered

" Comedy " ; the holy Ahmet, more excited than he should be; green camel-boy and white camel-boy, all teeth and expectation ; Karim, smiling ; and the three dark, solemn camel-men who play the pipes, for once in animation: fifteen of us to sit, kneel, crouch and wait; only cook, and the watchman—ah I and Samara —absent;

And soon our dancer comes in again, with her drummer, and her brother—whose agate eyes are finer than her own—to pipe for her. She has taken off her cloak now, and is clothed in beads and netting, with bare waist, and dark, heavy skirt. Standing by the tent-pole she looks slowly round at us; then, lifting her upper lips square above her teeth and curling her tongue, begins to sing, showing us the very back of her mouth, and passing through her short straight nose tones like the clapping together of metal discs. And while she sings, she moves slowly round, with wide-stretched arms, and hands clinking little bells that make the memory of castanets seem vulgar.

" She is a good one, this," says Mahmoud Ibrahim.

And now she ceases to sing, and begins to dance. She makes but little movement with her feet, protruding her over-developed middle violently, rhythmically, and passing her ardent gaze from face to face. And as she writhes before them each Arab visage around the tent becomes all teeth and eyes. Out beyond the dark excitement of those faces the peaceful sky is glittering with stars; the clear-cut palm trees, under a moon still crescent, shiver in the wind. And out there Samara, our tall, gaunt young camel-man, stalks up and down, his eyes fixed on the ground. That dance, what is it but the crudest love-making to us all here in the warm tent ?

" She is nearly a top-hole one, this," says Mahmoud Ibrahim.

And suddenly we see Samara crouching with the others in the opening of the tent. The only one who does not smile—he watches her, holding his thin dark face in his thin dark hand; then lo ! as though he can bear no more of such attraction, he leaps up, and again begins hovering outside, like a flame in the wind.

But she—she dances on, writhing, protruding her middle, clinking her bells. And all the time the imp Mabrouk and the camel-men laugh, and gurgle their delight, and stretch out their arms towards her; until at last the holy Ahmet, unable to control emotion, puts up his hands about her waist. Ah! What is this that comes swooping down, flinging at him fiery words and springing back into the night ?

" See Samara ! " says Mahmoud Ibrahim ; " he is jealous. ' Come over here ! ' My lord ! She is a fine one!"

But at last she has sung all her songs, danced all her dances, even the Sleep one, drunk all the wine, smoked the last cigarette, finished the Turkish delight. So we thank her and leave her.

When the camp is quiet I come out to watch the circle of the palm-trees under Hathor's crescent horns, to listen to the " chump-chump " of the camels, to the soft talk passing from dark figures crouching by the watch-fire. And Mahmoud Ibrahim comes up to me.

" Most of the men are gone to the village—the holy Ahmet and all ! The fools, they get excited. Certainly she is a good one; pretty, but too thin ! " He sighs, and looks up at the stars. " It was in camp here ten years ago, we had the best I ever saw. I went all the way to Cairo to fetch her; we paid her fifteen pounds.

Ah I she was beautiful; and I was very young. After the dance was over I went to her; I was trembling, I certainly was trembling. She was pretty as a flower. I asked her to speak to me just five minutes; but she looked at me—she certainly looked at me as if I was not there. I had not much money then, you see. And last week in Cairo I met her in the street. I would never have known her—never. But she said to me : ' Will you not speak to me? Do you not remember years ago how I came, to dance at your camp in the Fayoum ? ' I remembered her then; we paid her fifteen pounds. She was not proud any more ! " Mahmoud Ibrahim shakes his comely head. " She certainly is hidjeous now; and she cried, poor woman, she cried ! "

Save for the camels chumping there is silence; beneath the palm-trees we see a tall black figure standing beneath the crescent of the moon—Flame in the wind—for once quite still !

" Look !" says Mahmoud Ibrahim : " Samara ! This one would not have anything to say to him. He has not much money, you see ! "

Once more that night I come out of my tent. The men are sleeping, huddled with the silent camels in dark clumps on the grey sand. The watchman sleeps over all. Even the wind sleeps under the moon. . . .

Ah ! Hathor ! Love and Beauty ! Far from earthly lust, immortal cow with the soft, lustrous eyes,, and horns like the crescent moon !

1914.

XXXIV

MEMORIES

WE set out to meet him at Waterloo Station on a dull day of February—I, who had owned his impetuous mother, knowing a little what to expect, while to my companion he would be all original. We stood there waiting (for the Salisbury train was late), and wondering with a warm, half-fearful eagerness what sort of new thread Life was going to twine into our skein. I think our chief dread was that he might have light eyes—those yellow Chinese eyes of the common, parti-coloured spaniel. And each new minute of the train's tardiness increased our anxious compassion: His first journey; his first separation from his mother; this black two-month's baby ! Then the train ran in, and we hastened to look for him. " Have you a dog for us ? "

" " A dog ! Not in this van. Ask the rearguard,"

" Have you a dog for us ? "

" That's right. From Salisbury. Here's your wild beast, sir! "

From behind a wooden crate we saw a long black muzzled nose poking round at us, and heard a faint hoarse whimpering.

I remember my first thought:

" Isn't his nose too long ? "

But to my companion's heart it went at once, because it was swollen from crying and being pressed against

things that he could not see through. We took him out—soft, wobbly, tearful; set him down on his four, as yet not quite simultaneous legs, and regarded him. Or rather, my companion did, having her head on one side, and a quavering smile ; and I regarded her, knowing that I should thereby get a truer impression of him.

He wandered a little Tound our legs, neither wagging his tail nor licking at our hands ; then he looked up, and my companion said : " He's an angel! "

I was not so certain. He seemed hammerheaded, with no eyes at all, and little connection between his head, his body, and his legs. His ears were very long, as long as his poor nose; and gleaming down in the blackness of him I could see the same white star that disgraced his mother's chest.

Picking him up, we carried him to a fourwheeled cab, and took his muzzle off. His little dark-brown eyes were resolutely fixed on distance, and by his refusal to even smell the biscuits we had brought to make him happy, we knew that the human being had not yet come into a life that had contained so far only a mother, a woodshed, and four other soft, wobbly, black, hammer-headed angels, smelling of themselves, and warmth, and wood shavings. It was pleasant to feel that to us he would surrender an untouched love, that is, if he would surrender anything. Suppose he did not take to us I

And just then something must have stirred in him, for he turned up his swollen nose and stared at my companion, and a little later rubbed the dry pinkness of his tongue against my thumb. In that look, and that unconscious restless lick, he was trying hard to leave unhappiness behind, trying hard to feel that these new

creatures with stroking paws and queer scents, were his mother; yet all the time he knew, I am sure, that they were something bigger, more permanently, desperately, his. The first sense of being owned, perhaps (who knows) of owning, had stirred in him. He would never again be quite the same unconscious creature.

A little way from the end of our journey we got out and dismissed the cab. He could not too soon know the scents and pavements of this London where the chief of his life must pass. I can see now his first bumble down that wide back-water of a street, how continually and suddenly he sat down to make sure of his own legs, how continually he lost our heels. He showed us then in full perfection what was afterwards to be an inconvenient—if endearing—characteristic : At any call or whistle he would look in precisely the opposite direction. How many times all through his life have I not seen him, at my whistle, start violently and turn his tail to me, then, with nose thrown searchingly from side to side, begin to canter towards the horizon !

In that first walk, we met, fortunately, but one vehicle, a brewer's dray; he chose that moment to attend to the more serious affairs of life, sitting quietly before the horses' feet and requiring to be moved by hand. From the beginning he had his dignity, and was extremely difficult to lift, owing to the length of his middle distance.

What strange feelings must have stirred in his little white soul when he first smelled carpet ! But it was all so strange to him that day—I doubt if he felt more than I did when I first travelled to my private school, reading " Tales of a Grandfather," and plied with tracts and sherry by my father's man of business.

That night, indeed, for several nights, he slept with me, keeping me too warm down my back, and waking me now and then with quaint sleepy whimperings. Indeed, all through his life he flew a good deal in his sleep, fighting dogs and seeing ghosts, running after rabbits and thrown sticks; and to the last one never quite knew whether or not to rouse him when his four black feet began to jerk and quiver. His dreams were like our dreams, both good and bad; happy sometimes, sometimes tragic to weeping point.

He ceased to sleep with me the day we discovered that he was a perfect little colony, whose settlers were of an active species which I have never seen again. After that he had many beds, for circumstance ordained that his life should be nomadic, and it is to this I trace that philosophic indifference to place or property, which marked him out from most of his own kind. He learned early that for a black dog with long silky ears, a feathered tail, and head of great dignity, there was no home whatsoever, away from those creatures with special scents, who took liberties with his name, and alone of all created things were privileged to smack him with a slipper. He would sleep anywhere, so long as it was in their room, or so close outside it as to make no matter, for it was with him a principle that what he did not smell did not exist. I would I could hear again those long rubber-lipped snufflings of recognition underneath the door, with which each morning he would regale and reassure a spirit that grew with age more and more nervous and delicate about this matter of propinquity! For he was a dog of fixed ideas, things stamped on his mind were indelible; as, for example, his duty toward cats for whom he had really a perverse affection, which had led to that first disastrous moment

of his life, when he was brought up, poor bewildered puppy, from a brief excursion to the kitchen, with one eye closed and his cheek torn I He bore to his grave that jagged scratch across the eye. It was in dread of a repetition of this tragedy that he was instructed at the word " Cats " to rush forward with a special " tow-row-rowing," which he never used toward any other form of creature. To the end he cherished a hope that he would reach the cat, but never did ; and if he had, we knew he would only have stood and wagged his tail; but I well remember once, when he returned, impotent, from some such sally, how dreadfully my companion startled a cat-loving friend by murmuring in her most honeyed voice: " Well, my darling, have you been killing pussies in the garden ? "

His eye and nose were impeccable in their sense of form ; indeed, he was very English in that matter ; People must be just so; things smell properly; and affairs go on in the one right way. He could tolerate neither creatures in ragged clothes, nor children on their hands and knees, nor postmen, because, with their bags, they swelled-up on one side, and carried lanterns on their stomachs. He would never let the harmless creatures pass without religious barks. Naturally a believer in authority and routine, and distrusting spiritual adventure, he yet had curious fads that seemed to have nested in him, quite outside of all principle. He would, for instance, follow neither carriages nor horses, and if we tried to make him, at once left for home, where he would sit with nose raised to Heaven, emitting through it a most lugubrious, shrill noise. Then again, one must not place a stick, a slipper, a glove, or anything with which he could play, upon one's head—since such an action reduced him at once **to**

frenzy. For so conservative a dog, his environments was sadly anarchistic. He never complained in words Df our shifting habits, but curled his head round over his left paw and pressed his chin very hard against the ground whenever he smelled packing. Wha,' necessity,—he seemed continually to be saying,—what real necessity is there for change of any kind whatever ? Here we were all together, and one day was like another, so that I knew where I was—and now *you* only know what will happen next; and I—I can't tell you whether I shall be with you when it happens ! What strange, grieving minutes a dog passes at such times in the underground of his subconsciousness, refusing realisation, yet all the time only too well divining. Some careless word, some unmuted compassion in voice, the stealthy wrapping of a pair of boots, the unaccustomed shutting of a door that ought to be open, the removal from a down-stair room of an object always there—one tiny thing, and he knows for certain that he is not going too. He fights against the knowledge just as we do against what we cannot bear; he gives up hope, but not effort, protesting in the only way he knows of, and now and then heaving a great sigh. Those sighs of a dog ! They go to the heart so much more deeply than the sighs of our own kind, because they are utterly unintended, regardless of effect, emerging from one who, heaving them, knows not that they have escaped him I

The words : " Yes—going too !" spoken in a certain tone, would call up in his eyes a still-questioning half-happiness, and from his tail a quiet flutter, but did not quite serve to put to rest either his doubt or his feeling that it was all unnecessary—until the cab arrived. Then he would pour himself out of door ot

window, and be found in the bottom of the vehicle, looking severely away from an admiring cabman. Once settled on our feet he travelled with philosophy, but no digestion.

I think no dog was ever more indifferent to an outside world of human creatures ; yet few dogs have made more conquests—especially among strange women, through whom, however, he had a habit of looking—very discouraging. He had, natheless, one or two particular friends, such as him to whom this is dedicated, and a few persons whom he knew he had seen before, but, broadly speaking, there were in his world of men, only his mistress, and—the almighty.

Each August, till he was six, he was sent for health, and the assuagement of his hereditary instincts, up to a Scotch shooting, where he carried many birds in a very tender manner. Once he was compelled by Fate to remain there nearly a year; and we went up ourselves to fetch him home. Down the long avenue towards the keeper's cottage we walked. It was high autumn; there had been frost already, for the ground was fine with red and yellow leaves ; and presently we saw himself coming, professionally questing among those leaves, and preceding his dear keeper with the business-like self-containment of a sportsman; not too fat, glossy as a raven's wing, swinging his ears and sporran like a little Highlander. We approached him silently. Suddenly his nose went up from its imagined trail, and he came rushing at our legs. From him, as a garment drops from a man, dropped all his strange soberness; he became in a single instant one fluttering eagerness. He leaped from life to life in one bound, without hesitation, without regret. Not one sigh, not **one** look back, not the faintest token of gratitude or

regret at leaving those good people who had tended him for a whole year, buttered oat-cake for him, allowed him to choose each night exactly where he would sleep. No, he just marched out beside us, as close as ever he could get, drawing us on in spirit, and not even attending to the scents, until the lodge gates were passed.

It was strictly in accordance with the perversity of things, and something in the nature of calamity that he had not been ours one year, when there came over me a dreadful but overmastering aversion from killing those birds and creatures of which he was so fond as soon as they were dead. And so I never knew him as a sportsman; for during that first year he was only an unbroken puppy, tied to my waist for fear of accidents, and carefully pulling me off every shot. They tell me he developed a lovely nose and perfect mouth, large enough to hold gingerly the biggest hare. I well believe it, remembering the qualities of his mother, whose character, however, in stability he far surpassed. But, as *he* grew every year more devoted to dead grouse and birds and rabbits, *I* liked them more and more alive ; it was the only real breach between us, and we kept it out of sight. Ah ! well; it is consoling to reflect that I should infallibly have ruined his sporting qualities, lacking that peculiar habit of meaning what one says, so necessary to keep dogs virtuous. But surely to have had him with me, quivering and alert, with his solemn eager face, would have given a new joy to those crisp mornings when the hope of wings coming to the gun makes poignant in the sportsman as nothing else will, an almost sensual love of Nature, a fierce delight in the soft glow of leaves, in the white birch stems and tracery of sparse twigs against blue

sky, in the scents of sap and grass and gum and heather flowers ; stivers the hair of him with keenness for interpreting each sound, and fills the very fern or moss he kneels on, the very trunk he leans against, with strange vibration.

Slowly Fate prepares for each of us the religion that lies coiled in our most secret nerves ; with such we cannot trifle, we do not even try ! But how shall a man grudge any one sensations he has so keenly felt ? Let such as have never known those curious delights, uphold the hand of horror—for me there can be no such luxury. If I could, I would still perhaps be knowing them ; but when once the joy of life in those winged and furry things has knocked at the very portals of one's spirit, the thought that by pressing a little iron twig one will rive that joy out of their vitals, is too hard to bear. Call it aestheticism, squeamishness, namby-pamby sentimentalism, what you will—it is stronger than oneself !

Yes, after one had once watched with an eye that did not merely see, the thirsty gaping of a slowly dying bird, or a rabbit dragging a broken leg to a hole where he would lie for hours thinking of the fern to which he should never more come forth—after that, there was always the following little matter of arithmetic : Given, that all those who had been shooting were " good-fair " shots—which, Heaven knew, they never were—they yet missed one at least in four, and did not miss it very much; so that if seventy-five things were slain, there were also twenty-five that had been fired at, and, of those twenty-five, twelve and a half had " gotten it " somewhere in their bodies, and would ' likely " die at their great leisure.

This was the sum that brought about the only cleav-

age in our lives ; and so, as he grew older, and trying to part from each other we no longer could, he ceased going to Scotland. But after that I often felt, and especially when we heard guns, how the best and most secret instincts of him were being stifled. But what was to be done ? In that which was left of a clay pigeon he would take not the faintest interest—the scent of it was paltry. Yet always, even in his most cosseted and idle days, he managed to preserve the grave preoccupation of one professionally concerned with retrieving things that smell; and consoled himself with pastimes such as cricket, which he played in a manner highly specialised, following the ball up the moment it left the bowler's hand, and sometimes retrieving it before it reached the batsman. When remonstrated with, he would consider a little, hanging out a pink tongue and looking rather too eagerly at the ball, then canter slowly out to a sort of forward short leg. Why he always chose that particular position it is difficult to say ; possibly he could lurk there better than anywhere else, the batsman's eye not being on him, and the bowler's not too much. As a fieldsman he was perfect, but for an occasional belief that he was not merely short leg, but slip, point, mid-off, and wicket-keep; and perhaps a tendency to make the ball a little " jubey." But he worked tremendously, watching every movement ; for he knew the game thoroughly, and seldom delayed it more than three minutes when he secured the ball. And if that ball were really lost, then indeed he took over the proceedings with an intensity and quiet vigour that destroyed many shrubs, and the solemn satisfaction which comes from being in the very centre of the stage.

But his most passionate delight was swimming in

anything except the sea, for which, with its unpleasant noise and habit of tasting salt, he had little affection. I see him now, cleaving the Serpentine, with his air of " the world well lost," striving to reach my stick before it had touched water. Being only a large spaniel, too small for mere heroism, he saved no lives in the water but his own—and that, on one occasion, before our very eyes, from a dark trout stream, which was trying to wash him down into a black hole among the boulders.

The call of the wild—Spring running—whatever it is—that besets men and dogs, seldom attained full mastery over him ; but one could often see it struggling against his devotion to the scent of us, and, watching that dumb contest, I have time and again wondered how far this civilisation of ours was justifiably imposed on him ; how far the love for us that we had so carefully implanted could ever replace in him the satisfaction of his primitive wild yearnings. He was like a man, naturally polygamous, married to one loved woman.

It was surely not for nothing that Rover is dog's most common name, and would be ours, but for our too tenacious fear of losing something, to admit, even to ourselves, that we are hankering. There was a man who said : Strange that two such queerly opposite qualities as courage and hypocrisy are the leading characteristics of the Anglo-Saxon! But is not hypocrisy just a product of tenacity, which is again the lower part of courage ? Is not hypocrisy but an active sense of property in one's good name, the clutching close of respectability at any price, the feeling that one must not part, even at the cost of truth, with what he has sweated so to gain ? And so we Anglo-Saxons will not answer to the name of Rover, and treat our dogs so that they, too, hardly know their natures.

The history of his one wandering, for which no respectable reason can be assigned, will never, of course, be known. It was in London, of an October evening, when we were told he had slipped out and was not anywhere. Then began those four distressful hours of searching for that black needle in that blacker bundle of hay. Hours of real dismay and suffering—for it is suffering indeed, to feel a loved thing swallowed up in that hopeless maze of London streets. Stolen or run over ? Which was worst ? The neighbouring police stations visited, the Dog's Home notified, an order for five hundred " Lost Dog " bills placed in the printer's hands, the streets patrolled ! And then, in a lull snatched for food, and still endeavouring to preserve some aspect of assurance, we heard the lark which meant: " Here is a door I cannot open ! " We hurried forth, and there he was on the top doorstep—busy, unashamed, giving no explanations, asking for his supper; and very shortly after him came his five hundred " Lost Dog " bills. Long I sat looking at him that night after my companion had gone up, thinking of the evening, some years before, when there followed us that shadow of a spaniel who had been lost for eleven days. And my heart turned over within me. But he ! He was asleep, for he knew not remorse.

Ah ! and there was that other time, when it was reported to me, returning home at night, that he had gone out to find me ; and I went forth again, disturbed, and whistling his special call to the empty fields. Suddenly out of the darkness I heard a rushing, and he came furiously dashing against my heels from he alone knevv where he had been lurking and saying to himself; I will not go in till he comes *I ! could* not scold, there was something too lyrical in the return

of that live, lonely, rushing piece of blackness through the blacker night. After all, the vagary was but a variation in his practice when one was away at bed-time, of passionately scratching up his bed in protest, till it resembled nothing; for, in spite of his long and solemn face and the silkiness of his ears, there was much in him yet of the cave bear—he dug graves on the smallest provocations, in which he never buried anything. He was not a " clever " dog ; and guiltless of all tricks. Nor was he ever " shown." We did not even dream of subjecting him to this indignity. Was our dog a clown, a hobby, a fad, a fashion, a feather in our caps—that we should subject him to periodic pennings in stuffy halls, that we should harry his faithful soul with such tomfoolery ? He never even heard us talk about his lineage, deplore the length of his nose, or call him " clever-looking." We should have been ashamed to let him smell about us the tar-brush of a sense of property, to let him think we looked on him as an asset to earn us pelf or glory. We wished that there should be between us the spirit that was between the sheep-dog and that farmer, who, when asked his dog's age, touched the old creature's head, and answered thus : " Teresa " (his daughter) " was born in November, and this one in August." That sheep-dog had seen eighteen years when the great white day came for him, and his spirit passed away up to cling with the wood-smoke round the dark rafters of the kitchen where he had lain so vast a time beside his master's boots. No, no ! If a man does not soon pass beyond the thought: ' By what shall this dog profit me ? ' into the large state of simple gladness to be with dog, he shall never know the very essence of that companionship which depends, not on the points of dog, but on some strange and

subtle mingling of mute spirits. For it is by muteness that a dog becomes for one so utterly beyond value; with him one is at peace, where words play no torturing tricks' When he just sits, loving, and knows that he is being loved, those are the moments that I think are precious to a dog; when, with his adoring soul coming through his eyes, he feels that you are really thinking of him. But he is touchingly tolerant of one's other occupations. The subject of these memories always knew when one was too absorbed in work to be so close to him as he thought proper; yet he never tried to hinder or distract, or asked for attention. It dinged his mood, of course, so that the red under his eyes and the folds of his crumply cheeks—which seemed to speak of a touch of bloodhound introduced a long way back into his breeding—grew deeper and more manifest. If he could have spoken at such times, he would have said :

" I have been a long time alone, and I cannot always be asleep; but you know best, and I must not criticise,"

He did not at all mind one's being absorbed in other humans ; he seemed to enjoy the sounds of conversation lifting round him, and to know when they were sensible. He could not, for instance, stand actors or actresses giving readings of their parts, perceiving at once that the same had no connection with the minds and real feelings of the speakers ; and, having wandered a little to show his disapproval, he would go to the door and stare at it till it opened and let him out. Once or twice, it is true, when an actor of large voice was declaiming an emotional passage, he so far relented as to go up to him and pant in his face. Music, too, made him restless, inclined to sigh, and to ask questions.

Sometimes, at its first sound, he would cross to the window and remain there looking for Her. At others, he would simply go and lie on the loud pedal, and we never could tell whether it was from sentiment, or because he thought that in this way he heard less. At one special Nocturne of Chopin's he always whimpered. He *was*, indeed, of rather Polish temperament—very gay when he was gay, dark and brooding when he was not.

On the whole, perhaps his life was uneventful for so far-travelling a dog, though it held its moments of eccentricity, as when he leaped through the window of a four-wheeler into Kensington, or sat on a Dartmoor adder.

But that was fortunately of a Sunday afternoon —when adder and all were torpid, so nothing happened, till a friend, who was following, lifted him off the creature with his large boot.

If only one could have known more of his private life —more of his relations with his own kind ! I fancy he was always rather a dark dog to them, having so many thoughts about us that he could not share with any one, and being naturally fastidious, except with ladies, for whom he had a chivalrous and catholic taste, so that they often turned and snapped at him. He had, however, but one lasting love affair, for a liver-coloured lass of our village, not quite of his own caste, but a wholesome if somewhat elderly girl, with loving and sphinx-like eyes. Their children, alas, were not for this world, and soon departed.

Nor was he a fighting dog; but once attacked, he lacked a sense of values, being unable to distinguish between dogs that he could beat and dogs with whom he had " no earthly." It was, in fact, as well to inter-

fere at once, especially in the matter of retrievers, for he never forgot having in his youth been attacked by a retriever from behind. No, he never forgot, and never forgave, an enemy. Only a month before that day of which I cannot speak, being very old and ill, he engaged an Irish terrier on whose impudence he had long had his eye, and routed him. And how a battle cheered his spirit! He was certainly no Christian; but, allowing for essential dog, he was very much a gentleman. And I do think that most of us who live on this earth these days would rather leave it with that label on us than the other. For to be a Christian, as Tolstoy understood the word—and no one else in our time has had logic and love of truth enough to give it coherent meaning—is (to be quite sincere) not suited to men of Western blood. Whereas—to be a gentleman ! It is a far cry, but perhaps it can be done. In him, at all events, there was no pettiness, no meanness, and no cruelty, and though he fell below his ideal at times, this never altered the true look of his eyes, nor the simple loyalty in his soul.

But what a crowd of memories come back, bringing with them the perfume of fallen days I What delights and glamour, what long hours of effort, discouragements, and secret fears did he not watch over—our black familiar ; and with the sight and scent and touch of him, deepen or assuage ! How many thousand walks did we not go together, so that we still turn to see if he is following at his padding gait, attentive to the invisible trails. Not the least hard thing to bear when they go from us, these quiet friends, is that they carry away with them so many years of our own lives. Yet if they find warmth therein, who would grudge them those years that they have so guarded ? Nothing

else of us can they take to lie upon with outstretched paws and chin pressed to the ground; and, whatever they take, be sure they have deserved.

Do they know, as we do, that their time must come ? Yes, they know, at rare moments. No other way can I interpret those pauses of his latter life, when, propped on his forefeet, he would sit for long minutes quite motionless—his head drooped, utterly withdrawn; then turn those eyes of his and look at me. That look said more plainly than all words could : " Yes, I know that I must go ! " If *we* have spirits that persist—*they* have. If *we* know after our departure, who we were—*they* do. No one, I think, who really longs for truth, can ever glibly say which it will be for dog and man—persistence or extinction of our consciousness. There is but one thing certain—the childishness of fretting over that eternal question. Whichever it be it must be right, the only possible thing. He felt that too, I know ; but then, like his master, he was what is called a pessimist.

My companion tells me that, since he left us, he has once come back. It was Old Year's Night, and she was sad, when he came to her in visible shape of his black body, passing round the dining-table from the window-end, to his proper place beneath the table, at her feet. She saw him quite clearly ; she heard the padding tap-tap of his paws and very toe-nails; she felt his warmth brushing hard against the front of her skirt. She thought then that he would settle down upon her feet, but something disturbed him, and he stood pausing, pressed against her, then moved out toward where I generally sit, but was not sitting that night. She saw him stand there, as if considering; then at some sound or laugh, she became self-conscious,

and slowly, very slowly, he was no longer there. Had he some message, some counsel to give, something he would say, that last night of the last year of all those he had watched over us? Will he come back again?

No stone stands over where he lies. It is on our hearts that his life is engraved.

1912.

VERSES NEW AND OLD

DEDICATION

THINE is the solitude that rare flowers know,
Whose face is slender aristocracy.
And yet, of all that in the garden grow,
None other has such sweet supremacy.
For thine's the oldest secret of the world :
How to be loved, and still to keep apart—
A lily blown, a bud not yet uncurled—
Gold-fortuned I, whose very breath thou art I

I

COURAGE

COURAGE is but a word, and yet, of words,
The only sentinel of permanence;
The ruddy watch-fire of cold winter days,
We steal its comfort, lift our weary swords,
And on. For faith—without it—has no sense ;
And love to wind of doubt and tremor sways;
And life for ever quaking marsh must tread.

Laws give it not; before it prayer will blush ;
Hope has it not; nor pride of being true ;
'Tis the mysterious soul which never yields,
But hales us on to breast the rush
Of all the fortunes we shall happen thro';
And when Death calls across his shadowy fields—
Dying, it answers : " Here I I am not dead !"

II

ERRANTRY

COME ! Let us lay a crazy lance in rest,
And tilt at windmills under a wild sky !
For who would live so petty and unblest
That dare not tilt at something ere he die,
Rather than, screened by safe majority,
Preserve his little life to little ends,
And never raise a rebel battle-cry !

Ah I for the weapon wistful and sublime,
Whose lifted point recks naught of woe or weal.
Since Fate demands it shivered every time !
When in the wildness of our charge we reel
Men laugh indeed—the sweeter heavens smile,
For all the world of fat prosperity
Has not the value of that broken steel !

The strange far echo of our challenge cry
Sets ringing all the bells of merriment,
And yet another hidden bell that tolls
A faint and wandering chime of sympathy
Within the true cathedral of our souls—
So, crystal-clear, the shepherd's homeward pipe
From feasts his cynical soft sheep cajoles.

God save the pennon, ragged to the morn,
That signals moon to stand, and sun to fly;
And flutter? when the weak is overborne
To stem the tide of fate and certainty.
That knows not reason, and that seeks no fame—
But has engraven round its stubborn wood
The words : " Knight-Errant to Eternity I "

So ! Undismayed beneath the serried clouds,
Shall float the banner of forlorn defence—
A jest to the complacency of crowds—
But haloed with the one diviner sense :
To hold itself as nothing to itself ;
And in the quest of the imagined star
To lose all thought of after-recompense I

III

THE PRAYER

JF on a Spring night I went by
And God were standing there,
What is the prayer that I would cry
To Him ? This is the prayer :
O Lord of Courage grave,
O Master of this night of Spring !
Make firm in me a heart too brave
To ask Thee anything !

IV

TIME

BENEATH this vast serene of sky
Where worlds are but as mica dust,
From age to age the wind goes by ;
Unnumbered summer burns the grass.
On granite rocks, at rest from strife,
The aeons lie in lichen rust.
Then what is man's so brittle life ?—
The buzzing of the flies that pass !

V

ACCEPTATION

BLUE sky, grey stones, and the far sea,
The larks' song trilling over me ;
Grey stones, blue sky, and the green weed—
You have no sense that I can read;
Nor on the wind's breath passing by
Comes any meaning melody !
Blue sky, grey stones, and the far sea,
Lark's song, green weed, wind melody—
You are ,' And must accepted be !

VI

THE DOWNS

O THE Downs high to the cool sky;
And the feel of the sun-warmed moss;
And each cardoon, like a full moon,
Fairy-spun of the thistle floss;
And the beech grove, and a wood-dove.
And the trail where the shepherds pass;
And the lark's song, and the wind-song,
And the scent of the parching grass I

VII

THE SEEDS OF LIGHT

ONCE on a mazy afternoon, beside a southern sea,
I watched a shoal of sunny beams come swimming close to me.
Each like a whited candle-flame—left flickering in air
Each like a silver daffodil astonied to be there ;
Or like a diving summer star, its brightness come to lave;
Or e'en a little naked spirit leaping on the wave.

And while I sat, and while I dreamed, beside that summer sea,
There came the fairest thought of all that ever came to me:
The little lives of little men, no more they seemed to mean
Than one of those bright seeds of light sown on that water green:
No more they seemed, no less they seemed, than shimmerings of sky—
The sunny sudden smiles of God that glisten forth and die.

VIII

I ASK

MY happy lime is gold with flowers;
From noon to noon the breezes blow
Their love pipes ; and the wild bees beat
Their drums and sack the blossom bowers . . .
Yet, stifling in the valley heat,
A woman's dying there below I

Between the blowing rose so red
And honey-saffroned lily cup,
Receiving heaven, so I lie ! . . .
But down the field a calf lies dead;
At this same burning summer sky
Its velvet darkened eye looks up.

* ****

Behind the fairest masks of life
Dwells ever that pale constant death.
Philosophers ! What shall we say ?
Must we keep wistful death to wife ?
Or hide her image quite away,
And, wanton, draw forgetful breath ?

IX

HIGHLAND SPRING

THERE'S mating madness in the air,
Passionate, grave. The blossoms burst;
The burns run quick to lips athirst;
And solemn gaze young maids heart-free.

The white clouds race, the sun rays flare
And turn to gold the pallid mist;
With greedy mouth the Spring has kissed
The wind that links the sky with sea.

The blue and lonely mountains stare,
And long to draw the blue above.
The hour is come! O Flower of Love—
I can no longer keep from thee!

OLD YEAR'S NIGHT

How fast the slim feet move !
The fiddles whine, the reedy oboes toot;
Lips whisper, eyes look love—
And Old Year's dying underfoot I

*****

The moonlight floods the grass,
The music's hushed, and all the festal din;
The pale musicians pass,
Bach clasping close his violin.

XI

THE MOON AT DAWN

WHEN, at the dawn, the homeless breeze
Creeps back to wake the sleeping trees,
The moon steals down and no one sees !

Yes ! in the morn, no watcher there,
She turns a face, once angel fair,
And smiles, as only harlots dare !

*****

I saw her once, the insatiate moon,
Go stealing, coiffed with orange hood,
From night, her lover, still in swoon—
All wicked she, who once was good !

XII

SERENITY

THE smiling sea
And dunes and sky
Dream; and the bee
Goes dreaming by.

In heaven's field
Moon's scimitar
Is drawn to shield
One dreaming star.

The dreaming flowers
And lovers nod.
Serene these hoius—
Serene is God.

XIII

NIGHTMARE

THERE fell a man in the heat,
Out of the race he ran,
Who knew too well he was not beat—
O God! Was *I* that man?

XIV

LET

MY love lived there ! And now
'Tis but a shell of brick,
New-painted, flowered about-—
So far from being quick
As night, when stars die out,

From windows gaily lit.
Where once in curtained dark
My heaven used to hide,
The memories wan and stark
Troop down to me outside.

XV

RHYME OF THE LAND AND SEA

By the side of me—the immortal Pan—
Lies the sweetest thing of the sea;
In her gown of brine,
With her breast to mine,
And her drowned dark hair lies she !

But her smile—like the wine-red, shadowy sea,
When the day slides on and down—
By the gods, it is tender death to me \
In its waters dark I drown !
" *O* slave of mine I Thou mystery
Of smiling depths—I drown I "

XVI

AUTUMN BY THE SEA

WE'LL hear the murmur of the swell,
And touch the drift-wood gray,
And with our quickened senses smell
The sea-flowers all the day.

We'll watch the hills, the pastures brown,
The trees of changing hue,
Till evening's ice comes stealing down
From those high fields of blue ;

And far the crimson Sun-god sails
Away in sunset cloak ;
And gentle heat's gold pathway fails
In autumn's opal smoke.

And then we'll watch the bright half-moon—
Slow-spinning in the sky.
And trace the dark flight—all too soon—
Of land-birds wheeling by.

Through all the night of stars we'll touch
The quietude of things,
And gain brief freedom from the clutch
Of Life's cncompassings.

XVII

MAGPIE

MAGPIE, lonely flying—
What do you bring to me?
Two for joy, and one for sorrow !
Loved to-day, is lost to-moriow!
Magpie, flying, flying—
What have you brought to me !

XVIII

SILVER POINT

SHARP against a sky of gray
Pigeon's nest in naked tree;
Every silver twig up-curled,
Not a budding leaf unfurled,
Nor a breath to fan the day!

World aspiring and severe,
Not a hum of fly or bee,
Not a song, and not a cry,
Not a perfume stealing by?
Stillest moment of the year I

XIX

AUTUMN

WHEN every leaf has different hue
And flames of birch tree blow ;
And high against November blue
The white cloud's bent in bow ;

When buzzard hawk wheels in the Sun,
And bracken crowns the cleave,
And autumn stains the heather dun,
And wan buds make believe;

When droning thresher hums its song
And tale of harvest proves,
And rusty steers the lane-ways throng,
And gray birds flit in droves;

Then bird, and beast, and every tree
And those few flowers that blow,
Against the winter hearten me
Who would no winter know!

XX

STREET LAMPS

LAMPS, lamps I Lamps ev'rywhere?
You wistful, gay, and burning eyes,
You stars low-driven from the skies
Down on the rainy air.

You merchant eyes that never tire
Of spying out our little ways,
Of summing up our little days
In ledgerings of fire—

Inscrutable your nightly glance,
Your lighting and your snuffing out,
Your flicker through the windy rout,
Guiding this mazy dance.

O watchful, troubled gaze of gold,
Protecting us upon our beats—
You piteous glamour of the streets.
Youthless, and never old I

XXI

GAULZERY MOOR

MOOR of my name, where the road leads high,
Thro' heather and bracken gorse and grass,
Up to the crown of the western sky
A spying traveller, slow, I pass.
Silent and lonely the darkening moor,
The beasts are bedded, the birds are gone,
Never a farm, nor a cottage door,
And I on the road alone—alone;
And the south-west wind is beginning to croon
And a listening lonely pine tree sways ;
And behind it is hanging a golden moon
For a resting sign at the cornerways.
A thousand years since the stranger came,
And homed him here; and gave me name.

XXII

THE MOOR GRAVE

I LIE out here under a heather sod,
A moor-stone at my head ; the moor-winds play above.
I lie out here. . . . The graveyard of their God
Was not for desperate me who died for love.
I lie out here under the sun and moon;
Across me ponies stride, the curlews cry.
I have no tombstone screed, no : " Soon
To glory shall she rise I " But peace have !!

XXIII

DEVON TO ME I

WHERE my fathers stood
Watching the sea,
Gale-spent herring boats
Hugging the lea;
There my Mother lives.
Moorland and tree.
Sight o' the blossom I
Devon to me !

Where my fathers walked,
Driving the plough ;
Whistled their hearts out—
Who whistles now ?
There my Mother burns
Fire faggots free.
Scent o' the wood-smoke !
Devon to me I

Where my fathers sleep,
Turning to dust,
This old body throw
When die I must !
There my Mother calls,
Wakeful is She I
Sound o' the west-wind !
Devon to me I

Where my fathers lie,
When I am gone,
Who need pity me
Dead? Never one I
There my Mother clasps
Me. Let me be!
Feel o' the red earth'
Devon to me!

XXIV

COUNTING THE STARS

THE cuckoo bird has long gone home
And owls instead and flitting jars
Call out, call out for us to come,
My Love and me, to count the stars ;
And into this wide orchard rove—
The whispering trees scarce give us room.
They drop their petals on my Love
And me beneath the apple bloom.

And each pale petal is alive
With dew of twilight from the sky.
Where all the stars hang in their hive-
Such scores to count, my Love and !!
The boughs below, the boughs above,
We scatter, lest their twisted gloom
Should stay the counting of my Love
And me beneath the apple bloom.

And when the Mother Moon comes by
And puts the little stars to bed,
We count, my timid Love and I,
The pretty apple stars instead ;
Until at last all lights remove,
And dark sleep, dropping on the combe,
Fastens the eyelids of my Love
And me beneath the apple bloom.

XXV

LAND SONG OF THE WEST COUNTRY

THE lanes are long, and 'ome is far,
But we'll go joggin', joggin' on.
Up dimsy sky, 'ere comes a star,
Over the bank the flowers peep
To see if 'tis the time to sleep.
But we'll go joggin' on.

The sunset's sinkin' down apace,
But we'll go joggin', joggin' on.
The land's all like a maiden's face,
The more yii liike the less yd sec,
'Tis all a miivin' mystery.
And we'll go joggin' on.

The trout are risin' in the stream,
We ford it, joggin', joggin' on.
The mill-wheel's turnin' in a dream;
The chafer's boomin' over'ead,
And every lidd'l bird's in bed.
And we go joggin' on.

The cottages are prayin' smoke,
As we go joggin', joggin' on.
The 'ayrick's bonneted a-poke;
The beasts are chewin' at their ease
The evenin' cud beneath the trees,
As we go joggin' on.

There's many a teasin' drop o' rain
As we go joggin', joggin' on.
And many a brave while fine again.
There's many a dip and many a rise,
And many a smile o' dinky eyes.
There's many a scent, and many a tune,
And over all the lidd'l mune,
As we go joggin' ots.

XXVI

VILLAGE SLEEP SONG

SLEEP I all who toil ;
No longer creaks the harvest wain.
For sleeping lies the harvest day,
Asleep the winding leafy lane
Where none's afoot to miss his way.

Sleep ! village street,
You've stared too long upon the sun;
Now turn you to the gentle moon.
Sleep, windows ! for your work is done,
To-morrow's light will come too soon!

Sleep ! Sleep ! The heat
Is over in the darkened home.
A night-jar's spinning in the brake.
And—hark !—the floating owls have come
To try and keep the hours awake.

Sleep I honey hives I
And swallow's flight, and thrushes' call !
Sleep, tongues, a little, while you may,
And let night's cool oblivion fall
On all the gossip of the day.

Sleep ! Men and wives,
A sweetness of refreshment steal;
The morning star can vigil keep;
Too quickly turns the slumber wheel—
And all you little children, sleep I

XXVII

WEMBURY CHURCH

HERE stand I,
Buttressed over the sea !
Time and sky
Take no toll from me.

To me, gray—
Wind-gray, flung with foam—
Ye that stray
Wild-foot, come ye home ;

Mother I—
Mother I will be I
Ere ye die,
Heat! O sons at sea I

Shall I fall,
Leave my flock of graves ?
Not for all
Your rebelling waves I

I stand fast—
Let the waters cry I
Here I last
To Eternity I

XXVIII

A MOOD

LOVE'S a flower, 'tis born and broken,
Plucked apace—and hugged apart.
Evening comes, it clings—poor token—
Dead and dry, on lover's heart.

Love's the rhyme of a summer minute
Woven close like hum of flies;
Sob of wind, and meaning in it
Dies away, as summer dies.

Love's a shimmery morning bubble
Puffed all gay from pipe of noon;
Spun aloft on breath of trouble--
Bursts in air—is gone—to soon!

XXIX

STRAW IN THE STREET

STRAW in the street I
My heart, oh I hearken—
Fate thrums its song of sorrow I
The windows darken. . .
O God of all to-morrow !

Straw in the street !
To wintry sleeping
Turns all our summer laughter.
The brooms are sweeping . . .
There's naught for me hereafter !

XXX

PAST

THE clocks are chiming in my heart
A cobweb chime;
Old murmurings of days that die,
The sob of things a-drifting by.
The clocks are chiming in my heart I

The stars have twinkled, and died out—
Fair candles blown I
The hot desires burn low, and gone
To ash the fire that flamed anon.
The stars have twinkled, and died out I

Old journeys travel in my head !
My roaming time—
Forgotten smiles of stranger friends,
Sweet weary miles, and sweeter ends.
Old journeys travel in my head I

The leaves are dropping from my tree !
Dead leaves and flown,
The vine-leaf ghosts are round my brow ;
For ever frosts and winter now.
The leaves are dropping from my tree !

XXXI

WIND

WIND, wind—heather gipsy,
Whistling in my tree !
All the heart of me is tipsy
On the sound of thee.
Sweet with scent of clover
Salt with breath of sea.
Wind, wind—wayman lover,
Whistling in my tree I

XXXII

ROSE AND YEW

LOVE flew by I Young wedding day,
Peeping through her veil of dew,
Saw him, and her heart went fey—
His wings no shadows threw.

Love flew by ! Young day was gone,
Owls were hooting—Who-to-wboo !
Happy-wedded lay alone,
Who'd vowed that love was true.

*****

Love flies by, and drops a rose—
Drops a rose, a sprig of yew !
Happy these—but ah ! for those
Whose love has cried : Adieu !

XXXm

PROMENADE

ALL sweet and startled gravity,
My Love comes walking from the Park;
Her eyes are full of what they've seen—-
The little bushes puffing green,
The candles pale that light the chestnut tree.

The tulip and the jonquil spies ;
The sunshine and the sudden dark;
The dance of buds ; and Madam Dove;
Sir Blackbird fluting to his love—
These little loves my Love has in her eyes,

In dainty shoes and subtle hose
My Love comes walking from the Park,
She is, I swear, the sweetest thing
That ever left the -heart of Spring,
To tell the secret: Wliosice the pollen blows I

XXXIV

TO MY DOG

MY dear, when I leave you
I always drop a bit of me—
A holy glove or sainted shoe—
Your wistful corse I leave it to,
For all your soul has followed me.
How could I have the stony heart
So to abandon you !

My dear when you leave me,
You drop no glove, no sainted shoe;
And yet you know what humans be—
Mere blocks of dull monstrosity—
My spirit cannot follow you
When you're away, with all its heart
As yours can follow me.

My dear, since we must leave
(One sorry day) I you, you me;
I'll learn your wistful way to grieve;
Then through the ages we'll retrieve
Each other's scent and company;
And longing shall not pull my heart-
As now you pull my sleeve !

XXXV

"THE BIRTH OF VENUS"

THE Spring wind fans her hair,
And after her fly little waves,
Her feet are shod in pearly shoen,
And down her foam-white breast do shine
A silver moisture and new strewn
Petals encarnadiite.

Her eyes are deaths to care,
Her eyes of love are tender caves.
The blossoms blowing on the trees—
The leafy Spring's enchanted stir—
The humming of the golden bees—
All are the voice of her !

XXXVI

REMINDER

EACH star that rises and doth fade,
Each bird that sings its song and sleeps,
Each spark of spirit fire that leaps
Within me—of One Flame are made I

XXXVII

VALLEY OF THE SHADOW

GOD, I am travelling out to death's sea,
I, who exulted in sunshine and laughter,
Thought not of dying—death is such waste of me !—
Grant me one prayer : Doom not the hereafter
Of mankind to war, as though I had died not—
I, who in battle, my comrades' arm linking,
Shouted and sang—life in my pulses hot
Throbbing and dancing ! Let not my sinking
In dark be for naught, my death a vain thing !
God, let me know it the end of man's fever !
Make my last breatn a bugle call, carrying
Peace o'er the valleys and cold hills for ever I

XXXVm

BREATH OF MAN

THRO' the green grass the whisper ran:
" Death is coming with the breath of man!
No life shall creep, no breeze shall rustle here!
The fruit-trees shall be scythed, their blossom spilled,
And Spring's dear promise to them unfulfilled I
The sun no more unfurling leaves will see,
But shine on witch-like reverie
Of splinters charred toward the sky.
Here, as each storm goes wheeling by,
The rain will wet the stumps of death
And water lifeless earth beneath."

' ' ' ' '

The birds have gathered—every wing
All taut with panic of the thing
Which creeps, with that fierce gasping, *on*—
Till silence cries : " The birds are gone ! "

XXXIX

PICARDY

WHEN the trees blossom again;
When our spirits lighten—
When in quick sun and rain
Once more the green fields brighten;
Each golden flower those fields among,
The hum of thrifting bee,
Will be the risen flower and song
Of Youth's mortality.

When the birds flutter their wings ;
When our scars are healing—
When the furry-footed things
At night again are stealing;
Then through the wheat each rippling wave,
The fragrance of flower breath,
Will bring a message from the grave,
A whispered word from death.

When the sweet waters can flow;
When the world's forgetting—
When once more the cattle low
At golden calm sun-setting;
Each peaceful evening's murmur, then,
And sigh the water's give,
Will tell immortal tale of men
Who died that we might live.

XL

YOUTH'S OWN

OUT of the fields I see them pass,
Youth's own battalion—
Like moonlight ghosting over grass—
To dark oblivion.

They have a wintry march to go—
Bugle and fife and drum !
With music, softer than the snow
All flurrying, they come !

They have a bivouac to kcco
Out on a starry heath;
To fling them down, and sleep and sleep
Beyond reveilly—Death I

Since Youth has vanished from our eyes,
Who, living, glad can be ?
Who will be grieving, when he dies
And leaves this Calvary ?

XLI

MERLE

The sea and sky are grey—
  As with the grief of those who've mourned ;
Yet through this drear December day
  A lonely merle to song has turned.

Brave bird, for you no fears !
  Though to the sun you're strange—as we,
Across the waste of these last years
  Bereft of all hilarity.

Then, bird ! be voice for all
  The sad who have forgotten song.
Shake far that trilling lift and fall
  Of notes, and take our hearts along!

XLI!

THE FRANCE FLOWER

I STROLL forth this flowery day
Of " print frocks " and buds of may,
And speedwells of tender blue
Whom no sky can match for hue.

I love well my English home;
Yet far thoughts do stealing come
To throng me like honey-bees,
Till far flowers my fancy sees.

'Tis almond against the snows,
And gentian, and mountain rose,
And iris in purple bright—
The France flower, the flower of light'

XLIII

UNKNOWN

You who had worked in perfect ways
To turn the wheel of nights and days,
Who coaxed to life each running rill
And froze the snow-crown on the hill,
The cold, the starry flocks who drove,
And made the circling seasons move ;
How came your jesting purpose when
You fashioned monkeys into men ?

You who invented peacock's dress—
You, Lord of cruel happiness I—
Who improvised all flight and song
And loved and killed the whole day long,
And filled with colour to the brim
The cup of your completed whim !
What set you frolicking when we
Were given power to feel and see ?

Why not have kept the stellar plan
Quite soulless and absolved from man ?
What heavy need to make this thing—
A monkey with an angel's wing ;
A murderous poor saint, who reaps
His fields of death, and, seeing—weeps ?
No !—If the saffron day could sigh
And sway *unconscious*—Why am I ?

* * * * *

Unknown! You slept one afternoon
And dreamed, and turned, and woke too soon !
The sorrel glowed, and the bees hummed,
And Mother Nature's fingers strummed,
And flock of dandelion was blown,
And the yew-trees cast their shadows down.
Such beauty seemed to you forlorn—
And lo !—this playboy, Man, was born !

XLIV

THE BELLS OF PEACE

LILIES are here, tall in the garden bed,
And on the moor are still the buds of May;
Roses are here—and, tolling for our dead,
The Bells of Peace make summer holiday.

And do *they* hear, who in their springtime went?
The young, the brave young, leaving all behind,
All of their home, love, laughter and content,
The village sweetness and the western wind.

Leaving the quiet trees and the cattle red,
The southern soft mist over granite tor—
Whispered from life, by secret valour led
To face the horror that their souls abhor.

Here in the starlight to the owl's " To-Whoo ! "
They wandered once ; they wander still, maybe,
Dreaming of home, clinging the long night thro'
To sound and sight fastened in memory.

Here in the sunlight and the bracken green—
Wild happy roses starring every lane—
Eager to reach the good that might have been,
They *were* at peace. Are they at peace again ?

Bells of remembrance, on this summer's eve
Of our relief, Peace and Goodwill ring in I
Ring out the Past, and let not Hate bereave
Our dreaming dead of all they died to win I

XLV

DESERT SONG

WHEN I came on from Santa Fe,
The desert road by night and day,
The desert wilds ran far and free
Beneath the wind of desert sea.

But—ah ! my heart !—to know again
The scent of rain, the scent of rain I

And I'd in fancy scale the air
Beyond those yellow mountains bare,
And so with dizzy bird survey
A thousand miles of shining day.
And I would gleam the gold of sun
And mark his curving glory run
Its fiery course, and eager turn
My cheek and pallid brow to burn.

But—oh ! my heart!—to feel again
The wet of rain, the wet of rain!

And wakeful all the night *Yd* lie
And watch the dark infinity,
And count the stars that wheel and spin,
And drink the frosty ether in;
And I would hear the desert song
That silence sings the whole night long,
And day by day the whisper pass
Of parching heat through desert grass.

But—oh I my heart!—to hear again
The drip of rain, the drip of rain !

When I rode on from Sante Fe,
That desert road by night and day,
There came at last a little sigh,
A puff of white across the sky.

And—ah ! my hezurt!—*I* knew again
The scent of rain, the scent of rain I

XLVI

SAN YSIDRO

THE Spaniard-christened Isles
Lie out in summer's glow;
High on a live-oak tree
A bird sits still; below
A chipmunk plays; the sea
In southern beauty smiles.

This far enchanted shore,
Like to a wistful dream
Lulling the heart of man,
The face of truth might seem—
God resting—but His plan
He changes evermore.

XLVII

AT SUNSET

I'VE seen the moon, with lifted wing—
A white hawk—over a cypress tree ;
The lover's star, the bloom of Spring,
And evening folded on Tennessee.

Fve see the little streams run down—
All smoke-blue, lost in faerie ;
And far, the violet mountains crown
The darkness breathing on Tennessee.

I've seen the Beautiful, so clear—
And it has gone to the heart of me—
So there'll be magic ever near
To me, remembering Tennessee.

XLVIIT

DREAM HOUSE

DOWN on our house good shelter falls
From those high neighbouring white walls,
And here it dreams among its flowers
And bushes bright with summer showers.

Its creepered brick soaks up the smile
Of noon and afternoon, the while
The bees go tunnelling the deep
Dim lily bells that sway and sleep.

The day slips on, and sun's hot eye
Cools in the lime trees, down the sky.
'Tis twilight now, the birds refrain
From song, and all is still again.

Now night creeps over, distance hides;
The white house—a tall iceberg—rides;
A chafer breaks the darkened swoon,
And white wide roses scan the moon.

XLIX

MOUNTAIN AIR

TELL me of Progress if you will,
But give me sunshine on a hill—
The grey rocks spiring to the blue,
The scent of larches, pinks, and dew,
And summer sighing in the trees,
And snowy breath on every breeze.
Take towns and all that you'll find there,
And leave me sun and mountain air !

L

TO BEAUTY

BEAUTY on your wings—flying the far blue,
Flower of man's heart whom no God made ;
Star, leaf-breath, and gliding shadow,
Fly with me, too, awhile !

Bring me knowledge :
How the pansies are made, and the cuckoos' song !
And the little owls, grey in the evening, three on a gate ;
The gold-cups a-field, the flight of the swallow;
The eyes of the cow who has calved :
The wind passing from ash-tree to ash-tree !

For thee shall I never cease aching ?
Do the gnats ache that dance in the sun ?
Do the flowers ache, or the bees rifling their gold ?
Is it I only who ache ?
Beauty ! Fulfil me ! Cool the heart of my desire !