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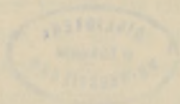
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THE CONCAVE MIRROR

BY

W. B. MAXWELL



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BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ / LEIPZIG

1931

THE
CONCAVE MIRROR

W. B. MAXWELL



232.340

SECOND EDITION

BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ, LEIPZIG

1871

AUTHOR'S NOTE

THERE is a resemblance, which I feel I should not ignore but rather be the first to point out, between this book and the excellent novel *Eva* by Monsieur Jacques Chardonne. It is quite accidental; for I had completely planned *The Concave Mirror*, and indeed finished writing many passages and scenes, long before Monsieur Chardonne's new volume by chance came into my hands. The resemblance, so far as it goes, is one of method and not of matter. Or, to use other words, the similarity lies in the presentment of a situation and not in the characters, incidents, development, or solution. Except for this similarity the two books are totally different.

For obvious reasons I do not want to trace here the story of either book. But I hope that readers of *The Concave Mirror* will read *Eva*, if they have not already done so. I also hope it will be understood that I do not say this as vaingloriously challenging the comparison. I hold Monsieur Chardonne's brilliant gifts in high esteem, and I should be glad to think that I had helped, even indirectly, to widen the circle of his English admirers.

W. B. MAXWELL.

AUTHORS NOTE

There is a resemblance which I feel I should not
ignore but rather be the first to point out, between this
book and the excellent novel *Ann* by Margaret Johnson
(London: H. K. Lewis, 1931); for I had completely
forgot *Ann* (Grove Press, New York) and indeed shared with
my many readers and writers long before Margaret
Johnson's new volume by chance came into my hands.
The resemblance, of all in a book is one of method
and not of matter. It is not other words, the style,
my list in the presentation of a situation, and not in the
characteristic incidents, development or solution. It was
for this similarity the two books are really different.

For obvious reasons I do not want to give you
the story of either book; but I have the readers of
The Green Mirror will read *Ann* if they have not
already done so. I do hope it will be read and that
I do not say this as unambiguously challenging the con-
vention. I hold Margaret Johnson's book and this is
my opinion; and I should be glad to think that I had
indeed even admitted to write the words of this
English edition.

W. B. Yeats

THE CONCAVE MIRROR

I FOUND this unused note-book in a drawer and have decided to keep a diary. But it shall be a diary only of events. The date and anything that happened. What one did. "Left London for Dinard"—the bald statement later on would evoke everything. No more needed. Thus one could reconstitute one's life. No interest to anybody else. But then it would be for no other eye than my own. I will do it. Merely to enter something every day might be useful as mental training. Never to miss.

*

Saturday, April 11. Happy afternoon in Kensington Gardens with Denise, my wife, and Norah, my little daughter. Afterwards D. depressed. Took her to Gerald du Maurier's new play. Successful.

Sunday, April 12. Put off Claude Roper and stayed at home. Rain in afternoon. London Sundays are difficult. Denise at my suggestion telephoned to her cousins, but they were all away, week-ending.

Monday. The mill-horse in its harness again. Office till late, because D. dining with her cousins, Marcia and Edmund Proctor. She enjoyed it. Gay and bright. A happy bedtime talk.

Tuesday. On my way home looked in upon Aunt Aggie at Prince's Gate. Then walked through the Park and Gardens. All the tulips in full glory. Daffodils (they have been wonderful) now nearly over. Aunt A. hard but kind. She said again I was always her favourite.

April 15. Denise spoke of our little Norah going to a school. I do not like it.

Friday, April 17. Before and after dinner talked about Norah and schools. Denise has heard of one. I think a child (an only child) of eight is too young to be removed from home and home influences. But Denise says not a bit. The younger they are the easier for them. She spoke of the advantages. Also the difficulty of obtaining governesses if N. remains with us.

Saturday. Rather unhappy at the office, because after breakfast my little Norah followed me down in the lift and begged that she might not be sent to school. Spent the afternoon with her, trying to comfort her and accustom her to the idea, repeating things said by Denise—the companionship, games, out-of-door fun, and the interest of competitive studies. Norah, wise but sad, said other girls might like it, not she. It is the unknown that she dreads.

When Denise comes back to-night (she is dining at Hurlingham) I shall get her to weigh disadvantages

against the evident gains. Norah is not the only person to lose. I myself dread the

*

Something interrupted me and I stopped—three weeks ago. I shall not continue these dated entries. Events are nothing really. They do not influence life itself. It is the feelings and emotions, the phases of thought, the mental struggles, the spiritual joys and pains which one passes through—it is these that make one's life.

I will go on, with this planless plan. Not following any date. Now and then putting down my thoughts. And it shall be a *true* record as far as it goes, the real thoughts, not thoughts dressed up and tricked out to look nice for other people, but stripped naked to stare me in the face whether I like them or not. Then the thing may have some use to me as a guide and an exercise.

But it is curious, looking back at my first entries I see that I put "My wife" and "my daughter" after their names. Why? For I had said it was for no other eyes than my own. Yet instinctively I at once began to give information as if addressing other people—strangers, the world. Is the craving for self-expression so completely linked with the need of an audience that they cannot be severed? When we talk to ourselves must we still be talking for effect?

Writers! Several contemporary authors have said (in interviews and prefaces) that they write to please themselves, without a thought of their public; and yet I doubt if they could go on writing unless they were sure of ultimate publication. They would be stopped by a sense of futility. Their atmosphere would be as of the Dead Letter Office and their never-to-be-delivered message would grow dusty and unintelligible before it was half finished. Winged words that do not fly, music that is mute at once without even making an echo to recall it, voices shouting beyond the reach of ears in vast desert places—the thought of such things as these must paralyse all motive power. On the other hand, the certainty of obtaining many readers must sustain the effort and stimulate that “ardour in the blood” which R. L. Stevenson said went to the production of really good writing. Yet there comes into my mind now something Daudet said about Mistral the poet, and exactly in this connection. I liked it for its fine sound, perhaps more than for its sense. “The brave poet! It might have been of him that Montaigne could say: *Souviennet-vous de celui à qui, comme on demandoit à quoy faire il se peinoit si fort en un art qui ne pouvoit venir à la cognoissance de guère des gens, ‘J’en ay assez de peu, répondit-il. J’en ay assez d’un. J’en ay assez de pas un.’*” I liked that, but I wonder if it was true of Mistral. In *Récits et Mémoires* he himself speaks with

delight of the increasingly large circulation of the magazine that he and his Provençal friends were editing.

I digress before I have fairly started.

Before all else let me put on record the main thought of my life, the stream, the strong broad river that carries every other thought along with it. It is my love—*our* love. The word gratitude is a totally inadequate symbol for my feelings in regard to Denise. Faith, religion! Comfort, peace, happiness, stability—there are no words to express all that Denise has given me. Beauty, and the sense of beauty (which even as a would-be artist I scarcely saw and never measured), came to me with her. Lastly, because of her, I am *compensated*. She has made up for all that I have missed, for all that I once hoped but failed to attain. It cannot be strange, then, if I worship her and willingly surrender all lesser interests to the paramount one.

She is the perfect sweetheart, wife, friend. There is nothing in her or about her that I would change or to the slightest extent modify. *Nothing*. But I wonder how many husbands after ten years of marriage could say this and truly mean it, as I do, to the very depths of my consciousness.

When a man has kept a forty-second birthday his

material circumstances are not likely to improve—at least by any effort of his own. I recognise my insignificance in the world's eye. I am of no importance, a business man working hard for a just sufficient remuneration, not a personage even in the dull small realm of side-tracked commerce to which I belong, not worthy of a portrait and brief biographical note in our trade journals, much less an entry in such books as *Who's Who*—or a snap-shot photograph in *The Tatler* or *The Sketch*. Denise does not mind. She wants no more than the modest comfort that I am able to provide for her. She thinks me splendid, and overwhelms me with gracious thanks. If I were a prince I should not stand higher in her judgment and love than I do as the very mediocre person who goes to an office every day to work for his wife and his child. I have never craved for pomps and vanities. I am inexpressibly contented as we are. A life cannot be mean or poor that has had a great and abiding love in it.

So I look at the surrounding pageant without servile admiration of its richness, and certainly without any envy of its brilliant actors. It is in ourselves that we are thus and thus. I hold these other things as cheap, not myself. And in this, as in all else, she and I are one. My attitude is hers, instinctively adopted, loyally maintained. It would be dreadful to have a wife who thought differently on matters so fundamental. For this,

as well as for a thousand other reasons, I thank Whatever Powers there Be for giving me Denise.

*

Thought! We accept it as calmly as we do the gas in our gas pipes, the wonder of electric light every time we turn a switch, a continuous hot water supply, or the penny-in-the-slot machine that gives out a postage stamp or a slab of chocolate. Yet how tremendous its mystery. How everlasting the barrier that stands between its seemingly unfettered activity and the explanation of its existence and cause. "The absolute world-enigma" for philosophers of all ages. "Ignoramus, ignorabimus," as the great German declared. In regard to it "Science confesses her imagination to be bankrupt," said William James (one of the gods of my early idolatry) more than forty years ago. "She has so far not the least glimmer of a conjecture or suggestion—not even a bad verbal metaphor or pun to offer." (I always liked that turn.) Tyndall had said much the same thing a few years earlier. And since then we have not advanced an inch, a hair's breadth, nearer to any comprehension, much less a solution of the mystery. The growth of physiological knowledge has had no concomitant progress in psychology. Unlike the honest old physicists, the modern psychologists have gone bankrupt without confessing it. They have been brazenly fraudulent in the attempt to

conceal their failure. Their discharge should be indefinitely postponed.

Dismissing as impossible any attempt at analysis, one's own observed processes of thought amaze one. The rapidity and complexity of our quite ordinary thoughts! Yesterday, coming from the club through St. James's Park, I paused for half a minute, not more, opposite to Buckingham Palace. I was very distinctly conscious of the big buildings above the foliage of trees and a glitter of the sun on water, Queen Anne's Mansions, the tower of the Catholic Cathedral, and so on, as well as all the courtyard of the palace in front of me, the pavement, the traffic, the long vista of Constitution Hill, and even of all the buildings out of sight behind me, but seen a moment ago when I glanced round. Sounds, too. I heard the stamp of the sentry as he turned—then again as he turned for the second time on the hard pavement. And through this acceptance of immediate impressions there has been in my mind a vague running comparison with other cities, quite to the advantage of London—Paris, Rome, Constantinople. Each in a lightning flash has evoked memories, wide associations, an immense fringe of nascent ideas. But I have looked with greater steadiness right through all this at other invisible things, such as the familiar rooms at home, and the still strange aspect of the playing field, class-rooms, and gymnasium at Norah's

school, with my little girl's pale sad face now distinct, now blurred, now gone, now here again. I have seen also, in imagination, the small furnished house at St. Margaret's Bay that her mother would like to take for the holidays. And yet all the time I have been busily thinking of Denise herself, and of something that I want to say to her—a decision that I hope I can persuade her to approve, after putting before her all the arguments in its favour. In fact this is a train of serious thought that I started at the club, and nothing has impeded it. As I go on, it goes with me unbroken.

Afterwards I amused myself with conjectures as to what all the men at the club were thinking of, though they looked so brutally vacant, or so absurdly preoccupied with some fiddling task—sealing an envelope, copying an address out of the Red Book, or getting a signature witnessed—as if their lives depended on it. But behind each mask so carefully set to the chosen pattern of pompous self-satisfaction, solemn dignity, fatuous good-humour, or whatever the wearer has considered most becoming, there is the deep-grooved channel and the flow of individual thought, a main current for each of them. Noble thought perhaps, an altruistic purpose that nothing changes, the driving on of the dominant idea, the urge of the customary obsession—call it what you will.

Of course in my own case it is Denise.

I take a bus at Hyde Park Corner. I am in a hurry now. It is the crush hour and I am crushed with other hurriers. Automatically I have renounced a seat, or the chance of a seat, to let a female sit. Sitting or standing is all one to me, for truly I am no longer there. The bus has been too slow and I have gone on ahead of it. A hundred times I have reached home before the end of my penny fare.

When at last comes the change from imaginings to actual facts the transition is almost imperceptible. Somehow I have ceased to be strap-hanging. The sunshine and noise and dust are no more. I stand in the cool shadow within my own door and glance at the hall table, seeking the significant messages that are given to all home-comers by the inanimate objects that first meet their eyes. I may see a man's hat and gloves, a woman's parasol or handbag. No, there is nothing there. Denise is alone.

Rooms in flats are rarely like rooms in houses. The irregular contour of the piece of ground on which the whole building has been erected is sometimes reflected to its innermost depths. I know London flats that do not contain a single right angle and have all their rooms slightly curved. Our drawing-room is queerly shaped. There are really two rooms; but whereas in a house the inner room would be straight behind the front room, our back part is at the side. Invisible from the doorway

you would not immediately know that this extra space lay open to you. Denise uses it—has made it her own, with her writing table, her sofa, her favourite chair, her books, her specially personal belongings.

She sits there and listens, waiting for my footstep. Invisible she asks if it is I, and I answer. "You're late," she says, "aren't you?"

Before I see her face, merely by the intonation of her voice, I know whether she has had a good day or a bad day. I go round the angle of the wall ready for my task, whatever it may be—to give gaiety or sympathy, to laugh with her, or lament with her about any annoyance and disappointment she may have suffered—to share her mood if it be happy, to banish it if it be sad. In either case she has need of me.

She needs me unceasingly. Like all highly-organised over-sensitive people she is subject to unreasoning fits of depression, and it seems that I alone have power to exorcise this cruel demon of baseless doubt and fear and discouragement that takes possession of her. Without me she succumbs. There are times when I merely have to sit by her and let her talk. At other times she cannot speak of her vague trouble of mind, and then it is I who talk. I tell her of things said, people seen, since we parted. Gradually the cloud passes from her eyes, the pinched aspect of her mouth relaxes, the whole face softens, melts, clears, and begins to shine as if beneath



its exquisitely delicate surface I had lit a lamp. Of a sudden she will take my hand and squeeze it in gratitude. Once she lifted it to her lips and kissed it—saying things about my being good to her that altogether overwhelmed me.


Really at these times I am like a doctor with a patient who is infinitely well understood, but for whom there can be no fixed treatment. It must change continually if it is continually to succeed. The narcotic drug that used to soothe ceases to have effect; to the stimulant that seemed unfailing there is no reaction. One must be quick to try something else.

She calls me not the doctor but the clock-winder. She has said of herself: "I am not an eight-day clock, I run down within the twenty-four hours. Wind me up, dear."

*

I love her name. Denise. When I am talking to people who do not know her I speak of her once or twice as "my wife," and then I have to say Denise—for the pleasure of saying it. There is an indescribable charm about a foreign name. It would have been nothing were she French.

There is another French name that appealed to me, but I can't remember it. Not Yvonne. It is a brown-haired name, and I think with three syllables. No matter. I have always had a strange feeling for names.



There are plump short fresh-complexioned names like Madge, Joyce; languid graceful tall thin names like Adèle, Clarice, Ferdinande; too delicate and rather anæmic names like Antonia, Clementina, Alethia; and also names that give one a sensation of chronic invalidism. Hyacinth! "Where is Hyacinth?" . . . "She is lying down. She was very tired." . . . "Yes, I thought that at luncheon she looked thoroughly tired. I shall beg her not to go to the ball to-night. Poor Hyacinth, her strength is soon over-taxed. Yet as a child she seemed as robust as her sisters—Nance and Bobby."

How do authors name their characters—and their books, too?

Of course the name and the person become one when you know them well. Denise could not have been called anything else.

Names are never inappropriate. People grow into them. Parents therefore should be careful. In giving a child a wrong name they may ruin its future career by stultifying a natural bent and wrenching it into a false path. But in sober fact mothers and fathers seem to be guided by an unerring instinct. Take the name of Lily as an extreme instance. It is never given wrongly. Even in a family where all the girls are dark the one called Lily is fair. I know a brunette called Lilian (a handsome woman), but there again the instinct must

have asserted itself, checking the wish to call her Lily.

By the way, Lily Langtry! Was not her loveliness of the warm full order, glorious chestnut hair and a rich glowing skin? But the world called her at once the Jersey Lily—as when one speaks of Tiger Lily, a thing of vivid colour with no suggestion of whiteness and waxiness.

I think that Isabel is a pretty name.

*

It was Denise who first told me that we should never see those we love when they do not themselves know that we are seeing them. For they will then seem to us a little different, a little strange. And the something unfamiliar in their aspect may give us a shock, as though we had been brought of a sudden face to face with mystery, where we thought that all was open and clear as daylight.

This may be fantastic, and yet I believe there is a truth behind it. She has never liked me to steal upon her unawares, and I avoid doing so. But she has an extraordinary power of self-withdrawal. One minute we are sitting together. Next minute, when I look round, although she is still there, I know that she has really gone. Whither? Who can say? She herself perhaps could find no reply to the question. But for a few moments she shows a queer sort of resentment if

abruptly summoned from this other realm in which she has been dwelling. She emerges from the waking dream reluctantly. She is angry with me for shattering it. Moreover, because she *felt* so completely alone, she thinks she *ought* to have been alone. It is inconsiderate on my part, even treacherous, not to respect her isolation. I should not have looked at her, much less have observed her closely.

At other times she is merely absorbed in the immediate task. Then she does not mind being watched. But her contacts with outward surroundings would seem to be only automatic. If deeply interested in a book she speaks in a far-away voice, not raising her eyes, but making a vague gesture, as she asks me to put coals on the fire or answer the telephone bell. She murmurs thanks, and I know that she has again ceased to be aware of my presence.

But there is something much more than this in still another phase. It happened again three evenings ago, and it made me think of her own words about change of aspect. She was busy with her silk embroidery. It is a scheme altogether of her own, the decoration of a patterned fabric with a new surface of small stitches as in old tapestry. Preoccupied, now meditating, now swiftly active, she chooses the variously coloured threads. Sometimes I have been almost frightened when watching her thus. Truly from moment to moment she seems so

different, so unfamiliar. The thought has come to me —“It is a Denise that I have never seen.”

The other night she laughed softly, with fingers playing about among the bright colours. She was childish, gay, wilful, when she decided—as if saying to herself: “Yes, red and green! It mayn’t be right, but I’ll have it. I want it.” She went on stitching. Her face was young, tender, wistful, as though she were now saying: “Why mayn’t I be happy like this? I am doing no harm. All that I ask is to be left innocent, undisturbed, free of care.” And there was pain in the modification of that other thought. It seemed as if she was not only a Denise I had never known, she was a Denise that had never been, but might have been. I could have wept over her—and over myself too.

It was a relief when she put the work away, and my own Denise—the one I know so intimately well—came back to me.

*

I am worried about a letter from my brother. It is like himself, simple, direct, manly, generous. He wishes to avoid a permanent estrangement, and says if he is at fault with Denise he is sorry. He is not aware of how or when he gave offence: but he is “ready to toe the line” in any manner possible.

What can I do? Since the difficulty with her began to seem insurmountable I have seen him only by stealth.

It amounts to that. And even then it has been dangerous. Once Denise guessed where I had been, and the cloud fell. She let me see that she was wounded. To gratify myself I had inflicted pain on her. No, it will not be easy for us ever to get back to the good time when she treated him as an honoured, and seemingly a welcome guest. He used to telephone unexpectedly offering himself for dinner. Or he came in afterwards. I was always glad.

Women's love will not brook rivalry. Even the affection and regard for others that cannot possibly interfere with the far deeper feeling seems in their eyes an abrogation of duty towards them, if not a betrayal of their trust in us. I could not understand this at first. There is a common saying that a wife will not permit a husband to retain the friends who have known him before his marriage, indeed that she will never rest until she has effected a complete alienation. But this is nonsense. It is not the length of a friendship, but its intensity, that makes her anxious, suspicious, distressed. If she is a wife who loves as Denise loves she sees little difference between a new friend and an old friend. Whoever comes between her and her husband is an enemy. I could not deny (to her or anybody else) that our bond of affection is stronger than that which usually subsists with brothers.

A great love is not easy but difficult. It demands unceasing care, a watchfulness that never sleeps. When a woman gives her complete love she puts such absolute power into your hands that the sense of responsibility is always increasing. It is dreadful to contemplate the injury one might do if one abused one's powers. Even inadvertently pain may be inflicted. To maintain perfect confidence one should not for an instant fail.

I know that with a thoughtless word I can darken the whole sky for Denise; if I were unkind or purposely unresponsive, I should literally wound her to death. She would not survive unkindness—from me.

I shall never fail her in big things; I try not to fail her in little things. When small sacrifices are necessary I make them with an internal hesitation so very slight, if it is there at all, that certainly no outward sign of it can be detected. Sacrifices! What a word to use in such a connection. The infinitesimal payments for an immensely large reward. Could they be grudged? Priests do not weary of the rites before the altar; sailors do not spare their labour for the noble ship that is carrying them safely onward; the tired mother does not grumble as she surrenders a night's sleep to sit by the sick-bed of one of her children. In my love for Denise there is a full tinge of the parental feeling. She is my guide and friend, my dear commanding officer; but she is also my little helpless girl. When I think of her in

this manner my yearning tenderness is greater than anything I feel for the real child, Norah. Although, Heaven knows, I am fond enough of N.

But here is an instance of what I am trying to express. Last Saturday I came home in high spirits, because directly after luncheon dear old Claude Roper was to pick me up and drive me to New Zealand for golf. I was looking forward to it. I want more exercise than I get, and I am very fond of Claude. Then I saw at once that something was wrong with Denise. Her tone was dull, listless. Plans of her own had been upset; disconsolate as a child whom an inexorable fate has ill-treated, she looked at me sadly and yet with a flicker of hope, as to one who can perform miracles. She asked what I intended to do this afternoon. I thought she would have remembered my engagement, but she did not. I said that I had nothing particular on hand. Could she make any proposal? Soon she confessed that she felt a craving to go out of London and walk among woods and fields. Her joy was pathetic to see when I welcomed the idea.

If I had hesitated a moment all would have been spoilt. If she had known that I was giving up anything to please her, she would have refused to let me do it. So that she might not know, I went down in the lift and used the public telephone to send a message putting off C.R.

We went in a hired car. We walked through deep woodlands, on high hills, and along wide open downs. It was perfect—tea in a cottage garden, dinner all to ourselves in the one private room of a roadside hotel, happy, most happy talk, then homeward through the soft warm night. A never-to-be-forgotten treat—for both of us.

But I am uneasy about Claude Roper. It is the second time I have put him off at the last moment. I do not want to lose him. I have let others go without regret, but Claude is different. Not of common clay, one who does not live by bread alone, a dweller in the realm of the spirit, only a visitor among the coarse gross earthy things of material existence. From the very beginning I felt it an honour that he should care for me. Except my brother there is nobody for whose character I have so true a respect. Except my brother there is nobody to whom I would cling more tightly.

*

Things to do this next week:—Make it all right with Claude. Look up Aunt A. Take a day for Norah.

*

The Park was all so bright and gay as I walked through it this morning that, instead of going to my stupid work, I would have liked to take a long day with Denise in

the country. There were of course innumerable other workers, humble slaves of duty like myself—black-coated office men making eastward; droves of girls and lads streaming down across the bridge by the Serpentine, on their way to shops at Knightsbridge and in Sloane Street. Why do none of them ever play truant? Probably they could not afford to lose a day's pay. Others there are, the successful, the famous, the august, who perhaps only go on working from a sense of duty. Noticeable (as a journalist might say) were Lord ——, walking with hat in hand, broad of forehead, clear-eyed, resolute; Lord C. and B., also on foot, dark, shadowy, moving fast beneath the trees; Lord P., new Secretary of State, riding solemnly for the good of his health; Lord S., of still higher rank, with a hunting, polo-playing seat, tittuping cheerfully; Mr. Justice W., Mr. S., M.P., Sir F. M.; Mr. This, That, and the Other—all of them workers. Earlier, as a park-keeper told me, the King (perhaps the hardest worker of the lot) was riding.

It is odd that in London, despite the immensity and the multitudinous swarm, one soon gets to know a large number of people by sight. But I think I like best the people that are unknown to me. I enjoy *placing* them. I make little stories for them. I sympathise with them and hope for them. This morning I felt like Walt Whitman, with a glow of diffusive sympathy for all mankind.

I saw my dog-girl. She strides along with two or three Alsatians. When she touches the railings they jump over them. Not bad-looking, she is rather wild and fierce, or shall I say with something still untamed about her? She is like her hounds. If one spoke to her or patted her she might bite. I pretend that she had an unfortunate love affair before she went to the dogs. I am terribly sorry for her, and I hope it will all come right in the end. Then I noticed a grey-haired elderly man who was watching the riders. A young girl, astride, in charge of one of Mr. Smith's riding-masters, came and talked to him. She was about Norah's age. She might have been the old man's grand-daughter, but I would have it that he was her father. He married late in life, a young woman, and she died in giving birth to the child. The little girl rider is his only remaining joy, his one great consolation. He adores her, and she is absolutely sweet to him. "Yes, getting on nicely now, sir," says the riding-master. "If she'll only remember to keep her heels down and not lift her hands . . ." Then I saw a grown-up girl in flowered muslin meeting a sunburnt young man in grey flannels. An attractive couple. I gave them their story. Last night, at a dance, he challenged her to be here. "All right," she said, offhand but smiling. "I bet you won't." She laughed. "Don't be rash. You'll lose your money . . ." "My dear," he said, "it's nearly three o'clock. At nine

a.m. to-morrow you'll be sound asleep." . . . "No, I shan't." . . . "D'you really mean you'll be there, just because I've asked you?" . . . "Not a bit. Don't flatter yourself. I often take a stroll before breakfast." . . . Well, she is here. They laugh and look at each other. Then they walk slowly side by side. What will come of it? Heaven or hell? In a year they may be the universe to each other, or nothing at all.

Near Hyde Park Corner many of us humble ones bid farewell to the sunlight and descend into the dark bowels of the earth. The Tube Railway. We are like miners in a cage going down for a day-shift.

I will take Wednesday afternoon off, to go and see Norah. It is her half-holiday. Denise meant to go last week, but was prevented.

*

Denise would not let me go to Norah's school again so soon. Twice in three weeks is too much. It would be "fussing," and not fair to N. Also she fancies (hypersensitiveness) that I should lead the school authorities to draw a wrong conclusion that she herself was neglectful. A disappointment for me—and for Norah too. But I have mitigated it on her side by getting Isabel Hughes (private and confidential) to go on Saturday.

I went to see Mrs. Hughes and asked if her girl could take charge of Norah, in the event of our going to Italy this autumn. Indeed the Hughes's have come

down. Such a house—Earl's Court Road, out of —— back of beyond. Hughes was thought to have money till he died. I knew him, but not very well.

*

It is astounding how quickly our habits grow, and how quickly they can be dropped. All my life I have been making habits and breaking them—the good ones and the bad ones. Once I nearly made a habit of success. A year ago I was playing patience with Denise every evening. Then came cross-word puzzles. I was crazily addicted to them. Now this futile record of my life and thoughts absorbs me. It is becoming my daily treat. I look forward to it. Returning from the office I think what I will put down. The mere toil of penmanship and choosing words has vanished.

Egotism. Another habit? Again looking back at my first pages, I see how the *I* has crept into everything. It is I, I, I—whereas at the beginning it showed that I was subservient to those I love and have in charge. I hope that I am not changing. But I do not think so. The one habit that with settled purpose I created and assiduously fostered should have become second nature. It must have ceased to be a habit and developed into an instinct.

Beyond knowing that my adolescence had ended, I scarcely remember when it was that, after a good deal

of mental restlessness and vain repinings, I resolved to adopt altruism as my rule of life. That is a portentous way of putting it. But I did in fact decide to discipline all my thoughts and inclinations, and subordinate them to the desires and wants of others.

Wishing well to others strengthens; wishing well to oneself weakens. Some people say that even *thinking* about oneself is enfeebling; but I do not agree with this.

Undoubtedly for achievement in any art the artist must forget himself while working. On a lower plane of effort, the same applies to games and sports. The golfer when addressing the ball should be altogether free of self-consciousness. Good game shots do not say "I will shoot that bird;" they leave it all to the gun; and it is as if their guns brought down the birds, not they.

But as a rule of life one should intermittently look deep into oneself, examine and study the depths, and afterwards ponder on all that has been disclosed. How else can one know oneself?

Here however there are impediments to real knowledge. What we saw yesterday we do not see to-day—at any rate not in an unmodified degree. Things most closely concerning ourselves expand, contract, alter their form. The scale of relative importance is a sinuous piece of elastic and not a tape measure. When one runs it over one's thoughts, one's emotions, instincts,

impulses, and inhibitions, over all that makes up self, it gives a different result every time. One can only strike an average, or make an estimate of permanency. And that is what one does.

It is like looking down into a mirror. But the mirror is concave, and therefore only capable of offering a distorted image. In it one sees oneself clearly enough, but with distortions of every possible kind—the mental features out of shape, the whole stature of the mind heightened, depressed, twisted to grotesque proportions of largeness or smallness.

The concave mirror! I am pleased with this as a simile for introspection. I think it is really new. An invention of my own, not a recollection of what somebody else said.

*

The handwriting of dead people that one loved.

In this note-book, which I thought was quite empty, I turned to the back and came upon my mother's hand. No words could say the sadness, the regret, the pitiful sorrow, the aching pain, that were aroused by the sight of it thus suddenly and unexpectedly. It shook me to my foundations.

She was so dear and sweet, so unutterably good. If there is in me anywhere a spark of nobility, a beginning of fortitude or the germ of an endurance that lasts out life and will bear all that life can bring, then it came

from her. We were very near to each other. But did I ever show her all that I felt? These scraps of her writing make me think of the letters she sent whenever I was away from her, and the poverty of mine in reply. Young people do not understand. When you love, you should say you love; you should never cease from saying it. Otherwise. . . . No. I think that my mother knew and did not doubt, even during the enforced separation towards the end.

I wish that she could have loved Denise. But I think D. came into her life too late. For too many years she had thought of me as a bachelor, the son who would not marry.

If I were to lose Denise (Forbid it, a million times, O Fate), I think I would destroy every scrap of her handwriting, and also all photographs of her. I could not bear to see these fading; getting yellow, spotted, ugly. The picture in my heart would never fade. I should need no reminders.

It is a large book, quarto size, with two hundred and fifty pages of white smooth paper, and bound in limp leather so that it opens flat. The pages are unlined. I cannot imagine for what use it was intended, unless for students or literary people to make extracts in. It was bought (according to a tiny label on the inside of the

cover) at that shop at the corner of Chancery Lane, and, as the dates of my mother's entries show, at least twenty years ago. I did not know that they already had limp leather bindings at that time. Probably my father bought it on his way from the office and took it home to our house in Hampshire; but what he meant to do with it I cannot guess. He would not make extracts from books, because he scarcely ever read a book.

I suppose my mother took it from him. Then obviously the dear thing had the intention of using it as a journal, and inadvertently she put the book upside down and started from the wrong end. She made six consecutive entries, writing the date to each, and then stopped. There are no more. The last of them concerns myself. I was expected home next day—twenty years ago. Twenty-two years of age! This must have been my return from Paris, just before I went into the business.

Strange that she and I should thus seem to be speaking to each other again. The book has now become sacred. No wonder I liked pouring out my heart in it.

*

Something rather startling was said to me at the office, about a Trade Commission that the Government intend to set up, and about the sort of people who

would be suitable for appointment. I shall dismiss it from my mind. It is no good.

*

I look into the concave mirror and allow for its errors in reflection.

I am proud. But I want to be. I think it is a good pride, and I try to strengthen it. I won't pretend to worldly importance. I won't for a moment ignore my actual position, of which I am not in the least ashamed. For instance, the occupation that one has to follow! I speak of it at once, saying that I am in business. I sit in my office all day, and cannot go to Sandown, Kempton, and Lord's, as free people do. Of course, nowadays if you are in a big way, commerce is something to boast of. People say admiringly: "That man is making fifty thousand a year." But it needs courage to confess that one makes only enough to live on, and that one is not even the head of the firm. Courage and pride. I tell them the plain facts, without a wry face, and not as if swallowing something that tasted nasty. If they think of it afterwards (and probably they don't), they should feel I have conveyed the simple truth that my standards of value are not theirs, that I do not envy them, that I would not exchange places with them.

In the same way when men talk of schools ("We were at Eton together," and so on), I say that I was

not at a public school, and that I received most of my education in France, where I went to study art. I know that to a certain type of men no revelation of the unconventional, the unorthodox, the inadmissible, could be more repugnant. Prejudice and tradition alike make them flinch. In their opinion, artists, actors, fiddlers, and lounge lizards are all one; while the hint of a foreign education is the last touch to an ugly picture. But they must accept me as I am. It is my pride to make that quite clear. They should understand.

And yet how little those who know us best really know of us. Not long ago Denise accused me of having "an inferiority complex."

I believe Denise used that expression without attaching any real meaning to it. She had picked it up; and she echoed it, as women will repeat each new catchphrase until they have learnt one still fresher. It flicked me on the raw because I have always hated it. It represents a theory as absurd in a full application as is the sex explanation for universal phenomena. At first I was fascinated by the work of Freud, Adler, Jung, and the others; but I was soon "fed up." They made me tired. I was revolted by the slap-dash methods, the apparent ignorance of the bulk of previous research, the foolhardy guesses instead of painstaking verification, the violent moulding of facts to fit preconceived notions.

Take the stuff about dreams and the ridiculous assumption that every dream has its origin in a latent but customary mental state! Rubbish of the deepest dye. Most of our dreams are obviously a reflection of bodily sensations—discomfort, ease, good digestion, bad digestion, fatigue, difficulty in breathing, and so forth. We merely translate the feelings into mind-terms; and the translation is false, utterly inappropriate, ludicrous, because sleep has taken from us all control of the thinking apparatus. Some day I should like to try to write a paper on dreams. All my life I have dreamed a great deal.

Not infrequently I dream that I am quarrelling with Denise, saying dreadful things to her, accusing her, reviling her, bullying her. I even use physical violence. I have dreamed that I held her down and flogged her with a whip while she screamed for mercy. But I had none. In the dream I could not hurt her enough. Such a dream is a very distressing experience. I wake from it shattered, and perhaps not until I have touched her with my hand and heard her voice murmuring drowsily can I recover composure; but I know the mental distress has been caused by a temporary trouble of the body—a cramped attitude, the mouth dry, thirst, bed too hot, anything. Yet Maeder (another of them) would persuade me that "our dreams seek constantly a satisfying solution of our unconscious problems."

All people who love someone very deeply have this dream of anger and strife. I have talked on the subject, and others agree that it is so. That young protégée of D.'s (Miss Hughes), who worships her mother, tells me she often has the dream.

*

Of course Denise and I squabble occasionally. If not, familiar conversation would be too tame and colourless. Rarely, I suppose, has the union of minds been more complete between a man and a woman. We think identically on all important matters. Not, however, on small ones. No, for we disagree about trifles often. But that is good. As someone said, difference of opinion but similarity of sentiment form the basis of a happy companionship. For example, tidiness! It worries me to see things out of their place. I put them right, and this worries her. So I have ceased to interfere, and I allow a mild chaos to reign.

Nevertheless, in spite of all my care, I irritate her now and then. Sometimes, too, I weary her. When her nerves are on edge (as she expressed it) anything upsets her. She is so quick. Whereas I think slowly. She is naturally witty; and if I have any sense of humour, it is a dull forced business. There is no flash and sparkle, as with her. I am fond of logic (the slow, painstaking proofs of Euclid delighted me as a boy). She detests it and scorns it. Thus we arrive at conclusions by

different routes—she, as it were, by aeroplane, and I in the char-à-bancs used by everybody and stopping at every stage. It is divination versus deduction. When I discuss, she says I am arguing. If I attempt a long explanation she is like a child being kept in school on a fine half-holiday. She fidgets, kicks her legs, utters piteous ejaculations. Then perhaps before I can check myself she says something that stings, telling me to drop the subject as if I were a dog with a bone—"Oh, for goodness sake drop it. You have gnawed all the sense off it ages ago." Then come sharp words on both sides.

It is over in a moment. We make it up, my wife and I, and kiss again—but not with tears. With laughter. We laugh at each other for being so foolish.

*

I believe there are many more happy marriages than is commonly supposed. We take note of the failures, we ignore the successes. Besides, the ill-assorted unhappy couples make a noise, while the united and contented are silent. Happiness is not a thing that one talks about. One cannot speak of married love to the unmarried, because they simply do not understand. It is the fourth dimension, to them—incomprehensible as the laws of harmony to the unmusical, or Freemasonry to the non-mason. Confirmed bachelors rarely guess that there is anything at all in it beyond the sensual

side. They think of wives as of mistresses to whom one has access at all times without trouble; and since they always get tired of their mistresses, they have no craving for the permanent bond. Moreover, wives grow old. What then? The notion of a companionship so perfect that it comprises the joys of all other known companionships, and in an enormously heightened degree, is beyond comprehension and belief, except to the initiated. I had an elderly bachelor friend who used to ask me the most ridiculous questions about marriage, with a serious, if only a transitory, interest. As: "Although a wife is a great tie, there are occasions when she can be very useful, aren't there?" "Oh, yes," I replied. "It does happen now and again." I made no protestations. "And children! I can't say I've ever been drawn to children or enjoyed their company—rather the reverse. But I suppose one gets genuinely fond of one's *own* children?" . . . "Oh, quite," I would answer. "It seems to be instinctive. Even the lower animals show affection for their young." I should have been as absurd as he, if I had tried to tell him how I myself felt towards my "useful" wife.

Indeed to very few people have I ever been able to say what Denise and I are to each other. Even my brother does not know. Aunt Aggie does not remotely guess. And since neither of us wears our heart upon our sleeve, Denise's relatives (and they are legion)

remain at a distance of a thousand miles from the truth. Only old Lady Rainsley, of all our acquaintance, has seen it or read it from external signs. She was lamenting the divorce of her pretty niece, Angela St. Clode, and I talked to her of love in marriage. "Ah," she said, "but you are not generalising. You are considering a particular case." Then she smiled significantly, and nodded her kind old head in approval. And I remember she added that selfishness is the rock that shipwrecks the matrimonial bark into which modern boys and girls clamber so hurriedly and carelessly.

*

Young and old, we are all selfish. Real unselfishness does not exist. When we say we think of others, we mean we are thinking of them in relation to ourselves. My pompously formulated rule of altruism has as its true aim comfort for self. En dernière analyse, why do I love Denise? Why do some little traits of hers affect me as much now as when we married, or perhaps more? Why do I feel that I could cry when I see her unexpectedly in the street and recognise, first the slender tallness, the graceful carriage of her body, the half shy, half defiant poise of her head, and then the marvellous individual charm and prettiness that to me makes her unlike any other woman on earth? In the moment of admiring her I yearn over her. For me there is a pathos in her mere outward shape that

touches me more profoundly every month that passes. Yet if I boldly dissect these emotions I see that they are largely egoistic. I loved her at first because I could not help doing it. Now I love her because she is so infinitely precious to me—so *essential* too, as necessary to my welfare as the air I breathe, the solid ground I stand on. Without her I should be indeed nothing at all. But in these thoughts there is an elemental selfishness.

*

I am uneasy about her phases of low spirits. There was nothing of the kind in the distant past. At the beginning she was entirely joyous. She had a bird-like happiness that communicated itself to me. Ten years younger than I, she made me feel that I was no older than herself.

I remember, I remember the house where she was born—a dark old manor house, built after the style of the seventeenth century, not on the available high ground, but low down against the hillside, and with tall trees still further to shelter it and cast their shadow into the dim wainscoted rooms. Another shadow, of impending ruin, also lay upon it. Her mother said that in that house Denise was the only sunshine. On the morning after our engagement she and I went up the gentle slope of the downs to the full glory of sun and sky and open space. The wide world

belonged to me; she had endowed me with it overnight when she made her long-delayed promise. The snowdrifts of hawthorn in bloom, the scattered gold of the gorse, the tall white beeches with emerald crowns, seemed too beautiful, too good to be true. As I walked with my arm round her waist, we were children. No, we had no age. We were lovers. We sang together.

All that has gone. London? It is not true that birds do not sing and flowers blow in London. It is the healthiest city in the world. When the wind comes from the west you have a high clear sky, when it sweeps at you from the east it brings the smell of the sea with it. But I think you must be highly imaginative or altogether prosaic to resist the dulling, deadening effect of London. To a delicately organised terribly sensitive woman who reacts at once to external influences without having time to summon any internal stimulus that might withstand the sudden impression, whatever it may be, then no doubt London can be cruelly oppressive. So to speak, Denise cannot pour forth an inward light to combat the outward gloom and fog. She pays the penalty of her immense quickness of apprehension. Contrarily, as I have said, an unimaginative materialistic sort of person would not be thrown off her balance by every change of weather, and be forced to confess that

the key to her cheerfulness or sadness lies in the barometer.

Besides, I have to remember that she is not a girl any longer. She is thirty-two.

*

I myself have fits of depression. But they are brief and sharp and soon over. They come at night and keep me awake for a little while. Then I fall asleep.

We are spending too much money. In the darkness of the bedroom I struggle with feverish, timorous thoughts, but hold myself rigid and do not toss and turn, lest I should disturb my adored bed-fellow. While the fit lasts I seem to be looking into a financial abyss. I am sliding fast to the edge of its overhanging precipice and I cannot stop myself. But unless I do, I shall take her and Norah down with me into a horror of penury, want, hardship, humiliation. I can see no hope, no gleam of light in the blackness of the future. It is very improbable that I shall ever earn more money than I do at present. An old-fashioned business does not unexpectedly boom.

The charge for the car when we had that happy drive to Guildford is seven guineas. A very reasonable amount, but too much from my poor point of view. All our little treats cost more than I would like. And unconsciously Denise pushes me on to further and

further expenses. She is upset if I say I cannot afford anything. She hates to think of me working so hard, and the idea that my reward may be inadequate is dreadful to her. In a moment she is frightened, anxious, perturbed, begging me to tell her everything. There is nothing to tell. "But you said you couldn't afford it." . . . "Oh, a façon de parler;" and to set her mind at rest I plunge on. "You are splendid," she says, reassured, and she dismisses it from her mind.

It has happened, however, that in such talks about ways and means I have scared her so much that all kinds of explanation have been required. Her fears have proved difficult to allay. She speaks of ruin; and swears, bless her, that she is more than ready to face it. Doubt and uncertainty are what she cannot support. I protest that all is well. Even economy, although perhaps desirable, is not really necessary. But she sits brooding miserably, her forehead puckered, her lips with a sad droop. At last I drive away the cloud—and to give a convincing proof of complete solvency and affluence, I rush into an extravagance much larger than the one that was originally contemplated. This satisfies her. She is at peace again. Thus it ends—by her giving me a promise (in effect) that we shall go on spending as much as, if not more than, hitherto. I smile. It seems to me comic

—until all at once, as during these hours of insomnia, it seems tragic.

Next morning I wake cheerful, full of hope, although my circumstances are exactly the same, my debts no fewer, my future prospects without the smallest addition in solid assets. Is it not amazing, this difference between the thoughts that fly like bats by night and the mood of gladness that can soar like a strong-winged bird by day? Within twenty-four hours my mirror shows me two totally dissimilar people, indeed people of opposite temperaments; one of them crainitive and foreboding, the other bold to recklessness. But as I think I said, we are never quite the same for any length of time. From day to day, from hour to hour, we are modified, altered, metamorphosed. We are ourselves and yet not ourselves. Nevertheless *something* goes on unchanged and unchanging.

*

Denise's father was rich, but, as I gather, not lavish to others. Then he went bankrupt before I married her. She had a few months of poverty.

It should not be so difficult for her to live as we do. She never complains. She loyally keeps with me on the higher level of thought; she never falters in the prescribed attitude that we have jointly made for ourselves; and yet I think sometimes that in secret she suffers from restrictions or enforced denials. She never

shows it. I am always her hero; but perhaps she cannot help thinking of what some other men win for their wives—wealth, luxury, rank, the consideration of the world. I have never given her even a semblance of these things. I have never given her anything—except love.

* * *

My concave mirror has been locked away in the drawer of the writing-table for five weeks. I bring it out after a happy holiday with Norah. Miss Isabel Hughes came and took charge of her while Denise and I went to Le Touquet. Another plunge!

I am so feeble a camel that I feel as if Norah's school fees may be the last straw and break my back.

This journalising has taken such a hold on my system that it has induced a "writing itch." For want of the usual relief during our holiday I wrote a series of six articles on worldly philosophy. I really think I shall have them typed and then try my luck by sending them to the *Evening Courier*. I suppose they are not good; but, on the other hand, they cannot be worse than a lot of the rubbish that gets printed.

At the office there has been a renewal of the talk that disturbed me early in the summer. The Government

is about to launch its scheme. The line of country suggested is not one that I am desirous of following.

I went to pay my respects to Aunt Aggie after her return from Switzerland and the Italian Lakes, and, on the whole, I think she was glad to see me. She is wonderful for her age. At seventy-three she dashes about the Continent unaccompanied. She told me of her adventures with the gusto of extreme youth and unimpaired vigour. Her self-confidence! But all through her life everything has tended to strengthen and confirm it. By character as well as fortune, Aunt A. belongs to the ruling classes if anybody ever did. She ruled her husband with an iron hand, I believe. She rules her household. Only to hear her speak to a servant who came into the room while I was there would have enabled one to infer the sense of absolute power.

These visits of mine are always the same. We sit talking—or rather she talks most of the time and I listen. Then very late in the interview she says abruptly, "Well, how's Denise?" I say that she is all right, and Aunt A. says "Good." She knows that I am aware of her feeling of resentment, and on several occasions has indicated that it is not in my competence to remove it.

*

When I come home and Denise says hurriedly that she has done something and she hopes I won't mind, I guess at once what it is, and nine times out of ten I am right. She has asked some of her cousins to dinner. Yesterday the little surprise party consisted of Edmund Proctor and his sister Marcia. Without vain-glory I may say that I went through it well, and afterwards Denise praised me for being so nice to them.

Being nice to Edmund and Marcia Proctor for two hours on end is a severe exercise, but I hope I am stronger when it is over. Like a faithful performance of Swedish exercises, it should brace one so that one can undergo ordinary fatigue without noticing one has made any effort at all. It is, of course, a mental and not a physical ordeal. It is what I believe has been scientifically termed *negative strain*. With Marcia to the right of me and Edmund to the left of me, my supreme task is to do nothing. I think of a passage from William James's *Gospel of Relaxation* that I learned by heart when I first began my attempts at mental training. "There is no more generally useful precept in one's personal self-discipline than that which bids us pay primary attention to what we do and express, and not to care too much for what we feel. If we only check a cowardly impulse in time, for example, or if we only *don't* strike the blow or rip out with the complaining or insulting word that we shall regret as long as we live,

our feelings themselves will presently be the calmer and better."

Marcia is at least thirty-five and reputed good-looking. She has a hard, dark glittering skinniness that is less pleasing to me than sheer ugliness. The thought of Marcia undressed devastates me; and yet she is one of those mistaken women who will speak of themselves as in a state of nudity—telling one of what happened when they were in their bath yesterday morning, or when they had stripped for bed and couldn't find their pyjamas the night before. Edmund, younger than she, is lank and sallow. I believe he has cultivated what used to be called the Foreign Office manner. He frequently runs his hand back over his forehead and lank dank hair. They both lay down the law on subjects that are quite beyond the scope of their intelligence—such as art, literature, science, politics, religion. But what don't they speak of with an assumption of final authority? Together with D.'s other cousins, they are clannish to an extraordinary degree. They and their relatives and intimate friends form an inviolate group (they have never attempted to enrol me in it) of unflinching interest, charm, and significance. They know no weariness in debating one another's qualities and idiosyncrasies. "Isn't that *like* Dick Tracy—exactly what he *would* do?" (As I neither know Dick Tracy, nor want to, I am in no position to confirm or deny.) Or it is Phyllis who has said

something daring and original in a public place. "Oh, no?" . . . "On my word, that's what she said." . . . "Oh, Phyllis really is the limit." And they laugh in a sort of esoteric rapture. Denise, as a member of the clan, loves this chatter. It seems to bring her to life. She sits drinking in the restorative elixir of family news, her elbows on the table, her pretty chin cupped in her hands, her eyes glowing. Then again they have protégés, and they make Denise share their enthusiasm and toil to advance the interests of the protected one. For a time it is an obsession with her.

No, I am not really fond of Edmund and Marcia. I dislike them. To this secret page I will confess that I hate them like several hells.

*

"*Mes Haines!*" Who was the author? Mallarmé—Rimbaud—Verlaine? I can't remember. But I will not say that my memory is gone, as everybody says nowadays in these moments of oblivion. "God bless my soul, on the tip of my tongue, and yet escapes me. I shall forget my own name next." People are silly to torture themselves because of a failure which is really not a failure at all. Old men and women especially suffer from self-inflicted pain in this connection, and accept forgetfulness as a premonitory symptom of decay and dissolution. The chief reason why our memories play us false is that we ask too much of them. Consider

names alone. The list of known names has swollen prodigiously, and is still swelling—names of new popular writers, actors, film stars, athletes, prize-fighters, game-players, racing folk belonging to the earth and the water and the sky; names of new fashionable resorts in all countries; of new shops, hotels, restaurants, night clubs; of steamship lines and railway stations, even of trains themselves. An ordinary woman of the world nowadays makes it a point of honour to know the difference between the Blue Train and the Golden Arrow, and never to say the Lido when she means Brioni. Some women even try to remember telephone numbers.

Denise attempts this impossible feat. She asks me to ring up one of her girl friends, and reproves me fretfully when she sees that I am consulting the telephone directory. "I've told you the number. Oh, do be quick about it, or let me do it myself." Very well. So be it. . . . "Can I speak to Miss Marjory Yateman?" Then comes the outraged voice, and sometimes a hurricane of indignation, from the other end of the wire. "Marjory *Who?* No, certainly not." (The offended subscriber thinks perhaps that I was asking for the inmate of a house of ill-fame.) Denise has given me a wrong number, of course. "That's funny," she says. "It must be seven eight six four, and not three." But she lets me use the book now. Dear girl, she is a little crest-fallen. This time I succeed. Metaphorically I throw

her into Marjory's arms, and then discreetly leave the room so that they may exchange those intimate confidences that are reserved for telephone chat without a listener. How women talk on the telephone! And men and women, too.

Lady Rainsley said the other day that the telephone has multiplied the number of heart affairs tenfold. It is the link between transient interest and growing inclination. In the old days when two people met for the first time and while together felt something approaching a mutual thrill, it generally ended there. They could hardly sit down and write to each other about it. To telegraph asking for an interview would have been more impossible. But any excuse is good enough to bring them into telephonic communication. Moreover, you can say things on the telephone that you might not care to risk if you were face to face with the object of your incipient desire.

I wonder if all this will be different when television is established and you see the person to whom you are talking.

*

"Go often to the house of thy friend," said the Scandinavian sage, "for weeds choke up the unused path."

I go fairly often to Aunt Aggie's house in Prince's Gate. She was kind to me when I was young. Now she is old and I must be kind to her.

More than once in our talks she has embarrassed

me by hints that when she is gone I shall get some slight evidence of her affectionate regard, and yesterday she increased my embarrassment considerably. I had told her about Le Touquet, and was saying I hoped we might have a week at Monte Carlo after Christmas, when she cut me short with one of her downright plain-spoken rebukes. She said I was very extravagant, or at any rate, did not cut my coat according to my cloth. Then, quite sternly and menacingly, she told me to remember that she could do what she liked with her money. "I shan't leave anyone out of my will by accident. I recognise no claims, although among all those who might pretend to make them you are my favourite. But I don't want it to go to a spendthrift." Those, I think, were her very words. I was taken aback. Then I told her that if she talked like this I could not go to see her any more. "Why not?" she asked curtly. "Because you might suppose now that I had an ulterior motive and was nursing a legacy." I said this in effect, but don't know what phrases I used. "Oh, stop," she cried. "It is such nonsense. I give you a serious warning and you reply with a lot of sentimental twaddle."

I walked all the way home thinking of money. She obviously means to leave me something. Not much? And that not for ages. A little now would be very useful. But years hence, if she left me all that she had

(and, of course, she would not), it might come too late for liberty and enjoyment. I must not even take into account so remote a contingency. Creaking doors hang long. And Aunt Aggie does not even creak. She still swings on smooth hinges—and shuts with a bang. Nevertheless I allowed myself to weave dreams (just as I weave them when I have a ticket in the Calcutta Sweep or the Stock Exchange Lottery) of what one would do with large means. Life free from petty care—power for others as well as for oneself—the capacity to do anything, wise or foolish!

I shall not say a word to Denise about my conversation with Aunt A. I have a feeling that it might upset her. Moreover, the communication was private and confidential.

*

Mes haines—my hates. If I were to write my hates this book would overflow.

I hate barbers' assistants who talk too much and part my hair on the wrong side. I hate tailors who trample on my individual taste and force me to order the "suiting" that they fancy and I don't. I hate men who tell me dirty stories, stale stories, long-winded stories—or any stories at all. I hate that over-politeness of the great and highly born with its implication of an effort to put one at one's ease, to assure one that one need not be afraid. But I hate worse, in the vulgar and

underbred, that too rapid transition from cringing sycophancy to gross familiarity as soon as one shows any civility that seems like kindness. I hate large blond men with big noses and drooping moustaches who push themselves with stupid and eager curiosity into matters that do not concern them and at once become emotional, showing sympathetic interest, sanguine expectation, wonder, horror, fear. In a crisis they could never be trusted. They remind me of horses (common horses) that come trotting with pricked ears and flowing manes, then stop, swing round, and upset the apple-cart. I also hate mealy-faced, full-bosomed, richly-dressed women of forty who tell me with a little frown or simper that they have been obliged to drop Sir Somebody Something because he was "being troublesome," when I know all the time that his only troublesomeness was in never troubling. I hate blind hero-worshippers—but not so much as I hate deaf recipients of noble and stirring words. I wish they were dumb, too. Edmund Proctor, for instance, running his hand across his vacuous forehead and describing people immeasurably greater than himself as *asses!* "Proust was an ass. Mr. Baldwin is an ass. Mussolini—there's another ass for you." And, oh, how I hate stupid old men who talk among themselves of modern girls. They say these minxes have no morals, but will permit any liberties and go all lengths at every opportunity. I hear them at the club telling

one another monstrous fantastic anecdotes of up-to-date misbehaviour, and becoming noisy in their expression of horror and loathing. Why do they do it? Is it merely a love of the marvellous, as with the majority of people who believe in ghosts? Or is there something far more unworthy underlying it—anger with fate for allowing them to be born too soon, hot envy of a luckier generation, piteous regret in the loss of a real good time that might have been theirs? "I'm not strait-laced, old fellow, and never was, but really, don't you know, the goings-on of boys and girls of to-day disgust me." I wonder. Tridon said: "Humility may conceal a violent ego just as prudery is the usual cloak for unbridled sexual cravings."

*

I am in print. The first of my articles has appeared in the *Evening Courier*. Denise is proud and exultant over what she calls my literary success. I myself am pleased. Really the thing does not read badly. The editor seems to like its style; for, writing *ex cathedra*, he has sent me a long and very gratifying letter.

To-day I am out of conceit with the screed from the chair. Last night I read it hurriedly. Of course, the editor of a daily newspaper is a very grand personage, at least in his own opinion; and I meekly admit that I am a complete nobody, at any rate, among the inhabi-

tants of Grub Street. Nevertheless and notwithstanding, this over-lord of the *Evening Courier* takes too much for granted. He evidently does not intend to use the other five articles; but I am to ask his secretary for an appointment, and go hat in hand to wait upon him. He will then give me some "ideas," with notes of how they should be treated, for me to "work them up." He does not seem to see that on my part this would be collaboration at the best, and plagiarism at the worst. No, strangely perhaps, if I write at all, I prefer to work up my own ideas. "Mon verre n'est pas grand, mais je bois dans mon verre." Without being de Musset, one is justified in taking that attitude.

*

My likes! They, too, would fill a volume. I like young men and women of half my age who treat me as a contemporary, and have no fear that I will sneak when they take me into their confidence. There are dozens of older men that I should like enormously if they would give me their friendship. I keep on saying rude things about my club, but I like my club. It means a great deal to me. And it is full of charming, splendid people—famous men quite unspoilt by success, territorial magnates as modest as any wood-cutter or cow-herd on their vast estates, industrious politicians without a thought of personal aggrandisement. Especially I like country gentlemen of sixty-five to seventy, sunburnt, blue-eyed,

with hair bleached white by sunshine rather than time. They give me an impression that they have never done an unkind action—except killing foxes. And that they would do fairly, after a gentlemanly hunt, in the open—not with spades, or terriers, or a shaken bag. The other day one of them ate an abominable plate of boiled beef, carrots, and dumplings, instead of the roast mutton that he wished for and had ordered, because, as he told me, the servants were greatly rushed during the luncheon hour and he did not care to make a fuss about a natural and pardonable mistake. I like kind people, considerate people, good people.

I belong to another club now, a small sociable gathering-place, the Fielding. Denise approved, but she does not know why I joined or who proposed me. I go there to meet Lionel. He made the suggestion himself. One hears excellent talk at the Fielding, and the whole club is like a party of old friends. I am only my brother's brother, nothing more. They accept me for his sake, but do not adopt me. They call one another by their Christian names, and chaff, and exchange jovial abuse. Their very politeness to me shows that I cannot truly be one of them. But I go there to see L. and am happy.

*

Although Denise is not on good terms with Aunt Aggie, she is interested in her. She talks about her to other

people as well as to myself. She says Mr. Harrison told her that Aunt A. is worth three hundred thousand pounds. She thinks that my aunt is altogether under the thumb of her servants, and that towards the end they will force her to make a will in their favour. I tell her that such a fear is baseless, and that far from being downtrodden, she governs these ancient retainers autocratically; but D. sticks to her opinion. She says there ought to be institutions into which one could put rich old women.

I know that, generally speaking, her views may be just. Elderly widows with no male relatives to support their authority are, in fact, often oppressed by a pampered, over-fed, under-worked domestic staff. In dread of their faithful maid, bullied by their butler, imposed on by pert underlings, they cannot call their souls their own. But Aunt Aggie! I smile.

Some time ago her chauffeur became slack and impudent after a long time in her service. She did not appear to notice it, but one morning she told him to drive her to Rambler's, the famous garage. When she came out she gave him a week's notice, because she had sold her car and entered into a hiring contract. Standing, the venerable butler, pleaded for him. Married man with young children, desperately sorry for the past, never likely to offend in the future—might he not be allowed to drive the hired car for her? But Aunt A.

was adamant. She said that she would sack the lot of them if she ever had any nonsense, and go and live in an hotel. The butler was to convey the message to everybody it concerned. "So now you know," she said to the trembling old creature. "If you are comfortable at Prince's Gate, your cue is to make me comfortable, too." She related all this with grim satisfaction.

*

I have been thinking of money. I never used to. But, as so often happens when one's thoughts have taken a new direction, all sorts of things that perhaps one would not otherwise have noticed or remembered seem to keep one moving along the fresh path and prevent one from turning back. Then one begins to have an illusion that these new thoughts are being shared by all the world. Certainly it has seemed that everybody now speaks to me about money. First it was Aunt A.; then came something that Mrs. Hughes let fall in regard to her daughter; and last night came talk at the Fielding.

They were talking of the attributes that women like best in men—such as strength, courage, resolution, kindness, chivalry. All agreed that, although the strong, silent man is played out as an attraction, women never forgive vainglory, feebleness, and cowardliness in their men. Then somebody said that the men who have been most notoriously successful with women have always been the ugly men. Somebody else suggested that

perhaps this was because, knowing themselves handicapped by the ugliness, they put so much real hard work into their love-making, whereas the good-looking men took it too easily. At last my brother chimed in. He said: "What women like in men is money. The more money they find, the more love they give in return. Money wins them, and only money can hold them." Everybody laughed. He is very popular at the Fielding. They relish his dry yet forcible way of giving an opinion. If he is silent they draw him out. But it was a queer thing to say. Although not rich, he had a handsome wife, and they were apparently happy. I know that he mourned her sincerely. Yet I feel sure he will never marry again.

Could one soften his dictum and bring it nearer to a possible truth if one said that money in a man is the counterpart or complement of beauty in a woman, and that she naturally seeks it to perfect or round off her destiny?

Again yesterday I was thinking of money. To so many it means so much. For instance, that poor Mrs. Hughes and her daughter, Isabel—quite a nice sort of girl. She will have to work for a living. I wish I could help them.

In a sense money has become the only real power. The common hateful people amass it, and then the fine people bow down to them. They have to. People

possessed of money speak differently from anybody else, with a dreadful confidence, a certainty that they can get all they want out of life. I hear them at the club. Sarah Bernhardt was famous for her voice of gold. But nowadays the only voices of gold are those belonging to millionaires. Their money rings in them, metallic, hard, irresistible. "To-day I shall do this, to-morrow I shall do that. . . . I tell you I mean to have it, and I don't care what it costs." Year after year they can do what they like and have what they like. As I said, their blatant self-confidence is nourished by solid proved facts; they are like artillerymen, engine-drivers, or electricians at a power station. They know the strength of the machine that they control. It is both machine and weapon. At any minute they can use it beneficially or destructively. On the other hand, observe brilliant, cultured, large-brained men like prime ministers, and so on. Always they talk diffidently, pleadingly, apologetically. They are, of course, ridiculously underpaid themselves, and they never can get enough money for their public schemes. When out of office they have to go into the City. It is all very wrong.

*

The Government are starting that big Commission to inquire into the state of industry at home and abroad. Lord Oldenbourne is to be chairman, with many other financial potentates serving under him, and three business

men are to be added as paid assistants. Their appointment will be for five years, and they will rank during this period as (I think) first-class civil servants, although without prospect of a pension. My partners believe I could secure one of these appointments by reason of my knowledge of France and the French language, and they think that my record of service in the war must be very favourably considered. They would themselves treat me well, and I should, of course, retain my partnership. The firm's old friend and ally, Sir Evan Berwick (now connected with Board of Trade), has offered to back my application.

I told them again that the thing was not in my line, and that, while appreciating their confidence, etc., I could not entertain the notion. It was a long talk, and it upset me considerably because they were so very insistent. They appear to think that my appointment would help the firm. Finally I had to promise not to make a decision for a few days. This was unsatisfactory; since to them I have left it as an open question, while for myself it is already settled.

*

To my great surprise, Denise is all in favour of the scheme.

Indeed she said the most unexpected and upsetting things. She thinks it is a magnificent chance. It would get me out of a groove. Prestige and status would be

gained as a government official. I should be taking my place among "the people who count." If we went to first nights at the theatre everybody would know who we were, and next morning we could see our names in the paper. We should be asked to the Academy Private View and to other semi-public gatherings, to the big official receptions too, at the Foreign Office, and so on, and perhaps to the Garden Party at Buckingham Palace. In the end I should probably be given a knighthood.

Concealing any effects either of astonishment or mortification, I said that all this was very wide of our usual estimate of values, and asked her if she really meant she had changed her views. But she said no. She was as contented as she had ever been. Only, as a chance had come, I ought to take it. Her wishes were for my benefit, not her own. Above all, the new occupation would wrench me out of a dull groove and give me an opportunity of showing what I was made of.

She refused to see any of the obvious objections. If, as seems certain, I should have to spend most of my time in France, gathering information and studying conditions, she would join me there. The picture I painted of three months in a large commercial town like Lyons or Rouen did not frighten her. She said she would be happy anywhere if sustained by the knowledge that it was for my good and that I was "getting on."

*

My formal application has gone in.

D. is enthusiastic and excited. She asks me every evening how the campaign is progressing. She speaks as though I were candidate for a constituency and the election close at hand—or as if it were she who had started some large enterprise, such as a charity matinée at Drury Lane or a bazaar at the Albert Hall. Naturally she has brought her relatives into it. The clan will support me. Every accessible string is to be pulled by them. I hate it all.

I am to canvass on my own account, too. She thinks that I ought to get help from men at the club. She named at once Lord M. and Lord G. as suitable supporters, and she continues to ask if I have “roped them in.” I have told her at least three times that my acquaintance with these two noblemen would not for a moment justify me in troubling either of them about a personal matter. But she says that this is nonsense—and she added, rather irritatingly, that till now I have always spoken of them as though they were my intimate friends.

She cannot understand. I suppose no woman ever yet did understand how men can go on knowing each other for years, but never drawing an inch nearer, in a pleasant unfettered intercourse without the slightest of obligations on either side. Friendship is not involved by it, or even hinted at as a possible sequence of it. To

men friendship is such a big word, and to women such a small one. Women ask casual acquaintances to come and see them; they fill their drawing-rooms with strangers that they have met at seaside places, in committee rooms, or, almost one might say, on the tops of omnibuses. If they like the look of people they are unhesitatingly ready to "make friends with them." That is their own invariable expression. And "We must meet again!" You can hear them saying it at the end of a voyage—a voyage no longer perhaps than the Channel crossing. "Now this is not good-bye. . . . No, indeed. . . . You have my address. . . . Yes, and remember, my bank will always find me." . . . A man says to his travelling companion, after a journey round the world with him: "Well, good-bye. I hope we may be on the same ship again, some time or other."

Nevertheless I am trying to screw my courage up to the point of tackling Lord M. if I can make an opportunity.

The opportunity was made for me yesterday (Saturday), and made by himself. Ordinarily the club is full at the luncheon hour, but on Saturday there are, as a rule, very few people. I had just taken a seat at the long cross table, with a man on each side of me, when I saw Lord M. come in. He looked round the half-empty room, and then deliberately came and took the vacant

place opposite to me. He began to talk at once of Paul Géraldy's last book (which I had advised him to read), saying he had enjoyed it enormously. He was genial, pleasant, friendly, and if D. had seen us she would, without doubt, have said that we were obviously real pals. Ridiculous as it seems, I felt my heart beating noisily and my breath going fast. In moments of crisis one's perceptions are always sharpened and intensified; and because M. had become suddenly important to me I seemed to see him and to understand him more clearly than I have ever done. I found myself noticing the little lines about his eyes, the tiny russet hairs on his cheek-bones, the carelessly tied knot of his black and white neck-tie, his enamel sleeve-links, the rough surface of the sleeve of his grey jacket; and while perceiving such trifling details, with many others, I had also the strongest possible impression of the man himself. I seemed to know with absolute certainty that he not only *looks* a healthy, hearty, kindly, honest, good-natured creature, but that he *is* all that. Bon comme du pain—through and through. Still further, I knew that he would do what I wanted. I had but to ask him. But he would be surprised. My request would be altogether unexpected and would appear to him as strange. It was impossible to broach the subject immediately, since we were not yet alone. Then one after another those two neighbours got up and left the table. It was now or never.

I could not do it. We went on talking together, about this and that, about anything on earth except my private personal business. We sat there for a long time; and in the end (a small ironical touch of Fate's large hand) he asked *me* a favour. He begged me to recommend some more books. If without too much trouble I could jot down some titles of things I liked, it would be extremely kind of me and he would be very grateful.

Shyness. What a heavy handicap. How it disarms one! And how little it is recognised by other people. One loses friends merely by shyness—or rather one fails to make friends. And yet would one be without it? Nice people must surely be a little shy. A self-confidence not due to consciousness of highest worth, but achieved by the obliteration of all the finer susceptibilities, delicacy, modest reluctance, horror of situations in which one has put oneself at the mercy of another, and if rebuffed, slighted, scorned, can no longer resent the outrage or retire from it with dignity, seems to me worse than the pains and penalties of the most stupid bashfulness. Denise is really very shy, although she pretends not to be.

Of course some men go through existence asking favours, and become successful only by the assistance of other people. The big man helps the small man once,

and curses his impudence. Then he helps him again, simply because he has done it before. After that he does it inevitably, and soon quite willingly. He now wishes the other to succeed, and is interested in the success. Like a person who has made an investment, he wishes to see the quotation of his stock go up rather than down. This is trite but true. A thousand worldly philosophers have observed that you bind people to you by receiving benefits and never by granting them. We forget the cab-fare borrowed, but not the cab-fare lent.

The only two friends from whom I have craved support in "the campaign" are my brother and Claude Roper. In the latter case it was not easy, because I had neglected him for such ages. Both promised. I shall leave it at that.

*

In the game of life one must play one's cards in one's own way. It is a game for which no rules are available, except those that one makes for oneself. Having made them, one should adhere to them firmly through good and bad luck. If slowly ripening thought has always been the prelude to action, it is absurd to begin acting hastily and without consideration. If you are cautious by temperament you cannot safely become bold and reckless. Yet this is what many men attempt to do—to change their nature, fit themselves to new and difficult conditions, scrap all their acquired experience, and, in

middle-age behaving as though they had the plastic minds and adaptable manners of the very young, plunge forward on unexplored paths and search for perilous adventures. Too late they recognise their mistake. Then they feel "rattled," unable to go on or go back.

That is exactly how I feel. The fuss and chatter about this appointment (which I know very well I shall not get) have unsettled me, made me restless, taken from me balance and purpose. Routine and monotony were my daily companions. Perhaps I did not love them, but we rubbed along well enough together. Change, movement, varied interest do not entice me. Also it seems to me now that I was comfortable as well as safe in my groove. There are things that may be best left in their grooves. A tram-car is a useful if slow-going vehicle; but it looks futile and absurd when you see it jolted out of its groove, toppled over on one side, and blocking the thoroughfare.

*

I look into the concave mirror and see a man with a wry face making queer movements of the mouth and larynx, as if he had swallowed a dose of atrociously bitter medicine.

When I came home yesterday evening there was a man's hat with gloves and papers beside it on the hall table, and guessing that these belonged to my cousin by marriage, Edmund Proctor, I felt that I would be ex-

pected to go into the drawing-room and do the civil to him. But the visitor was somebody else—a man called Kilby, George Kilby, company promoter and member of parliament. Of this common, pushing, vulgarly successful person suffice it to say that he is a type of all that I dislike most profoundly, and that our acquaintance with him has been of the slenderest kind. Denise was ensconced with him in her sanctum round the corner. They could not see me, and neither of them knew that I had entered the room. Denise continued an animated conversation. "Mr. Kilby," she said, "you will be the greatest dear imaginable if you can do the trick for me. But you always *are* a dear." These words at the same time told me who was our guest and prevented me from announcing myself.

Denise went on talking eagerly, in the friendly affectionate style that she employs only with her family or cherished girl comrades. She gave little laughs, and I know, although I did not see, made gestures, shrugging her shoulders, nodding her head, and pressing her hands together. She was soliciting aid, pleading for Mr. Kilby's influence on behalf of a protégé—a poor feeble semi-imbecile creature who it seemed was incapable of helping himself or even managing his own affairs sanely. I do not pretend to record the moment at which I understood that she was speaking of me. Perhaps from the very first word. But I think I tried not to believe it. At any

rate I stood there listening, stock-still, "gorgonised from head to foot." The fat prosperous lout said he would invite me to dinner at the House and introduce me to some big-wigs; but Denise said that this would not do, although he was "a darling" to have offered it. No, I must be kept in the background. If produced, I should spoil everything. I was in fact brilliantly clever, but I always hid my light under a bushel. Sounded as to my competence, I would give an utterly false impression. If directly asked whether I felt up to the job, I would probably hum and haw, and say I didn't know, but I would try my best, and so forth. Or I might put them off by a quick change to assertiveness, for like many other gifted people of my temperament, I oscillated between absurd diffidence and overweening conceit. Above all I was unpractical. And she told him that a little while ago I had a great opportunity of becoming a regular contributor to *The Evening Courier*. The editor wanted me, was keen on getting me, but I put him off for ever by sending an absolutely ridiculous letter of refusal. "A pity," said Mr. Kilby. "If he had the Press behind him now it would be a sure thing."

I left them to their chat, unconscious that any part had reached ears for which it was not intended.

There is no more to say. If I tried to describe my feelings I might go on writing for a week. Paramount is the

sensation of complete overthrow and disillusionment. I am not a person with a slight wound to his vanity: I am one large raw sore. My insufferable pain is five feet ten inches tall and thirty-eight inches round the chest. Any remittance of it is a paralysing effect left by the revelation of this other unsuspected side of D.'s character. How could she so let herself down? The voice—the turn of words—courting that vulgar man with all possible arts of allurements. True it was for my sake. I must remember if I can that the sacrifice of dignity, propriety, and decency was being made to help me, and that in the midst of the horrible belittling she declared that I had gifts and might be ranked as clever.

No, this is not a thing to write about, or think about. It is something to live down.

*

I shall get over it all right, but I may not know for a longer time whether I have not suffered permanent injury. I am shaken. It is as if I had been in a railway accident or motor smash, and although no bones are broken and I can see neither contusions nor blood stains, I wonder if there may not be internal damage.

To see ourselves as others see us! The first evening-party I ever attended was in Paris, when I was quite young and tender. The Montaubans had kindly asked me to their grand house in the rue du Faubourg

St. Honoré. I was to go to them after dinner. I had dressed myself with inordinate care, but I did not know that it was a party until I arrived there. The grandeur of the empty hall with solemnly watchful servants and the loud noise of innumerable voices up above overwhelmed me. To add to my timid confusion, I realised that I was late in arriving. I should have to make a solitary entrance. My inclination was to turn and flee. But that would have been too pitiful. Silently ushered, I mounted the vast staircase entirely alone, with not a single other guest to keep me in countenance. Then half way up, on the landing, I did see somebody else, a foppishly attired young man advancing as if from the side wing of the staircase. In his stiff white shirt, white waistcoat, and high collar, with a flower in his button-hole, he had a foolish languid affected air; but the sight of him gave me instantaneous comfort. For I thought "At any rate I cannot look a bigger donkey than he does." Then, as we drew nearer to each other, I found that I was face to face with a large looking-glass. He was myself.

The only professional author (English) that I have known personally is L. D. Some years ago his death was announced, and obituary notices appeared in all the papers. Their tone was intolerably belittling. They said that he had disappointed by not fulfilling the promise of his earlier work. Never suspected of genius

he had seemed in the beginning to show a quick natural talent that might have been developed to at least a mediocre second-class excellence. But his innumerable novels, turned out with the regularity of a machine, had betrayed a steady failing both in power and discrimination. Among a large circle of ignorant or un-literary readers, however, he had continued to enjoy popularity. In private life he was entirely estimable, a loyal friend, a devoted husband, a generous and careful father of a big family. Many would sincerely mourn his loss.

But he was not dead at all. He had to issue press paragraphs to say so. He took the whole thing laughingly. Yet of course he had read every one of those notices. I admired him greatly for the fortitude and equanimity with which he bore it. I think I could not myself have survived it. I should have given fresh colour to the report of my death by committing suicide.

*

I have said nothing to Denise, and I shall not. But the episode has put me altogether out of conceit with this journal. I will stow it away—and in some safe place, where D. can never satisfy her curiosity by reading it. Several times she has teased me about it and begged to be allowed access to it. I think I will burn it. I must avoid all risk of its ever coming to her

eyes. Even years hence, when I myself am burnt, or buried, I would not have her see how terribly she has hurt me.

* * *

AUNT AGGIE is grievously ill.

I have been there every day this week. I can do nothing for her, and it makes me very unhappy. To-day I sat by her bed for an hour or more. I think she knew me and liked having me there. I talk to her, but she now makes no effort to speak herself. She has tried so often.

Eleven p.m. Just back from there. Each time she woke she looked at me. She sleeps and wakes two or three times in five minutes. It is a fitful alternation between darkness and light, and not a losing and regaining of any real consciousness. Denise gives me all her sympathy. Sorrow brings people together. But she has also shown a quite unexpected feeling for poor Aunt A.

Autumn! Leaves falling, hopes fading, days shortening. I have always been affected more by the sadness of autumn than its beauty. I feel that the year is dying, and although I know that another year will be born soon, the knowledge does not console me.

*

It has come. The money. Beyond all estimate. I was poor, and I am rich.

Strangely, the first glow over, I feel quite the same. We accommodate ourselves to prosperity with such swiftness, and a whole life is not long enough to teach one to bear adversity meekly. But I am not the same to Denise. In her voice I can catch the full note of pride and triumph. Her man has vindicated himself. She honours me for this windfall more than for the dull labour. All past faults are pardoned. I am not only forgiven now for what seemed an unforgivable sin, the failure to obtain that appointment, I am treated retrospectively as though it had been another cause for praise and deference. I did not make a fool of myself on that occasion: I showed foresight, acumen, a very proper sense that I was reserved for higher and better things.

It is quite natural.

Two months have passed since I wrote that entry about the sadness of autumn. In these months we have been unceasingly active, attending to business matters, planning, and indeed carrying into effect, arrangements for our future.

Now I hope we may soon settle down. The "hectic time" (pet phrase of D.'s younger friends) should be over. We are to have a place in the country, but not so deeply and remotely embedded therein as to cut us

off from the pleasures and amenities of London. The lease of this flat is for sale. Anybody may have it, at his own price. We shall not haggle. I would willingly move into the house in Prince's Gate; but the tentative suggestion fell like a pebble down a deep well. It aroused no echo. Nevertheless I have postponed arrangements for selling the furniture. All there remains as it was when she died.

Because of the hurry, the excitement, the many things that have happened every day, I look back at our old life as though it ended years ago. Yet in another way the new life seems to have begun only yesterday. If I close my eyes as I sit alone by the fire I am again at the funeral, seeing and feeling all that I saw and felt then.

Mr. Arnold was in charge of everything, at the house and at the church. He put us in a front pew, with the bier close beside us. I felt unduly conspicuous, and thought that we were being narrowly observed. I dreaded mute but hostile criticism of D.'s attire. She wore a black satin coat with a collar of grey fur (chinchilla) and a bunch of Parma violets in the lapel; and before we left home I had demurred to the general effect and asked if she could not dress herself entirely in black. But she would not. She said that any fur, no matter what its colour, was counted as mourning wear. The flowers also, she said, were strictly

permissible. Her hat was black and without ornament.

The church was full of Aunt A.'s friends, and I had the thought that the whole thing was poignantly like one of her afternoon parties. She had music at those, too; and the guests, nearly all of them old people, sat just as they were doing here, in close rows, not actively enjoying themselves, but as if with gentle resignation accepting an entertainment that was as lively as they had a right to expect at their age. Presently, after the last song, they would pull themselves together, bald generals, rheumatic admirals, corpulent dowagers, white-haired spinsters, nondescript husbands and wives, and all of them stream out of the church exactly as they used to go down the stairs and help one another to light refreshments at the buffet in the dining-room. But they would go away this time without saying good-bye to their hostess. It was *her* party, but they could not thank her for it.

Funerals, as we conduct them in England, are terrible. The coffin, covered with a pall, but its shape visible, affected me miserably. Above all its *smallness!* A little old lady sleeping for ever in a wooden box! Alive she seemed so big, because of the power that was attributed to her, strong and resolute right up to the beginning of ill-health, able to raise her voice in anger, able to make her whole world tremble if she merely frowned. I could not keep my thoughts from wander-

ing. I saw old General Vardon, level with us on the other side of the aisle, staring hard at Denise. It was as if he could not take his eyes away, but this scrutiny, far from being inimical, was benign, complacent, full of meek admiration.

I looked at her myself, and saw at once that she was feeling emotional strain. She had become quite white, and the delicacy, the refinement, the sheer loveliness of her face, cannot be described. I had the clear and definite conviction that there are times, as then, when she *is* lovely. It is no mere imagination of my own, no product of past memories, linked associations, fancies bred of vague desires, but a solid indisputable fact. I do not say always. But in the moments when she herself is spiritualised, then the outward charm rises to a height that might be called perfection if it were not indeed something even greater in being quite untypical and purely individual. I have always felt this, but perhaps never so strongly—that she is not like ordinarily pretty women. And, of course, her costume (if correct) could not possibly have been more becoming. My heart melted. I touched her hand as a sign of encouragement.

The choir sang the anthem beautifully, and many of the old tired eyes were dimmer still with moisture. At that time and place the words seemed overpoweringly eloquent. They were familiar to me, but I do not know

who wrote them. I transcribe one verse from the black-edged memorial leaflet:

“There is an old belief that on some solemn shore,
Beyond the sphere of grief dear friends shall meet
once more;
Beyond the sphere of Time and Sin and Fate’s
control,
Sere in changeless prime of body and of soul.
That creed I fain would keep, That hope I’ll ne’er
forego.
Eternal be the sleep, If not to waken so.”

At the end of the service D. broke down. It was when the men put the coffin on their shoulders again, turned it, and began to move with shuffling footsteps. The tears poured down her cheeks, she sobbed, although making no noise, and therefore not attracting anybody’s attention. But nevertheless, she was half hysterical in her sudden access of grief. She whispered to me wild self-reproaches, almost as if praying to be forgiven. “I was hateful to her always. Yes, I was. Oh, Aunt Aggie, Aunt Aggie.” I had to stay and pacify her. We were the last to leave the church. Outside I got Lady Rainsley to drive her home, and then hurried after the others to the cemetery. I fear that I was thinking more of Denise than of my dear kind old friend as I stood at the graveside.

Then, walking with Mr. Arnold to the gates, he said he supposed I knew that she had left me everything. I think he did not believe when I told him I had had no idea of it. But I asked, if so, why had he not communicated with me. He said he was old-fashioned enough to put off all business until the deceased client was laid to rest.

Throughout these two last months Isabel Hughes has been amazingly useful to us, not only with Norah, but in many other ways.

*

For myself I have made strong resolutions, and I must struggle hard to adhere to them. Power has been unexpectedly placed in my hands, and I will employ it for those I love to the fullest possible extent; and yet I must not, in doing so, lose my own identity. I have said that the money has not changed me. And I vow that it shall not. It is, of course, glorious to contemplate all that I can now give to and obtain for those two well-loved ones, Denise and Norah. Denise may have the pretty frocks, hats, cloaks, the trinkets, ornaments, toilette accessories, and what not else, that have so far been denied to her. Norah shall have a pony, nice girl friends, wise and clever governesses. She will no longer go to school, but be taught quietly and happily in this home that we are about to make for ourselves. At least I have stood firm about *that*. I maintained my decision

on the point with "a mulish obstinacy" that was entirely successful.

But it must not be all buying and procuring. Things that no money can buy will have to be provided by ourselves. In imagination I see Denise as the care-free mistress of the country house (wherever it may be), surrounded with comfort, elegance, beauty, a princess in a princely setting, a tall white flower in a garden of flowers, anything you like that, itself charming, is decked out with charms; but as yet I do not feel the longed-for atmosphere in which she can move among her subjects or sit on her throne. No, because the atmosphere is what she and I must together make. It is necessary that we should be spiritually at peace. Our thoughts must be as grand as our surroundings. Standing on the sure foundation of our mutual love, we should now be able to stretch mental wings and rise a little way, if not soar highly, above the brainless, hurrying, futilely-striving, ant-like crowd.

Highfalutin? What I mean is, not to rush about, spending, spending, spending, like common nouveaux riches—but listen to our own hearts sometimes and cut off the chatter of the costly wireless apparatus or the tinned music of the latest and best gramophone—forget our money and not go on rattling it, even in our sleep!

With regard to these fixed aspirations of mine, I

think of Paul Géraldy. I absolutely love his work. He teaches as well as fascinates me. Nothing ever gave me a clearer knowledge of myself and Denise than that marvellous play *Aimer*. Those two people of the play seem almost to be ourselves. That is, before the lover appears on the scene, they offer a picture of exactly what I would wish our relations to be. They are noble people, living finely. They *help* each other; the man leans on the woman, and yet supports her. And that is what I would strive for in my humbler and more insignificant way. But again (I repeat) one *isn't* insignificant if one thinks and lives finely.

Hélène, the wife, makes this wonderful reply when Challenge is trying to lure her from her allegiance by talking about all the temptations of a teeming active world, the swift passage of our opportunities, the after-regret for the innumerable experiences one might have enjoyed if one had been bold enough to plunge into them. He says: "The whole of life is but a moment." "Yes," Hélène replies, "a moment. . . . We know that well, we women, because for us the moment passes twice as rapidly as it does for you! That is why we must live the moment gently, calmly, deeply. Life is scarcely big enough to contain a single happiness. It is those who try to seize everything who will have had nothing in the end. We must grasp with passion one thing only, and take great care not to let it fall."

Noble! But I could quote a dozen passages with even a loftier tone from the same play.

The appeal of certain authors! It is almost like what I said about women, the something unanalysable that differentiates one woman from all other women and gives her a potency of attraction that cannot be resisted, although possibly in the very moment of yielding to it we may know that she has found a willing slave in us individually because of our own particular constitution, and that the rest of the world could break her spells and laugh at her attempted dominion. The great writer, R. L. Stevenson said, gives the thought of the hour—the universal thought. It is his function. But the author who says all that one *feels* but can't express, who tells one the things which one has not known, but which have lain deep inside one? That is what Paul G eraldy does for me.

Yet when I was in Paris three years ago and met other writers, I found no adequate response to my enthusiastic praise of him. Yes, writers! I should have talked of him to readers.

*

The continuous employment of money keeps one on the surface of things. It is as if every day was market-day. Metaphorically, we go to market in the morning and return with our arms full at night. For the time we are people of the herd. I crave for even twenty minutes during which I can retire into myself.

Truly this settling-down seems an endless process. I think I finally agreed to buy Marley Grange more because I was so tired than because I really liked it. Perhaps I am prejudiced against the Windsor district. It has always appeared to me as a half-and-half affair, almost the country, but not quite. The residents bring London with them for the week-end. The taint of villadom has spread to the fringes of the Forest. Some of the large newer houses would look more suitably placed in St. John's Wood; and quite jolly old country-fied houses are spoilt by touches of town-like splendour. They have high gates of forged iron, the scroll work gilded, the owner's initials on an embossed scutcheon, with a towering Gothic red-brick lodge, in lieu of the white wooden gates and pretty little one-storeyed, white-walled cottages that were there once and ought to be there still. But I suppose all this could be said in disparagement of any part of the home counties.

Marley will do all right. It is old, of course, and Mr. Sandford will make his wonderful alterations while scrupulously preserving the Queen Anne character. It has three things that I have always pined for—a library with bays, an orangery, and a long, broad, flagged terrace. I will procure orange trees in green tubs for the terrace, or die in the attempt. (No idle boast, for these best of all garden ornaments are disappearing from

the land.) Mr. Sandford swears that we shall be safely established by Christmas, at the worst. By next autumn we shall feel that we have never lived anywhere else, and Norah and I will take early morning rides (she will be an accomplished horsewoman by then) through the Forest, and I shall see again the unbroken cobwebs on the bracken and the footprints of small animals across the wet grass as I used to do years ago in my adored Hampshire. Then, hungry from the pleasant exercise, she and I will have breakfast on the terrace, breakfast of coffee, rolls, and honey, with great flaunting dahlias to nod their heads at us from the house border and huge stupid hollyhocks like giraffes stretching their necks and staring at us over the terrace wall. And this new autumn shall be joyous, not sad.

Mr. Cecil Sandford is very much the modern architect—thirty-seven, dark, smooth, beautifully dressed, a linguist, a player of real tennis, an accomplished dancer. He is undoubtedly clever, and more than successful, fashionable. That is why we went to him. It is only a few weeks since we first set eyes on him, but already he appears to have become the bosom friend of at least one of us.

From my store of extracts I have hunted out an apposite reflection by William D. Howells (a now insufficiently considered author) in *The Rise of Silas*

Lapham. . . . "He had entered into that brief but intense intimacy with the Laphams, which the sympathetic architect holds with his clients. He was privy to all their differences of opinion and all their disputes about the house. He knew just where to insist upon his own ideas, and where to yield. He was really building several other houses, but he gave the Laphams the impression that he was doing none but theirs."

This is astoundingly applicable to D.'s state of mind. I know she is convinced that Mr. Sandford lives but for Marley Grange. She speaks of it as the *magnum opus*, at all hours talks to him about it on the telephone, asking if he has thought out anything new for it, and if he is going down to it again to-morrow. Twice after our visits of inspection she has insisted upon his dining with us. It did not seem to me necessary; but she said yes, she still had so much to be thrashed out with him. So we sit in a discreet corner at Claridge's, and snatch our food while we continue to talk about Marley in a style for which friendliness is a pallid term. Last night she called him Cecil. That, too, appeared to me as unnecessary. But all these youngish people that Phyllis Wren and Marjory Yateman are now bringing round us address one another by the Christian name. It is all Oswald, Eric, Julian—or Tom, Dick, and Harry.

Feverish excitement. Unceasing effort. Furniture. Equipment. Engaging servants. Mild bedlam.

In the midst of it I have stolen a quiet and very happy day. After it I felt almost guilty, as if I had betrayed D. But she did not want me. She has not even asked me what I was doing. When Norah began to tell her she said: Another time; too busy just then to listen.

It was a very bright, still morning, with the glass high. Norah, Miss Hughes, and I set out like three children escaping from parental authority and bent on harmless mischief. We went by Tube to Hampstead. Down by the station I bought sandwiches, buns, sponge cakes; and at the top of the hill further loaded myself with bottles of ginger-beer and glasses. The notion of an open-air picnic in late December took our fancy mightily. Among bare trees in a deep glade we found a lonely bench and spread out the banquet. I never enjoyed a meal more. We hid its refuse beneath dead leaves and tangled brambles, after laying out our uneaten cakes at points that N. judged to be the most convenient for the birds. Then we tramped on, chattering, laughing, sometimes stopping *to play games*. N. and I hid, and Miss H. hunted for us. Then I was the pursuer in a long chase. It did my Norah all the good in the world. Her cheeks were crimson, her eyes on fire; her joyous cries made the suburban welkin ring. Finally tea at

Golder's Green—three wayfarers emerging from the darkness of a wood, lost, but keeping up our hopes because we had seen twinkling lights at a great distance. That was what we pretended. Home again. N. healthily tired.

Now and then the affluent should give themselves a reassurance that there still are supreme pleasures of which the money cost is so small that all may afford it. Apart from the happiness I always enjoy in being with Norah, perhaps the sense of relief was what made it such a treat to me. We have had so much too much of Claridge's, the Ritz, and Phyllis Wren's gang. The child with too many expensive toys finds a discarded reel of cotton and a bit of string, and makes an entrancing toy for itself. The pampered over-fed house dog picks up a dry crust in the roadway and devours it with a gusto that is disconcerting to the dog's owner.

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It is not true that if your life is given utterly and completely to one woman you cannot see the charm of other women. You should see it better. Where desire cannot enter, taste and discrimination ought to be stronger. I think that because of all the time I spent trying to be an artist I am peculiarly susceptible, in the sense that I observe more closely and rapidly than can be done by an untrained eye. I classify types, admiring each in turn, just as I do with different schools of painting. To me women *are* pictures, and nothing more—except my

own one. (And she is *hors concours*. When I judge her after comparison with all the world she remains high above every competitor.) But the streets of London are thronged with pretty faces. French women, quand elles s'en mêlent, can be staggeringly pretty; but the average of good looks is certainly higher in England. Above all, our women, as they mature, are so glorious. With years they seem to gain so much and to lose nothing. Of late I have been greatly struck by the charm of mere youth also. As I am well past forty, if not yet threatened by fifty, it would be strange if I did not. H. G. Wells, in one of his novels, speaking of a character, said she was at that age when a girl has to be positively deformed not to be pretty and attractive. (That is the gist of the phrase; I cannot quote its exact words.)

Although other women might not call her pretty, Isabel Hughes has this elemental charm—I mean outwardly, for she is a nice girl and one likes her for herself. But with the boy-girl figure, shiny brown hair, and fresh complexion, she typifies modern youth. Like the very young, she often has a waiting, attentive air, as if expecting something marvellous to happen sooner or later. In spite of the brightness, her face, or at any rate its expression, becomes cloudy and vague. I think of her as a lamp; and some day somebody will light her up, and keep the flame burning. She told me she

had no wish to be married, and said that girls manage nowadays very well by themselves, getting everything in their own way. For a moment I thought that there was an underlying meaning—an implication that she intended to emancipate herself by throwing off some of the old-fashioned trammels of spinsterhood. But it was not so. She is very innocent, and altogether straight.

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I wake in the morning, and, looking for the door, see the mirrors and marquetry of a large, strange wardrobe; I stretch out my hand to touch Denise, and do not reach her smooth, warm body. The door is in a different place, and Denise is in another bed. A little path of new carpet leading to a table with lamp and books divides us. We are established at Marley. It is the new order of things—even to the two-bed arrangement. The past is dead, the future begins. Nevertheless, I am haunted by that queer sense of accustomed localities that lingers for such a long time. Thus I go to sleep at our Windsor mansion and think I have awakened in the Hyde Park flat. We all carry inside us the houses that we have inhabited. Blindfold, at night, I believe I could find my way up and down, and round about that Hampshire house in which I spent some of my earlier years.

Denise thought it was a master stroke to come in before they were ready for us, but "I ha' ma doots."

She said they were going on as if they would never finish. Now it seems they go on at their ease, and seeing that we put up with all the noise and discomfort, do not hurry. The library (that was to be my safe and inviolate retreat) is untenable except at night. Books in their cases still unpacked, bookshelves not yet fixed, and tap-tap, grind-grind, as of giant woodpeckers throughout the British workman's working hours! But I steal up there of an evening, escaping from the gaieties, and amusements, and elegant frolics of our small circle of choice friends, and Norah often follows me. We sit reading together. The other night I made a pencil sketch of her in a characteristic attitude, one slim leg folded under her on the sofa, the other hanging down, head bent, eyes shaded. She was so deep in her book that she did not know she had been sitting for her portrait.

All day long our new servants ask questions. They behave like shipwrecked people on a wild and unexplored island. They ask if they may enter certain parts of it. They want to know the use of things they have found, and where they had better look for substitutes of the things that they require. They make no fight against the terrors of the unknown.

Already I can see that Denise will not be much more successful in managing a largish staff of servants than she was when there were only three of them. Servants

have never stayed with us long. It is strange, because she is so extraordinarily sweet and kind to them. But with her it is, of course, up and down. She pets them and soothes them, and then snaps at them. In illness she is quite marvellous. She made herself ill by nursing Alice Farmer and sitting up all night with her.

How long, how long? Noise, confusion, rattle. I feel that until we regain comparative peace I shall not be able to do anything. I am not living the days, but merely struggling to get through them. There are, however, many signs that the desired end is approaching. The furniture people have gone. The electricians go tomorrow. "Cecil," our brilliant architect, pays us dine-and-sleep visits and makes his inspection early next morning. He now introduces talk of his other work—ingenious alterations for a corner house in Grosvenor Square, bold conversion to school uses of a large Warwickshire place, and several dainty little operations of the cottage order. These tales fail to arouse interest. His sun is setting. Denise calls him "Mr. Sandford."

From Seneca: "Tranquillity is a certain equality of the mind which no condition of fortune can either exalt or depress. He that fears serves. The joy of a wise man stands firm without interruption; in all places, at all times, and in all conditions, his thoughts are cheerful and quiet."

This journal is becoming like a patchwork quilt. I get odd pieces from anywhere and just put them together. Too many quotations! But it is not until you begin to set down your thoughts that you realise how many of them are other people's.

Last reflections in regard to money—or, rather, the last that I intend to make! The only excuse for talking and thinking about money is not having any. It is like one's health. Only feeble, sickly people are always feeling their own pulses and taking their temperatures. If you are fit and strong you don't even notice that you are in a healthy condition. You take your good health for granted. It should be so with us and our money. We have it in such a plenteous supply. As though it were the water in the bathroom, we need only turn on the tap to enjoy a bath of it.

But it is not easy to use it for others, as I had resolved to do. I was determined that I would not stop short after satisfying the needs, whims, and fancies of those closest to me. Well, I have been giving freely wherever there seemed to be an occasion; nor have I too narrowly examined the worthiness of "the objects," as they are termed in charitable circles. Lady R. told me once that when she asked the advice of Father Stanton about the piteous demands of street beggars, he said that in nineteen cases out of twenty they were

worthless impostors; but it was not safe not to give to them all, because the twentieth case was sure to be one of genuine and terrible distress. Rather fine, that! I will follow his line. And my right hand shall not know what my left hand is doing. I have made out all these cheques to "Self"; so that if Denise should chance to examine my pass-book she can gain no information from the names of recipients. She may think perhaps that I have been indulging Self very handsomely. But she never grudges personal expenditure.

At first I thought that the money had brought us again very near together, and made me irrevocably sure of her. Plainly this thought betrays other thoughts that had gone before it. I must have felt, after the devastating experience as an inadvertent eaves-dropper, that we had drifted very far apart. And even earlier there must have been some doubt as to my security. No, not a doubt, a recognition of a danger that never ceases. What man was ever really secure of a woman? But the money, I believed, would be a permanent insurance against any actual breach.

Now I sometimes dread that it is steadily separating us. I have not lost weight. I stand high as a well-wisher who can prove the sincerity of his wishes. She still treats me with the deference that began on the day of the funeral, when I reported Mr. Arnold's communication. Other people may be rude to me; she is never

otherwise than complimentary and appreciative. But she does not want me as she used to do. She no longer looks to me for mental support. My office of *clock-winder* has become a complete sinecure.

I am glad that she should "splash about" and be happy, if thus she can find happiness. She is to have a good time. That Phyllis woman is always speaking of D.'s good time, and how pleased I must feel in being able to give it to her at last. D. allows them to talk as though it is notorious that she has been through a great deal on my account. Our past is alluded to as though it had been full of hardship and deprivation. I can see clearly that a legend is being built up for D., as of a person who bore all sufferings without complaint, and who now at long last can be rewarded for unmeasured sacrifice and unflinching endurance. What a wife she has been to that man! He may well be grateful to her. For she has stuck to him through thick and thin. . . . It is all rather absurd.

But I see, too, and with equal clearness, that a specially good time is being organised for her. It will include a London season, done on a hitherto unprecedented scale. Our mourning being fully over, we can plunge into the vortex with light hearts. Moreover, in the capital, I am to share the gaieties. My presence will be required as chaperon if nothing else. I was going to say that I should have to dance attendance, but that

would convey a false impression. She does not care for dancing with me, and I don't care for dancing with her friends. At our many impromptu dances here, Norah has been my only partner—except Miss Hughes, during that week-end in January.

From Géraldy's latest (*L'Amour, Notes et Maximes*).
A father advising a son about the woman he loves:

"Be kind, but defend yourself.

"Do not yield to a good-heartedness that would destroy you without saving her.

"That which she has given you is without doubt important, but to give her your life in exchange would be too much.

"You have not only duties towards her, you have duties towards yourself.

"Pay with your intelligence, with your strength, with your time, although from day to day it is becoming more precious.

"You are no longer a young man. Pay with your money."

He is more cynical in these Maxims than he is anywhere else, but among them are some quite beautiful. Wilkie Collins, in *The Moonstone*, has a character who uses *Robinson Crusoe* as religious people once used the Bible. Opening the book haphazard, he seeks inspiration or guidance in all moments of difficulty; and he always

finds what he wants. I am getting to be like this with the works of G eraldy. Some day I should greatly like to try my hand at translating one of them. I wonder if he would let me.

In spite of disturbance and interference I am reading much more than I did last year.

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Age, I am sure, will never wither Denise, nor custom stale her infinite variety. I believe no woman ever possessed a greater faculty for surprising one. As we are to have another week-end party from the ninth to the twelfth, I suggested that Isabel Hughes might be of it. Last time she and I had some real good talks. Her company helped me through. She is very intelligent. But D. at once said no, she did not want her again. Enough was as good as a feast. She has obviously turned against her. Yet this girl was altogether her own discovery. She took her up, made a favourite prot g e of her, wearied everybody by singing her praises. Why should she now drop her? Weathercocks are more stable. Really it would seem that if I show the slightest interest in anybody, suppression and obliteration are rigorously enforced. Or can it be an intended punishment? Tit-for-tat. I must not make a friend of my own, because I have too often handed the ice jug to D.'s friends.

I said that in any event there would be few opportunities of offering hospitality to I. H., since she will

probably soon disappear from England. She wants to obtain employment in America or Canada. I said also that it is hard luck when a young girl has to leave her mother and her country. But D. said Miss Hughes is older than I supposed; at least twenty-three, and quite able to take care of herself in any latitude or longitude. She said this almost with spite.

That was an irritable, unworthy entry. It is D.'s house. And she has a right to choose her guests, admitting or excluding as she pleases. I have always had a contempt for men who, because they hold the purse, adopt a universally proprietorial manner. My cook, my gardeners, my cars, etc. The home is the wife's. If a man is not happy in his home he should walk out of it.

Mrs. Hughes has asked for my "influence" in finding some overseas opening for her daughter. I. H. really wants to go. So I must do all I can. I suppose it may be to her ultimate advantage. She will have a better chance of meeting a suitable mate out of England than in it. Here the marriage market is so miserably overstocked that it is time we began dumping on a larger scale in our colonies. I think that all this is at the back of Mrs. H.'s mind, and, of course, Isabel herself must want to be married. I discount what she has said once or twice to the contrary. Marriage is no longer the

whole of a girl's career, but it must still be considered by her as a very large part of it—that is if she is normal. I. H. is quite normal, reticent, but not farouche, by nature affectionate, and with full capacity for the warmer passion.

Of how many girls here in England may not this be said—girls admirably fitted to become companions of men, wives of men, mothers of men—and yet doomed by circumstances to frigid celibacy, defrauded by fate, *wasted* by the laws of simple arithmetic! Of all things blind waste is the most detestable.

Coincidence after coincidence. Every day I am struck by some instance, big or small, of the way in which other people's thought seems to follow one's own thought. One has been thinking of something, but has not spoken of it. Then somebody else speaks, and his or her words chime in exactly with one's previous line of meditation. They sound like an echo. (Denise does it sometimes in a most uncanny manner, but it is different with her. In the past I used to believe that she actually read my thoughts. But I am considering here the apparently fortuitous accord.)

This morning I received a long letter from Lady Rainsley about her unmarried niece, Margaret St. Clode. Lady Margaret is much older than her sister, in fact, she is now forty, and no sisters could be more unlike.

Lady Angela possessed from an early age sex-appeal, "it," or whatever you call the attractive quality, and always had men at her feet, to be trampled on or to be picked up and comforted for a little while, as she pleased. (She is to begin comforting again as soon as her decree is made absolute.) On the other hand, Margaret, although persistently running after men, was devoid of lure. Then at last she got engaged to be married, and to a real good sort. Now her fiancé has been killed in an air crash.

Too bad. At forty. The final chance gone.

My status has undergone a modification. I am a visitor where I used to be a tenant. D. and I are occupying different rooms. The change has been occasioned by her continuous laments about her recent insomnia. Yet I had thought that *I* was the wakeful one. A temporary arrangement? Banishment, not exile?

"Scorn'd, to be scorn'd by one that I scorn,
Is that a matter to make me fret?
That a calamity hard to be borne?"

Yesterday young Mr. Blank, who had come over with two other unlicked cubs in a preposterous racing car, was very distinctly impertinent to me during a discussion about airships at luncheon. As host, if an unwilling one, I ignored the affront. But Phyllis laughed

and egged him on until D. stopped her with frowns, and made Mr. Blank turn the shafts of his wit in another direction.

I call all these young men who hang about the place "Blank," because really their names are not worth learning—Mr. Blank of the Grenadiers, Mr. Blank of the Coldstream, Mr. Blank of the Stock Exchange, and so on. Indeed this could apply, I think, to most of D.'s new friends. They might be described after the modern fashion for the minor characters in a play—A red-haired man, A pertinacious woman, Two people of no importance. Or, better still, if one cared to take the trouble, one could revert to the custom of the old moralities and label them as Mr. Toady, Mr. Trencherman, Miss Pert, Lady Bounce, and Mrs. Lightways! I know a name for Phyllis Wren, but it is unwritable. Manners she has none, and I believe her morals are beastly. Phyllis shall have a page to herself in my Book of Hates.

I dreamed that I was driving somewhere with the King and Queen. It was a ceremonial occasion, the opening of a building, the unveiling of a monument, or something of the kind. That part of the dream was vague. But then it became vivid. The Queen and I were alone in one car now, with the King in another car just ahead, and Her Majesty was indescribably sweet and kind to me. I had ventured to say that no monarchs were ever

so dear to the hearts of their people, or so profoundly honoured and so completely understood. "Yes," said the Queen, "if all our subjects were like you. But that would be too much to hope for"; and as if to give emphasis to the words, she laid her gloved hand on my arm. This little gesture was indescribably charming, at once gentle, gracious, womanly, and yet entirely queen-like. I glowed, I became candescent with pride and pleasure. I remember no more. In fact, I think it ended there.

It is not without a reason that I record this uncontrolled nonsense of darkness and sleep. As I think I said before, I have always disliked the slap-dash interpretation of dreams, or rather their explanation by general rules. For instance, the theory that in a large number of our dreams we are merely compensating ourselves for the rebuffs and disappointments of the daylight hours. But I must confess that last night's experience does look a little like compensation. I was smarting, these professional dream analysts would say, after the rudeness of the woman Wren and that young ass; so I indulged in vainglorious imaginings to compensate myself, and thus re-adjust the shaken balance of self-conceit.

I cannot accept it. Everybody dreams of the King. We dream of the King and the Queen, too, because they are the most prominent persons that we know of, the central figures of our national life. Not a day passes that we do not read of the King, see his picture, and,

at least currently, think of him. No doubt in the early stage of the war more than a hundred thousand people dreamed each night of Lord Kitchener. That noble figure loomed so large, and was so completely linked with all our hopes and fears. And in most of the dreams probably Lord K. would be gracious and reassuring, telling the dreamer that all would be well, that the war would not last long, and that already the signs of approaching victory were perceptible to military experts. But, hang it, there again we come to something very like compensation—a redressing of the day's thoughts. Unpremeditatingly I used the word *reassuring*.

My real quarrel with the modern psychic crew may perhaps be only the abhorrence of a too wide generalisation, and a contempt for their ignorance and their total shirking of the necessary spade-work. They should collect statistics and study them before being so cursedly ingenious and cocksure.

Dreams could be classified. Take the dreams of an opium-eater. They all sing pretty much the same song, no matter how diverse the characters and circumstances of the dreamers. There are dreams that belong to certain ailments, and dreams caused by certain surgical operations. Two big classes might be given to the dream of power and the dream of difficulty (or otherwise named, of success and failure.) We all dream of an accession of power hitherto undetected in ourselves.

We ride quite easily a race more tremendous than the Grand National; we step on to the operatic stage and sing divinely; or we are eloquent beyond imagination when compelled to address a vast audience on some super-important subject for which we have had no anterior preparation. I put the dream of flying at the top of this class, as the culminating and fullest expression of the root idea. One finds that one can fly; without wings, engine, or any external aid, one floats upward and soars; and one thinks often that one has previously dreamed one could do it, but now at last one in truth can. Then fatigue supervenes, one flutters down and the power goes—perhaps annoyingly at the very moment that one has secured the attention of other people after vainly imploring them to watch the marvelous performance. (Henri Bergson has a splendid dissertation on this particular dream, and he demonstrates its entirely physical cause.) We all know the dream of difficulty. Protean in form, it afflicts us from the cradle to the grave. Its extreme case is in the loss or inhibition of bodily faculties. We are being pursued, but we cannot run away. In the presence of an overwhelming danger we become paralysed. Or we are tongue-tied, blinded by eyelids that refuse to open, impeded in breathing, being suffocated, being buried alive. A less acute form of the difficulty dream is when one has to dress for some very important occasion (with soldiers

and ex-soldiers it is usually for a parade and in uniform) and one cannot assemble all the articles of attire. One nearly does so, but never quite.

Another well-known variant is that of dreaming one is altogether naked. At first one accepts one's condition as perfectly natural; one strolls about nonchalantly; one feels comfortable, at ease, conventionally correct. Then doubt creeps in. Is it really all right? Other people are clothed. But still one faces the situation, and, right or wrong, tries to make the best of it. Then comes the understanding that one is in a most horrible predicament. Our fortune for a rag of clothing! We are covered at last, but only with dire confusion. Miss Hughes told me she has this dream (as well as the quarrelling one), trying to make the best of it, and everything else, exactly as I do. She told it all so frankly and unconcernedly and laughingly that it did not in the least upset me, although, as a rule, I hate discussing nakedness with women. But treatment is everything. Oh, the difference between I. H.'s light, free touch and the heavy-handed innuendos of Marcia P.

There is something rather sinister and chilling about all the looking-glasses in an empty house. Suppose they began to give off their dead reflections.

I am spending a long week-end at Prince's Gate, having done a bolt from our home festivities. Norah

said she could get on all right without me. She and her good Miss Appleton will be at the party, but not of it. This morning (Saturday) I had a long sitting with Mr. Arnold. Then I went over No. 109, Charles Street (the smaller of the two likely houses), and found it much as D. had described it. But it would need a great deal to be done. I tremble when I think of Mr. Cecil Sandford turned loose there.

Now, with all business finished, the long, empty time stretches before me like a placid and unruffled lake over which I may sail in any direction I please, or allow myself to drift where the gentle wind chooses. I think I will amuse myself to-day and to-morrow by making notes for an appreciation of some of the modern French novelists and playwrights—Cocteau, Barbusse, Dorgelès, Mauriac, Duhamel, and the others. But the trouble is that I read them without remembering them. I muddle two or three together in my mind. Yet I think I could make a good, longish review of their work, comparing and analysing it all. That sounds audacious. But Heine said that: To dare is the secret of successful literary effort—and everything else in life. Another well-known if often-neglected author says:

“Our doubts are traitors

And make us lose the good we oft might win

By fearing the attempt.”

Marriage is isolation. Necessarily so. Ever since I married the circle of external movement has been narrowing. Looking back to ten years, eight years, even six years ago, I seem to have had so many friends. I thought of all the people I could have gone to then if at a loose end and feeling bored. Now there is not one. Without exaggeration I am altogether solitary in the middle of London. Of its hundreds and thousands of houses there is not a single house to which I could go with any expectation of being cordially received.

To-day (Monday) it is over. I was unable to work. I have done nothing. On Saturday afternoon, feeling more than bored, depressed, and uncomfortable, I had an idea that I might get hold of Isabel Hughes. I thought I would ask her to dine with me quietly and do a play. Or even go to one of the dancing places. I craved for company. But then I felt that it would perhaps be a little undignified. A girl of that age is scarcely a suitable companion for a man of mine. I could, of course, have asked Mrs. Hughes to come too, but that would have spoilt everything. Really it was a very strong temptation, and what made it the more difficult to resist was that I felt sure Isabel would like to come. It would be a treat for her. Moreover, neither she nor her mother would have any scruples as to the propriety of the adventure. On the other

hand, Denise might not have approved. It would seem to her foolish. Since I had fled the gaieties of Windsor, why should I want to be gay in London? I renounced the project, and felt stronger and firmer having done so. That nobly heroic and yet quite matter-of-fact psychologist Macdougall King would have patted me on the back. He says: "*The facility with which we can forgo our unwise wishes is proportional to the amount of our practice in this regard.*"

And the sequel! At about seven o'clock on Sunday I changed my mind and rang her up. Directly I gave the delayed invitation she said: "Oh, why didn't you ask me sooner!" Now she had engaged herself. I told her how lonely I felt. "What a *shame*," she said; and her voice sounded so pleasant and gay, and yet full of friendliness and sympathy. And she laughed. "Can't you get out of it?" I said pleadingly. But she said no. I understood that it was some awful supper with an uncle and aunt, and she could not throw them over because she thought she ought not to. I pleaded the urgency of my case, and told her that I wished she would. She said "Good-bye" laughingly, but regretfully. And I laughed, too.

Then five minutes later the telephone rang. I thought "She has done it." I felt overjoyed. . . . It was a wrong number. I felt sick with disappointment. Absurd!

I told Denise how dull I had been, and she said at once: "Oh, but where was your paragon? Couldn't you get Miss Hughes to help you out?" I told her that I had tried and failed. And, curiously, she echoed Isabel's words: "What a shame." But she did not say it in the same way.

*

The curtain is up. The variety show has begun. The London Season. The merry month of May—May in extreme youth, sparkling, smiling, only shedding a few tears and looking all the brighter after them— young, innocent May on her country throne of daisies, buttercups, hawthorn blossom, and wondering perhaps why we prefer smoky skies, dust, wood pavement, and petrol fumes to what she has to offer us down there.

We are doing our season from Prince's Gate. Nothing better having been found, D. decided that we might bivouac here, using the commonplace old house as a base or shelter, but not exhibiting it to the world. We can entertain our friends, paying cutlet for cutlet and quail for quail, at restaurants. This suits D. very well. Another installation would have impeded her movements. As it is, she will have less on her mind to distract her from working through the promised good time. That legend has already grown—After hardship and sadness, frolic and joy. Everybody seems to understand the

necessity of aiding and abetting her in obtaining the just reward.

Norah and Miss Appleton are spaciously bestowed. N. rides in the Park of a morning. There are all kinds of lectures and classes which she can attend conveniently. When disengaged I am much with her. But whether indoors or out, I am like a taxi-cab on the rank waiting to be used. When D. wants me she calls me.

Busy for Mrs. and Miss Hughes about the American opening.

Lunched with Lionel. Then met Norah and Miss A. at the British Museum. Tea at Rumpelmeyer's. After that the tread-mill. Home very late.

We dined last night at General Vardon's, in Prince's Gardens. We dine on Thursday with Admiral Sir Charles and Lady Ethel Newing, in Rutland Gate. The Miss Coopers have kindly bidden us to dinner next week in Brompton Square. These and other old friends of Aunt A.'s try to make much of us for her sake. It is rather touching. Visiting their houses, which are all within a stone's throw of one another, I feel as if I were going the rounds of a village. These old people seem to have made a purely local society for themselves. They are *neighbours*, in such a sense and style as was once customary in the depths of the country.

Aunt Aggie was like the lady of the manor. They respected her as well as liking her. As her heir and the new occupant of the manor house, I am made welcome. The vicar of the parish has not yet called, but I expect he will soon. Also the secretary of the local Foxhounds.

Wonderful! What do we know of London who only London know?

Denise mocks at these so kindly intentioned but terribly dull dinner-parties, and yet she enjoys going to them. Last frocks, like last thoughts, are always the best, and she is pleased to show the very latest one in as many places as possible, however incongruous they may be. We leave early (too early, I am afraid); then we hurry off to D.'s, London, and the real fun begins—crowd, noise, jazz. Now here, now there, we revel till the jokes and the champagne get too stale, too flat, and we are reluctantly compelled to go to that long-avoided place, bed.

We go to gatherings where you pay to gain admittance; then inside we make new friends who ask us to gatherings at their houses, where you are charged nothing at the door, but have to make good afterwards. Thus our circle expands.

Attending to I. H.'s affairs. Interviewed Mr. and Mrs. M'Cullagh, the Americans, who appear to me both

amiable and responsible. Appointment for Monday, at Brown's Hotel. Final decision then.

*

The fête continues.

We are still spreading ourselves. D. seems to accept every invitation to join Ladies' Committees for charity balls. She is also on the list of patronesses for some living pictures at his Majesty's Theatre. She will pose as well as patronise, but in which picture is yet uncertain. By reason of these activities she occasionally rubs shoulders with the very great. Meanwhile our success among the less important, the quite unimportant, the huge population of affluent nonentities is unquestionable. I should certainly add, as an item abounding with satisfaction for all concerned, that she has been twice photographed for the public press. Thus we seem safely on the way to become notable social figures. With a little more push we may be recognised as having "arrived."

But I cannot help asking myself a question. If, instead of being ourselves, we were two rather vulgar people who had come into money, how else would they have behaved?

Dust and ashes.

There is another universal dream that ought to be classed—the dream of ecstasy, rapture, plenitude, ful-

filment. I should call it the dream of impossible bliss. Properly it belongs to youth, and not to middle-age; but it has come back to me of late. I wake enervated and discontented.

Yesterday I went with Miss Hughes to Waterloo, and saw her off for America by the Cunard boat train. I hate leave-takings. I told her I was sorry she was going, and I should miss her (nothing could be truer), but that it seemed a big chance. She was painfully moved, feeling the wrench, and beginning to doubt the wisdom of her decision. But at the end she said all at once: "Yes, it's best—it's far best."

Tennyson is to have a revival—and about time. As a boy I adored his music as well as his emotional quality, and there are lines in *Maud* that rouse old echoes and stir me with new thoughts. Melodramatic, sentimental, *soppy*—these are the epithets that boys and girls of today give him:

"I know it the one bright thing to save
My yet young life in the wilds of Time,
Perhaps from madness, perhaps from crime,
Perhaps from a selfish grave."

I suppose that *is* rather soppy?

In low spirits. Headache for two days. So bad this evening that Denise let me off duty. I could not read seriously, but have muddled with my old notebooks. I found something (responsive) that I had transcribed from a book by H. G. Wells. How that man can write! For sheer power of expression, saying what he wants to say, hitting the target every time, he seems to me matchless. It is after an enforced farewell. "I had shirked the price of her and she was going from me, taking out of my life for ever all those sweet, untellable things . . . the moments of laughter and pride and perfect understanding. Day by day my love went westward from me. Day and night I was haunted by a more and more vivid realisation of a great steamship, throbbing and heaving its way across the crests and swelling waves of the Atlantic welter. The rolling, black coal-smoke from its towering funnels poured before the wind. Now I would see that big ocean-going fabric in the daylight; now brightly lit from stem to stern, under the stars."

*

Gayer than ever. I do not feel that I can go on with it. But D. seems untiring. Pleasure has become the business of life. She works hard at her business.

That girl Marjory Yateman is another *âme damnée*. She has been promoted to a confidential position almost as high as that which is proudly occupied by the in-

sufferable Phyllis. She flatters D., telling of compliments she has overheard, and reporting that another "nice boy" has fallen in love with her at sight. Many more young Mr. Blanks now make an enlarged court for D. Phyllis and Marjory speak of it as her kindergarten. Well, there is safety in numbers, and the infant school cannot but be harmless to its principal, if it does not add to her dignity. But there are, of course, older men. There is one that they all talk about. I have never seen him, and am content to wait for the privilege. I gather that he is widely known, married, well-off, and possessed of what would once have been called a bad reputation but is now labelled interestingness or originality.

Denise is fonder of adulation than she used to be, and much less fastidious as to the manner in which it is offered.

She would be *noticeable* (elegant, modern word) anywhere. Indeed wherever we go she attracts attention. Her taste in clothes holds good. She dresses beautifully. Women stare at her in the streets, and it is sometimes as though they did not see her herself but only the costume. On the other hand, men see her first, and the garments afterwards. At parties when well-bred mature men (not callow striplings) are introduced I see their quiet and respectful admiration of her. Admiration and respect, yes, but ready to become flame and

violence in auspicious circumstances; ripening quickly as it is, after only an hour or so, to a warmer consideration, a closer friendliness; certain, I fancy, to continue with augmenting strength if they were given encouragement. She does not encourage, but she does not check. She *discourages* nobody. Perhaps she relies on me to choke off anyone who misinterpreted her amiability or attempted to claim serious consideration. But really this should be her duty at an early stage, not mine at a late one. I might quote to her what Henri says to Hélène. He reminds his wife that to defend a woman is almost an admission that she has compromised herself.

Her good looks are indubitable. She is prettier at thirty-three than she was at twenty-three. Like the wife of Dr. Primrose, she has worn well, although I certainly did not choose her for the qualities that the vicar sought in a help-meet. She seems so amazingly young that she makes me feel old in comparison. Perhaps her more subtle charm has gone, but a wider, stronger appeal has taken its place. The one was for me, the other is for the world.

All this I understand clearly when people are looking at her. But I look at her myself sometimes, across a room or from the threshold of a doorway, and wonder, supposing that she and I were nothing to each other, exactly what I would think of her. An idle interrogation. You cannot see those you love except with the

accustomed eyes of love. I know her a thousand times too well ever to be able to disentangle memories of her from immediate impressions of her. My gaze goes far beneath the surface; indeed it disregards the surface. External differences cannot affect the result of my scrutiny. Black dress, blue dress, pink dress; hair pulled severely back, or rather tumbling in ringlets, a big fan slowly waved, or no fan at all—these night-to-night alterations are obliterated by the certainty of sameness, unchangeableness, in herself. Perhaps for a fraction of a second I could catch a glimpse essentially similar in character to that which other people take. "Look. Do you see that woman on the sofa, laughing? Pretty, isn't she?" But it would be gone, unregistered, forgotten, in the next smallest movement of time; because then I should have recognised that it was Denise—my Denise, the same Denise, the unchanged woman with whom I have lived for so many long years.

No, that is not true. Why did I write it? A fatuous pretence. I know that she is not quite the same; and this is proved by my method of thinking about her actions, her habits, her general mode of life. I criticise, I judge. If she had not changed, I should not do it. In these comparatively few weeks, and especially since we came to London, the progress of the change has been plainly perceptible. She is withdrawing herself from me—in more ways than one.

It is perhaps for the material reason, rather than for those of the spirit, that I find insuperable difficulty in even attempting to get back to the old conditions of ease and confidence. If I could, I would break down reserves, concealments, subterfuges. I *want* to—most earnestly. I want to be able to open my heart to her, to tell her what things I like, what things I dislike, to speak to her without premeditation, to say in any words any thought that has come into my mind, just as I used to do. But when you are merely on visiting terms with your wife, the occasions for expansiveness are too rare. Intimacy of any kind is out of the question.

I go to her room of a morning, while she is still in bed, reading her letters. . . . And we talk. I try if possible to obtain my orders for the next twenty-four hours.

*

I must get our bills from the Ritz and Pommier's. The month's bill at Claridge's is of an enormous total. Even the admirable and ever-discreet Charles said he was surprised. We are spending a preposterous amount of money. And on what? Ye Gods, on what? Flowers alone—flowers from shops, to put on tavern tables, when at Marley flowers are blooming in profusion, asking to be picked, shouting that they are free, gratis, nothing to pay! . . . When I hinted my doubts, D. said (fretfully, with her martyrised air): "Oh, good heavens, is all

that going to begin over again? What does it matter *now?*”

Well, I suppose it does not greatly matter. But there are a million unemployed workmen; the hospitals sorely need funds; the Waifs and Strays and the other rescue organisations assure one that they still find people without shelter, food, hope.

Letter from America. All well there. A happy land full of kind people. But three thousand miles away!

I have had a partial explanation with Denise. I told her I could not go on. I met with no resistance. Indeed this tardy effort to escape was like pushing against an open door, for she agreed at once. She said that constant attendance had never been necessary. If I can accompany her to formal dinner-parties and preside at our own feasts, it will handsomely suffice. I am glad. Now I shall have more time for Norah, for my books, and for myself.

I am passing a day of irritation and resentment. D. has upset me badly by acting in an obstinately foolish manner. For a week I have been anxious about Norah. She has had “the sniffles,” as she calls them, but said she did not feel seedy, it was only a summer cold. Then when she ceased to blow her nose she coughed a little, but it

has not seemed to be on her chest, and she implores me not to get medical advice. Nevertheless I have kept a watchful eye on her; "fussing," as her mother says. I cannot help that. *Somebody* must look after her. Miss Appleton is all right, but without experience.

D. had planned a visit to Marley to-day (for her own purposes) and Norah was to accompany her, but this morning I begged D. not to take her. In spite of the weather D. insisted. Very much upset, I remonstrated with her strongly, and she became only the more obdurate and determined. We had a scene—two or three scenes. Norah, she said, was perfectly well; the change of air, if only for a few hours, would do her good. Besides she wished to have her daughter with her for once. That should be enough. Then in her anger she said monstrously absurd things—that I was cruel and insulting, that N. belonged to her as much as to me, and so forth. Then she ran upstairs calling loudly for Norah. "Norah," she cried, "do you want to come with me or not?" Norah said yes, of course she wanted to go. She had been looking forward to it. I let her go.

Since two o'clock it has rained off and on. And there is a cold wind. June is the most treacherous of all months. If she runs about that dripping garden, or, worse still, through the meadows, she will get her feet wet. And perhaps there will be no change of shoes and

stockings down there. If I had not been upset I should have thought of that, and made her take a change of things with her.

*

A terrible week. Anxiety, suspense, fear, anguish—then at last relief. But there are things that one cannot and should not write of. One should not even tell them to oneself. One should begin to forget them as soon as possible. Nature means one to forget; nature helps one to forget.

I pass over the story of pain, and will only put on record that Norah's illness was pneumonia and that we thought we should lose her. The remission of the disease came as rapidly as its onset. Now all danger is over; she is on the high road to recovery. I may be able to take her out in a bath-chair if it is fine tomorrow. On Thursday all three doctors will see her once more, and then after consultation will advise as to the future.

Midnight. A happy hour in the Park this morning, and N. none the worse for it. She is sleeping. I have listened to her breathing for half an hour, and it seemed perfectly normal. No cough, not a gasp, nothing. When I went into the room D. was there, sitting by the bed, but she got up and went away without a word. What can I do?

Those men have been and gone. I am still overwhelmed by what they said. Sir William was the spokesman, but Griffiths and Barnby both agreed with him. There may be after-effects, which will last for the rest of her life. That is his verdict. A healthy strong-constituted child has been changed into a delicate one needing unremitting care. It is making my heart ache. The pity of it.

They have advised me to send her to Switzerland—to Beatenberg, that place near Interlaken, above the Lake of Thum—for a fortnight or three weeks, not longer. I suggested St. Moritz or Davos; but Sir W. says they are too high up. Beatenberg is the right altitude and its air has a beneficial effect on the nerves. He explained that an illness such as hers tends to nervous exhaustion. Very good. Beatenberg it shall be. But I shall not *send* her there. I will take her there myself.

I am already making all arrangements. Miss A. will act as both nurse and maid. I can trust her now.

Going the day after to-morrow.

Eve of departure. Everything arranged. But the cloud of misapprehension still hangs as heavily on Denise and me. Now, all alone, late at night, I think of her very tenderly.

If anything could bring us together, it should have

been this ordeal through which we both have passed. But it has not. I believe that trying to spare her I made a great mistake. Then I did not realise this quickly enough. I regret my senseless delay. Somehow or other I ought to have put things right with her at once.

My object was to save her from the slightest feeling of remorse, and I therefore ignored the cause of N.'s illness as well as the circumstances that preceded it. I waited for Denise to say something, and I had prepared the sort of palliative arguments I would use when she did speak. But she never said a word. Yet she must have thought again and again, "This is my fault. I am to blame for this." Every hour of those days of crisis must have been torture to her for this very reason. She looked as if distraught. She sat up at night. She would not even try to get any sleep by day. I did all in my power to comfort and console her, but I was silent on the main point because she remained silent. I was sorry for her, but I did not help her.

It was not truly her fault. Fatality. A hundred times we risk disaster, and escape. We safely do imprudent things, as well for those we love as for ourselves. Besides, it was as much my fault as hers. Perhaps *only* my fault. If I had not bored her, rubbed her the wrong way by my unceasing fears and precautions, she would not have been so obstinate. Even at the last,

by keeping calm and avoiding recriminations, I could have made her postpone the trip to Marley. And if the calamity could have been averted by me, then I am to blame for it.

These are the things I should have said to her. I feel them now to be true. I feel shame as I remember my first anger, and I bitterly regret my hardness. But very soon it seemed too late; I allowed the chance to go. I was *afraid* to speak. A forbidden subject had been created. The firmly adopted attitude of silence had wounded her too deeply. A kind intention misinterpreted was a cruel ill-treatment. If I touched upon her soreness however lightly I might make matters worse. I have said that I was afraid. I dreaded most of all that it might turn her against N.

I have had a queer thought that I might destroy this journal except for the last few pages, and then leave it about for Denise to read. Then she would understand. But of course I cannot do that. I shall take it with me, my mute confidant, my only trustful companion.

* * *

ST. BEATENBERG, I bless your name. I salute your gentle airs, I kneel before your emerald shrines, I shall never forget you. I shall always think of you with gratitude.

From the first Dr. Kreisler (the local man called in merely to act as watchdog) expressed the most optimistic views about Norah. He seemed puzzled by my account of the English opinion. He said that pneumonia should not leave any after-effects with a young healthy patient. Had there been any weakness of the heart it might have been otherwise. At any rate he could not see the slightest signs in Norah that suggested a future trouble. But he begged me to get the famous Dr. Gustav Herzog of Zurich to examine her.

I took her to Zurich, and after an exhaustive examination the great Dr. H. pronounced in the most authoritative manner that she was absolutely all right. And there was no occasion whatever either for apprehension or for excessive care. He has an immense reputation, earned by sheer merit. Big of frame, grey-haired, majestic yet paternal, he reminded me forcibly of somebody that I had somewhere met before, but could not adequately recall to my mind. Then I remembered. I was thinking of Flaubert's illustrious doctor in *Madame Bovary*. He patted Norah on the shoulder, and told her to run about and be happy.

It was a dead weight lifted. Chains and shackles had been taken off my limbs. We returned here that evening, and have been happy ever since. Miss Appleton is modest perfection. Never in the way when we don't want her, never out of it when we do.

There is one walk that Norah and I will, I think, remember all our lives. At the end of it we go across meadows in which the grass is a large flower bed, then into a little wood of tall dark pines, on the other side of which there is nothing—nothing but space, air, with a sheer precipice and a deep valley, both unseen. No, not nothing, for straight in front of you on the other side of the valley the tremendous Jungfrau towers upward to the blue sky, and warms her white breast in the sunshine. This glimpse of the mountain through an opening in the pine trees startled us and delighted us. We have come back and back to it.

In one thing at least our dogmatic Sir William was accurate. The air of this place has a wonderfully soothing effect on the nerves. Most of the people here are nerve cases, and N. and I have amused ourselves in watching their rapid improvement. We have seen newcomers at their first table d'hôte, frightfully jumpy, jerking round their heads at the slightest unexpected sound, almost uttering a scream if one of the waiters drops a soup spoon. But after a very few days they are so composed that they would scarcely notice it if a waiter took the great metal soup tureen and trundled it clattering across the wooden floor. The other night we had a violent thunderstorm during dinner—a bombardment of heaven's artillery on the largest scale, as if the very biggest pieces were all being discharged at us together.

But the guests placidly smiled, and went on eating. If they did not entirely ignore the uproar, they only alluded to it as a passing annoyance, murmuring gently, "I'll tell you the rest later. One can't hear oneself speak, can one?"

It has certainly done good to my own nerves. It has calmed me to a quite extraordinary extent. I shall return as another man. I have not, of course, put serious preoccupations behind me. Denise has been always in my thoughts. It is by far the longest time that I have ever been away from her. Thinking of her day after day I have arrived at some very firm resolutions. I shall call them my Beatenberg vows.

*

She was at Victoria waiting for us. Somehow I had believed that she would come to meet us, although it seemed improbable. She was there, and at sight of her my heart melted. We kissed, and really I could hardly speak. In that moment when I put my arms round her, and as if instinctively, not automatically, she moved her face towards mine, all the old feelings rushed back upon me, and it was as if there had never been any doubts, any distresses. We laughed. And I said something about our greeting being unfashionable. And she said something about moderating our transports. Then Norah absorbed all her attention. No one could have questioned the genuineness of her delight in N.'s im-

proved aspect, her sunburnt cheeks, her bright eyes, her vigorous movements. And she was sweet to Miss Appleton. We drove away, all four of us, leaving Charles with our keys to get the luggage. A happy united family group—that is, to all seeming appearance.

But the trouble has not gone. It is still with us. Very soon I began to feel that she and I had been divided by three years rather than three weeks. In all that time she had been going her own way, living a life that is impenetrably hidden from me. By no power of imagination can I see her in a single moment of all that vanished time. I suppose that something of this kind must be felt by any two people who meet again after an absence. Strangeness. A constraint that needs an effort on both sides before it can be overcome. But she does not intend to make that effort herself. She will disregard it when I make it. At dinner she seemed to be using Norah as a shelter or guard against the possibility of an encroaching familiarity in me. Before the evening was over I seemed to understand how and with what deliberate purpose she had contrived everything. She had met me at the railway station, a public place, in order to avoid the warmer demonstrations that might have been possible in our own house. That kiss in the midst of the crowd served to fulfil inexorable requirements. Thence onward she could keep me at arm's

length. All transports had been moderated not by accident, but according to plan.

A little before eleven she went out. I could scarcely believe it. She had gone up to Norah's room, and I thought she was still there. I heard Reynolds's voice in the hall, and the sound of doors being shut. I asked Reynolds who it was, and he said she had just gone. A car had been ordered for ten-thirty. (She had not said a word about it to me.)

I went into her room this morning and she was asleep. I went again an hour or so later, and she was still sleeping. In bed she looks small and weak, like a child. Her face was so white, so tired, with the long eyelashes pressed against the flesh, and the eyelids full, as if a little swollen, faintly blue. It was the sleep of sheer exhaustion. I had no thought for her that was not tenderness and love. Standing there, I thought of my last resolutions. . . . If she could know all my thoughts, she would be kinder to me.

Norah continues to flourish. She and I have long walks together. Soon she will begin riding again. We are left much to our own devices. D. rackets about unceasingly. It is a dance of folly, and she will not, or cannot, stop it. It will go on I suppose for at least another month, for we have the better part of July to get through before

London will empty itself. I might of course turn my back on it all, and take N. down to Marley and stay there. But I don't want to do that. I think of my Beatenberg vows.

Yet I am not of the slightest use to D. I neither watch her nor control her. She does what she pleases. She might have a lover and I should not know it.

On Saturday she is going to Le Touquet again. I loathe that place. I believe she is in a thoroughly bad set out there.

Now that the far greater anxiety about Norah is at an end I am increasingly anxious about D.'s health. She is simply wearing herself out. She will certainly have a breakdown if she goes on in this way. I have urged her to stop. But now whenever I speak to her as one who has at least the right to advise, if he does not attempt to give orders, she becomes fretful and bad-tempered. She is terribly nervous. She ought to have three months at Beatenberg. I am so sorry for her—and so sorry for myself too.

I myself have been trotted out only twice, to act as host at two big dinners she has given, the first at the Ritz, the second at Pommier's. Her friends are not my friends.

I have been struck by something. The man they all talked about is now never mentioned by anyone. Is not this rather odd? I asked D. if he had gone away. She said, "Oh, no. He is still in London."

Thinking of that man—the one who has never been introduced to me, who has never once been included among the guests at our dinners. Yet I have a feeling that D. is often with him, and that some of the things she says are very often derived from him. She sometimes talks glibly of racing. Until lately she knew nothing about it. Shooting in Nairobi too. The pleasures of a big game expedition.

She is up and down. Worn out. Then about again. It will end in neurasthenia. When I suggest the need of rest and change, she only speaks of that infernal Le Touquet.

We are to have another party, at Claridge's. I asked her if her interesting friend, the one who is a game shot and a traveller, would be asked; and she said, "No, because he is not in England. He has gone to France." She said this easily and naturally, without a semblance either of embarrassment or regret. I purposely spoke of him again, and she said she would have wished us to meet. I was pleased. It gave me complete relief.

I had not liked thee, Dr. Fell.
The reason why I cannot tell.
But this I know, and know full well,
You may go to France—or go to Hell.

I have fetched out one of my old note-books (Physiology and psychology), and found something that I would rather not have come upon.

“White sees in the useless, unsatisfying life of the idle rich woman one of the most potent causes of neurasthenia. Having no other interests, she becomes introverted, and complains of a hundred little nothings. Exertion to her is only exertion and serves no special end, fits in nowhere as a link in a well-connected, coherent chain of events. She becomes introverted at the auto-erotic levels.”

This trick of making things I read match with things I think has grown on me.

Perhaps I don't follow what is meant by “auto-erotic,” and I certainly cannot make the term applicable. In short extracts one very often fails to get the real context. It was from a book by Tridon. He is only quoting White.

At any rate some of it seems to touch off D.'s condition. The useless, unsatisfying life of the idle rich woman. But why do I write so bitterly?

Why do I bother? Well, because I love her. That is what it amounts to.

The past holds me as its prisoner. I could not get free if I wished to. If liberty were forced upon me I should be like the poor released captives when the Bastille was overthrown in the French Revolution and our Newgate sacked in the Gordon Riots. They crept back to the sites of their imprisonment. They gave themselves up. Freedom was no use to them. Moreover there has been a restoration or a regrowth of my oldest and gentlest feelings towards her. She has become again as necessary to me as I once thought I was to her. It was not so a few months ago. I believed then that I had accommodated myself to the new conditions, and that I should soon be philosophically content. At that time I had not the sensation of utter loneliness. There was somebody else that perhaps I was thinking about. I don't know. Certainly I did not seem to want D. so much. I want her now most desperately.

I go to her of a morning still. I insist on talking to her, pretending that all is well. Sometimes she lets me read anything in the newspapers that seems interesting, and then we chat about it. But yesterday morning I made her angry. It was inexplicable why and how I had upset her.

She was brushing her hair with her back towards

me while I sat on the bed and watched her. I was talking for effect, about men and women, their different points of view, and I know I tried hard to be pleasantly cynical, pointed, and amusing. Suddenly she stopped me curtly and rudely, and speaking in anger said I was being idiotic and if I really wanted to know she could tell me. Then she herself stopped short. I begged her to go on, to give her opinion freely, but she would not. She remained dumb, although seeming ready to explode, and she brushed her hair in a sort of fury. I had a glimpse of her face as I went away, the cheeks still red with suppressed wrath. And the hair brush still worked in violent haste.

What was it all about? I cannot understand her anger. And then the obstinate refusal to go on with what she had intended to say. I can only suppose that she was stung by my perhaps silly generalisations about the sexes, the implication that they are essentially opposed to each other, like north and south, black and white. Or perhaps, with her nerves on edge, as she so often says, it was only because I was boring her. I do bore her nowadays. Vainly I try not to.

Although I have time for reading I waste it. I cannot concentrate. Then I muddle away an hour or more trying to find something in a book that I half remember, but not fully. I wanted to find a particular passage in

Tolstoy in which he sums up his philosophy about marriage. (Not the *Kreutzer Sonata*, nor any of the novels.)

I have been thinking of love. The curve of love. Love to be vital cannot stand still. It must be always growing, ripening, maturing, changing. A husband and wife cannot remain merely lovers. Under ideal conditions there should be a steady but imperceptible progress, leading one upward through all the emotions, with passion fading, and less selfish qualities replacing it. Husband and wife, brother and sister, father and mother, companions, friends, but no longer sweethearts. From the beginning I had in a certain degree all these feelings for her; and, normally expanding, they might and perhaps should have brought us to the point we have now reached. But that point lay far ahead of us. The journey there would still have taken years. Denise has done it too quickly.

Tolstoy said this, I think, but it was quite early, when he still believed in marriage. Later he seemed to disbelieve in it altogether. In my youth I was greatly influenced by those Russians—not only Tolstoy, but Turgeniev, Tchekhoff, Dostoievsky, and the others. But what creatures of prejudice we are, and how true was Herbert Spencer's denunciation of bias as an obstacle to clear thought. When the Russians went out of the War and let us down so filthily, I turned against their literature. Of late years, too, I have become shy of

translations. Mr. Maude and Mr. Garnett are very good, and probably Russian lends itself better to an English rendering than a French one. Last time I looked at *Anna Karenina* in French the phraseology appeared to me namby-pamby. I like Alfred Sutro's rendering of some of Maeterlinck's work better than the original. This is strange. But then Maeterlinck does not write French, any more than Joseph Conrad wrote English. Each *made* a language for himself. The only good German translation I ever read is Carlyle's *Wilhelm Meister*.

I can't read. My mind wanders. I wish I had been a professional writer. What a solace authors must feel in turning from reality to the world of imagination. Again, they sublimate their emotions.

Must get back to the old relations. Without her I am lost. I have invested my all in one security. If it failed me I should be ruined.

Yes, I will make an appeal to her. I will not let things drift. I have had one lesson. That silence about Norah's illness.

Let me be just. I must think before I speak. If she has changed, I changed too. The breach that is so wide now was not made only by her. It began of course

when I heard her speaking of me behind my back. But I should have acted then. Instead of swallowing everything, hiding everything, evading instead of being open, I should have spoken out bravely. I pretended to her and to myself too. I just went on as if nothing had happened. It was only my need of her that kept me going on. Then, later, the thing itself became of no importance to me. But the mischief wrought by my manner of treating it still remained. It was *that*, not the thing itself, that became big and full of danger.

I have made the appeal—and it has failed. She parried everything by a refusal to recognise the weight or even the meaning of the matter in hand. At first seeming not to know what I was talking of; then laughing it off (nervously and apprehensively); finally giving me some very hollow assurances. As fond of me as ever, and so on. I was too proud to tell her how much I had suffered, how much I am suffering. It would have made no difference. Perhaps she knows already. Perhaps, knowing, she does not care.

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The difficulty is to occupy the mind so fully that the whole realm of sensational activity becomes submerged. All would then be inert, without power or effectiveness, except one's guided and inexorably governed thoughts. These, however, should have not only a definite direction

but a *chosen* direction, and one that is harmonious to our original temperament, our instinctive sympathies, the nature and capacity of our intellect. I imagine that something like this happy state actually exists in certain men who are engaged on a great and (to them) originally interesting work. From early youth their aim has been the same. Now in the time of its achievement the accustomed work fills their lives—fills to overflowing. It can be argued of course that the work has mastered them. But in all other respects they are masters of themselves.

Goethe says in *Wilhelm Meister*: "Let us merely keep a clear and steady eye on what is in ourselves; on what endowments of our own we mean to cultivate; let us be just to others; for we ourselves can only be valued in so far as we can value. . . ."

"A man is never happy till his vague striving has itself marked out its proper limitation."

Yes, but for me it is too late.

*

August is ten days old. Everybody who is anybody has left London. D. went to Le Touquet on Tuesday. Norah and I have been here (Marley) all to ourselves for a week. To-day we went to church, and walked home a part of the way with Colonel and Mrs. Lock. During the sermon I furtively read the Bible. From

Proverbs: "The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly." Big words!

Something very strange and disturbing has happened. I got up early. I was out soon after eight. To be precise, it was eight-twenty, and I was strolling up and down the terrace. I had just called up to Norah's window, telling her not to be a toad and lie in bed on such a lovely morning, but bustle out and join me—when I thought I heard her mother's voice inside the house. It startled me, as I knew, or I thought I knew, that D. was at Le Touquet. Next moment she herself appeared on the terrace and hurried towards me. Although I did not think it was her ghost, I was startled. And her agitated manner did not reassure me.

She said that she had come because she wanted to get here before the arrival of the morning post. Yesterday she had written me a letter, but she did not want me to have it. She wanted me to give it back to her unopened. It was a mistake. For a few minutes we walked up and down, and she talked volubly and nervously about various things. I said that yesterday being Sunday, and the post from France not good, the letter probably would not be delivered until the evening post. Then she said the letter had been posted yesterday in London. She had returned from Le Touquet two or three days ago. Knowing that Prince's Gate would be

uncomfortable without the servants, she had put up at an hotel. I noticed that she said "an hotel," and asked what hotel. She said "Pommier's."

I went through the hall with her, and stood in the porch waiting for the postman. He arrived punctually. I took all the letters from him myself. Reynolds was there. She had evidently given him instructions. It was all very unpleasant.

Her letter was among the others. A thickish packet, as though there were several sheets in the envelope. I held it in my hand, and went back to the terrace with her. She kept on saying, "Please give it me. Don't open it"; and with difficulty restrained herself from snatching at it to get it from me by force, if I would not give it willingly. I felt sure that she had this passing thought.

I said, "Denise, this is rather serious—not at all a joking matter. And presently I will tell you why. But first answer a question. Is the letter addressed to me, or is it a letter that you have written to somebody else, and then put into the wrong envelope?"

"No," she said. "It is for you. I meant it for you, but now I don't want you to have it." And she repeated— "Give it to me."

I said, "Wait. Of course you shall have it if you insist. But don't you think you had far better let me read it? If you leave me in ignorance about it—if you

make it a secret that you will not divulge, I shall go on thinking about it—asking myself questions, and worrying.”

She tried to speak lightly, and said that I, too, had my little secrets. “That diary of yours, for one thing.” But all the time I could see her anxiety.

I asked her to stop talking, and to let me tell her all that was in my mind. Then I put it to her very strongly.—Whatever she had said to me in the letter, she would be wiser in letting me know it. I said I was not afraid of knowing. I would rather know. And that this might be an opportunity of clearing up a great deal of misunderstanding. And I know I said again that I begged her to avoid the other alternative—leaving me with distressing doubts. I said that the thing would always be between us—a mystery—a discomfort.

But again she spoke in a light tone, asking me not to make mountains of molehills, saying she had been in a silly mood, or something to this effect, and that I was too kind and generous, as I always had been, to take advantage of a mistake.

I handed her the letter without saying anything more, and she hurried back to the house, where no doubt she destroyed it.

Norah came down and we all had breakfast.

In the course of the day she praised me highly for my chivalrous conduct, and said she was grateful for it.

She said I was always generous and kind. I always did the right thing, and, what was even more important, I did it so nicely. These compliments left me very cold.

She went back to London early in the evening, but she will return on Thursday to stay here for at least a fortnight. That is, until she and Phyllis start for the Continent. Then it may be Juan-les-Pins or possibly the Adriatic. If the latter, she suggested that Norah and I might go too.

I have written it all down as though it were the narrative of a novel, or the dialogue of a play. That is how it sticks in my memory. Certain conversations from the moment they begin carry to one a sense of weight and tension. It is as though they printed themselves because they are unforgettably important, unalterably final. If one ever has to repeat them one can use their exact words. You notice this in omnibuses and trains, when you overhear people recounting portentous episodes. "‘Yes,’ she said, ‘No,’ I said. But I said ‘Pardon me, quite the contrary.’" Poor things, they can't forget it! To them, if to nobody else, it has been of colossal moment.

I can't forget it. I am very unhappy. What had she to say to me? What was it that she wished to say on Sunday, and wished to withdraw on Monday? A

decision? A long silly indictment of my failings? A nervous excited vindication of herself? A series of requests as to modifications or indulgences for the future? No, I think not. Something deliberate, carefully considered, necessary, and then a change of mind. Something that she believed to be irrevocable, and then the possibility of recall. Not ready to burn her boats. I don't know.

Taking all the circumstances into view, what would an ordinary husband believe? What would he do? I don't know, and I don't care. I am not ordinary. But, nevertheless, I am very unhappy. I am a miserable unhappy man.

* * *

THEY want me to take her back.

They say she wants it. No, my love. No, my dear kind impudently officious friends. A brilliant idea, but not acceptable. Try again. Ask me an easier one.

My life has gone too long on a broken wing. . . . Oh, that 'twere possible after long years. . . . I am not going mad to oblige that portentous old gentleman and the rest of her relations. I must keep my sanity always for Norah's sake. Because one has been betrayed, one need not betray. For her sake I must continue to be calm and sensible.

It is true that I once dreaded a collapse from

nervous strain. I thought, too, that this might entail the loss of mental balance. Dr. Barnby, worried about other symptoms, was quick to reassure me on the essential point. I had told him all—keeping nothing back. In my youth there was a current saying (supposed to have the weight of medical authority) that those who fear madness never go mad. But they said also that a person who threatened suicide never did it. *That*, however, is disproved a dozen times in a twelve-month. Nowadays the Coroner's first question is: "To your knowledge has he ever threatened to do away with himself?" Answer: "Yes, but only jokingly." A grim joke.

But I knew that in my own case I was all right. I was a modern construction, not the Tower of Pisa, able to swing a little way to and fro at the top without tumbling over or taking a permanent list. I had been shaken, but being built on a rocky foundation I still stood firm. Safe then, I am of course infinitely safer now. It is only the interview of yesterday, the family gathering, that has brought a return of excitement. And Norah never noticed that I had been in the slightest degree upset. I told her I had passed through a tiring afternoon in company with a lot of bores.

This move of theirs is of course the culmination of the annoyance to which they have subjected me for a year and a half. Perhaps I ought to have expected it. But I did not. Nevertheless I am quite sure that I

allowed none of them to see that I was surprised. One after another they ran their heads against the blank wall of my impassiveness. They had invited the presence of a long-suffering, good-natured, too easily influenced piece of very soft goods; but their visitor proved to be the Sphinx.

Rosencrantz-Edmund and Guildenstern-Marcia looked foolish. . . . Can you play upon this delicate instrument? Go on. Finger my stops. Blow into me.

Why are we human beings more stupid than the beasts? When an animal is wounded almost to death, the other animals either leave him alone or kill him outright. But men do neither. They cluster round to torment and watch. In polite society evacuation is never practised. There are no casualty clearing stations, no ambulance trains, no guarded base hospitals. The victim is never safe from molestation. Any inquisitive acquaintance may come in and tear off his bandages; the journalist, note-book in hand, takes down his delirious ravings; the photographer with flashlight and camera, snaps his death-throes. However prolonged the agony, it must be carried through in public.

Better for Norah now (said by one of them), and to her ultimate advantage. How dare they pry into the sacred relation of parent and child? The injury she did to Norah was irreparable. She might possibly add to it, but she could not lessen it. Norah and I were left to

make a new universe. And we have made our universe. It is as far removed from the one she and her clan inhabit as heaven is from hell.

Let me remember, in case of future reference, that although I am starting in a new book, this is not a fresh start of my journal itself.

I never stopped writing it. But I tore out and destroyed more than a hundred pages, preserving only my mother's entries at the end. Those I have put by themselves. The cancelled pages cannot be a loss. They had served their purpose in the writing, and they do not match with anything else. All sense of proportion had abandoned me. My concave mirror had changed into a magnifying glass. It showed the tale of two insects—enlarged to a thousand diameters—a female insect who grew tired of the male and ran away from him.

I purposely took a chair between the windows with my back to the light, and I fancy that from the moment I sat down I dominated them, making them nervous, and rendering the previously rehearsed scene very difficult to get through.

I understood at once that clever Mr. Edmund had laid an ambush for me. I was supposed to be meeting him alone, but Marcia was already there and the other two came in directly, followed soon by their quite pre-

posterous uncle, Sir Laurence Carlow. Really the thing was like the third act of a four-act play by Henry Arthur Jones. Sir Laurence is just the sort of character who is tardily introduced for comic relief and of whom any dramatist might be proud. Conventional, yes, but an unfailing source of amusement. In real life the clan keep Sir Laurence in reserve for great occasions. He is talked about but rarely shown—just shadowed forth as a powerful force, an ultimate resort in extreme embarrassments. "Can't you get your Royal Enclosure tickets? Oh, I'll ask my uncle. . . . Not sure of election? Oh, Uncle Laurence could put that right in a minute. . . . I wonder if dear old Laurence would mind helping us again." He visited my late wife once or twice—and it was as if the Pope had been coming—the excitement and preparation. I smiled inwardly when he stepped upon the stage now.

Edmund began, and the rest joined in, a chorus of praise. I was this, that, and the other—magnanimous, lavishly generous, more than liberal-minded, a person who because he can understand all can forgive all. They had learnt their parts, but "fluffiness" was soon apparent. I maintained an imperturbable silence.

After the opening each had a speech. Edmund was the man of the world, unemotional but good to the core, helping simple words by gestures, a shrug of the shoulders, a smile, the hand drawn over forehead to back of

head, and plenty of Don't-you-knows, and I-mean-to-says. Alice and Tom represented the comfortable still-united couple who have weathered the storms of married life—Forbearance on both sides, a little give and take, and all comes right in the end. Alice tried to look like an undiscovered tart, and Tom preened himself as the happy cuckold. They flickered out beneath my silence. Skinny Marcia was to be womanly and noble, speaking as a woman of a woman. If I could only see her cousin at this moment (as she Marcia had, the other day), deserted, friendless, quite alone. “And it isn't good for a woman to be alone like that, is it?” As I made no attempt to answer this conundrum, Marcia talked faster, then forgot the words, dried up, and could merely sit rattling her bones at me. “Speak to him, Edmund,” she murmured as a last effort. But it was the turn to speak of the old fool, the pantaloons, Sir Laurence. His task was easy. He had but to be idiotic. He succeeded.

At last I asked them if Denise knew of what they were doing. Edmund and Marcia answered in the same breath that they were sure they had her approval, otherwise they would not have dreamed of taking liberty. “No,” said the mirth-provoker, portentously, “we are too wise to interfere between husband and wife without credentials. . . .” “Denise,” said Marcia, somewhat recovering her form, “is so miserable that one *has* to act for her. She wishes, she prays for a reconciliation.”

I said no more. Except for my question I do not think I uttered another word beyond telling them at the very end that I would think about it. But Edmund and Sir Laurence both surpassed themselves in sheer fatuity before they let me go.

"Look here, old man," said Edmund, with a sudden assumption of schoolboy cordiality—sixth form, prefects' room, Englishness, etc. "We all thought you such a brick in not divorcing her. Now if you will put the coping-stone on it." . . .

"Exactly," said Sir Laurence. "To rise to the height of the situation!" But he added that the situation should be "envisaged" first. As he saw it, and he was never one to blink the facts, his niece had earned my very just resentment. She had gone from me and had lived maritally with another man. Nothing could be more reprehensible. But the point he wished to make and begged me to recognise was that she had left that person, and ever since the parting, a considerable period of time, her conduct had been exemplary. His large experience told him that in such circumstances this did not always happen. On the contrary. It showed that she was not a *bad* woman. If she had been bad, she might so easily have gone from bad to worse.

"No," cried Marcia, "she is a good woman, but tried beyond her strength. Everybody has their breaking-point. But given another chance, they never do it again."

Enough. I was proud of my silence. I derived a cruel satisfaction from their discomfiture. Nevertheless they have nearly made me ill once more.

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How petty and mean are all the thoughts of such worldlings! They praised me for giving her a handsome money provision. Why not? That was done for my own satisfaction—a necessity of the case, something that went without saying. Can people of the Proctor sort never understand? Even *she* had shown a disregard of money when compelled to weigh it against her new love. But all that I do, all that I think, is incomprehensible to that crawling gang; although they themselves are so glib with the cant phrases that might give them a key to the mystery—rising to the height of the situation, playing the game, what one doesn't do, and so forth. *Noblesse oblige*, too! Surely they said that? It is a pet of pets with them. Perhaps, according to their lights, which are darkness, they try to act up to the maxim. If one went for a railway journey with Marcia, she would insist on buying her own ticket—third-class. Her noblesse would oblige her to. But if one wanted to go first-class or in the Pullman car, she might perhaps allow one to pay her excess fare. It is *de minimis* that *curant* Marcia and her friends. Thus so many of the slightly larger decencies of life are beyond them. Well, I did not attempt to explain that when a man is taking

your wife from you, you cannot say "Yes, but wait. I must strip her naked first. It is for you to find her clothes in future."

They praised me also for not divorcing her. Again they don't understand. I would divorce her to-morrow if it could do any good. She knows it herself. I told her so at once—that if her man got free I would free her too, so that he might marry her. But I told her as well that I would never let her divorce me, in the modern fraudulent manner, by my posing as the guilty party. No, for Norah's sake, that at least is out of the question. When Norah is twenty-one I shall be nearly sixty. I am not going to allow her then to hear or to read of a false record. She shall not be made to think that the old father who adores her is weaker or worse than he really is.

To my surprise Edmund Proctor has sent me a letter in which he admits the failure of his persuasive eloquence. He says, "You may have thought me an ass." Well, Edmund, I have always thought so; but as your list of asses is comprehensive enough to include Presidents of the Royal Academy, Prime Ministers, Archbishops, inventors like Marconi and Edison, artists like El Greco, Augustus John, Joseph Conrad, and so on, you need not be ashamed. I too am an ass—but not quite as big a one as you would wish.

He says he ought to have made the point more strongly that Denise's performance was an *aberration*. She recognised her mistake almost in making it. Soon she grievously regretted it. She was with her lover for only eight months all told, and long before she left him he had sickened her by his ill-treatment. By the time they finally (E.'s word) separated she hated him and had good cause for doing so.

Cousin Edmund's letter at first made me laugh, but now it has saddened me.

I am not vindictive. It is a pity that the fruit of shame should so quickly have become bitter in her taste. Among the smart riff-raff of two continents, with apparently everything she could desire, unlimited Le Touquet, the delicious stimulation given by plenty of cocktails and new frocks, the wholesome excitement of chemin-de-fer, with all this, not to mention the man of her heart, she ought to have enjoyed herself. Can it truly have come to an end so soon? Even a sucked orange must be more palatable food than dry and dusty bread crumbs. To re-exchange the noise and frolic, the showiness, the tinsel glitter, the musical comedy scenes, the cockney paradise, that formed what she deliberately chose as her fitting surroundings, for the well-tried dullness of Prince's Gate and Marley Grange would be a second mistake, and on a larger scale than her first one. Surely her best friends (and at

least I am not an enemy) should advise her that she has sought a reconciliation in the wrong quarter. It is not with me but with the other gentleman that she should patch things up and begin again.

An aberration! I have looked up the word in Ogilvie's dictionary, for I like close definitions. Aberration is "A wandering from the right way; deviation from truth or moral rectitude; alienation of the mind; the difference between the true and observed position of a heavenly body." That is rather good. I observed that she was a heavenly body and I thought she had a heavenly soul. There was *my* mistake. All the difference.

When a woman has filled your life and gone out of it, you cannot let her come into it again.

I had given her a supreme power. She exercised it and nearly destroyed me. But the power once used vanished for ever. The bee had stung and lost its sting. She could not do me any further damage. But I found that my world had been smashed. The hollow ground over which I was walking subsided beneath my feet; I fell amidst the sudden ruin, was crushed, buried in rubbish; then I struggled out of it, bruised and bleeding, but still alive. I went on my way, without looking behind me. Her friend, it seems, has been luckier. He ill-treated her. He was selfish and brutal, Edmund says.

Well, he took what he wanted from her and went away uninjured.

But Edmund does not soften me by speaking of him. I know nothing about him, I wish to know nothing. His name in the newspapers blinds me with rage and hatred; if I desired to read what the newspaper says of him, I could not. To this day I have never set eyes on him. I hope I never shall. I have not a guess as to what he is like. For me he is without aspect, character, attributes, or individuality.

It was not always so. At first I wanted information. In the days of my collapse, stupefied by the pain and shame of it, I used to imagine his appearance, I tormented myself with a haunting image of him, and if this faded I groped darkly for signs and tokens of my successful enemy. The quality of his unknownness seemed insupportable. It was my crowning humiliation. If, as usually happens, I had been betrayed by a friend of the house, someone with whom I had sat at meat, talked to often, thought of perhaps as pleasant and trustworthy, the thing would not have been quite so sickening and disgusting. The laceration of my pride would not have been so deep, so dangerous. But I was wronged by an unknown man—just a man—any man. My hold upon her had been so feeble that the first-comer was able to whistle her away from me.

Of course this is not true. He was l'homme à

succès. Somebody—Francis de Croisset, I think—said the other day that when a man is known to have an attractive mistress he can always get another one; and when he is known to have had many women he can have all women. He possesses the glamour of an irresistible conqueror. His victims scarcely attempt to defend themselves. Analogously as with us men in a contest with a champion golf-player, they are beaten before the game begins. No doubt Denise had yielded to the seduction of his fame before he even thought of seducing her. I believe that instinct said to her: "This is the man I shall go wrong with unless I am careful." She chattered about him, could not keep him out of the conversation. Then she became silent. She had stopped his pursuit by the promptness of her surrender. My brother said that this silence is an infallible sign. A woman chatters about the man who is likely to become her lover, but never about the one who is.

I myself had no real instinct in the matter. I entertained a logical suspicion. But she wiped it out by the cleverness of her acting.

The second and worse stage of my impotent wrath lasted a long time. My thoughts were those of a thwarted murderer. Each day my torment renewed itself. Each night was the unchecked repetition of the anguished day. Those two were together, while I writhed and myself tore my heart if for a moment I

could forget that they were tearing it. My supreme torture was to think of her abandonment to the new master, the only master she had ever known. Everything she had denied me she was giving to him. Rage, futile, exhausting, maddening, possessed me—the rage of caged animals, of whipped children, of foaming megalomaniacs boxed in padded rooms or strapped in strait-waistcoats. The rage overwhelmed me. For a time everything else was a dream.

I awoke to an intolerable sense of desolation. I was alone. The only other woman in all the world that I might have loved was as completely lost to me as this one.

Every woman who takes possession of a man is like a virulent progressive disease. In a happier and more advanced state of knowledge we should be inoculated against love, so that afterwards we could love mildly instead of violently—not one woman, but many women. That man, my enemy, no doubt attempts to act thus, and perhaps has reached a lower form of immunity by the road of continuous sensual gratification.

Denise was a malady. She weakened me and stultified me. Because of her I submitted to everything. Like a sick man I mused and dozed when I ought to have been acting promptly and firmly. I let our world move on without guidance or interference.

How she devastated my life, robbing me of dear

friends, cutting me off from intercourse with useful acquaintances, remorselessly driving me back upon myself and making me the prey of morbid thoughts that still further lowered my vitality, or futile enervating imaginations that sapped my shrunken funds of normal energy!

Yet I thought it worth while. In the balance of my moral and material estimates she weighed down the universe. So long as I believed in her love I could not consider what it was costing me. And all the time I had never had it really. Lionel says she did not care for me. He says, too, that our mother told him that the reason my marriage made her unhappy was because she knew I had taken a valueless wife. It was the same with Aunt Aggie—and even with Claude. All recognised her for what she was, at once and without hesitation. Directly she was tested by strength and worth, she was found wanting. Only I was deceived, blinded, drugged, and befooled. She was colourless, and I made her a source of golden light and rainbow fire. She was a common type; and I believed her to be unique, above womankind, almost divine. She was a shallow, trickling stream, rather muddy in places, and I thought her the bright, wide, fathomless sea.

I say she was like a poisonous disease. But the virus is still in my blood. Perhaps I shall never be fully

cured of the taint she has left in every cell of my body and every fibre of my brain. I react to the memory of her automatically, invincibly—as a patient after the amputation of his leg feels twinges in the ankle and the foot, although they are no longer there, or as a time-expired soldier in civilian clothes, but with all the sensations given by the uniform, raises his hand to his hat and touches it instead of lifting it when he wants to salute a lady. She has been cut off, but I go on thinking of her and feeling her presence. For to think of her is to see her. In imagination, as I write these words, I can see her as clearly as if she were in the room with me. . . . I am returning from the day's work. She looks up in smiling welcome. She leans her head against my shoulder as I sit by her, and with her fingers playing about the lapel of my coat she tells me she has been tired and sad, and asks me to comfort her. Or I see her smartly dressed, laughing gaily, the lamplight on her white neck and smooth, lustrous hair, as she comes into a crowded baccarat room and goes to the desk to buy counters. . . . With each of these visions my heart is torn again, I ache with regret. I faint in an anguish that is disgust, a wrathfulness that nauseates because of its impotence.

No one could possibly know better than I do that this is all nonsense. The Denise I see is not only the fabric of my immediate imagination, but made of a

myriad false impressions of the past. I never saw the real Denise. *My* Denise never excited. She was a creation of my own hopes and desires, a mocking phantom evolved from nothing solid, a daylight dream; such a friendly illusion as a child invents for itself when alone in the dark, to keep it company and fight the other ghosts. Pardonable pretence of the child. But it is marvellous how a hard-headed and rather sceptical man of middle-age can live with a simulacrum contentedly for eight or nine years.

Other people have no doubt done something of the sort, but none to so fantastic, so preposterous an extent.

For this reason alone, if there were not a million others, it would be impossible to take her back. She would fit in nowhere. The place occupied by the phantom was too big; in the vast blank space left by it the real living woman would wander about homeless, seeking for warmth and shelter. Unrecognised, unfriended, she would die and shrivel and once more fade.

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I think of love, and try to leave Denise and myself out of these reflections. As between men and women it has become too horribly complicated. This is the fault of the women, not of the men. They have been the changing progressing sex, or at least their advance has been much more rapid. While they have been enlarging their sphere, pushing forward their innumerable claims,

successfully passing on from each admitted grievance to a new and inadmissible licence, we men, comparatively speaking, have stood still, wondering, gaping, surrendering. Better educated, as bold in thought as in action, incredibly more subtle intellectually than they used to be, they fight us with new and different weapons.

I am sure that it is true, and I am not thinking of myself or distorting the general in order to find a convenient place for the particular.

Women, as long as their influence was due to physical charm, were infinitely less dangerous to men's peace and comfort than they are now that their lure is of the spirit as well. In the old days a man could keep them out of the main part of his life. Moreover, as he advanced in age, their power over him (being physical) necessarily waned, so that he at last became free of all worry from them. But now the woman works herself into the innermost sanctuaries of a man's life, to devastate it or make it beautiful. Women encroach more and more spiritually—they no longer allow that there exist certain matters of the intellect which are beyond them, that there are certain realms of thought in which they cannot be successfully active. Thus the partnership of mere love is no longer possible. Exchange of thoughts as well as exchange of endearments is demanded by them.

Again, the new charm of women, the diabolically

subtle admixture of inward light and outward grace, affects men to the end of their days. Men are never safe. The danger goes on. And it will increase. Women will become more and more dangerous to men. With a cruelty of instinct as the mainspring of their highest purpose, unflinching, pitiless, every time we thwart them, they themselves will never desist until they are beaten down into their old subordinate and cringing position or avowedly accepted as the conquering sex.

We do not yet recognise all this.

But fifty or sixty years ago one of the later Victorians seems to have seen it coming. Thomas Hardy makes a sage old man say to a clever astronomer, when speaking of love and marriage: "Perhaps she persuades herself that she is doing you no harm. Well, let her have the benefit of the possible belief; but depend upon it that in truth she gives the lie to her conscience by maintaining such a transparent fallacy. Women's brains are not formed for assisting at any profound science; they lack the power to see things except in the concrete. She'll blab your most secret plans and theories to everyone of her acquaintance and make them appear ridiculous by announcing them before they are matured. If you attempt to study with a woman, you'll be ruled by her to entertain fancies instead of theories, air castles instead of intentions, sickly prepossessions instead of reasoned conclusions. Your wide heaven of study, young

man, will soon reduce itself to the miserable narrow expanse of her face, and your myriad of stars to her two trumpety eyes."

I laugh whenever I read the representative Victorians holding forth on the inexhaustible subject. Ruskin, for instance: "Love, when true, faithful and well fixed, is eminently the sanctifying element of human life: without it the soul cannot reach its fullest height and holiness!" Or George Elliott (if that's the way she spelt her name!) "Doubtless," says Georgie, "a great anguish may do the work of years, and we may come out from that baptism of fire with a soul full of new awe and new pity."

What dreary humbugs they were—Matthew Arnold with his Sunday evening poetry, Emerson with his portentous Board School philosophy, Dr. Smiles with his Self-help as a guide for bank clerks on the way to the City and thence onwards to Paradise. Gigantic insensitive pachyderms! It is curious that almost every important man of that era was big, weighing in life almost as much as the statue that would be erected for him by loving memories or appreciative reverence after death. Large, whiskered or bearded, frock-coated, wide-trousered, he stood upon his blameless domestic hearth as if unceasingly posing for a portrait, impressive, almost sublime in his dignity and complacence. Strip him, and, as Carlyle said, only a forked radish. But

what a radish—fit to win a prize at any vegetable show in the kingdom. Yet he made love, he dared to talk of love. He went to his wife at night, majestic, ponderous, like a doctor visiting a patient, like a hippopotamus going to the cow. She was waiting for him in the huge mahogany bed hung round with vallances, reading to beguile the time a good book, with a single candle in a silver candlestick at her elbow. At once they put out the light.

They put out the light—and begat children.

Then I think of the women of to-day. I think of Denise. I see her in the glowing if shaded brightness, with only her eyes dark, mysterious, wonderful; naked except for a gossamer shift, laying aside a cigarette, and stretching out bare slender arms as invitation. I must not think of her. I must not have these visions. They do me great harm.

The point is that those males of Victoria's reign were top-dogs. They kept their mates well under. And for those women the old-fashioned régime was sufficient. They were meek and respectful to the household tyrant. They spoke of their husbands as Mister—or if he was a peer, then by the place from which he took his title, never by the Christian name. They sat beamingly at the head of Mr. Jones's table. They said: "Mr. Jones never discusses his business affairs with me. . . . No doubt Mr. Jones will tell me in due course what has happened."

Simple elemental creatures, the great effort of their lives was to keep warm. In this period of semi-nudity in all weathers belief is strained almost beyond possible limits by an exact catalogue of what they wore—snug woollen combinations to start with, then a long chemise and a pair of white drawers, stays, at least three petticoats, a petticoat bodice, finally the bodice and skirt of the dress itself. Of course they undressed at night; but they dressed again before getting into bed. By day and night the rule was flannel next the skin—a rule not broken even for Mr. Jones.

But I am needlessly coarse—like D. H. Lawrence.

Lawrence, by the way, makes a woman who has had many lovers give this opinion: "There isn't any such thing as love. Men are simply afraid to be alone. That is absolutely all there is in it: fear of being alone."

It is not easy to refute the dictum. We cling to one woman because it takes time to break down the sense of solitude. Indeed this may persist in the most intimate moments of love-making between unfamiliar people. As a student years ago in Paris I passed through the disconcerting experience more than once when driven by solitude to seek the companionship of an obliging young woman. I have become more and more friendly with her throughout the hours of a protracted evening, We have nestled close in the cab after

the end of the night's amusement, we have seemed as if united for life, made one by a mutual understanding of each other's needs and sympathies. But then when the consummation of it all came, a desolation of loneliness fell upon me. I slunk away tongue-tied and ashamed, as from somebody whom I had never seen until that hour of haggard dawn in a shabby, disordered, unknown room. We could not even say good-bye in a language that was understood by both of us. We were like two people of different nationalities who had been flung into each other's arms in a street accident, and, stunned, insensible, had lain together for a long while on the pavement or in the gutter, until, at last recovering consciousness, we abruptly released ourselves from the unintentional embrace.

But I am coarse again.

It is easy to see the reason for such sudden failures in realisation. They are caused by the exaggerated promises of imagination. One must not idealise. If you have nothing better than a poor kind common girl, take her as what she is, leave her as what she is. I could never do it. I tried to change my models themselves into princesses, instead of providing the courtly air, the gracious bearing, the proud outlook, and all the rest of it, with paint-brush and pencil alone. I paid compliments to midinettes. I looked at the femme de chambre

sideways and told her she had a refined profile. "Oh, que monsieur est bête!"

Yes, I have been stupid as any beast in striving all my life to rise above the beast level. One should not dare to idealise. In every modern writer of any reflective power you will find, if you look for it, a warning against wilfully incurring the pains of disillusionment.

Here are two instances out of at least twenty that I have come upon since my thoughts began to work along this line. Louis Chadourne, who died recently, too young and too soon, recalling episodes in his travels, says: "The viler and more rapid love is, the better it appeases. The thing of paramount importance is never to let it gain any dominion over the mind." And Octave Mirbeau, in an older but still modern book, says: "We, who are above the brute creation, for our misfortune make love differently. Instead of preserving to love the simple character that nature intended it to possess, the character of an act that is regular, tranquil, and noble, in fine, the character of an organic function, we have blended with it a dream. . . . And our dream has brought us inappasement (l'inassouvie)."

That book (*L'Abbé Jules*) is of course morbid, violent, gross. But, dismissing the falseness of strained effort and over-coloration, a verity remains.

I see its irrefutable force in application to my own

life story. My fundamental error was the belief in an idealised Denise.

But did I really believe in her? Thought is very dreadful. There is always another thought hiding behind the thought that we admit and recognise. The very eagerness with which we avow and put forward one thought may be only caused by our fear of unavowable thoughts. So to speak, we post it, like an armed sentry on guard—or like a policeman pacing to and fro before dark and sinister-looking tenements, to prevent all those other thoughts from coming out of their evil and secret dwelling-places. And they are so many, and so fierce and powerful if they can once get at us. Or—a closer simile—these other thoughts are like illegitimate children, seen perhaps at birth, feeble, immature, pitiable, immediately disowned, sent away, or abandoned on door-steps in furtive haste. But they do not die. They go on living and growing; unseen by us, they gather strength while we are losing it. Then how terrible when, the tables reversed, parent and child stand face to face, and the strong one says to the weak one: “Am I not your son? Don’t you *know* me?”

I am not sure, but I can believe now that I always knew it really. All day long I was protecting the myth, by every conceivable trick and pretence. I never ceased telling myself about her love and loyalty. I asseverated,

vowed, swore, bellowed my faith in her. Why? If not to drive away knowledge and nourish phantasy? My life was merely a long struggle to maintain the unreal against the real—or so I can almost believe now, looking calmly back at it all.

Every one of those dreams, including the dream of unattainable bliss, had its meaning. Each was a plain message. And this, too, I knew. All that anger against psycho-analysts and their dream-interpretations was a part of the desperate fight to achieve complete self-delusion. I resented their teaching, I hated their phrases, because they were telling me a truth. I fought against the truth for years.

Yes, it seems to me, looking back, that I was always dreading a discovery, guarding against accidents that might lead to it, averting it, postponing it. I feared that the bandage might be forcibly torn from my eyes, that she herself would cease to help me in sustaining the pretence. Then on that horrible day when I heard her talking to George Kilby I was caught unawares. In spite of my efforts the revelation was upon me. I could not escape it.

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Perhaps something akin to hero-worship is necessary for the comfort of most women. They begin as schoolgirls by worshipping a music-master, a curate, or the boy who blacks the boots, and afterwards they build higher altars

to more generally accepted gods—actors, authors, film stars, gigolos, tennis champions, quack doctors, skating instructors, aviators, anybody of any sort who happens to be conspicuous in the public eye. Even the shops at which they deal are according to them the best in the world. They “enthuse,” they “gush,” about a boot-maker, a hairdresser, a chiropodist. He is simply the *only* man to go to. It is an exaggeration that gives them a sense of reflected importance. “And mention my name, dear. Don’t forget. He’ll do anything on earth for a friend of mine.”

While I stood as the target of Denise’s contempt, poor little Isabel Hughes was making me her hero. She enthroned me at once on a hitherto unused pedestal. She has told me this, in those first letters from Philadelphia. On my first visit, when Denise sent me to hunt her out after her father’s death, she was little more than a child, and she says I seemed grand and imposing (ye gods!), but although comparatively old, as kind and understanding as if I had been of her own age. This understandingness of mine, displayed more strongly in the happy companionship with Norah and herself, won a larger and larger share of her affection and regard. Nothing could be more natural; and heaven knows I do not flatter myself or feed in retrospect on a foolish conceit. I suppose that any grown-up man thrown much into the society of an innocent young girl will almost

inevitably influence her thoughts and draw her heart—that is, unless he is an absolute brute. And perhaps even then, too. Miranda felt no aversion to Caliban, and probably was not offended by his advances, until she had seen Ferdinand. Unhappy Caliban! But *my* slate was clean. Never for an instant did I try to take advantage of a propitious situation, or, even dreaming, think I could ever abuse her sweet, frank confidence in me. On the other hand, I allowed her to see from the earliest days how very highly I valued both this and her herself. Then when gradually I began to think that another warmth had crept into her feeling for me my own feelings are very difficult to analyse. But I did more than guess, for a long time I had been sure, before that evening towards the end when we had the brave, full “clearing-up” that she at least, if not both of us, considered to be necessary. There is no doubt as to my feelings *then*. For myself, pain that was not free from pleasure, regret that swelled and throbbed with pride; for her, sorrow, reverence, undying sympathy. *Now* there is nothing left in me but sorrow. She has gone beyond recall.

We look before and after. . . . But, oh, if we could really see what lies even a little way ahead of us! How many shadows would then be dropped for the substance that is within reach, and needs but to be grasped before it slips away for ever. There is a common belief

that in all lives there are approximately the same number of favourable chances, and the successful man is he who takes the greatest number of them. But one particular chance comes only once in any life, and in many lives never.

I must write to Isabel. It is dreadful to have left her letters unanswered, but I shrank so pitifully from telling her what had happened. She has no idea of it. She sends her kind regards to D. in every letter. But now I have no choice. I must write without delay to congratulate her on her engagement, and doing so, I will tell her of my disgrace.

He is a lucky young man, and I hope he will be worthy. I have not the slightest reason for questioning the happiness of her future, and yet I doubt. Instinctively I know that she is not in love with him. She has merely drifted into the engagement, or been pushed into it by the increasing force of circumstances—nephew of kind employers, propinquity, convenience, the plan of friends and well-wishers, a comfortable, sensible arrangement! Bless you, dear Isabel—and God prosper you.

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I have heard from Denise. It is the first direct communication from her since she left me. She makes the explicit request. To such a letter one may well find

difficulty in framing a reply. I think that very likely I will not reply at all.

I have replied to her, kindly but firmly, and I hope suitably.

She has written to me again. She says the things that Edmund says, but with additions of her own. She says that she was just as fond of me all the time. What meaning can that have, except that she was never fond of me? She asks quite simply why is a reconciliation impossible, as I told her. She begs me to explain. I might say that friends become reconciled after quarrels, but people who are indifferent to each other rarely trouble to adjust their differences of opinion, and in our case I look on her as a stranger. But that would be a feeble explanation, because *she was always a stranger*.

A third letter—from Paris. She must have left Biarritz before my second answer could reach her. It will follow her to Paris and serve as answer to Number Three, for she says nothing new. She merely repeats her previous statements, amplifying them a little.

She wants me to go to Paris and see her, and she would be glad if I could take Norah with me. She will not write to N. unless I give her permission. Certainly I shall not do so. I made this a condition in the financial arrangement that has won such gratifying ecomiums

from her family. At any rate, it is decent of her to recall the embargo and refrain from any attempt to break it down or modify it.

But why does she really want reunion with a husband that she neither loved nor respected? I did not even amuse her. She was bored with me. I am baffled by her persistent desire for reconciliation. She would forfeit so much were I to grant her request. As it is, she has money and freedom. She can do what she likes and as she likes. She is not really an exile. If she returned to England she would find plenty of friends. Indeed I imagine that all her own friends would welcome her with open arms, saying that she had put a fine feather in her cap, praising her for the high spirit she had shown, and wishing it had been they instead of herself. And among other people very little can be known of her escapade. She is not considered as banned or tarred; there could be no general wish to treat her as a pariah or a leper. She and I were not big enough to make a resounding scandal. The wide life of London rolled on unwittingly, not caring a fraction of a halfpenny about the little domestic worry in Prince's Gate. No doubt our immediate neighbours heard of it. Kind old gentlemen in Rutland Gate nodded their bald heads and said they feared it was true, while nice old ladies in Brompton Square smoothed their cashmere shawls and said they still hesitated to

believe it. Perhaps it was the worse thing that had ever happened in their village. But Denise would not want to be taken up again by them. If she did, she could soon win them round.

Truly the whole world is hers. She may go in it anywhere she pleases. At least she is only debarred from entering two houses—one of them on the south side of Hyde Park and the other not far from Windsor Forest.

She says that she is not as strong as she used to be. Evidently for the time at least she is tired of racketing about from place to place in a round of gaiety that pretends to change and is always the same. Hotels, casinos, bathing-beaches are nowadays all made to look alike, no matter in what climates and countries they are situated. When I glance through the illustrated newspapers I do not know at sight if the picture is of Deauville, the Lido, or Palm Beach; and the similarity of places destroys differences among people. Looking at all the prettily dressed women, I don't know whether they are English, Italian, French, or Americans. In every picture there are one or two who might well be Denise.

I suppose the clue to her state of mind is once again *loneliness*—a loneliness not comprehensible by Marcia, although she employed the word so freely when trying to play upon my feelings; the sense of aloofness, of self-imprisonment, that creates silence in the midst of

crowded, noisy scenes, and veils the eyes with something like darkness at high noon; something different from the solitude of the heart that I spoke of as driving one to physical contacts, and different, too, from that which can be dispelled, as Lawrence's girl suggested, by an intermittent sentimentality; a sickness, a craving of one's very soul. She, too, has felt it. No one can be for ever exempt from it. Poor woman! But we make our beds, and it is not fair to expect others to lie on them.

Moreover, I can believe that she has begun now to miss me. There is no one except myself that she has ever been able to influence strongly. She misses the old sensations of power. She remembers the satisfying, bracing effect of having always within reach a *dependant*, somebody at once man-like in apprehension and dog-like in submissiveness, somebody that she could make glad or sorry by the varying expressions of her face, that she could frighten with a glance or wound with a word, somebody that in system or whim she could treat badly. There is a strange morbid attraction for us in those we have ill-used or wronged. The interminably long apologies to a person we have hurt by accident are sometimes only a base gloating over his misfortune, and a sneakingly vainglorious pleasure in having occasioned it. The injured person wants to hear no more about it, but we go on and on. This, however, is far too subtle to be taken into consideration when weighing

her motives or intentions. No one was ever less subtle, and my ideas in that respect seem now the oddest part of my delusion with regard to her.

Nevertheless I feel sorry for her. Not strong, and woefully tired—as she declares. She admits her faults, she does not palliate them. She says she would make up to me for the past. She promises that she would make me forget. But even if she were capable of doing that, I do not want her to do it.

Pity, compassion—those are the universal solvents; they melt the sharp metallic outlines of facts, they make memories blurred and shapeless, they obliterate logic, reason, high principles, ordinary common sense. Lionel used to say that most men are cowards and that half the evil in the world can be traced to fear. Fear makes men unspeakably cruel. Oppression, deceit, murder, torture, and many damnable things are practised through fear. But I am not sure that the other half of the folly, the ruin, the pain, the indirect sorrow of the world, has not been caused by the weakness of pity. When compassion suffuses the mind we forget that we may not have the right to be compassionate. We lose sight of duties to everybody else, and succouring the one person in need we can greatly fail towards a hundred other claims for help and kindness.

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She has invaded our well-sheltered peace. Even at a distance she can harm me. I am a soldier behind a safe rampart, fully armed, but defenceless because attacked with new, mysterious, deadly weapons. A poison in the air creeps upon him, stupefies him, destroys him. That is how I have felt during all this week.

I lay awake at night thinking of her. When I fall asleep I dream of her. In my dreams she has her aspect of the past, so that I know that it is she, and yet except for the too well remembered prettiness she is immeasurably different. Gentle, humble, yielding, she woos me with sighs and diffident caresses. She tells me not with words, but as if it were soul speaking to soul, that I am cruel to doubt her; that she was climbing a difficult path with me, mounting on it higher and still higher, until for a moment I took my hand away and, unsupported, she fell. But she has risen again to her feet, and in fear and remorse has followed me upward, and at last overtaken me. Then sometimes in the dream there come suddenly words instead of vague impressions of her meaning, words so plain and strong that they echo in my ears next day with all the resonance and actuality of the dream itself. They are spoken fiercely, violently, as I know it is not possible for her to speak—I mean with a physical strength that she never possessed. “Are *you* what you said you were? Which of us is the worst, you or I?” . . . Another time she as suddenly changed

this note of defiance and accusation to a wail of despair and sank down, with her arms round my knees and her face hidden; and she has said: "Do with me as you please. Kill me or save me. I am utterly at your mercy. . . ." And dreaming I give way. Sorrow and pain overcome me. Then it seems as I lift her from the ground, clasp her, and hold her trembling body against me, I have found an ineffable peace, an ecstatic satisfaction; for it is not the real Denise, that shallow and merciless wanton, but the woman I wanted her to be, the woman that, if fate had forborne, if fate had been only a little kinder, I might perhaps have made her. And as I hold her closer and closer a wave of sensual passion submerges me. It is at once a triumph and a surrender; I am drowning, flying, submitting, ordaining; I am her king, her slave, her lover. In this ecstasy the dream ends, and I wake from it exhausted, shattered, half dead.

Night thoughts, but lingering by day, difficult to banish, lying in wait to attack me again when sleep again makes me helpless. What is the message of such a dream, at the point of bitter experience I have reached? To take heed; to stand firm. It can mean nothing else.

But I, too, have become very tired—almost tired out. And once more I begin to lose the sense of proportion. What does it really matter, this problem of our lives, hers and mine? In such a little space both will be over

and done with eternally. There are times when in sheer weariness I am inclined to say: "Oh, come back if you like; and go away again if you like. Your reappearance in the house will not make the slightest difference to me. Only don't interfere with Norah."

Norah has seen that I am upset.

I go out very early and take a long walk before breakfast. Yesterday I went as far as Hatton Copse, and the day before right across Ascot Heath. Norah helps me. In the afternoons we ride together. I have had three nights without a dream.

What does Norah know? How much, how little? At her age one can know things and yet not understand them. Sin, vice, profligacy are names, no more. Like other young girls, she reads all sorts of books. The gist of her parents' story must have been brought to her intelligence as belonging to the realm of facts; but similar tales that she has met with in fiction, tricked out as no doubt they are with romantic turns and elegant complications, would confuse rather than enlighten her if she attempted to interpret it closely.

She knows that her affection is a balm to my wounds. Her sympathy is like an invisible harp. She strikes its strings and the chords of my heart vibrate. As David for Saul, she plays, soothing me with gentle music 'till

my dark fit passes away. She is inexpressibly sweet. "Don't tire yourself," she says, when she is going to bed and leaving me alone with my books; and she touches my forehead, smooths my hair, lets her light small hand lie on my shoulder lovingly. More than once she has come down again in her dressing-gown an hour or two later, and she gently chides me. Her eyes are anxious then, and her lips quiver. "Daddy, it's dreadfully late. It can't be good for you to sit up like this. *Please* come."

Her mother never did that for me.

Why did she marry me? She kept me waiting. Her consent was tardily given.

I think one can say, as a very safe generalisation, that in all perfect love affairs the girl must respond at once fully and freely to the declaration. The declaration, the first kiss, the sudden embrace, or whatever the man attempts as expressive of his feelings should have been so long delayed that it is a sort of summing up of all he has shown her before. They both are ready, so that it is instinctive, explosive, invincible. There never was a *real* love affair in which the girl hung back, played shyness or reproof, at this moment of declaration. If she checks him, says he ought not to kiss her or hug her or whatever it is, she does not really care for him, and never will in the way a man wants to be loved.

This automatic response was altogether wanting in Denise. Ages passed before she would permit even the slightest embraces, and I seem to remember a very real distress from the hardness, the inflexibility, with which she repulsed me if I was persistent. Of course we were not yet engaged. I was still only her suitor, and she often reminded me that she had not pledged herself.

But it is quite probable that all this while she was undergoing pressure from her mother. The disclosure of financial ruin after the father's death had frightened them. In that old house of hers there was care and anxiety for the future as well as sorrow and a little shame for the past. It may well have been the mother's argument that, although I could not be considered much of a catch, the prospects of doing better were problematical. She may have felt that she ought to play for safety; she may have shirked the perils that go with pretty faces and unstable temperaments; she may have known, as mothers are supposed to know, that her daughter was the sort of girl that should be put safely into "a good man's hands" as soon as possible.

I am only guessing. As I go further and further back on the pathway of memory, forgotten things, things purposely forgotten perhaps, rise from the mist of time and stand before me in cruel vividness. But I also think of things that I am not really sure about. They may be memories or imaginations. Thus, I know that on the

night which ended my suspense and brought me great joy, I was sitting at dusk in a room at the back of the house. She had left me there, and had gone to talk with her mother. It was a most beautiful evening of early summer; the French window stood open to the silent, breathless garden; and as I watched the grey shadows deepen out there and the colours of the flowers begin to fade, the perfumed coolness of approaching night crept sweetly towards me. All that is an absolutely clear memory; but what I cannot be sure about are the growing sensations of doubt, discomfiture, anger that I seem also to remember. What was the meaning of this endless colloquy with her mother? She had left me too long alone. It was neglect, lack of respect, discourtesy. I must refuse to be played the fool with. I would stand no more.

Then she came into the room and it was all over with me. She said that she consented. She yielded her face, her lips. I thought no more. I was too happy, too proud. Next morning I came back to the house for her, from the inn where I was staying, and we walked away together hand in hand. I could not see, or think, that I had gained for myself an unloving wife.

Of course Lionel is entirely correct in saying that she did not love me then. But is it not equally true that I did, in fact, win her love after marriage? What tortures me now is the thought that I had her love and lost it.

When I strive hardest to hold in view the elements of our trouble I still oscillate now between those two opposing beliefs. At night I sit in the library brooding dejectedly under the weight of a negative decision, and then I get up and walk about restlessly, stung to quick movement by an acceptance of the affirmative. One is, of course, the dull self-depression, the helpless discomfort, natural after the shattering of fatuous but long-cherished illusions, and the other is the sharp mordant regret in the sense of an actual and perhaps avoidable loss. I swing to and fro. I cannot think clearly any further. It is childish. As well might I go down to the terrace, snatch a flower, and while I tore off its petals in the darkness say: "She loved me. She loved me not."

I believe that she did. It came slowly, a year or two after our marriage. She had accustomed herself to me; the inexorable force of habit conquered her; companionship, wedlock itself, then motherhood, bound her to me. Then she was mine. For three or four years after Norah's birth I possessed her love, all that she had to give to any human creature.

She offered a hundred proofs of her love. All this cannot have been false and sham, nothing but acting. She *required* me. She could not do without me. If for a moment she thought I was neglecting her for anybody else she showed jealousy.

But does that prove anything? A woman can be jealous without love.

Let me test it from my side. There are limits even to self-deception. Confining the survey to that period of time, I *know* that I am not mistaken. So far as I was concerned, the effects of her love were objective as well as subjective. They were measurable in me, as much as increased muscular force or higher blood pressure are to be measured in a run-down patient after treatment by tonic medicine and electric douches. From her I derived courage, confidence, endurance. She gave me strength. She sustained me day after day in the deadening routine of my office work. I felt her presence as a bulwark behind me. As I went back of an evening it was to life, a living aid, and not to that other, the illusive phantom.

She changed into that later. Perhaps I myself changed her.

Monotony! Unbearable to some, it is by no means noxious to others. It has always suited my temperament. I speak of the wretched dreary sameness of work in an office, and yet its uneventful character really had charms for me. Now the quiet routine of our life here at Marley is pleasant—every day like the last, with a prospect of many exactly similar to-morrows. Norah's progress, her advance in education, the always expand-

ing scope of her mind, are enough of change for me. I feel that all is well. "E chi sta bene non si muove." I stand still. Except for these agitating and engrossing thoughts about Denise, I should be absolutely content if monotony were but another word for eternity.

But Denise hated it. I can see that the legend of the bad time through which she had passed without revolt was not as ridiculous as I used to think it. All those quiet empty years were insupportable; she suffered under what was for her only death-in-life. But she never showed this. Give the devil his due. In this debit and credit account of ours I must at least be fair, and put down the items on the left side of the page as well as on the right. She maintained the semblance of peaceful satisfaction; even while deprived of all the lesser joys for which she ardently longed, she let me go on prating of the higher plane of thought, the nobler way, the essential loftiness of abnegation. She made her struggle, too, to lift herself towards this pallid realm of intellect and selflessness. She was patient. In a sense she had the patience of Griselda.

Her patience wore out. Putting myself in her place and using my imagination sympathetically instead of critically, I can suppose that she thought her youth was going from her, unemployed, frustrated, wasted. She may have felt that even the capacity to enjoy greatly and to live fully had ebbed away. Her face in the

glass (as she saw it, not that it was really so) seemed lifeless, the large wistful eyes dim, lines in their corners as the beginning of time's ugly print, a hardness about the mouth that frightened her as much because it was the sign of her own hardening nature as because it made her seem older than her age; the face of a woman who has suffered without being ennobled by pain. I imagine her going out to do our poor little household shopping on foggy days, with thoughts as heavy as the atmosphere, as chokingly lightless. All along the Bayswater Road she would see vague drab-toned figures of other women, ill-dressed, forlorn, almost sexless, quite pitiful, in their abrogation of claims, in their blind submission to a blinder destiny; and she thought, very likely: "I shall soon be much the same, gone, done for, beyond help from paint, powder, and fine feathers." In the lamplight of shop windows she may have fancied that men passed her close without a glance, even of curiosity. . . . Oh, I don't know.

Then the money came. It was more than release for her; it was the miraculous opening of the locked and rusted door against which she had beaten despairingly for a lifetime. Fairyland lay before her and she rushed into it. She took the new things; she tried to recover all the things that she had lost. Joyous bewilderment, intoxication, madness. She aberrated. For the aberration synchronised with the tidings of our

wealth, and not, as Edmund fancies, when she took the last wild plunge from the orbit of decorum.

At once she allowed me to perceive how barren would be any attempt to check her on the deviated course. The practice of connubial intimacy was artfully controlled by her altered arrangements and reduced to a grudging minimum before she altogether abolished it. No doubt the definite refusal of herself came with the actual beginning of the intrigue. But in this again she was *decent*. She did not descend to the basest of all means for lulling suspicion—as so many wives do in similar circumstances. (And in all countries, too. See the marchesa and her husband and her lover in Pirandello's tale, *Nel Dubbio*.) For whatever this may be worth, I must set it down to her credit. She remembered what is and what isn't cricket. Let us say in Edmund Proctor's schoolboy tongue, she was playing a wicked game, but she did not cheat at it.

If I were to forgive her no one would understand why I had done it. Some would despise me, some praise me, but none would ever guess that I had made a sacrifice for my own sake and not for hers. It would be my ultimate struggle to maintain an ideal.

If I am to pretend to myself that I still have any ideals left, if I am not to confess to myself that I admit my own fall from a chosen and accepted altruism, then

I *must* forgive her. It is easy to go on nursing one's wrongs, it is impossible to forget them, it is mercilessly difficult to act as though one ignored them. I should be doing the big thing, and not the little thing. And, whatever the other consequences, I believe that I myself would feel stronger and not weaker for having done it. We grow more powerful by the restraint of our power than by its exercise.

I have sounded Norah. Norah says that certainly she would like to have her mother back with us, but not if this was going to make me unhappy again.

She has written a marvellous letter. It is staggering. It chimes in so strangely with my dreams of her and the sort of appeal that in the dreams she made to me. It amazes by reason of the strength and facility of expression, a capacity of finding words and phrases for by no means ordinary thought, that I would have said lay altogether beyond her powers. It is a last cry for pardon. But there is nothing typical or universal about it. It is not any wife to any husband. It is Denise to me.

She is almost terrifying in her frankness. She repeats, much more strongly and boldly than before, that she always loved me and she did not for a minute of time cease loving me. Yet, as she says in effect, her love

for my rival was overpoweringly strong, an awakening of new emotions, a whirlwind of passion, a flaming desire that burned her up body and soul, and that she was as impotent to escape from as a culprit tied to the stake in the Spanish Inquisition. She knew at once (and this I had surmised as a probable fact) that if he wanted her he could have her. She hoped that he would "let her off" (her own words). Her only chance of remaining true to her marriage vows would be either his indifference or some extraneous action. Nothing happened to prevent it, and inevitably she became his mistress and went away with him. But whereas her love for me was unchanged, everything in her love for him went on changing. Rising and falling, burning and growing cold, again possessing her and again deserting her, it came at last to be nothing at all, not even so much as a habit that she could not break. While they were together I was always between them. She could not talk to him. They had nothing to say to each other. If she had continued to live with him for years she would still have belonged to me and not to him. If there had been the double divorce and they had married, she would still have been my wife, not his. Thus, mysteriously, as she says, my influence over her was never so strong as after she had left me. And *he* was aware of this. It was this really that separated them in the end, making him as willing to let her go as she to give him up. Then she asks me to

judge, and to say which was love, the real love, what she felt for him or what she felt for me.

And she says, too, that whether we come together or not, this is the last time she will ever speak of the months she spent with him. For her they have gone utterly, and she cannot tolerate any reminders. It would have to be a law accepted by me—not a word or hint or vaguest allusion that would recall the bad time. There is dignity in this.

So I am to be the judge. But if I hold the scales of justice, it must be for myself as well as for her. Is my own conscience quite clear? I look into my Mirror, and it shows me only doubts, bewilderments, confusions, the inextricable entanglement, the sheer chaos, of ever-varying emotions. How many different kinds of love are there? I don't know. What *is* love? I can't say.

* * *

(MARLEY.) A lapse of the writing habit. I have not had a minute to myself. Now I will make up my journal. It is time that I took stock—and pulled myself together too. For this morning I had my very first failure. A moment's irritation or forgetfulness or loss of self-control brought me very near to breaking one of my vows, perhaps the most important of them, and I wounded her. It was all right again directly—the damage repaired—our ship sailing again on a calm sea.

I shall not fail. I will not fail. If I did, the fault would be on my side alone, because in these two months since I brought her home with me from Paris she has been consistently perfect. All that I used to look for in vain is now mine (lavished on me)—tenderness, thoughtful consideration, unquestioning submission to my wishes, indeed more than that, a divination and a fulfilment of them before they are expressed in words. And the greatest of all things—love? Yes, that too (in full measure and overflowing). I should be wicked to doubt it now. Like a dove returning to the ark of its safety, it has come back to me.

From the moment that she flung herself into my arms in that room at the Hôtel Meurice, any further doubt became impossible. We were made one. It was union rather than reunion, because we became then and have continued to be a united husband and wife in the most old-fashioned sense of those words. Truly we follow the old fashions as rigorously as if we were of the Victorian era—so much so that, if discussing the geography of the house, we might commit that terrifying solecism against which clever Lady Grove warned the world years ago, and speak of “our bedroom.” Still further, if showing inquisitive visitors round the house, it would be impossible to conceal the fact that in our bedroom there is only one bed.

She would have it so. She gave the necessary orders

and made the whole arrangement without speaking of it to me. It was her tacit intimation. It was a gesture, symbolic but significant. By it she wanted to tell me that if any doubt still lingered in my mind as to her intention of being to me all that a wife can be, this should dispel it. In truth no such evidence of her feelings was required. As I have said, I had not a shadow of doubt. I knew already that I was safe in the restoration of all things, great and small, and that she would be mine, without let or hindrance, to the end of the chapter.

But I protest too much. These repeated asseverations of my contentment are not necessary now, and I hope they never will be. I do not require to remind myself that she has loyally and generously determined to repay me for my action. If I lived to a hundred I could not regret it. I am glad of it. I am proud of it.

Our home is beautiful. The weather has been gloriously fine, and it goes on day after day. Although shining in gold and brown, the big trees about those broad meadows that the servants obsequiously call the park have scarcely dropped a leaf. The terrace is ablaze with brightest coloured flowers. It is so warm that my orange trees have not yet been put away for their long hibernation under cover. Just now when I looked out I saw the tall, slim, elegant figure of a woman slowly pacing the flagstones. It is the lady of the house. She

seems to be this so very much more than she used to be. She is truly at home, not desiring to be anywhere else, without preoccupations or the slightest inward turmoil of conflicting thoughts. Her clothes are amazingly becoming, a part of herself and not an addition, making up the graceful prettiness that *is* herself as seen from a little distance. Near at hand she looks older, and very much thinner than in the past. The thinness is strictly correct in the eye of fashion, but I would like to see her put on a little more flesh, as she is sure to do in this quiet, wholesome life.

Presently her daughter joined her, and they walked together, so happily and charmingly that just to watch them was another source of happiness to me. Then they stopped. I heard their voices and Norah's rippling laugh. Then another figure came and stood near them. Miss Appleton—Discretion incarnate and suitably attired, speaking when spoken to, smiling in bland expectancy when not addressed. I know that she rejoices with discreet beatitude in the return of the wanderer. Another treasure, not stimulating or exciting, but honest, wise, unselfish—our Miss Appleton. They made a picture.

I went down myself, to add to the family group. I did not want to be out of it. And from then, throughout the ten minutes till the gong sounded for luncheon, I was basking in the sunshine, the peace, the beauty, the comfort of the undisturbed atmosphere, and thinking

that all animate and inanimate things had combined to make me happy.

But I wish that the season were not autumn. I have my old stupid feelings which autumn nearly always evoked—with the thought that sunshine now is only good luck, and the luck cannot last; that a wind will blow, a cloud loom, a cold destroying air creep out of the nights to invade the days. The light is fading, the year is dying. Hibernation begins for human beings as well as for orange trees. It is as if hope itself fell asleep.

Another lapse. We have been for a week in London, all of us. The weather broke. Now we are back again. It is fine on and off.

D. wants no guests. I suggested some of the old lot. Wouldn't she like to have Phyllis and Marjory to stay for a few nights? She shook her head. I told her I should be glad to see them again; but she said no, she was happier here with me all alone, and she shirked the fatigue of being hostess to anybody. Strangely enough, it is quite true that I should like to have those people sometimes. Much as I disliked them, I now fancy they might have their use. They would lessen the tension that I sometimes feel. Avoiding all contact with others, as if we were plague-stricken, cannot be good for us. That it is a quarantine of our own making I am sure.

The people about here are not shunning us, but we them. Colonel and Mrs. Lock have gone out of their way to be civil—more civil even than they used to be. When we were at Prince's Gate, Lady Rainsley and one of her nieces offered themselves to luncheon, and we put them off with a silly excuse.

Of course with Phyllis and company sensitiveness must be altogether unreasonable. For them truly nothing worth thinking about ever occurred. They took D.'s catastrophe in their stride. Her departure would seem perfectly natural to them, and so would her return. In their world, I dare say, people betray one another and come together again on alternate nights.

She wants to read the books I read, so that we may be able to talk about them. But we cannot really talk, because naturally with regard to literature we do not meet on an equal footing. She begs me to instruct her. She whose attention wandered in a moment if I spoke of serious questions, who could not tolerate an explanation of anything, who fidgeted, tapped her feet, and yawned in my face if I pursued the subject, now is always asking me to explain this, that, and the other, from Einstein's theories to the laws that govern a stymie at golf. She sits and listens like a child with its tutor, her forehead puckered, her thin hands tight clenched, in the stress of the concentrated effort to understand

me. I reply as to a child, slowly, with words of one syllable—and she does not understand. All this is a mistake. It makes the many hours we spend alone together often difficult and occasionally wearisome.

On our journey back from Paris we were both of us nervous, apprehensive even, as we drew nearer to the encounter with Norah, Miss A., and the servants. Something of an ordeal lay before us. We should have an awkward phase to live through. But all the big difficulties that I had feared seemed to vanish, while some of the little things that I had scarcely thought of have become extraordinarily difficult.

I do not mean that the actual moment of our arrival at Marley and the hour or two that followed it passed without emotion on both sides, and perhaps also on both sides there were some very sharp throbs of pain. In spite of the greetings and interchanges of effusive affection between her and Norah, there was the sense of strangeness, difference, irrevocably altered conditions that, as I have often thought and said, must of necessity arise when the closest friends meet after any length of absence. Norah, I know, felt this. And, very curiously, I felt it too, although I had had the days in Paris to prepare me; for as she crossed the threshold and stood among familiar things she seemed, even to my eyes, to change and become unfamiliar. The same and yet not the same! Perhaps her mastery of herself, a gentle

composure which she had resolutely determined to maintain, however it might be tested, together with the perfectly chosen garments, the elegance studious as well as natural, all tended to enhance this sudden impression that one of my old thoughts was miserably correct, and that a stranger, and not a mother, a wife, an intimately close companion, had been brought into the hall. And it seemed, as she glanced from one to another, that she did not really know us.

As we went with her from room to room there came into my mind a simile that made me wince. I shrink from setting it down. But its effect upon me was very strong at the moment, and unfortunately the repellent idea has more than once recurred.

When a lost dog is restored to its home and friends, we recognise it at once, and yet there is so much about it that is unrecognisable. The blank time in which the petted and cherished creature was lost to us has left many marks. It answers to its name; but except for this shows little responsiveness, at any rate at first, while it moves to and fro, seeming more anxious in regard to the place than the people. It is woefully thin. And there is something queer about its eyes, as though they were half blind. It has seen so much, been through so much, and perhaps suffered such brutal ill-treatment, that it cannot any longer look at one with the old steadfast, confident gaze.

This last thought, of brutality and ill-usage, was dreadful in its application to herself.

I had not really measured the difficulty that would be offered by this blank space of time, the long period that is never to be mentioned or in any way examined. I should have. For I have often thought, when playing with the notion that at long last I might become an author myself, what a good story one could write about a person's return to ordinary life after serving a term of imprisonment—possibly having been wrongly convicted, so as not to lose the sympathy of readers. There is, of course, Ibsen's play of *John Gabriel Borkman* (or Rosmersholm?); but the interest in that, if I remember, is more than serious, tragic. My imagined character would merely be weighed down by the ignorances that the empty gap had caused. He would find himself in a world apparently, indeed essentially, the same as that which he left, and yet so different by reason of trifling alterations that he could not be comfortable in it. Its language would have changed; all sorts of slang words of which he did not know the meaning would be used all round him. A dozen times a day references would be made to people and events that he had never heard of. Plays, books, popular songs, dances, places of entertainment, politicians' speeches, acts of Parliament, mechanical inventions—all these odds and ends that

make up ordinary conversation would be foreign and unintelligible. He would feel shy of answering questions, and would not dare ask them. He would be reduced to a condition of strained attentively waiting silence.

It is like this with Denise. She has flushed, turned pale, and then fallen completely silent for many minutes after inadvertent words from Norah or myself. We are speaking of things we have done, and all goes well until I see that she is puzzled. I tell her then that we have alluded to what happened not recently, but two years ago. But these things that happened to us while she was away become linked mentally with conjectures that are not to be made about the things that then were happening to her. I abruptly change the subject of our talk. I turn in haste from the path that is leading us towards dangerous and forbidden ground.

This is simple, but our case has further complications. She herself is very dignified. Not a word, not a gesture of irritation, has ever come from her when she has been thus accidentally hurt. To everybody except myself (and to me too, *outwardly*) she sustains an attitude of complacent impeccableness, as with any normal person who no more regrets the past than she dreads the future. In the house of our memories there are no dark cupboards, no skeletons, no locked and hidden rooms. She is my wife and Norah's mother and Miss A.'s employer; and she has nothing for which she

feels ashamed, nothing for which she desires to apologise. I approve and applaud this. Heaven knows that I would not have it otherwise. Yet out of it there arises a harder test of endurance, a greater need of delicacy for myself. As a recurrent instance! She *will* advise Norah as to her reading. Some books are to be avoided. She took a novel out of Norah's hands and asked her not to finish it, indicating, if not plainly saying, that it was not nice, not proper. This supervision irritates, annoys me. I hate censorships. Norah has had freedom to read anything, everything, and I believe it is always a mistake to draw a girl's thoughts to a consideration of unsavoury matters, as one certainly does by pursuing D.'s method. Nevertheless my tongue is tied. I dare not utter the slightest protest, lest she should think I was challenging her authority, or, worse still, seeming to hint that she had put herself out of court as an infallible arbiter of good taste, and that verdicts as to niceness and propriety sound queerly when delivered by her.

I did not foresee the inevitable clash with regard to Norah. She is her mother, with all a mother's rights. To question them in any circumstances would be cruel, and in the actual circumstances monstrously iniquitous. But for so long I have been sole guardian of the child's welfare—and I think an obviously successful one. Now I stand aside; but I very much dislike doing it. I get

worried and fussed. Nevertheless I refrain from interfering with what to me is interference.

Especially disturbing to my equanimity are D.'s well-meant efforts to introduce coddling where I have taught hardiness. Norah has flourished exceedingly on open air, cold water, plenty of exercise. She is a splendidly healthy girl now. But I hear Denise, as if haunted by the recollection of the dire crisis that was passed once and for ever, imploring N. not to take cold baths, not to go out in bad weather, not to do too much. She says long rides are exhausting, and she wants N. to change the astride position and use a side saddle, because it is easier and more comfortable. When we were in London, she bought N. a big fur coat. No doubt it is a handsome garment, and I admit that it suits N. very well, but I do not admit that she ought to live in it. That is what her mother appears to wish. "Darling, if you are going out do put on your big comfy coat. . . . My angel, where are your furs? . . . Oh, let me fetch them for you." Then Miss Appleton springs to attention. "Oh, please, allow me to go. A minute, Norah;" and she rushes upstairs to fetch the unwholesome burden instead of saying, as she so easily might, that her charge does not require it, that the weather is warm to stuffiness, or anything else sensible and useful. She agrees with D. exactly as she used to agree with me in D.'s absence, no matter what the suggestion.

I must try to get Miss A. on my side about these molly-coddle innovations. But can I trust her? I begin to think she is such an ass that she would permit D. to divine she had been "got at." Difficult.

And there is a stupendously greater difficulty, concerning which perhaps least said soonest mended even in these secret pages. It must be surmounted. Time should help me to do this. If not, I may come to grief.

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Of course we are two people at cross-purposes. We are controlled by fixed ideas, and these are essentially incompatible. Her aim is expiation, mine is avoidance of causing pain. In other words, she wants to atone, I want to forget.

For her sake I am incessantly on my guard. It is a constant watchfulness and self-restraint, far more arduous, more irksome, than anything in the past, when she was up and down, with moods, whims, fancies, senseless resentments, and I had to chase these away, with all the fretfulness and bad temper that accompanied them. Now she is always even, calm, amiable, until I myself upset her. In her anxiety to please me she is easily frightened when she thinks she has made a slip, and then in her timidities, hesitations, and diffidences she is wearisome, and, if the truth must be acknowledged, sometimes a little maladroit. But in an instant

she detects my incipient irritation. I have to compose my face again and hold it rigid to a pattern of satisfaction. This task of hiding oneself behind a smiling mask is oppressively hard. It fatigues body and mind together.

I remember often what she said herself about not being looked at unawares. But she is always observing me. In the library where we sit together, if I glance up from a book, I find her not reading, but watching me. I beg her not to do this; and if I make the request with the slightest *nuance* of asperity in its tone, as I am afraid happened yesterday, she meekly drops her eyes and says that she is sorry. She says that and does not speak again. She becomes like a dumb animal that has felt a stroke of the lash and, although thinking that more strokes may follow, will not attempt to escape.

Despite all my efforts I believe that frequently she can read my thoughts. This is no new thing. She did it in the past. But then she burst out on them, challenging them, disputing their justice or hotly denying the existence of any basis for them. Now she says nothing.

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It is no good. If I am to fill this book with lies and pretences it is valueless. Unless I adhere to the rule of giving the truth and the whole truth there cannot be the slightest use in recording anything at all.

Well, then, perhaps I ought to be happy, but I am not. There has been something akin to happiness on

the surface of my life, but only on the surface. Or at any rate, it has not gone deep enough.

The mind of an ordinarily educated and cultivated person of the present day is like one of those temples in Crete or Asia Minor that archæologists are always laboriously uncovering. As they excavate the sites they find building upon building. Below the Grecian or Roman structures there are the solid remains of an earlier civilisation, and below that again evidences of a civilisation still more remote in time; and beneath all else they come to signs of prehistoric man—rude weapons, clumsy implements, the débris of carnage and fire, charred bones of human enemies, with maybe the skeletons of huge beasts that were companions, friends, servants. It is so with us. Our thoughts are in strata, the better the higher, and below them can still be perceived our primitive instincts—lusts, cruelties, fears, ungovernable impulses.

While that man lives I can know no real peace.

Just as she said I came between them, he is between us. He is impotent, and yet he can destroy us. I have not the least fear of him, for she has long ceased to care about him in the smallest degree. He is literally nothing to her, and nevertheless everything on earth to me. My feelings towards him are entirely different from what they used to be when I wanted to kill him with my own hands, when I inwardly clamoured for vengeance and cursed the smug, tame, shoddy age that had abolished

the practice of duelling. I thought of myself then, of my honour outraged, of my pride trailed in the mud. Now I think of her.

By no strength of character, no flight of imagination, no self-deceit, can I escape from the indelible fact of his having possessed her—to caress and cherish, and neglect and brutalise, and finally abandon. Only to think of it—and what else can I think of?—is a more virulent poison, a fiercer fire than was ever in my blood till now. It is the elemental sting. She was mine, and he took her from me. He used her as he pleased, not as I had done, tenderly, reverently, unselfishly. *He took his pleasure with her.* Phrases like that, echoing and re-echoing, make me feel again that I am being driven mad.

She has ardours where there were coldnesses. Every embrace she gives me is suspicious. Did he teach her all that? Certainly he changed her. He or the years. In two years how we all change! I myself. But that is only another reason why there cannot be a *renewal* of married love. It must go on unceasingly, without break or pause, so that the changes made by time are never perceived by either.

It is not true that one must be the *first* man in a woman's life. All that old rubbish about virginity, the impress of the male, the irrevocable gift, is absurd. One may be the second, third, or fourth man, and it makes no difference. But one cannot *share* a woman with another man.

Suppose Denise had been a widow!

But then he would be dead, and he is alive. Active, vigorous, he roams the world that he has rendered hateful to me. He bets, races, plays cards, hunts, shoots. While I sit brooding he swaggers in and out of his clubs, or flies along country roads at dare-devil speed in a hundred-horse-power car, or lolls after a restaurant meal, sipping old brandy, blowing tiny clouds of white smoke, grinning insolently at women as they pass, talking lazily, carelessly, to other men like himself. No doubt he talks of me sometimes, perhaps saying that I have taken her back and he is glad; perhaps even praising me—"Yes, a good-hearted sort of fellow. I treated him damnably. But it was her fault." . . . Every day he becomes more real to me, every day I seem to see him more clearly. As if fate meddled with common chances and probabilities, I am forced again and again, and as if by accident, to know him a little better. For so long I had nothing but the vaguest guesses as to his appearance; he and I might have come face to face and neither would have recognised the other; but now this comfort of ignorance has been taken from me by his photographs in the journals that give so ridiculous a prominence to such futile matters as race-meetings, hunt-balls, hound-shows, and so forth. He is mentioned too in the daily press. The limelight of publicity falls upon him with an almost inexplicable persistence. They say that one of his horses may win next year's Grand National. Last

week he himself rode in a cross-country race, and, although he did not win it (or even get placed, I believe), there were notices of it and him in every paper that I picked up. He was eulogised. A creditable, indeed an admirable performance for a man of his age; "sporting," "plucky," showing grit, setting an example, leading the way to a younger generation who are reprehensible in their tendency to softness and love of ease! I could have been sick. I cannot get away from him. If I forget him for an hour I am reminded of him in the next. At the end of the day I feel too tired to think of him any more, and yet I have to. After she has gone to bed, and it is time for me to follow her, he is as an implacably haunting ghost that by some mistake or slackness of the priests that were paid to exorcise him was allowed to escape from the power of bell, book, candle, and the rest of it. They bungled. They failed to lay him. Thus he is here in my house, in my life, pushing us apart, more certain of separating us by his impalpable presence than ever was the coarse brutal worthless swine, the actual man, when he gained physical possession of her, and forcibly held her against me as his prisoner and slave.

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No improvement. Growing irritation and constant discomfort. I have told them that we will all go up to London again. Anything for a change.

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(MARLEY.) I have passed through a phase of such great emotion that merely to stop feeling anything at all is like the solace of rest after intolerable bodily fatigue. Of course the shock affected me, although at first I did not understand that this was so. Some of my faculties were numbed I think by the surprise, and only a few days later I began to experience a sort of superstitious horror of what had happened, as if I myself had in some unexplainable manner been instrumental in bringing it about. I dreamed. In my dreams I was weighed down by a guiltiness that I did not attempt to question, although no earthly tribunal could convict me of the crime. A man's death was on my conscience.

As if wishes could kill! Think of all the rich old men and women who would die quietly in their beds because of heirs walking about longing for the day of inheritance. Think too of trade rivals, and professional competitors, prime ministers, Lord Chancellors, Presidents of the Royal College of Surgeons, and so on, all of whom would die violent and sudden deaths because of those who were heartily wishing them out of the way. War too! A nation's enemies. How long would the Kaiser have lasted after August, 1914, if the multitudinous wish to see him dead could have been effective. Absurd.

I read it at the club in the evening paper. Suddenly,

among the dull headlines and all the meaningless names, *his* name blazed out. I felt the blood rushing to my head, as if I was going to have a seizure. Then I became cold, and I seemed to read the whole announcement calmly and indifferently. He had broken his neck in a steeplechase. They carried him to a neighbouring farmhouse. He never showed any signs of life. . . . "A sterling good sportsman . . . a great loss . . . to be mourned by many, high and low. . . . Only forty-three years of age."

I went home, but said nothing to her. Had she seen it or heard of it? I could not guess. She gave no indication of trouble or anxiety, much less of grief. Her manner continued to be as quietly composed as is now usual with her; but at dinner when I felt that she must surely have observed how silent I was, letting Norah and Miss Appleton do all the talking and never once joining in their little jests or facetiousness, she refrained altogether from any attempt either to dissipate my gloominess or to be cheerfully conversational herself. Then I noticed that she did not look at me. I believe that all through dinner, and even when they were leaving the dining-room, I did not once meet her eyes. I thought this significant.

Again after we were all together in the other room when Norah wanted to turn on the wireless and I begged her not to, Denise said that neither did she care to

listen to the wireless to-night. Norah for a moment protested, saying something about the news bulletin, but D. was firm in her refusal. She said she was tired, and she asked Norah to play to us instead. Norah played a couple of Chopin studies, and all the while D. sat shading her eyes with her hand so that it was not possible to see the expression of her face.

N. and Miss A. retired, and we were left alone, each with a book, but neither of us in fact reading. A long time passed and still she said nothing. I thought then "She is waiting for me to begin." The hour grew very late. I got up and walked about, and as I passed by her chair I looked at her. Then, when I was again close beside her, she spoke of it. I think she had stretched out her hand to stop me, and with her hand on my arm she looked up at me, her eyes swimming in tears, her face white, miserable, the lips quivering. I shall never forget that look—or the tone of her voice as she humbly asked the unexpected question.

"Tell me," she said piteously. "Now will it be all right between us?"

Marvellous. I did not dream that she knew what had been in my mind. All this time, month after month, she had read my thoughts, understanding and never combating them, suffering but not complaining, meekly bearing the reflected pain, accepting, atoning, expiating. . . . The revelation broke me down completely.

That night I seemed to recover her. At last fate had relented and given her back to me—my fragile love, so small and thin as she lay in my arms, my poor little heartbroken girl. She cried. I cried too. We mingled our tears, going down together into a deep cave of sadness in which we should be lost for ever unless we clung tight, hand to hand; blind, helpless, feeling the cold walls and stumbling over unseen steps of stone as we tried to retrace the way upward towards light and joy.

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Now we are both of us tired, very tired, but at peace. I recognise plainly that this is our first experience of true companionship. Hitherto one or other of us has always had secrets and doubts, something to hide, something that one feared the other might discover. For a long time it was I myself, then it was she, and then once again it was I—each of us in turn.

Now every barrier has been torn down. We stand visible to each other at all times, heart open to heart, minds working in a contented unison.

It is the spring too. The brightness, the gentler airs, the wide sense of awakening life and growing strength all about us, cheer and gladden. In the completeness of our new confidence I have laughingly told her how once I secretly reproved her undue susceptibility to changes of weather, but how all the while I was just

as bad as she, and as far removed from the stoical indifference to climate that Dr. Johnson boasted himself of possessing. She said that Dr. Johnson was a stupid stuffy old man, and that it was ridiculous to compare him with a couple of brilliant imaginative highly-gifted people like ourselves. She was extraordinarily comprehensive when I described my autumn thoughts. She herself always felt the sadness and oppressive regret of October and November. As a girl she would go out into that Sussex garden and stand amidst the ruin and devastation, the blackened flowers and leaves, the fallen branches, like a mourner in a cemetery.

We take long motor drives, exploring parts of the country that are unknown to us. Twice we have carried our luncheon with us. We have been as far as Winchester and Salisbury. These excursions are soothing as well as exhilarating. She always loved motoring.

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One accustoms oneself to anything. That was a lesson (perhaps the only lesson) of the war. This renewal of our life already seems old, so firmly established is it, so smooth and unbroken in its tenor. It is still only early spring. Not a ruby bud has changed to an emerald on the limes; even the chestnuts remain stickily closed; crocuses and daffodils prolong their reign in borders and meadows; our modest woods are waiting for the primroses and bluebells that do not come.

And yet it seems immensely long ago that we fled from London and returned here. It is the blessed emancipation from agitated thought, the relief, the slow restoration of energy after a continued wear and tear of the emotions, that makes time gathered look so big instead of so small when I glance backwards. Our case was abnormal. Somebody (I think Thomas Hardy) said: "Measurement of life should be proportioned rather to the intensity of the experience than to its length." This is trite enough. I copied it into my note-book not for its novelty but its truth. On the other hand, if you are leading a monotonous and uneventful life, time glides past one swiftly and more swiftly in its emptiness. But monotony, which I used to like and she to detest, had become for her something fresh and strange after the period of undue excitement. She now enjoys it. She revels in it.

Certainly it is curious, this reversal of our attitude towards change. I would willingly admit a few breaks and interruptions in our programme. But she continues to dread social intercourse, public entertainments, any amusements shared with others. She feels happier undisturbed by the sight of any faces except those that she sees every day. And although I often feel that it might be better for us now to go about a little, to meet people, to have people here occasionally, I dare say I may be wise in letting well alone. She *is* happy now.

That is the thing of paramount importance, the one and only thing which matters. She has begun to sing again. She had a trick of singing softly to herself when she was engaged on any mechanical occupation, such as putting some order in a littered desk, arranging her store of trinkets, cleaning and polishing silver ornaments, or anything of that sort. I always thought this childlike and pretty. But then she became mute, like a child that is sad or a wounded bird. A few mornings ago, however, I heard the little song again, and I stood listening to it outside the door of the room. No words could express the satisfaction, the grateful pleasure that I felt while I listened. It touched me to the heart as telling of her natural sweetness of disposition and also proving conclusively that her mind is at ease.

On reflection I am a shade anxious about her reluctances and disinclinations with regard to any sort of gaiety, any sort of communication with our kind. It is the only thing that in the slightest degree worries me. In her of all people it is so very unnatural. Sometimes it seems merely listlessness; at other times it suggests an almost morbid shrinking from scrutiny and interrogation. But if so, the one should have passed away by now, and the other should be overcome by an act of volition. Her strength is replenished; she has had full repose; what might have seemed onerous, difficult,

necessitating an effort, ought by now to be easy. I do not want shyness and timidity to grow upon her.

A letter from Philadelphia, with news entirely unanticipated—and viewed in a certain light rather disturbing.

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I think that several different reasons have combined to give me a desire for change of scene and movement. This is on my own account. But I feel also that in helping myself I should help D. Minds need exercise quite as much as bodies. They need stimulation if they become quiescent.

I spoke to her about her not doing anything, and finally proposed that we should both rouse ourselves and make a dash to the South of France. The crowd must have thinned down there. The doltish fashion-led herd always run away from that coast when it is at its best, in April and May, and then idiotically return when it is at its worst, in August and September. We could see the deciduous trees burst into leaf. I am weary of waiting for the young foliage here. But she would not have it.

She asks me not to mind leaving her if I would care to go away, to the Riviera or to Paris. She thinks it might do me good. She is always unselfish. She spoke of the impossibility of our being always together, and said the time would so soon come when Norah

would be grown up and I should be taking her about to parties and balls—"as a dancing father." But I said *she* would have to be doing all this, the smiling chaperon, up and doing till the small hours of the night. She said no, she thought not—and I could not go on arguing. Something of piteous resignation in her way of speaking had upset me. The reason she gave was not feeling vigorous enough to play even the modern chaperon's part. But I fear it is really that she believes she might damage her daughter's social chances. That distresses me.

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Her listlessness is contagious. I too grow sluggish. I do not get half enough exercise. In any close companionship, even when there is mental equality and nothing but comfort throughout that zone, there may be an inequality on the physical side producing less subtle, although burdensome constraints. I feel the weight of this inequality and do not see any prospect of avoiding it. Inclination keeps me with her, but the demands of health would lead me to leave her more frequently to herself. In the afternoon I see Norah and Miss A. starting for a brisk walk, and I envy them. When D. and I take a turn we simply potter. She has lost the practice of walking, and she will not make any effort to recover it. The moment she gets out of breath she stops short. I rally her and urge her on, for of course this languor and torpidness is very bad for her. But she won't. She

soon cries another halt, and makes me laugh by asking for mercy and calling me a slave-driver.

We go for our drive, and I fall asleep. She does not mind. She steals her hand into mine, and I wake with it there. Then she tells me of beauties that I have missed while I was asleep—the light on a pool beneath fir trees, a common with cattle and sheep, the sunset sky, groups of children coming home from school. She is unfailingly sweet.

And unfailingly appreciative. I have been reading to her of an evening—*The Tempest*, parts of *Lycidas*, one or two of Lamb's essays, and a lot of Jane Austen. She sits entranced. Much that she used to consider lacking in vital interest now appeals to her strongly. This task never tires me. I like reading aloud.

A dullness of the spirit has fallen upon me. I think I have been reading too much—to myself, not to her. One would die if deprived of books, and yet I often feel that they interfere with life itself. In the shadow world where the incessant reader dwells there is no play of the senses, no tightening of nerves, no test of courage. It is not only the capacity for action that may deaden, but the power to taste and relish any strong food. The slow stalkers of knowledge take no part in the wild galloping chase after the far nobler and more dangerous quarry which we call Joy.

That is André Spire's warning.

"Ah! ne lis plus,

Ah! n'apprends plus par cœur.

Regarde, écoute, flaire, goûte, mange!

Jette tes vêtements. Laisse le ciel, la mer,

Le soleil, l'air, l'odeur riche des plats

Posséder ton corps neuf. . . .

Et tes lèvres se mettront toutes seules

A chanter de neuves chansons."

I have mutilated Monsieur Spire's text by changing the word *young* to *new*. It is young songs that he really asks for. There is not much difference. For the song of youth goes on inside us to the very end; the desire for new and wonderful things never fades. Middle-aged and elderly people starting on a holiday have just the same elation, the gay hopes, the brightly coloured fancies, as are the share of schoolboys and schoolgirls. Large and corpulent, they lean back against padded cushions as the continental boat train carries them over the Thames and perhaps emit a fatigued elderly sigh of satisfaction that sounds like a horrid grunt; but nevertheless their hearts are dancing to a lively measure, the eternal song is in their heavy-lobed ears. *This* time new wonderful things are going to happen. Cannes will be quite different, they will win the Grand Duke's prize,

they will break the bank at Monte Carlo, they will meet sirens with large hats and white shoulders, dressed in nothing but a little black satin and a lot of diamonds and pearls—ineffably seductive sirens, who nevertheless will not disdain, etc., etc. . . . When I think, I know that if I live to ninety half my life is already gone, immeasurably the better, fuller half, and that ahead lie perils, confusions, unspeakable horrors of bodily decay and mental failure; but except in hours of lassitude (like these), indeed at all times when I am fit and healthy, I feel young. It is the difference between thinking and feeling. In youth we did not think, we only felt—with an intensity, a deepness, that made the feelings endure unalterably. Alphonse Daudet said it, with one of his happy phrases. *Achevé d'imprimer!* Speaking of the fact that the first impressions of life are the only ones that strike us irrevocably, he says: "At fifteen years of age, at twenty as the final limit, we may put '*achevé d'imprimer.*' For the rest it is only a working off, a machining, of the original impression."

Well, that being so, we naturally are not suited to old age. We do not fit into it. We dread and shrink from it, we hate and abhor any contemplation of it.

Yet always the talk goes on about the appropriate and satisfying pleasures of every period of life. Is it humbug or fatuity? Does anybody believe it? Very old and very successful men when they write their autobiographies, as they all do, stuff in a lot of such rubbish.

They pretend that they were never so happy as after they had passed their seventieth birthday. They speak of the many consolations and peaceful contentments of old age. I wonder what they are, these consolations. To have liked golf, but to be glad not to be able to play it any more; to enjoy walking fast and vigorously, and then not to walk at all, and to prefer sitting; to have loved life, and then transfer one's affection to something like death? Of course there would be sense in it if they gave altruism as the source of a possible comfort. With obliteration of self they might spare anguish, even if they had only begun to live for others when to live for themselves was impracticable. But old people are proverbially selfish. I used to see at the club an old man who was always bullying the waitresses. If kept waiting for his pudding he stormed and threatened. It was nothing to him that the girl was young and rather pretty, a poor little defenceless creature dependent on the good opinion of members and doing her best to earn it and hold it. He regarded her simply as an obstacle between him and his boiled custard. He would trample over the obstacle or tear it to pieces. Age is always willing to destroy youth. During the war I heard a splendid sermon delivered by a Senior Divisional Chaplain, the Rev. A. J. W. Crosse, to troops who were all young. He said it was utter nonsense to pretend that age is venerable in itself. Age might arouse respect or contempt; and he

added with force that in his opinion there was nothing more hateful on the face of the earth than a *nasty* old man or a *nasty* old woman. Is it not true? Think of the selfish cruelty practised by mistresses upon their long-suffering maids. Quite lately I read a terrible story by Ada Negri—*La signora del pozzo*. In it she describes how an oldish woman takes an orphan girl as her servant and brutally exploits her. The girl is a willing slave, sweet-natured, nobly grateful, splendidly staunch; she works year after year, cooking, cleaning, gardening, managing the house, with no other rewards than insults and blows. She gives more than service, an affection that never flinches though always repulsed. She renounces the love of a sweetheart. She renounces every joy of life, in order to remain faithful to her dear signora, as she calls her. When her signora falls sick she acts as a skilled nurse, bringing nicely prepared delicate food and getting her face smacked for her pains; but with her eyes full of tears and the red mark of the fingers on her cheek she continues her gentle ministrations. Many years pass without a single word of kindness. The signora grows very old, feeble, decrepit, half-witted, a terrible disgusting human wreck propped upright in a big armchair. She wails and slobbers, addressing the servant as Mammy, and the servant calls her her child. . . .

“Yes, darling, I’m coming—My pretty pet shall have its nicey nicey hot milk.” With infinite tenderness she

washes, dresses, supports in her arms the horrible destroyer of her whole life. When the old wretch dies she is inconsolable. The family, grandsons, give her the house as recognition of her services and she stays there, but she is broken-hearted, keeping doors closed and windows shuttered, as in a house of death. One day a priest makes his way into the dark, silent house, calls her name, but receives no answer. He finds her upstairs leaning over the big armchair, crooning and singing and murmuring baby words of love to a hideous doll or dummy that she has made to represent the dead tyrant. She is becoming insane. Thus the destroying influence can still reach her from the other side of the tomb. . . . There! A nasty old woman, as brave truthful Chaplain Crosse would have said. How many thousands are like her! Old age is loathsome, abominable, devastating. We are wise not to meditate about it.

I do not really mean all this. I think of my mother. She was old.

Denise had observed the senseless depression that has bothered me. She redoubles her efforts to keep me cheerful. Her gentleness and solicitude render me ashamed.

What a splash a quite small pebble will make in a completely stagnant pool! When nothing of importance has happened for ages we are shaken and perturbed by

matters essentially trivial. We stand aghast and non-plussed when confronted with the unexpected, merely because it was unexpected. A circumstance that may cause a little trouble is like a lion in the path. Miss Appleton is leaving us.

She is sorry to give up, but her old father wants her at home to look after him. I never knew that she had this "ancient parent" up her sleeve. She burst him upon us, much as a rather smug conjuror produces a white rabbit, a bowl of gold fish, or anything else surprising.

Denise said, when I told her, that good governesses are always taken away by fathers, and good cooks by mothers; so one ought only to engage orphans.

Then she asked me suddenly about Isabel Hughes and her mother. Was Mrs. Hughes still alive? I said that she was very much alive, and that she had married a well-to-do coal merchant in his third widowhood. This amused D.

Then after a longish silence she asked me what had happened to the daughter. "She went to America, didn't she?"

I said yes, she went to America.

"Is she still there?"

As I explained directly afterwards, this was not an easy question to answer; but she did not give me time, for while I hesitated she said, "You heard from her a

little time ago," more as if making a statement than putting another interrogation.

I said yes, Miss Hughes had written to me from America, and in the letter had announced her intention of returning to England, without however mentioning any date. Thus I could not state definitely where she now was. For all I knew, she might already be back in England.

D. said no more.

How I dramatise trifling occurrences and insignificant conversations!

But perhaps what passed between my wife and myself is not altogether a trifle and may have some future significance. That letter came by the second post, and I read it at the luncheon table. How did Denise divine the sender? One can scarcely think that she ever knew the handwriting well enough to remember it now. Of course she might have noticed the letter among others in the hall, and seeing the American stamp, have made a guess. Or did I show by my face that for a moment I was upset? It is almost uncanny, her power to read my thoughts.

Isabel's letter was really a reply, after considerable delay, to the one in which I told her that D. had left me and I was living alone. I had wondered why no word came from her. Now she simply says that she has

broken off her marriage and is coming back to England. My trouble or doubt is whether there can be any connection between the news I sent her and the news she sends me. She says nothing to suggest that there is.

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Coelum non animum mutant. . . . I have been to Paris. But I did not enjoy myself. I went because of an almost intolerable longing for any kind of change. And Denise, who had detected something of this, was insistent that I should do it. Yet even in agreeing I felt mean, and a little ashamed. I would not have yielded, but that I thought of how I might turn this brief absence to account, and thus gain an end to certain private wishes more rapidly than in any other manner. Then I went with an ulterior motive? But that seems meaner still.

I will not say that Paris is not what it was—for why on earth should it be? It is too silly to expect all the world to remain the same while one goes on changing oneself. Yet you can still meet old people who seem to feel it as a personal grievance that they cannot any longer see Napoleon the Third driving in an open carriage with accompanying cuirassiers through the long newly-built avenues of his own and Baron Haussmann's invention. They regard the Eiffel Tower as a monstrous impertinence. They say that those atrocious omnibuses with three Normandy horses clattering abreast over the stone paving were not only more picturesque, but much

nicer than the convenient and expeditious underground railway. Silly people. They cannot really pine for all that used to be—for instance, the unreaped harvests of garbage in every gutter, the hotel bedrooms with borrowed lights, or at best a shadowy outlook into the deep well of an enclosed court-yard, from which arose odours pregnant with meanings that only Zola could have detailed, the dark and horrid bathroom at the end of a dismal passage, the frowsy aspect of chambermaids, the rudeness and roughness of porters, the slimy sycophancy of head waiters with obscene photographs and cocottes' visiting cards in their greasy tail-pockets. If you don't like Paris, why come to it at all? Or why not put up at the Ritz Hôtel and be in France without knowing you are there. For the Ritz régime has no country of origin; it is *sui generis* and yet universal, the same in New York as in Piccadilly or the Place Vendôme, not reminding one of yesterday or suggesting to-morrow. You yourself, as you cross its thresholds, lose nationality and become merely a Ritz customer. If you are mistaken for a Jew, it is only because the Ritz has made you look like everybody else.

But I must confess to feeling qualms of sentimental regret on my early morning strolls round the corner into the Rue Castiglione, each time that I passed what was once the Hôtel Bristol, that house of many traditions, rendezvous of exotic diplomats, honeymoon abode of

aristocratic couples, sedate resting-place of all travelling potentates. Our King Edward, as Prince of Wales, lodged there often, in an incognito that was at once transparent, stately, and decorous; while the King of the Belgians slipped in and out for a night or so at a time, furtive yet brazen, carrying, they used to say, his whole luggage, a suit-case that he had hurriedly packed at Brussels or Ostend a few hours before. When the spasm seized him he *had* to go to Paris. It was a bad habit, a crave, a subjugation of the mind, this recurrent necessity to forget that he was a king and mingle with the boulevard crowd, laugh and stamp his feet at the Folies-bergère or the Moulin Rouge, go behind the scenes of second-rate theatres, sup at dubious restaurants as host to representatives of every world except his own. When I was a child the French newspapers still had caricatures of him, lanky, bearded, grinning. His subjects laughed at him and liked him. They had a nickname for him, *les braves belges*. What a transition to the steel-hatted King of Dixmude!

There seemed to be no new plays worth troubling about. I went twice to the Théâtre Français. And I saw for the first time Edouard Bourdet's *La Prisonnière*. It acts better than it reads, and seems untranslatable. So I am not surprised that, apart from any considerations as to the theme, it failed to attract in England. The construction struck me as very good. Keeping the

objectionable woman off the stage is most effective. But I wish he would go back to the style of that earlier play of his, *L'heure du berger*. That was so very charming; full of a sentiment really pretty, but never mawkish.

Bourdet is amazingly clever. I once nearly met him. The year that the firm sent me to Nice on the Arkwright business he was living somewhere between Toulon and Hyères, and I had a letter of introduction, but he had gone before I could deliver it. Another and stronger literary light shines habitually from the top of Hyères mountain—Mrs. Edith Wharton. Francis de Croisset would have taken me to see her, but I just missed finding him. Claude had written to him. I know too that he is a friend of Somerset Maugham, who was also not far off—and also W. J. Locke at Cannes. I wish I might have laid a wreath at the feet of Edith Wharton, because I admire her work so prodigiously. *The Age of Innocence*, in its brilliancy of craftsmanship, its subtleties, and infinite delicacies, is unsurpassable. And *Ethan Frome!* But how tired she must be of hearing about that great small masterpiece! *Ethan Frome* is one of those short perfect books that come to authors once in a lifetime—like Maupassant's *Pierre et Jean*. Never to be repeated. Born not made. A miraculous conception. Such books must live. Indeed Anatole France says they will live *because* of their shortness. He says that a book must be light to go down the winds of fame and reach

distant ages; he instances *Candide*, *La Princesse de Clèves*, *Manon Lescaut*, "each no thicker than one's little finger." Of our own time one might cite for shortness *Jekyll and Hyde*, *Ships that Pass in the Night*, Rebecca West's *Return of the Soldier*, and only the other day, that wonderful haunting book *The Gypsy*, by Trites—to mention only a few among many, as critics say when afraid of giving offence by omissions. Another surprisingly short book, Daudet's *L'Immortel!* Oh, how I should like to talk of these things to writers, or only to listen. What a privilege.

Some time or other I will write a book myself, called *Famous People that I have not Known*, and give it the long full index of names that insures publicity and sales nowadays.

I stayed away only a week, on every day of which I had a letter from D. She missed me, and yet rejoiced in my absence because it was doing me good. I missed her in every hour. I longed to be back with her. I can truly say that in my constant thoughts of her there was not a single transient condition of disapproving or complaining.

Now I have achieved the secondary object of this brief separation, and I am not so clear in my conscience or so free from the malaise of self-reproach. I know that I am not disloyal, yet I dread that she might see

unkindness where truly none was meant. On a pretext of insomnia and the beginning of a cold caught on the journey, I temporarily modified the extreme closeness of our domesticity. It is a temporary arrangement that will become permanent. Has it seemed unkind? I trust not, but in truth I could not help it. My nerves were getting frayed. The exposure to unceasing observation, the demand for unflinching responsiveness, the strain of intimacy, contact, subordination of the personal ever-changing inclinations to which neither night nor day brought any respite, were playing me out and causing irritabilities or revolts that I could not guarantee any longer to control. I simply *had* to avoid a too frequent necessity and escape from a growing weariness. Otherwise I might have been unkind still.

My room is close to hers. I go in to her every morning. She now has breakfast in bed, and I often sit with her while she disposes of her scanty little meal. I wait upon her, arranging pillows and cushions, bringing her the tray, carrying it away again. We chat happily. Then, too, on some mornings I read things out of last night's *Evening Standard*. She loves the articles by Dean Inge and cannot understand why he was ever thought to be gloomy. She vows that nowadays he is full of fun. In a word, it is all natural and pleasant.

There can be no possible hint or likelihood of our

becoming a semi-detached couple. Nothing is altered, except the adherence to an exploded fashion. We are merely Georgian once more after our Victorian retrogression. On the other hand, have I laid myself open to facile misinterpretings? Surely not.

Nevertheless, to tell the truth, I am haunted by a reluctance and a recollection. Stripped of excuses and explanatory reasons, what I have done to her is so like what she did to me. It is not in the least the same, and yet it might *appear* to be the same. I have not withdrawn myself from her, whereas her withdrawal was nearly total from the very beginning. But in its outward aspect it might unfortunately suggest the idea of revenge, of retribution, of punishment. This thought is horribly persistent, and it works in with previous unregistered thoughts that, although she is paid all honours as mistress of the house, as its acknowledged leader and queen indeed, she is really here being punished by those at whose mercy she lies, or that she is voluntarily punishing herself.

I know that such a thought is groundless, only a morbid notion, but it has worried me dreadfully.

*

She wants Miss Hughes to come and live with us. She said it suddenly. "A good thing, don't you think? Norah is so fond of her. And you like her." And she repeated the same phrase—"Don't you think it would be a good thing?"

I answered her with an air of thoughtfulness, if not of doubt, pointing out that there are two sides to every question, advantages and disadvantages. I said it was certainly very much in favour of the idea that Norah and Isabel Hughes were so well known to each other, such pals, and that somebody of that sort might be more useful in every way than the ordinary typical watch-dog of the Appleton breed, now that Norah was really so far advanced in her education; but on the other hand the fact that Isabel was a friend, requiring friendly rather than merely considerate treatment, being necessarily one of ourselves, as she must be, might possibly prove a little irksome or at least restrictive in its final effect. A lot of words—but I wound up more simply. I said that the important thing we had to make sure of, supposing of course that Isabel consented to come to us, was whether she, Denise, felt the scheme to be promising and worth trying. "Do you wish it yourself? Would *you* like it?"

● "Oh; yes," she said, "quite."

Now that I have got over the surprise, and so to speak recovered my breath, I think of nothing else, although D. has not spoken of it again. Of course I want it most desperately, for Norah's sake. I want it for myself too. Her presence here would make a great difference to me. It would be an immense relief to know that N. was in

such good hands, and this would bring me lesser reliefs; for, much as I love her, it has not always been easy of late to do the things that I have done for her. Moreover, it would end the slight clash between D. and me in regard to a variety of minor details. I should never wish to interfere—for the best of all reasons, because there would never be any need for interference. With N. entirely accounted for, I could devote myself to Denise with a fuller attentiveness. Denise and I would both be at leisure.

But it is the beginning of acting again. I am compelled to hide something of my thoughts. I cannot forget that at one period D. seemed not only to turn against her, but also to disapprove, or not altogether to approve, of my continued friendship with her. If D. remembers, she is magnanimous enough to wipe out the recollection. But were I to show any eagerness, a doubt might be re-awakened. In fact, I should risk offending her by appearing to look forward with the slightest pleasure to obtaining any other society than her own. I have to be patient and wait quietly for the next word. My hope is that she will ask me to arrange it all. If she herself opens the negotiation there will be difficulties.

Embarrassment. She intends to write to Isabel. She will do so in the course of the next few days. I have given her the address.

It is essential now that I should somehow contrive to see Isabel at once. She will not come on D.'s invitation. I shall have to support it personally. Indeed I know I must urge her consent with all the eloquence and strength I can muster. Face to face I think I may influence her; from a distance, if I trust to written words, I may probably fail.

A long difficult day, but crowned with success. If D. writes to her cordially the answer will be yes.

Once more I felt the strangeness with which time paints the features of the best known things. It is so with landscapes, houses, rooms, people. Seeing them after a lapse of time there is always something of disappointment, a few sharp twinges of regret because they can no longer be quite what they were to us, because they are not exactly like the pictures of them that we have carried in our minds. Automatically one resumes the old habit, the *manner* of past intercourse, but behind this external manifestation there is often a sense of void. Thus we greeted each other in quite the old style, frankly and affectionately; we said it was wonderful, splendid, to meet again at last; and then we laughed, but I think only because we always used to laugh. We settled down to our talk. But I did not know where to begin, or how to mend the broken threads, or what memories to snatch at and pull forward; and then it

seemed to me as if there were four or five different Isabells in the room—the shy immature child, the jolly companion with the boyish figure and the birdlike voice, the deeper-toned playmate of Hampstead Heath, the graceful girl who had been my dancing partner, the quiet confidante and sympathiser of a little later, the *friend*, white-faced and tremulous, that I parted with so ruefully on the platform at Waterloo, and lastly, demanding instant attention, calling for the utmost tact, watching me interrogatively, this handsome well-dressed self-possessed young woman of the world. I got on with it as best I could, and finally she gave me one of her kind, wide, unimpeded smiles, and then all became easier between us. How great is the difference between a laugh and a smile. Laughter may mean anything, from nervousness, amusement, malice, cruelty, hysteria, to lunacy. But smiles have only one meaning, *sympathy*. And there are times when a smile is like the bow that was set in the sky, a promise of hope and safety. We exchanged no confidences. I did not inquire as to the occasion of her most welcome return, and she never alluded to it even remotely. We stuck to the main point, arguing strenuously until I convinced her, or prevailed with her to consent.

We are so sure of ourselves that what might otherwise be a precarious experiment, and even lead to danger, will be absolutely all right. Yes, I *know* it is the best thing, and worth fighting to secure; best for

me, for Norah, for the ultimate comfort and well-being of our home.

* * *

THE kindness of Americans surpasses belief. It is active, *prévoyant*, inexhaustible. With us there is too much of "Oh, why didn't you tell me? I should have been delighted to do it. But I never guessed." In America they *do* guess. They act first and speak afterwards. They say, "I have put you down for my club. . . . I have placed a limousine at your disposal. . . . I have asked a friend of mine on the shipping line to look after you." They are naturally affectionate too. As children in the frankness of their response, they turn to those who have plainly shown that they like them. They have faults of course. Their prosperous citizens are snobbish, more so even than they seem, more so even than we are ourselves. It is a snobbishness that cuts both ways; they admire what isn't worth admiring, and they too often feel contempt for that which deserves respect. Climbers themselves, they kick down those who are climbing just beneath them. Whereas our eager pushful English snobs are more concerned with getting into good society than in keeping others out of it. Nevertheless their uppermost and most select classes are charming, and it is a ridiculous anachronistic slander to say that the dollar reigns with them. They possess so very many dollars that they have

long since ceased to count them. Yet if you compare one of their elderly society queens, women of unquestionable position, with a person similarly situated over here—say Mrs. X. or Mrs. Y. as against the Duchess of Z.—then the comparison will be in our favour. Our great lady is grand without loss of simplicity. The other will be a shade pretentious, mannered, with lapses into complete artificialness. Again, with the particular people I am thinking of, there is something rather mean and craven in the acceptance of the illustriously-placed merely on their fame. They look at the label. Titles are labels that they swallow whole. I doubt if they ever soar to the height of saying that an English lord is a bounder or an Italian prince a bad egg.

These, however, form a tiny group in an immense population. America is so large that it would take a lifetime to see it, and so varied in character that it would take two or three lifetimes to understand it. The Americans don't. That is why they like to talk about it and to read about it. Anybody may tell them something worth knowing. With almost a certainty of success an Englishman, a Frenchman, or a Dutchman can write a book about America after a fortnight's stay there.

But I look at all this through somebody else's eyes. They were amazingly good to her; and, although she does not say so, I know they appreciated her. That is another of their engaging qualities, the chivalrous and

protective care they hold at the disposal of any nice, but more or less defenceless girls that tumble into their midst. From decade to decade you never hear of a typist, a secretary, a governess, being insulted or badly treated by her employer.

Still another pleasing attribute, and one that she has caught from them, is that unfailing *neatness* in which American women have always excelled. It comprises not only their attire, the sleek trim closeness of dress and everything else, but the whole aspect of them, so that they look smooth and bright, deliciously clean, firmly, strongly, healthily immaculate. Yet they do not give that effect of being *soignées* which sometimes slightly jars with French women. One could not say either that they are *tirées à quatre épingles*, for they do it without a single pin. Even before shingling came into fashion they never had a hair astray. Much less could one say that they are *apprêtées*. It impresses one as entirely natural. A heaven-sent gift with which unconsciously they shame the loose ends, the straggling grace, the untidy profusion of European prettiness. Well, she certainly usen't to show it, and she shows it now no matter what she is wearing, from an evening frock to riding breeches.

She learned to ride out there. This is very advantageous. She and Norah have started riding together, and they go to the stables often to see the ponies fed and so on. Norah could not do that with Miss Apple-

ton, who did not know one end of a horse from the other. She teaches N. how to saddle and bridle her mount. Once I chimed in, raking out the stuff we were told in the army—three fingers under chin-strap, etc. It was great fun. Jarvis and Tom stood by grinning approval. Everybody on the place has taken to her. I think they all feel, as I do, a change in the atmosphere.

She will pull out N. more and more. When we are in London they will fence. They play tennis (I am so glad now that I had the hard courts made), and yesterday there were four of them, noisy, joyous, their voices filling the air with freshness, as I passed by. Already she has produced two companions for my girl—a niece of the Locks, who will always be available, and a young friend that is staying with them.

But I wish that Denise were not so inscrutable. In her own words, she is as happy as the days are long—said without double entente, not echoing Leo Trevor's addition, "And the days *are* long." She is not bored. Yet she often seems aloof, almost as if purposely holding herself outside our gratifications. What is it? Mysterious; something that is becoming more noticeable and yet more impossible to unravel or explain. It is like a limitless abnegation, or a refusal to exercise will power. I don't know what it is. I only know that it is abnormal.

Last night we danced to the gramophone. I with D.

and Isabel with Norah. But D. gave up at once and became a wallflower. It would be jolly to get a few young people sometimes to come in of an evening.

Her unwillingness to help things along casts a damp upon us. And, as I go on telling myself, it really is unintelligible that she should continue to shun the least gaiety and still evade taking the smallest trouble. There are times when she almost has the airs of a *malade imaginaire*. Suppose she became one!

*

I am contented and yet uneasy.

O divinely musical hunchback of Twickenham, why did you write that line, "Man never is but always to be blest"? So trite now, but so pitifully true for most of us. Till you said it perhaps nobody noticed it. My brother, I remember, declared that it would be equally true to say, "Man never is but always *has* been blessed." That is not so with me. When I look back I do not find the golden hours, the happy care-free days. I am always looking forward, always hoping for a peace that has not come.

I suppose the persistent sensations of youth (that I was musing about not long ago) have much to do with the inability to grasp the fullness of each present moment and the almost insanely sanguine watchfulness for all the moments yet unborn. Children invariably live in the future. Towards the end, it is commonly alleged

that one is compelled to live in the past, and the current hours slip by rapid as rays of light, untenable, unretainable as the shadow of a cloud. Thus one's whole life may seem illusory, and then of a sudden the other illusion, death, is upon us—the greatest of all illusions, as Samuel Butler said.

“There will come a supreme moment in which there will be care neither for us nor for others, but a complete abandon, a *sans souci* of unspeakable indifference, and this moment will never be taken from us; time cannot rob us of it, but, as far as we are concerned, it will last for ever and ever without flying. So that, even for the most wretched and most guilty, there is a haven at last where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt and where thieves do not break through nor steal. To himself every one is an immortal: he may know that he is going to die, but he can never know that he is dead.”

At first I had a double difficulty requiring solution—to prove my untouched allegiance to D. and to clear the air with Isabel. I showed no signs of over-valuing her. I suppressed excessive welcomings on her arrival. I avoided her company. In fact I resumed the close attendance on my wife that had a little lessened. I was more her companion than ever.

With Isabel I felt a constraint that I hoped and believed would yield presently. I had not dared speak of

her broken engagement, and there were other things that must sooner or later be touched on. We had our inevitable "scene." She regrets nothing. She never cared for him. After this *éclaircissement* all was well. In a little while we resumed our talks—not heart to heart, but mind to mind talks. We were almost if not quite on the ancient terms. So far so very good.

But the problem of Denise remains unsolved. I am incessantly on my guard. I watch and think, and by reason of these preoccupations sadness is returning to me.

She tells me that Denise says queer things to her, as if asking permission of her, Isabel, before she makes any plan that concerns Norah. I have noticed it myself. I heard the end of a conversation between her and Norah, and she said, "You had better consult Miss Hughes and your father." I did not like it at all, but I could do nothing at the time. Since then I have once or twice sent Isabel to her to obtain her wishes as to any arrangement for Norah's exercise or amusement. When we are all together I keep the conversation on general lines, and never by any chance run the risk of seeming to ignore D. by addressing Isabel directly. I scarcely look at her when we are debating future events. More care. Restraining influences instead of liberty.

But I think of things that I ought to have thought of before. Tardily I ask myself questions for which I

ought to have found much earlier answers. Hopelessly too late I try to analyse D.'s motive with regard to Isabel. Was the invitation simply one more attempt to please me, or did it imply much else? Had she again read my secret thoughts, or rather did she imagine that she was reading them? I sometimes am assailed with a really dreadful idea, and I cannot for a while shake it off. Perhaps it merely is a distortion of my thought that she had set herself to *expiate*, to accept her punishment. Then this might have been the last step on the road of pain, a culmination of her chastisement, the supreme sacrifice. She knew I felt that she had never been a safe guardian of the child. Then the engagement of Miss Hughes was an abrogation, a laying-aside of power—as if she has deposed herself as a mother because she had detected that I would like to depose her?

But that would be terrible.

No, it cannot be. I distress myself without cause. It is merely this lassitude of hers, which may pass off at any time. I torment myself with fancies that are bred from my too constant habit of introspection. When one looks deeply into oneself one wants to look into everybody else too. And we cannot. No human being can really see what is going on inside another. We should accept the impenetrability of the barrier, and be satisfied with what is permitted to come through. We must believe

what those we love choose to tell us. Take their actions, never worry about their thoughts! D. behaves as if happy. She acts as if she liked Isabel. She has asked her to drop the *Mrs.* and call her Denise. In any case I should have been glad. Now I am reassured.

Only at night can I get occasionally an hour of peace. Quite late, now and then, she comes to me in the library. We are alone then, and the fact of our enjoyment in a quiet talk can hurt no one. We have nothing to conceal or be ashamed of. The presence of half a dozen people there could neither embarrass nor annoy us, provided that they would allow us to go on talking together.

But the sad thoughts recur. My troubled fancies are like flames of volatile oil burning on water. A sea of common sense cannot extinguish them. When I suppose they are done with they flare up again. And the trouble of mind makes me angry with Denise. It is her fault.

How merciless the progress of life is. And time—the time that can be measured, or at least estimated in the effect of its work. While a man sleeps a tree grows. We plant a seed and time does the rest. Even as we watch, time obliterates our cherished picture, paints another picture in its place, and again obliterates. Time kills the strongest of our thoughts, or if it cannot kill, nullifies them, renders them impotent. We do more than

forget, it is a ceasing to mind. The longer I live, with the greater clearness can I see that the largest part of our actions are merely reactions. We give way to pressures, we do what we are fated to do. We have little choice. Even when we experience the sensation of initiative, when we believe we decide, boast ourselves of standing firm, or meditate nobly and generously until "no" changes into "yes," above all when we suppose we are controlling the trend of events or modifying the direction of our own and other lives, we really are being carried on the current of an irresistible stream or being blown where the wind listeth. We save our face by pretending afterwards that we meant to go there. Like Hans Andersen's proud darning-needle, we dance with preposterous dignity through sudden eddies and absurd swirling turns, and if finally washed into a backwater and landed fast in the mud, we still preserve our self-conceit and say: "*I did that rather well.*"

All that grief and anguish such a little way behind us both is really almost nothing to me. I have no strong feeling when I think of it. Is this so with Denise? I hope it is. I have done all in my power to make it so.

*

Why did she ask Isabel to come here?

I go on stupidly worrying myself with what in retrospect has become an enigma, although at first it neither puzzled nor disturbed me. The idea appeared

natural. Now I cannot stop thinking about it and trying to find underlying reasons for her adoption of it. Was I boring her again? Her determination to satisfy me never wavered, but perhaps after all I was again producing that malady of ennui from which she once suffered. My bookish chatter may have been too much for her. Even the reading aloud. The eternal intercourse, the unyielding necessity to play her accompaniment in our confidential duet, was perhaps as worrying for her as burdensome to me. She needed a relief as much as I did. Or was it still the distressful notion of expiation—to supply pleasure for me at all costs, to let me cry tit for tat, to give me the odd trick and finish the game?

I cannot get away from the ugly thought. I believe that she would make no protest if Isabel became my mistress. Sometimes I believe she *wishes* things to work out so. She looks at me diffidently, appealingly, almost like a person asking for help. Or I meet her eyes unexpectedly, and they seem unnaturally bright and hard in her pallid face, while her lips are drawn back, the whole expression being one of strain, or defiance. And I am frightened; for at such moments it is as though she were saying: "Since you seem a little tired of me, try somebody else. Then you and I will be quits". . . .

Oh, no. *That* can never happen. There might have been a chance of it once when I had a wife who was not a wife. If I had succumbed to temptation then, I

might have had an excuse. Not now. I am not an eagle, but at least I am a little higher than the sort of bird that fouls its own nest.

*

Stirred to movement! The Locks want us to have the big church bazaar and fête here. Lady Fergus has failed at the last moment. Mr. Nevill came with Lock to make the petition. We cannot refuse. I shall insist on D.'s agreement. It is just what she wants, to be shaken out of herself.

The garden would be converted into a market of stalls, and in the park we should have a regular fair, with roundabouts, swing-boats, cock-shies, a theatre tent with actors and actresses (amateurs) giving a continuous show, and I don't know what else. I suggested a gymkhana. For Norah (and for D., too—in fact, for all of us) it will be the easiest possible introduction to the whole neighbourhood. At present we seem to know nobody. After the fête we shall know everybody. We can do our picking and choosing later.

Anyhow, the programme is as yet in the clouds. The first thing will be a meeting here in this house of all those who are interested. Say twenty, or at most thirty people. Tea of course. Light refreshments provided. That department can be in charge of Norah and Isabel. Denise, naturally, must receive the guests. A smile and

civil word as they come in, and her duties will be ended. Surely not a formidable ordeal. She need not even be present at the discussion.

Lock said I should take the chair, but I will not do that. I shall propose him or the vicar.

We have all been very busy. But it is a healthy, stimulating fussification. The meeting is for to-morrow. We shall have at least forty-five people. What fun!

*

Three days not without anxiety, and now a shock.

Everybody arrived, the discussion had started, Lock was speaking, when Isabel came to fetch me away. Denise had fainted. She was lying on a sofa in the oak room, white as death, indeed looking lifeless as well as unconscious, with Norah and Bateman distractedly attendant. I knelt beside her, meaning to chafe her hands, but immediately she came to herself.

Again I am dramatising. But it is only because of what has now happened, just when my anxiety, never great, had altogether disappeared. She got up from the sofa unaided, and said she was quite herself. Isabel had gone to telephone for the doctor; but she called out and ran after her to stop her. And she stuck to this (at the time and afterwards), absolutely refusing to have a doctor. She was contrite and apologetic, saying she was sorry and she hoped she hadn't spoilt it—

meaning our party. She begged, implored, to be allowed to take her place in the tea-room and to go on being hostess. We persuaded her to go to bed, and she consented to stay in bed next day. I told her I had been slightly alarmed because this was out of her line, since she had never fainted in her life. But she says she has often. During the last few years something of the sort has frequently occurred. She gets out of breath, feels dizzy, and for a moment or two goes queer, but it amounts to nothing. She knows that it is of no consequence.

Then this afternoon she said suddenly and oddly: "I want you to do something. I believe I am going to be rather ill. Take me to London."

*

(Prince's Gate.) During this week I have had no heart for journalising. Now we are permanently established here. Norah and Isabel followed us. All the servants have come. Marley is shut up. We cannot hope to get back there for a longish time.

It is heart trouble; functional, not organic. I craved for lay terms. Was it heart disease or not? No, not disease. But they are disquieting, these doctors. They seem to suspect something worse, or at any rate, they consider the possibility of there being an unascertained cause for the derangement.

Her condition is serious, in the sense that it needs to be watched very closely. Every symptom at present

and every symptom that may arise is important. Meanwhile she is to be ordered a quiet régime and great care. But, heavens and earth, has she not had quiet and care? It is this that upsets me.

To-day I talked to Barnby of Dr. Gustav Herzog. He says he is one of the biggest men in Europe. I asked him also about Beatenberg—whether it would be a good thing to go there for the whole summer. But he thought not. She is better here in her own house, without any necessity to incur fatigue, which must be guarded against, however small in amount. Then he said something that went through me like a knife. Exertion or fatigue would certainly bring back the pain.

No words could possibly express all that I felt as he answered my further questions. He said that undoubtedly she has suffered a great deal of pain in the last few months. With every occurrence of the breathlessness there must have been the sharpest pangs, and he hinted that the anguish, while it lasted, must have been akin to what is undergone in angina. This was horrible to hear. It shook me, it rent me. My poor Denise!

But he swears that there need be no more pain. Seeing my distress he repeated his assurances again and again. They can keep it away, and they will. In fact, as he said, she has had none since I brought her here.

He is kind. From the days when he was so good to

me, in my bad time, we have been friends. I trust him. Of course he knows so much of our history that there could be no reason ever to hold anything back. I spoke to him of the year before she left me, and of my fears during the latter half that she was exhausting her nerves and utterly wearing herself out. And after that, I told him, she had been through a far worse period of excitement and strain. He said he had understood that it was so, and had taken it into account. If necessary he would put the early story of the case before Mr. Falkland.

A third opinion (Falkland), and I am frightened. There are to be X-ray examinations and other methods of investigating. I asked: If it is the sort of thing they fancy as possible, would there have to be an operation? They cannot say. But surgical interference would be avoided if possible.

Falkland used technical words and started to give me an explanation, even using a pencil to draw a diagram of internal parts; but I simply could not bear it. I wanted the truth about my dearest, but not the ghastly description and anatomical details. I shrank from him and his picture. Barnby interposed. He quickly understood. Then he talked to Falkland, and I did not listen. I could not listen. I turned my back on them and stood in a window, looking out at the roadway with all its life and movement. And again I felt dread and horror. I was thinking of

another of Ada Negri's tragic little tales. It is in *Prima di Morire*, when the wife falls sick after many years of unbroken health. "And her illness was that to which doctors can give an infinity of names; but in reality it possesses only one—the illness of death."

As soon as I had Barnby alone I prayed him to deal openly with me, not to try to spare me, but to tell me exactly what he thought. He said that I must not give way to an alarm which would unfit me for meeting any trouble that may lie ahead of us. He declared that there is no *immediate* cause for the extreme fear I had begun to entertain.

But out of all this emerges the terrible and overwhelming fact that I have been cruel to her. She was ill, and I could not see it. She needed rapid comprehending sympathy, and I gave her a stupid misunderstanding stimulation. I misread an endless number of signs; I urged her to bestir herself when she longed to be at peace; physical oppression, the disabilities of bodily weakness, lowered vitality, stared me in the face, and I took them for mental conditions, the whims and fancies of an indolent woman. I was irritable. I tacitly complained, I overtly questioned. I felt angry with her. And all the time she was ill, suffering—in pain. But what courage she has shown. Her fortitude and endurance have equalled my brutal callousness.

To say that I am sorry and ashamed would be too colourless, too futile. I am devoured by sorrow. I throb and ache with sorrow and shame.

Everything that seemed enigmatical would have been obvious, logically consequential, if I could but have divined the truth. It is the clue to all. It explains what was apparently a fundamental change in her whole character. Not only her attitude to the world, but her behaviour to me would have been intelligible in a moment if only I had guessed. When she wanted to come back to me she did not know that she was going to be ill, although quite possibly there were even then instinctive whisperings or premonitions which she disregarded. She only knew that she was immensely tired (as she said in her letter). She longed for rest, a harbour of refuge; and beyond this she had the intense desire to make up to me for the past. It was an obsession with her. And who can say but that some deeper instinct told her that time might be short? She returned, and set herself to the task that should have been easy for her if I had not wilfully or blindly made it difficult. As certainly as I had vowed to myself that I would not fail her, I failed from the very beginning till now. I let her have no real rest, I played on her nerves; she was giving me all that she could, and I still demanded more. Our little walks when I urged her on, driving and bullying her, using soft kind words as accompaniments of sheer cruelty, were symbolical of everything else in our

relations. I forced the pace. She could not keep up with me.

If I did not *make* her ill, I utterly failed to avert the illness or to save her from its tightening hold. It began after the storm and stress of our second reconciliation. Then she knew. I had taken away from her the hopes that had been sustaining her. She asked me that night, when we heard of the racing disaster, would it now be all right between us. Oh, how could I forget, or ignore the memory of, that almost despairing question? I told her yes. But then too soon I allowed her to feel that nothing was really altered; she could rely on me no more than before. She felt hopeless, spiritually abandoned by me for the second time, and her powers of resistance grew less and less. Perhaps she ceased to fight the illness, although she continued sedulously to conceal it. She still sought to please me in any way, in every way. Well aware that she ought to have medical treatment, she refused to allow herself this aid and comfort. She would spare me the annoyance and trouble of a sick wife. She sent me away. She begged me to be gay and jaunty. But she had almost reached the end of her tether by the time Isabel Hughes joined us. There was no mystery whatever in her ready acceptance of Isabel. She simply thought that Isabel would be useful, that I liked the girl's company, that Isabel would, in fact, carry on things that she no longer had strength to deal with. Yet still she struggled to show a face unmarred by secret pain,

to smile when another woman would have shrieked. Oh, Denise, Denise, my poor shattered, faithful girl, at last your trial is over, at last you have won a little rest.

I cannot make amends. But henceforward for the remainder of our lives I will devote myself to her, and I swear that no disloyal thought shall ever come. It is a solemn dedication of myself. And God deal with me as I with her.

*

Another heart attack.

*

Dr. Herzog has seen her. He came by air, all the way from Zurich. After the consultation he spent the night here. Now he has gone. He was splendid, a tower of strength, a lighthouse with noble, far reaching beams of light that showed at once the stormy deep all round us and the course that may lead to a port of safety.

He agrees with their latest view of the case, but authoritatively pronounces on all measures that are to be taken. His word sounded like law. As law they will consider it. For weeks and weeks, indeed throughout the treatment, she must be kept absolutely quiet; and all now must depend on what happens during this period. For her it is motionless rest of the body, for us a suspense of the mind, a waiting, a hoping. Something is to be absorbed, or slowly to disappear almost one might say of its own accord. They hope that it

may. If so, all will be well, and there will be no reason that with constant care she should not live to old age, but it would probably be a restricted life, inactive, quiescent. On the other hand, if not, if the mischief augments instead of diminishing, then the worst! And every hour is one of peril to her. An accident, a failure, some unfortunate turn that cannot be guarded against, and all would be over.

That is the verdict. I write it down baldly and as if coldly, and yet while my pen moves I feel more dead than alive. At any moment the pen might be jerked out of my hand and thrown down in a spasm of fear, at the sight of a face in the doorway, or the sound of a voice calling to me. This is not a highly coloured figure of speech, but an accurately stated fact; for any moment might be the fatal moment that they spoke of. I should be summoned to her room at any time of the night or the day. From now onwards the dread of such a summons will be with me. I may ignore it, I may act as if it were not darkening my every thought, but for months while the peril lasts it must necessarily be here.

I have done much wrong. Stretching through the years right back into youth I see small if not great sins, of omission and commission, neglects, ingratitude, selfish evasions, mean acceptances, not only with her, but with others, and all those many failures added together would

have the weight of a few braver and more heinous crimes; and yet I think that before this time of horrible suspense comes to an end, before they give me the signal of security, I shall have been well and adequately punished. But no more thought of myself.

I have organised our altered existence. She has two specially trained nurses, one of whom is always with her; and these two women who came into the house only a few days ago are already like long-trying friends. It is as if I had known them all my life. They are, of course, dressed alike in the uniform of their hospital, they themselves are not dissimilar in appearance, but as I see them moving about on the stairs and landings I could no more mistake Nurse Edith for Nurse Kate than if they were my sisters. Reynolds and the others are good to them. The orders I gave were not really needed. All in their different ways are displaying kind feeling. Norah and Isabel ride of a morning. They go to a gymnasium, and Norah is to attend lectures and classes at the French Institute in the Cromwell Road. I have begged Isabel to lighten her sadness as far as is possible, and to take her to *matinées* of plays and films. We meet at meals.

*

Three times in this house I have seen the terrors of illness—first Aunt Aggie, then Norah, and now my poor Denise. With Norah it was a paroxysm of distress, a

swift crisis, a relief. With Aunt Aggie there was really no hope. Now there is every reason to hope. It would be wicked not to hope, not to have full confidence.

She herself has no idea that she is in any danger. The impression she gave of being a person resigned to fate, resolutely determined on meek abnegation, has gone. She is contented, taking the ease that she craved for, enjoying the restrictions to which she is subjected, in a word resting. Life perhaps has never seemed so valuable to her as now. It is even possible that she is essentially happier than she has ever been. She whispers to me of things that we are to do together as soon as the rest cure is finished.

Only on one occasion and for a very little while have I seen transient fear in her eyes.

It was two days ago when I was bidding her good night. I had stayed with her longer than usual, and the nurse was urging her to settle down and let me go. Then when the nurse went out of the room for a moment she seemed all at once to be scared, either by my manner or something in Nurse Edith's recent tone. With her eyes on my face she spoke of her state, asking me for an assurance that the doctors did not really think it dangerous. I said no—"On my honour, no." But she raised herself higher in the bed, clinging to me, and I saw the look again. "I *shall* get well, shan't I? Dr. Barnby thinks so? Tell me, on your honour." I said: "Yes, on

my sacred honour." What other answer could I give? But it tore me to pieces.

When I left her I went into the library and wept. Nurse Edith came to me there after a time to tell me that the patient was asleep, and she remained for a few minutes comforting me with kind and hopeful words. Like Barnby she says that I must not give way to doubts and apprehensions. A good kind creature, she helped me to regain calm.

I sat there alone, in the limpness and heaviness that follows too strong an emotion, scarcely meditating at all, only feeling a dull and ineffectual remorse for my shortcomings towards her down at Marley. Then, sitting thus, I had a sudden and abominable thought. It was as though not my true self, but a detested, hidden dweller in the secret parts of my mind, the dim cavernous realm that is never explored, had been thinking for me, and suddenly finding a voice had forced me against my will to listen. I sprang up from my chair and walked about the room. Perhaps I had been asleep or half asleep.

My remorse does not lessen. I suppose I have always been too much addicted to self-tormenting. But I cannot escape from recollections of her piteous glances when she would have pleaded, had she not mastered the impulse, for a respite from my urgings and goadings. I remember, too, those times when her face seemed hard with an ob-

stinate defiance of my stupid plans, but when truly she was bravely repressing every outward effect of pain. Physical discomfort darkened her eyes, dragged at the corners of her mouth, and made the lips dry and colourless, these changes together producing that strained expression that I feared and hated. Now her face is smooth and unlined as a child's.

I must fix my mind on our future and think only of the quiet, peaceful years that I shall have with her. We need not remain in England. We can go to a climate where laziness and inaction are luxuries rather than faults—the Neapolitan coast, Sicily, anywhere. The world is open; there are many lands where the lotus flourishes, and it is always afternoon. I see in imagination palm trees, marble steps, a sunlit garden, and the sea. Our lives would pass without the possibility of tempests or chilling winds. But I should not be really idle. I would cultivate my mind in a new way; instead of sowing and planting its too-much laboured field, I would *cleanse* it, eradicating noxious weeds, burning, destroying, purifying the soil for a nobler and better harvest than it has ever borne. For her sake as well as my own I will purify myself. Once I was proud of my mind; now I fear and sometimes abhor it.

Till we win the infinite joy that the end of our suspense will bring, my universe is narrowed to the confines of one room.

She lies there so patiently, but I am sure quite happily. Her voice is weak. She whispers, because even the effort of ordinary speech is forbidden. She has a smile for everybody who comes into the room—Norah, Isabel, the housemaid. Both the nurses adore her. They say I am indispensable. When I am not there she keeps moving her head and looking towards the door. Yet she will not ask for me.

I am with her as much as they permit. I try to give her strength; I never let her see that I have the least anxiety; but as I stand by her bed, especially if she is sleeping, the very life seems to go out of me in a flood of compassion, remorse, and love. I yearn over her as a mother with a first-born child. I would give my life a hundred times to ensure her safety. And yet that hideous thought comes back and back. It is there in a moment, amidst all the other thoughts, each one of which is truly a prayer. It is not mine. It is not a real thought. It is not of the mind, but a mere reflection of physical fatigue, as when men in the war, tired beyond endurance, thought they would rather die a shameful death than go on fighting. The blood and nerves and muscles of which they were composed, and not they themselves, had begun to fail.

There is a limit to our power of bearing physical and mental pain. A point is reached when we cease to feel and to think. Or the thought, refusing to run deep and

strong, rises to the surface and becomes uncontrollable in its light, meaningless vagaries.

I have had several experiences of this loss of control lately. As a rule, I go out to get a little air directly after her luncheon, for it is then that she always sleeps. I am never gone long. I stroll round the houses or into the Park. At first all these buildings and men and women seem to me unreal, like things seen in dreams. I have left that silent room where my love lies with closed eyes, but in the spirit I am still there. Then as I observe my actual surroundings more clearly I have the feelings of horror, common to all people in my situation, at the merciless indifference of the whole world.

But then soon I begin to think of many irrelevant, valueless things. I even wonder and speculate about these trifles. As, for instance—wondering why the red-brick house at the corner is for sale, and asking myself if it has not traditions concerning a peacock room and Whistler the artist. Also why do they never unfurl the Stars and Stripes at the American Embassy? They have a flag-pole. And how long will dear old countrified Kingston House continue to embellish the ugly roadway, with its sober Georgian dignity? I remember hearing that the late Lord Listowel served in the Crimea, and that he told somebody that when he was a boy he used to ride out on his pony over open fields and marshy wastes all the way to the river. Then I recall how my

father would tell us the tale of Lowther Lodge. When first built it was admired by all London; standing alone in its fine garden, with nothing between it and the Albert Hall. But almost immediately the huge, overshadowing bulk of those piles of flats rose behind it, and for ever spoiled it. No one, my father said, could understand how Mr. Lowther came to spend so much money without acquiring the adjacent land for protective purposes. I go on, questioning, reminiscing, vainly and vaguely. There is generally a wedding at Brompton Church. Prebendary Gough is turning off another tightly-bound young couple. He marries so many people that even an accelerated Divorce Court cannot undo all his knots. I stand at a distance, noticing brightly striped awning, shining coachwork of motor-cars, bevy of nursemaids, stolid policemen, surly cigarette-smoking chauffeurs with pretty favours worn reluctantly as if they were badges of shame and disgrace. I gape and loiter and go on.

But after half an hour my brain resumes rational activity. The machine is at work again. Anxiety returns. Dread follows in its wake as I hurry homeward. I walk faster and faster, my forehead is warm, but I feel cold inside me. Then the quiet, undisturbed aspect of the house as I draw near reassures me. Nothing has happened.

On a table in the hall there are visiting-cards. I read the names: General Vardon, Sir Charles and Lady

Ethel Newing, Miss Cooper. All those kind old people, Aunt A.'s friends, call regularly to inquire. Often there are flowers on the table, too. Reynolds tells me who has brought them. Marcia and Edmund Proctor send little scribbled notes promising that I may command them whenever I feel it would do Denise good to see them. That most absurd of human beings, Sir Laurence Carlow, came ten days ago with a parcel of sick-room delicacies—caviar, foie gras, potted pheasant, burnt almonds, olives—the things he would fancy himself, I suppose, if deprived of his plenteous dinner at the club. Poor old dodderer. His attentions were kindly meant, and it is unworthy to mock them. Sometimes I find a letter from my brother.

I creep upstairs to her room and noiselessly open the curtained door. As noiseless as myself, a nurse moves towards me with finger on lip. She is still sleeping. Or I hear my name softly whispered. She is awake.

This is my life. Waiting, hoping, fearing. But to-day we have all been cheered by happy auguries. Barnby and the nurses are well pleased. Nurse Kate sent me out again. The patient was sound asleep, and according to her nurse it was I who looked ill. She said my face was white, as of someone too closely confined, and obviously requiring more air.

I strolled across into the Park and sat beneath an

elm tree within sight of our house. It was bright and fine, with a high blue sky and feathered streamers of white cloud. The friendly west wind. Sitting there I felt almost at peace. I was thinking with satisfaction of those good omens. Barnby says that her progress in the last week has been unquestionable. His reports to Herzog have brought confirmative answers. She is gaining ground, not losing it. Only the terrible contingency of accidents would seem to endure as a basis for apprehension. Then words as if automatically presented themselves. "The priceless boon of youth and health." They had apparently no relevancy. They almost surprised me. Then in a moment the other thought came. Without link or transition it was there, and now it seemed that I, my very self, was speaking the thought with a sickening plainness of meaning. I seemed to say, and no human power could stop me saying: "I wish, I hope, I fervently pray that there may be no accident and that she will recover. But if she does the shadow that has lain on half of my life will be lifted. I shall marry Isabel, and she and I and Norah will be immeasurably happy." I struggled, I fought against the thought, but for a little while I was helpless in its overwhelming embrace. No, never, never, I told myself. Yet still the thought held me. Yes, I should grieve intensely, I should mourn for her truly, but then I should forget. Isabel would make me forget. Isabel would be mine at last. She and

Norah and I would all of us forget. We should all of us be happy.

It passed away from me. I sat and shivered, feeling faint and sick as after a bodily wrestling with someone far stronger than myself. A sort of prickly heat ran up and down my spine while my hands were icily cold, exactly as when one is really going to be sick. I could not get up and walk away. But now I talked to myself aloud. "God forgive me." I kept repeating it. "God forgive me. God forgive me." And although I seemed in these iterated words to be seeking comfort or release, as though they had been merely a kind of abracadabra, a traditional form used to break a spell, a suddenly remembered exorcism to defeat the wiles of the tempter, I understand now that they were very much more than anything of the kind. They truly expressed a rational thought. They summed up and symbolised my actual state of mind. They were at once a plea and a justification.

O God, who made us what we are, you *must* forgive us.

*

I read a great deal to her. I read the things she likes, and not as hitherto the things I liked myself. "Do you mind?" She murmurs it, as if ashamed. No, my dearest, I do not mind these books that I know I have looked down at from the height of a lofty ignorance. I bless

their writers. We have had Ethel Dell, Edgar Wallace, Rafael Sabatini, and others of the very popular, and I see how good they are, how just their popularity. I underestimated them because people said they were narrators, and not philosophers. Now as I glance from the turned page to my dear one's peaceful face, I understand the suave and beneficent charm of the born storyteller. I think, too, in this grateful recognition, that if I were an author I would be prouder of knowing that by a simple tale of human nature I had brought comfort and oblivion to one sick bed than I should be were I wallowing in the praise of all the highbrow critics for having produced the damnable clever pessimistic twaddle of a Proust or a Lawrence.

During the war I used to think the same thing of Nat Gould, the soldier's universal author. But then I forgot it.

*

She has not been so well to-day. Rather restless. She had a little pain in the morning, but Barnby speedily subjugated it, and there has been no more. Nevertheless, she could not sleep. To-night I sat with her hour after hour reading. I read drowsily and slowly, with occasional pauses, making my voice a mere lullaby. At last it had effect. That was more than an hour ago, and she is still sleeping.

But I know that I should not myself sleep if I went

to bed. So I shall remain here among the silent companions standing shoulder to shoulder, rank on rank, along the shelves. Silent yet full of eloquence, each of them would speak to me if I asked it to.

The calm and the quiet are inside me as well as outside. For many days I have been stronger. Not a single unwelcome thought has molested me. I hope and do not dread. I hope more and more firmly. Even today's anxious hours I was able to get through without any panic fears.

I have been reading William James—not to get the taste of the other stuff out of my mouth, but because he is an old and well-tryed friend. His messages seem to me solid as those of the Bible Prophets. His sonorous phrases are like organ music to my mental ear. Take this, for instance, seeming to follow (but really preceding) Bergson's reflections, on joy in life:

“To miss the joy is to miss all.” Indeed, it is. Yet we are but finite, and each one of us has some single specialised vocation of his own. And it seems as if energy in the service of its particular duties might be got only by hardening the heart toward everything unlike them. Our deadness toward all but one particular kind of joy would thus be the price we inevitably have to pay for being practical creatures. Only in some pitiful dreamer, some philosopher, poet, or romancer, or when the common practical man becomes a lover, does

the hard externality give way, and a gleam of insight into the ejective world, as Clifford called it, the vast world of inner life beyond us, so different from that of outer seeming, illuminate the mind. Then the whole scheme of our customary values is riven, and its narrow confines fly to pieces, then a new

*

Ten days after.

I can write no more. The fatal summons that I always knew might at any moment stop my pen came while I was transcribing the above words. By the time I reached her room she had nearly gone. Without sight or knowledge or pain she passed from me for ever.

I shall go away, and alone, not taking my daughter or my friend, and possibly for a long absence. It may be a year, half a year, or perhaps only a few months, before I return. I cannot say. Isabel approves. Isabel understands.

THE END



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von

Dr. Bernhard Fehr

o.ö. Professor an der Universität Zürich

84 S. 8°. 1930. Kartoniert *N* 2.50

Der durch seine Geschichte der englischen Literatur im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert in weiten Kreisen berühmt gewordene Professor an der Universität Zürich gibt hier eine kurze Darstellung von der heutigen englischen Literatur, ihren wichtigsten Vertretern und deren bedeutendsten Werken. Seine überlegen abgefaßten Ausführungen werden vielen, die nach einem kurzen Führer durch die zahlreichen Erscheinungen des englischen literarischen Lebens verlangen, willkommen sein.

„Bei ihm wird der Blick in die Werkstatt des Dichters zu einem Blick in die äußersten, dunkelsten Winkel der Geistigkeit. . . . In dem dünnen Bändchen liegen beschlossen die Grundlagen des 20. Jahrhunderts. . . . Kein Freund der Literatur — es braucht nicht einmal bloß der englischen zu sein! — wird an Fehrs Abhandlung vorübergehen wollen, und kein ernster Kulturforscher wird daran vorübergehen können — vom Anglisten schon gar nicht zu reden. In shorthand, mit wenigen Siegeln, hat Professor Fehr eine geniale Transkription jenes Diktats gegeben, zu dem der Kulturgeist der Gegenwart die englischen Dichter zwang.“

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