

twelve o'clock at night, in a bedroom in Corsica between two people alone and no audience ! Cecil went on :

"So much so that his town house was shut up all the winter—the covers on the furniture for the whole year—and, as a child, I lived with you in your mother's house, for there was nowhere else for me to go to, I had no home."

"Puaretto !" she said.

"Yes, almost an orphan. My father loved his yacht so much that he could never leave it. He did not return at all with your mother and father and Monsieur de St. Brice when they brought Chilina and Matalina to Lancaster Gate, but said good-bye to them all in Paris and rejoined the yacht at Marseilles and on to his villa at Ventimiglia."

"I did not know all that, I was so little."

He made her nervous, squeezing her arm to signify that she was not playing the game properly. She knew she was muffing it. She felt like a trained animal exhausted by the tricks it is made to perform, longing to go back to its cage and stand on four legs again. But the showman was rigorous :

"And when my father did return from his cruise, which lasted a whole year——"

Cecil was telling such lies. But she supposed it didn't matter much now and he hated so to be contradicted. . . .

—"You and the girls were all living together in a house my aunt had taken at the seaside where there weren't too many people, and your mother and the girls could bathe and paddle with the children."

Cecil was talking in rather a more natural voice now and all about such baby things. She felt reassured. Nothing so bad perhaps . . . She laughed out :

"Good !" Cecil whispered.

—"Yes, Matalina and Chili were so funny ! Nothing would induce them to lift their skirts above their ankles, even though there was no one there, and of course they both spoiled their silk dresses and were so cross when we children made fun of them."

"And then," he said quickly, "you stayed till nearly Christmas at Brighton, and my father and stepmother and Monsieur de St. Brice came down from London in my father's four-in-hand and paid you a visit."

"Uncle Horace wasn't married then and Monsieur de St. Brice had gone back to France."

“No, I remember. It was Lord Ivo Gray came down with him, who admired Chilina, so that my good aunt was trying to arrange a marriage between them.”

“But it was Matalina Lord Ivo admired. They both liked him and fought about him.”

Cecil whispered, “Don’t say too much.” Then very loud: “Well—and when my father and Lord Ivo came down they did not stay in the house with you at all?”

“No. Not room. At the hotel—they liked the eating there better. But they came to my birthday dinner at four o’clock. It was so close to Noël that we had a Christmas Tree.”

“My father caused that to be installed and gave you all splendid presents?”

“To my mother he did, and to the others things out of crackers. Uncle Horace was not great at giving presents. I believe he was a bit of a miser. Oh, to Chilina, because it was her birthday, he once did give a ring.”

“*Bien!* Out of a cracker too.” His voice trembled.

“No, it wasn’t. Chili said it was diamonds. She wore it a long time. She called it her *anneau de fiançailles*——”

Cecil groaned at her and there was a sound coming from the corner as if a chair had been violently thrown down.

Then her husband, seizing her roundabout, had flung her across him with such extreme violence, over on the side of the bed against the wall, that it nearly stunned her, but she heard a click and the gun go off. A moment later she got back to Cecil and clasped him, wet and gluey, as if he were dissolving in her arms and heard him say:

“Darling, you *would* bring me among these savages!” and knew that it was his life’s blood that was flowing between them.

Someone, a man said to her:

“Do not cry, Madame. My nephew will console you.”

She remembered, before the long night descended on her, that Cecil had said a day or two before it happened:

“I suppose I ought to wear the amulet Julia gave you for me. For if anything happened to me, how are you to get home?”

Barry Pain

THE END OF A SHOW

from STORIES IN THE DARK

Grant Richards, 1901

It was a little village in the extreme north of Yorkshire, three miles from a railway-station on a small branch line. It was not a progressive village ; it just kept still and respected itself. The hills lay all round it, and seemed to shut it out from the rest of the world. Yet folks were born, and lived, and died, much as in the more important centres ; and there were intervals which required to be filled with amusement. Entertainments were given by amateurs from time to time in the schoolroom ; sometimes hand-bell ringers or a conjurer would visit the place, but their reception was not always encouraging. "Conjurers is nowt, an' ringers is nowt," said the sad native judiciously ; "ar dornt regard 'em." But the native brightened up when in the summer months a few caravans found their way to a piece of waste land adjoining the churchyard. They formed the village fair, and for two days they were a popular resort. But it was understood that the fair had not the glories of old days ; it had dwindled. Most things in connection with this village dwindled.

The first day of the fair was drawing to a close. It was half-past ten at night, and at eleven the fair would close until the following morning. This last half-hour was fruitful in business. The steam roundabout was crowded, the proprietor of the peep-show was taking pennies very fast, although not so fast as the proprietor of another, somewhat repulsive, show. A fair number patronized a canvas booth which bore the following inscription :

POPULAR SCIENCE LECTURES

Admission Free

At one end of this tent was a table covered with red baize ; on it were bottles and boxes, a human skull, a retort, a large book, and some bundles of dried herbs. Behind it was the lecturer, an old man, gray and thin, wearing a bright-coloured dressing-gown. He lectured volubly and enthusiastically ; his energy and the

atmosphere of the tent made him very hot, and occasionally he mopped his forehead.

“I am about to exhibit to you,” he said, speaking clearly and correctly, “a secret known to few, and believed to have come originally from those wise men of the East referred to in Holy Writ.” Here he filled two test-tubes with water, and placed some bluish-green crystals in one and some yellow crystals in the other. He went on talking, quoting scraps of Latin, telling stories, making local and personal allusions, finally coming back again to his two test-tubes, both of which now contained almost colourless solutions. He poured them both together into a flat glass vessel, and the mixture at once turned to a deep brownish purple. He threw a fragment of something on to the surface of the mixture, and that fragment at once caught fire. This favourite trick succeeded; the audience were undoubtedly impressed, and before they quite realized by what logical connection the old man had arrived at the subject, he was talking to them about the abdomen. He seemed to know the most unspeakable and intimate things about the abdomen. He had made pills which suited its peculiar needs, which he could and would sell in boxes at sixpence and one shilling, according to size. He sold four boxes at once, and was back in his classical and anecdotal stage, when a woman pressed forward. She was a very poor woman. Could she have a box of these pills at half-price? Her son was bad, very bad. It would be a kindness.

He interrupted her in a dry, distinct voice:

“Woman, I never yet did anyone a kindness, not even myself.”

However, a friend pushed some money into her hand, and she bought two boxes.

It was past twelve o'clock now. The flaring lights were out in the little group of caravans on the waste ground. The tired proprietors of the shows were asleep. The gravestones in the churchyard were glimmering white in the bright moonlight. But at the entrance to that little canvas booth the quack doctor sat on one of his boxes, smoking a clay pipe. He had taken off the dressing-gown, and was in his shirt-sleeves; his clothes were black, much worn. His attention was arrested—he thought that he heard the sound of sobbing.

“It's a God-forsaken world,” he said aloud. After a second's silence he spoke again. “No, I never did a kindness even to

myself, though I thought I did, or I shouldn't have come to this."

He took his pipe from his mouth and spat. Once more he heard that strange wailing sound ; this time he arose, and walked in the direction of it.

Yes, that was it. It came from that caravan standing alone where the trees made a dark spot. The caravan was gaudily painted, and there were steps from the door to the ground. He remembered having noticed it once during the day. It was evident that someone inside was in trouble—great trouble. The old man knocked gently at the door.

"Who's there? What's the matter?"

"Nothing," said a broken voice from within.

"Are you a woman?"

There was a fearful laugh.

"Neither man nor woman—a show."

"What do you mean?"

"Go round to the side, and you'll see."

The old man went round, and by the light of two wax matches caught a glimpse of part of the rough painting on the side of the caravan. The matches dropped from his hand. He came back, and sat down on the steps of the caravan.

"You are not like that," he said.

"No, worse. I'm not dressed in pretty clothes, and lying on a crimson velvet couch. I'm half naked, in a corner of this cursed box, and crying because my owner beat me. Now go, or I'll open the door and show myself to you as I am now. It would frighten you ; it would haunt your sleep."

"Nothing frightens me. I was a fool once, but I have never been frightened. What right has this owner over you?"

"He is my father," the voice screamed loudly ; then there was more weeping ; then it spoke again : "It's awful ; I could bear anything now—anything—if I thought it would ever be any better ; but it won't. My mind's a woman's and my wants are a woman's, but I am not a woman. I am a show. The brutes stand round me, talk to me, touch me!"

"There's a way out," said the old man quietly, after a pause.

An idea occurred to him.

"I know—and I daren't take it—I've got a thing here, but I daren't use it."

"You could drink something—something that wouldn't hurt?"

“ Yes.”

“ You are quite alone ? ”

“ Yes ; my owner is in the village, at the inn.”

“ Then wait a minute.”

The old man hastened back to the canvas booth, and fumbled about with his chemicals. He murmured something about doing someone a kindness at last. Then he returned to the caravan with a glass of colourless liquid in his hand.

“ Open the door and take it,” he said.

The door was opened a very little way. A thin hand was thrust out and took the glass eagerly. The door closed, and the voice spoke again.

“ It will be easy ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Good-bye, then. To your health——”

The old man heard the glass crash on the wooden floor, then he went back to his seat in front of the booth, and carefully lit another pipe.

“ I will not go,” he said aloud. “ I fear nothing—not even the results of my best action.”

He listened attentively.

No sound whatever came from the caravan. All was still. Far away the sky was growing lighter with the dawn of a fine summer day.

H. G. Wells

THE CONE

from THE PLATTNER STORY AND OTHERS

Methuen, 1897

The night was hot and overcast, the sky red-rimmed with the lingering sunset of mid-summer. They sat at the open window, trying to fancy the air was fresher there. The trees and shrubs of the garden stood stiff and dark ; beyond in the roadway a gas-lamp burnt, bright orange against the hazy blue of the evening. Farther were the three lights of the railway signal against the lowering sky. The man and woman spoke to one another in low tones.

"He does not suspect?" said the man, a little nervously.

"Not he," she said peevishly, as though that too irritated her. "He thinks of nothing but the works and the prices of fuel. He has no imagination, no poetry."

"None of these men of iron have," he said sententiously. "They have no hearts."

"He has not," she said. She turned her discontented face towards the window. The distant sound of a roaring and rushing drew nearer and grew in volume; the house quivered; one heard the metallic rattle of the tender. As the train passed, there was a glare of light above the cutting and a driving tumult of smoke; one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight black oblongs—eight trucks—passed across the dim grey of the embankment, and were suddenly extinguished one by one in the throat of the tunnel, which, with the last, seemed to swallow down train, smoke, and sound in one abrupt gulp.

"This country was all fresh and beautiful once," he said; "and now—it is Gehenna. Down that way—nothing but pot-banks and chimneys belching fire and dust into the face of heaven. . . . But what does it matter? An end comes, an end to all this cruelty. . . . *To-morrow.*" He spoke the last word in a whisper.

"*To-morrow,*" she said, speaking in a whisper too, and still staring out of the window.

"Dear!" he said, putting his hand on hers.

She turned with a start, and their eyes searched one another's. Hers softened to his gaze. "My dear one!" she said, and then: "It seems so strange—that you should have come into my life like this—to open"—She paused.

"To open?" he said.

"All this wonderful world"—she hesitated, and spoke still more softly—"this world of *love* to me."

Then suddenly the door clicked and closed. They turned their heads, and he started violently back. In the shadow of the room stood a great shadowy figure—silent. They saw the face dimly in the half-light, with unexpressive dark patches under the pent-house brows. Every muscle in Raut's body suddenly became tense. When could the door have opened? What had he heard. Had he heard all? What had he seen? A tumult of questions.

The new-comer's voice came at last, after a pause that seemed interminable. "Well?" he said.

"I was afraid I had missed you, Horrocks," said the man at the

window, gripping the window-ledge with his hand. His voice was unsteady.

The clumsy figure of Horrocks came forward out of the shadow. He made no answer to Raut's remark. For a moment he stood above them.

The woman's heart was cold within her. "I told Mr. Raut it was just possible you might come back," she said, in a voice that never quivered.

Horrocks, still silent, sat down abruptly in the chair by her little work-table. His big hands were clenched; one saw now the fire of his eyes under the shadow of his brows. He was trying to get his breath. His eyes went from the woman he had trusted to the friend he had trusted, and then back to the woman.

By this time and for the moment all three half understood one another. Yet none dared say a word to ease the pent-up things that choked them.

It was the husband's voice that broke the silence at last.

"You wanted to see me?" he said to Raut.

Raut started as he spoke. "I came to see you," he said, resolved to lie to the last.

"Yes," said Horrocks.

"You promised," said Raut, "to show me some fine effects of moonlight and smoke."

"I promised to show you some fine effects of moonlight and smoke," repeated Horrocks in a colourless voice.

"And I thought I might catch you to-night before you went down to the works," proceeded Raut, "and come with you."

There was another pause. Did the man mean to take the thing coolly? Did he after all know? How long had he been in the room? Yet even at the moment when they heard the door, their attitudes. . . . Horrocks glanced at the profile of the woman, shadowy pallid in the half-light. Then he glanced at Raut, and seemed to recover himself suddenly. "Of course," he said, "I promised to show you the works under their proper dramatic conditions. It's odd how I could have forgotten."

"If I am troubling you"—began Raut.

Horrocks started again. A new light had suddenly come into the sultry gloom of his eyes. "Not in the least," he said.

"Have you been telling Mr. Raut of all these contrasts of flame and shadow you think so splendid?" said the woman, turning

now to her husband for the first time, her confidence creeping back again, her voice just one half-note too high. "That dreadful theory of yours that machinery is beautiful, and everything else in the world ugly. I thought he would not spare you, Mr. Raut. It's his great theory, his one discovery in art."

"I am slow to make discoveries," said Horrocks grimly, damping her suddenly. "But what I discover . . ." He stopped.

"Well?" she said.

"Nothing," and suddenly he rose to his feet.

"I promised to show you the works," he said to Raut, and put his big, clumsy hand on his friend's shoulder. "And you are ready to go?"

"Quite," said Raut, and stood up also.

There was another pause. Each of them peered through the indistinctness of the dusk at the other two. Horrocks' hand still rested on Raut's shoulder. Raut half fancied still that the incident was trivial after all. But Mrs. Horrocks knew her husband better, knew that grim quiet in his voice, and the confusion in her mind took a vague shape of physical evil. "Very well," said Horrocks, and, dropping his hand, turned towards the door.

"My hat?" Raut looked round in the half-light.

"That's my work-basket," said Mrs. Horrocks with a gust of hysterical laughter. Their hands came together on the back of the chair. "Here it is!" he said. She had an impulse to warn him in an undertone, but she could not frame a word. "Don't go!" and "Beware of him!" struggled in her mind, and the swift moment passed.

"Got it?" said Horrocks, standing with the door half open.

Raut stepped towards him. "Better say good-bye to Mrs. Horrocks," said the ironmaster, even more grimly quiet in his tone than before.

Raut started and turned. "Good-evening, Mrs. Horrocks," he said, and their hands touched.

Horrocks held the door open with a ceremonial politeness unusual in him towards men. Raut went out, and then, after a wordless look at her, her husband followed. She stood motionless while Raut's light footfall and her husband's heavy tread, like bass and treble, passed down the passage together. The front door slammed heavily. She went to the window, moving slowly, and stood watching—leaning forward. The two men appeared for a moment at the gateway in the road, passed under the street lamp,

and were hidden by the black masses of the shrubbery. The lamp-light fell for a moment on their faces, showing only unmeaning pale patches, telling nothing of what she still feared, and doubted, and craved vainly to know. Then she sank down into a crouching attitude in the big arm-chair, her eyes wide open and staring out at the red lights from the furnaces that flickered in the sky. An hour after she was still there, her attitude scarcely changed.

The oppressive stillness of the evening weighed heavily upon Raut. They went side by side down the road in silence, and in silence turned into the cinder-made by-way that presently opened out the prospect of the valley.

A blue haze, half dust, half mist, touched the long valley with mystery. Beyond were Hanley and Etruria, grey and black masses, outlined thinly by the rare golden dots of the street-lamps, and here and there a gaslit window, or the yellow glare of some late-working factory or crowded public-house. Out of the masses, clear and slender against the evening sky, rose a multitude of tall chimneys, many of them reeking, a few smokeless during a season of "play." Here and there a pallid patch and ghostly stunted beehive shapes showed the position of a pot-bank, or a wheel, black and sharp against the hot lower sky, marked some colliery where they raise the iridescent coal of the place. Nearer at hand was the broad stretch of railway, and half invisible trains shunted—a steady puffing and rumbling, with every now and then a ringing concussion and a series of impacts, and a passage of intermittent puffs of white steam across the further view. And to the left, between the railway and the dark mass of the low hill beyond, dominating the whole view, colossal, inky-black, and crowned with smoke and fitful flames, stood the great cylinders of the Jeddah Company Blast Furnaces, the central edifices of the big ironworks of which Horrocks was the manager. They stood heavy and threatening, full of an incessant turmoil of flames and seething molten iron, and about the feet of them rattled the rolling-mills, and the steam-hammer beat heavily and splashed the white iron sparks hither and thither. Even as they looked, a truckful of fuel was shot into one of the giants, and the red flames gleamed out, and a confusion of smoke and black dust came boiling upwards towards the sky.

"Certainly you get some fine effects of colour with your furnaces," said Raut, breaking a silence that had become apprehensive.

Horrocks grunted. He stood with his hands in his pockets, frowning down at the dim steaming railway and the busy ironworks beyond, frowning as if he were thinking out some knotty problem.

Raut glanced at him and away again. "At present your moonlight effect is hardly ripe," he continued, looking upward; "the moon is still smothered by the vestiges of daylight."

Horrocks stared at him with the expression of a man who has suddenly awakened. "Vestiges of daylight? . . . Of course, of course." He too looked up at the moon, pale still in the midsummer sky. "Come along," he said suddenly, and, gripping Raut's arm in his hand, made a move towards the path that dropped from them to the railway.

Raut hung back. Their eyes met and saw a thousand things in a moment that their lips came near to say. Horrocks's hand tightened and then relaxed. He let go, and before Raut was aware of it, they were arm in arm, and walking, one unwillingly enough, down the path.

"You see the fine effect of the railway signals towards Burslem," said Horrocks, suddenly breaking into loquacity, striding fast and tightening the grip of his elbow the while. "Little green lights and red and white lights, all against the haze. You have an eye for effect, Raut. It's a fine effect. And look at those furnaces of mine, how they rise upon us as we come down the hill. That to the right is my pet—seventy feet of him. I packed him myself, and he's boiled away cheerfully with iron in his guts for five long years. I've a particular fancy for *him*. That line of red there—a lovely bit of warm orange you'd call it, Raut—that's the puddlers' furnaces, and there, in the hot light, three black figures—did you see the white splash of the steam-hammer then?—that's the rolling-mills. Come along! Clang, clatter, how it goes rattling across the floor! Sheet tin, Raut—amazing stuff. Glass mirrors are not in it when that stuff comes from the mill. And, squelch!—there goes the hammer again. Come along!"

He had to stop talking to catch at his breath. His arm twisted into Raut's with benumbing tightness. He had come striding down the black path towards the railway as though he was possessed. Raut had not spoken a word, had simply hung back against Horrocks's pull with all his strength,

"I say," he said now, laughing nervously, but with an under-note of snarl in his voice, "why on earth are you nipping my arm off, Horrocks, and dragging me along like this?"

At length Horrocks released him. His manner changed again. "Nipping your arm off?" he said. "Sorry. But it's you taught me the trick of walking in that friendly way."

"You haven't learnt the refinements of it yet then," said Raut, laughing artificially again. "By Jove! I'm black and blue." Horrocks offered no apology. They stood now near the bottom of the hill, close to the fence that bordered the railway. The iron-works had grown larger and spread out with their approach. They looked up to the blast furnaces now instead of down; the further view of Etruria and Hanley had dropped out of sight with their descent. Before them, by the stile, rose a notice-board, bearing, still dimly visible, the words, "BEWARE OF THE TRAINS," half hidden by splashes of coaly mud.

"Fine effects," said Horrocks, waving his arm. "Here comes a train. The puffs of smoke, the orange glare, the round eye of light in front of it, the melodious rattle. Fine effects! But these furnaces of mine used to be finer, before we shoved cones in their throats, and saved the gas."

"How!" said Raut. "Cones?"

"Cones, my man, cones. I'll show you one nearer. The flames used to flare out of the open throats, great—what is it?—pillars of cloud by day, red and black smoke, and pillars of fire by night. Now we run it off in pipes, and burn it to heat the blast, and the top is shut by a cone. You'll be interested in that cone."

"But every now and then," said Raut, "you get a burst of fire and smoke up there."

"The cone's not fixed, it's hung by a chain from a lever, and balanced by an equipoise. You shall see it nearer. Else, of course, there'd be no way of getting fuel into the thing. Every now and then the cone dips, and out comes the flare."

"I see," said Raut. He looked over his shoulder. "The moon gets brighter," he said.

"Come along," said Horrocks abruptly, gripping his shoulder again, and moving him suddenly towards the railway crossing. And then came one of those swift incidents, vivid, but so rapid that they leave one doubtful and reeling. Halfway across, Horrocks's hand suddenly clenched upon him like a vice, and swung him backward and through a half-turn, so that he looked up the line. And there a chain of lamp-lit carriage-windows telescoped swiftly as it came towards them, and the red and yellow lights of an engine grew larger and larger, rushing down upon them. As he

grasped what this meant, he turned his face to Horrocks, and pushed with all his strength against the arm that held him back between the rails. The struggle did not last a moment. Just as certain as it was that Horrocks held him there, so certain was it that he had been violently lugged out of danger.

"Out of the way," said Horrocks, with a gasp, as the train came rattling by, and they stood panting by the gate into the ironworks.

"I did not see it coming," said Raut still, even in spite of his own apprehensions, trying to keep up an appearance of ordinary intercourse.

Horrocks answered with a grunt. "The cone," he said, and then, as one who recovers himself, "I thought you did not hear."

"I didn't," said Raut.

"I wouldn't have had you run over then for the world," said Horrocks.

"For a moment I lost my nerve," said Raut.

Horrocks stood for half a minute, then turned abruptly towards the ironworks again. "See how fine these great mounds of mine, these clinker-heaps, look in the night! That truck yonder, up above there! Up it goes, and out-tilts the slag. See the palpitating red stuff go sliding down the slope. As we get nearer, the heap rises up and cuts the blast furnaces. See the quiver up above the big one. Not that way! This way, between the heaps. That goes to the puddling furnaces, but I want to show you the canal first." He came and took Raut by the elbow, and so they went along side by side. Raut answered Horrocks vaguely. What, he asked himself, had really happened on the line? Was he deluding himself with his own fancies, or had Horrocks actually held him back in the way of the train? Had he just been within an ace of being murdered?

Suppose this slouching, scowling monster *did* know anything? For a minute or two then Raut was really afraid for his life, but the mood passed as he reasoned with himself. After all, Horrocks might have heard nothing. At anyrate, he pulled him out of the way in time. His odd manner might be due to the mere vague jealousy he had shown once before. He was talking now of the ash-heaps and the canal. "Eigh?" said Horrocks.

"What?" said Raut. "Rather! The haze in the moonlight. Fine!"

"Our canal," said Horrocks, stopping suddenly. "Our canal by moonlight and firelight is an immense effect. You've never seen

it? Fancy that! You've spent too many of your evenings philandering up in Newcastle there. I tell you, for real florid effects—But you shall see. Boiling water . . .”

As they came out of the labyrinth of clinker-heaps and mounds of coal and ore, the noises of the rolling-mill sprang upon them suddenly, loud, near, and distinct. Three shadowy workmen went by and touched their caps to Horrocks. Their faces were vague in the darkness. Raut felt a futile impulse to address them, and before he could frame his words, they passed into the shadows. Horrocks pointed to the canal close before them now: a weird-looking place it seemed, in the blood-red reflections of the furnaces. The hot water that cooled the tuyères came into it, some fifty yards up—a tumultuous, almost boiling affluent, and the steam rose up from the water in silent white wisps and streaks, wrapping damply about them, an incessant succession of ghosts coming up from the black and red eddies, a white uprising that made the head swim. The shining black tower of the larger blast-furnace rose overhead out of the mist, and its tumultuous riot filled their ears. Raut kept away from the edge of the water, and watched Horrocks.

“Here it is red,” said Horrocks, “blood-red vapour as red and hot as sin; but yonder there, where the moonlight falls on it, and it drives across the clinker-heaps, it is as white as death.”

Raut turned his head for a moment, and then came back hastily to his watch on Horrocks, “Come along to the rolling-mills,” said Horrocks. The threatening hold was not so evident that time, and Raut felt a little reassured. But all the same, what on earth did Horrocks mean about “white as death” and “red as sin”? Coincidence, perhaps?

They went and stood behind the puddlers for a little while, and then through the rolling-mills, where amidst an incessant din the deliberate steam-hammer beat the juice out of the succulent iron, and black, half-naked Titans rushed the plastic bars, like hot sealing-wax, between the wheels. “Come on,” said Horrocks in Raut's ear, and they went and peeped through the little glass hole behind the tuyères, and saw the tumbled fire writhing in the pit of the blast-furnace. It left one eye blinded for a while. Then, with green and blue patches dancing across the dark, they went to the lift by which the trucks of ore and fuel and lime were raised to the top of the big cylinder.

And out upon the narrow rail that overhung the furnace Raut's doubts came upon him again. Was it wise to be here? If

Horrocks did know—everything! Do what he would, he could not resist a violent trembling. Right under foot was a sheer depth of seventy feet. It was a dangerous place. They pushed by a truck of fuel to get to the railing that crowned the place. The reek of the furnace, a sulphurous vapour streaked with pungent bitterness, seemed to make the distant hillside of Hanley quiver. The moon was riding out now from among a drift of clouds, half-way up the sky above the undulating wooded outlines of Newcastle. The steaming canal ran away from below them under an indistinct bridge, and vanished into the dim haze of the flat fields towards Burslem.

“That’s the cone I’ve been telling you of,” shouted Horrocks; “and, below that, sixty feet of fire and molten metal, with the air of the blast frothing through it like gas in soda-water.”

Raut gripped the hand-rail tightly, and stared down at the cone. The heat was intense. The boiling of the iron and the tumult of the blast made a thunderous accompaniment to Horrocks’s voice. But the thing had to be gone through now. Perhaps, after all. . . .

“In the middle,” bawled Horrocks, “temperature near a thousand degrees. If *you* were dropped into it . . . flash into flame like a pinch of gunpowder in a candle. Put your hand out and feel the heat of his breath. Why, even up here I’ve seen the rain-water boiling off the trucks. And that cone there. It’s a damned sight too hot for roasting cakes. The top side of it’s three hundred degrees.”

“Three hundred degrees!” said Raut.

“Three hundred centigrade, mind!” said Horrocks. “It will boil the blood out of you in no time.”

“Eigh?” said Raut, and turned.

“Boil the blood out of you in. . . . No, you don’t!”

“Let me go!” screamed Raut. “Let go my arm!”

With one hand he clutched at the hand-rail, then with both. For a moment the two men stood swaying. Then suddenly, with a violent jerk, Horrocks had twisted him from his hold. He clutched at Horrocks and missed, his foot went back into empty air; in mid-air he twisted himself, and then cheek and shoulder and knee struck the hot cone together.

He clutched the chain by which the cone hung, and the thing sank an infinitesimal amount as he struck it. A circle of glowing red appeared about him, and a tongue of flame, released from the chaos within, flickered up towards him. An intense pain assailed him at the knees, and he could smell the singeing of his hands. He

raised himself to his feet, and tried to climb up the chain, and then something struck his head. Black and shining with the moonlight, the throat of the furnace rose about him.

Horrocks, he saw, stood above him by one of the trucks of fuel on the rail. The gesticulating figure was bright and white in the moonlight, and shouting, " Fizzle, you fool ! Fizzle, you hunter of women ! You hot-blooded hound ! Boil ! boil ! boil ! "

Suddenly he caught up a handful of coal out of the truck, and flung it deliberately, lump after lump, at Raut.

" Horrocks ! " cried Raut. " Horrocks ! "

He clung crying to the chain, pulling himself up from the burning of the cone. Each missile Horrocks flung hit him. His clothes charred and glowed, and as he struggled the cone dropped, and a rush of hot suffocating gas whooped out and burned round him in a swift breath of flame.

His human likeness departed from him. When the momentary red had passed, Horrocks saw a charred, blackened figure, its head streaked with blood, still clutching and fumbling with the chain, and writhing in agony—a cindery animal, an inhuman, monstrous creature that began a sobbing intermittent shriek.

Abruptly, at the sight, the ironmaster's anger passed. A deadly sickness came upon him. The heavy odour of burning flesh came drifting up to his nostrils. His sanity returned to him.

" God have mercy upon me ! " he cried. " O God ! what have I done ? "

He knew the thing below him, save that it still moved and felt, was already a dead man—that the blood of the poor wretch must be boiling in his veins. An intense realisation of that agony came to his mind, and overcame every other feeling. For a moment he stood irresolute, and then, turning to the truck, he hastily tilted its contents upon the struggling thing that had once been a man. The mass fell with a thud, and went radiating over the cone. With the thud the shriek ended, and a boiling confusion of smoke, dust, and flame came rushing up towards him. As it passed, he saw the cone clear again.

Then he staggered back, and stood trembling, clinging to the rail with both hands. His lips moved, but no words came to them.

Down below was the sound of voices and running steps. The clangour of rolling in the shed ceased abruptly.

Ethel Colburn Mayne

THE SEPARATE ROOM

from COME IN

Chapman & Hall, 1917

I

It was clear that Bergsma was pleased, and Marion Cameron held her breath in thrilled alarm.

"You've done it—why! you've done it rippingly," said Bergsma, in his intermittent foreign accent, which now made a *w* and *y* precede the *r* in "rippingly." He did not look up, but read on eagerly from the sheet that Marion had typed for him, this morning, before he came into the study. She had felt tired, on waking, after the late evening with its difficult job, and then the exciting sense of having done it not so badly; she had hardly slept a wink, but she was at Bergsma's house much earlier than usual, so that all should be in best array when Bergsma came, and she herself in something that might figure as composure.

"So it was interesting," Bergsma said, still reading. "Miss Grey was in good voice, and Woolley not too—woolly?" He grinned at his mild joke, but still did not look up.

"Miss Grey was splendid," Marion said, in her clear solemn tones; "and Mr. Woolley was . . ." She stopped. She wanted to acknowledge the joke, to say that Mr. Woolley had been something textile, but the word would not present itself, and Marion gave it up. "Mr. Woolley was quite good."

"Loose?" asked Bergsma, with another grin.

"Loose—Mr. Woolley?"

He glanced at her. "The part—it's *quelque peu*! I thought he might have 'given' a bit for once, pulled his voice out . . . ah, *peste*, no more of it!" He frowned.

Marion blushed. She knew she had been slow, and knew that Bergsma hated slowness.

He laid the sheet aside. "It's all right. Send it off." Now he looked up, and at her. "You enjoyed it—the job, I mean?"

"Indeed I did," she answered with the full force of her earnestness.

He turned his thick blue eyes away.

"Like to do it again?"

“ If you think I’m worthy . . . ” Marion said, a shade more solemnly still.

All at once a different mood seized Bergsma. “ Oh, any intelligent person can turn out a notice like that. It wasn’t an important production. . . . You’ve done it very nicely.” He took the morning paper ; Marion knew she was dismissed to her own table in the corner.

This kind of thing had happened before—the disconcerting change of tone, when she had thought that he was really pleased beyond the ordinary limits of a secretary’s “ giving-of-satisfaction.” Marion did not resent, but she would have liked to understand it. Was it something in him, or in herself, that brought the quick reaction ? For she knew, as she had known before, that this was not the mere return to business-manner when the moment for expansion is over. No ; he was cross, and about something that was definite, to him.

She put up her article for post—the first words she had ever written for print, and they were to appear, in the foremost musical weekly, not as hers but his. She was Bergsma’s “ ghost ! ” Marion, when first she had realized that this was what she was to be, had smiled to herself with the humour of which, for all her lack of wit, she was capable. Bergsma’s ghost—a ludicrously dissimilar one ! He was short and squat, with a flat, smooth, white face, and thick, prominent, most heavy-lidded eyes that deadened into boredom frankly and alarmingly : “ the eyes of genius,” somebody had said of them to Marion. Certainly, if that power of extinguishing his eyes were proof of genius, Bergsma had it ; and if the other power of lighting so excitedly that they lit up his whole face were further proof, the eyes doubly marked him. That was what made it comic that she should be his ghost. Marion’s eyes were large, but that was the most they were. They always looked the same ; their brightness was constant—not a luminous brightness, but a mere surface glitter, just enough to rescue them from dulness. They bored her ; she despised them heartily. Other things about herself she did not so much mind. She was glad to have her strong white teeth, to be so very tall and not an atom weedy ; she could not help thinking, too, that she looked more like “ a lady ” than most working-girls. (Marion liked to call herself a working-girl, but it annoyed her mother.) She carried herself gallantly, and had adopted the right manner of dress for an impoverished but undeniable gentlewoman, glad and proud to be the hard-working

secretary to a leading critic of music—the musical drama, especially. She wore dark, well-cut coats and skirts, and broad low stiff white collars, and sober hats that had not “too much surface,” as her friend, Mrs. Wynne, was fond of saying. Marion didn’t know what her friend meant, yet she always contrived to get the kind of hat. It was worn one-sidedly, “crammed” a little; that suited the frank, earnest face with its wide brows and mouth, for it toned down what might have been too much of earnestness. “You look almost piquante,” Mrs. Wynne had said. “Not quite—I shouldn’t countenance that; it would spoil you.”

Marion laughed. “You wouldn’t countenance my countenance!”

But Mrs. Wynne did not laugh, and Marion flushed, as she often did when people didn’t laugh, as they often didn’t. It wasn’t a good joke; one saw that when one heard it. . . . She thought of saying *that*; it sounded funny; but perhaps it wouldn’t be a good joke, either?

At all events, it was a good joke that she should be Bergsma’s ghost. His public, this week, would read *her* devoutly, thinking she was he! And he had known that this was to be so, and yet had ordered her to send it off. . . . She had not believed that she could do it, when Bergsma, harried by a crisis at a theatre where the opera in rehearsal was of his discovery—when he had said: “Look here, Miss Cameron, they want a notice of that Russian operetta at the Yellow on Wednesday night: the International Amateurs, you know. Do you think you could do it? I’m so bothered! It’s interesting, though not important. I’d like to give them a word or two this week, but I can’t spare the time just now.”

Marion had trembled. “Would they take a notice—from *me*?”

“They’ll take what I send them,” Bergsma said. “How are they to know who wrote it? Do you feel inclined to try?”

His eyes were beginning to deaden. . . . Marion hastened to say something that would show she was not thinking of the sudden evolution of her duties, or was thinking of it as an honour.

“If I only felt sure I could do it,” she faltered.

“You know my point of view by this time, and it’s only a short notice—anything long would be absurd. . . . It’s very good of you, Miss Cameron; we’ll regard it as settled that you go and try your hand.” He had glanced at her again, a little suspiciously, she thought; so Marion said, “I feel honoured,” in her most earnest manner.

He had a shrug and a grunted word for it ; she felt again that haunting sense of error. . . . It made her the more ardent when the evening at the Yellow Theatre arrived. Her mind was stretched to fullest tension ; the little opera was Russian of the subtlest, all accumulation and intention, expressed in a new, disconcerting scale, "that beats Schönberg," said one of the appalling experts among whom she sat, "into an egg-flip."

Though she did know Bergsma's point of view, it was not an easy task for Marion, writing her first article, to utter it, and so that it would be accepted as his work. For Bergsma had a very special manner. It seemed almost impious to ape it, but what else could he expect of her ? and Marion, blushing while she wrote, did ape it : the quivering, suffused attack, the adjectives and adverbs, the conviction and conversion, as in a revivalist campaign—Bergsma's patent, making each experience of the higher musical drama into a vicarious public change of heart ; *his* heart, of course, had never been anywhere but in the right scale.

Marion, though elated, was alarmed to find that she could "do" it. Suppose he was angry ? That opening—it was like. . . . But if Bergsma had noticed the mimicry, he had said nothing about it ; the crossness did not refer to that, she knew. And now she had sent it off—it would appear ! Even though he had said it wasn't important, she couldn't help regarding next Saturday as an epoch—she and her mother, who had sat up for her, that "Yellow" night, with cocoa and biscuits in their bedroom, and at one o'clock in the morning had heard the article, and thought it *exactly* like Mr. Bergsma's own.

Soon Marion was writing all the minor notices, yet the weekly did not lose prestige. It was an astonishing development. All she had had to offer, in the beginning, was her wide acquaintance (it was hardly knowledge, in the deepest sense) with some new developments in foreign music. She had travelled, and (most useful, too) was polyglot in a degree that rivalled even Bergsma, who never used his native language—probably the one he now knew least, for it was Dutch, and Holland has added little to the musical drama. Marion knew Dutch, but that seemed to be one of the things in her that did not please him.

"Ah, Dutch I now speak never," he had said hurriedly, when she told him, and she had noticed with what an unusually foreign idiom he then spoke. Normally he used quite normal English.

However, this had not deterred him from engaging her, and she had not again mentioned her acquaintance with Dutch. His vexation was put away among the rest of the puzzlements, once she had thoroughly discussed it with her mother.

Marion discussed everything with her mother. Both were younger than their ages, but while Marion, at twenty-eight, showed merely a retarded maturity, Mrs. Cameron was of the type that never does grow up. She was not "well-preserved"; her hair was grey, her small pink face was frankly though quite prettily wrinkled and withered; she was, in short, the confessed old lady who is a little self-consciously a child. True to her type, she held herself to be a deep diplomatist; Marion believed this of her too—she had been nurtured in the faith. Thus they could, with zest and a tinge of vanity on Mrs. Cameron's part, sit arguing for hours and hours about other people's reasons for being or doing this or that. They would turn an incident round and round, and up and down; then Mrs. Cameron would bring forth an explanation which lately, now and then, had seemed to Marion a little superannuated. She would laugh her big whole-hearted laugh. "Oh, mother, that's *your* generation!"—and Mrs. Cameron, though offended, would laugh too, and declare that Marion was now leading such a free life that no doubt she must know better, but "that would have been the reason when I was a girl."

In this way the repulse of Dutch had been explained. "He must have been dissatisfied with a former secretary who spoke it. That was it, you may be sure."

"Or perhaps," cried Marion the emancipate, "he was *in love* with a secretary who spoke it. That would account for his nervousness, too."

"But, Marion, Mr. Bergsma is married."

"*Ça n'empêche pas*," Marion smiled.

Mrs. Cameron pondered the smile. Marion was growing; her mother must grow with her.

"Will he fall in love with *you*, I wonder?" she said, archly.

Marion rose up from her chair. They were in their private hotel's drawing-room, quite alone together; everybody else preferred the lounge.

"Mother! If you ever say that again . . ."

Mrs. Cameron's little face at once took on a rosy obstinacy.

"I don't see why you fly at me, Marion. You said it first."

"I! Say such a thing about myself and . . . and Mr. Bergsma! I'm a useful servant to him, that's all."

"So would the other one have been."

Marion gasped. "The 'other one!'" For a moment she could not say any more.

Her mother became injured. "I see nothing dreadful in calling another secretary 'the other one.' And please don't speak of yourself as a servant, Marion; there's no need to do that, if you *are* working for a salary."

Marion sat down again. "I am a servant, and I'm not ashamed of it."

"You are an accomplished lady, who makes use of her talent to help a busy man—not of course a gentleman, but . . ."

"'Not a gentleman,'" Marion gasped again.

"Do not repeat every word I say." Mrs. Cameron was calm, but her little fallen-in, pink mouth was closely set. "Mr. Bergsma is very clever, but you must know as well as I do that he is *not* a gentleman, in the way your father was, and Neil is."

"He's foreign," Marion panted. She had only just saved herself from echoing "Neil!" Neil *liked* Bergsma; he had said so when he met him before going out again to India.

"You are used to foreigners," continued Mrs. Cameron. "You know that the Count and M. de la Vigne and Herr von Adelbert were not a bit like Mr. Bergsma. He may be very courteous to you; I have no doubt he is, but his manners to *me* . . ."

And all this because Bergsma had omitted to open a door, the other day, for Mrs. Cameron! He had been talking so eagerly that he hadn't seen her get up. Marion did not speak; she could do nothing but echo if she spoke. The Count—horrid old M. de la Vigne—manners. . . .

"It is time to go to bed," said Mrs. Cameron, cheerfully, as if nothing had happened. That was her tact, the famous tact which had carried her—and Neil and Marion—through so many difficulties. Marion wondered why she hated it, now that it was being exercised upon herself. But mother had forgotten it when she spoke of Mr. Bergsma as not being a gentleman. A cloud obscured the earnest face, as she followed Mrs. Cameron upstairs, and wished, for the first time in all her life, that they could afford to have separate bedrooms.

She said much less about her work from that time forward. It grew more and more exacting ; there were few nights now on which she was not out at concerts, for Bergsma was devoting himself to musical drama : he found it more inspiring for his gifts of exposition. It was clear that Marion's efforts pleased him ; and yet his crossness grew more pronounced, more constant—not rudeness, but a curious coolness and aloofness, as it were a watchfulness. And since now she did not talk about it with her mother, it seemed the more oppressive, even sinister. Her mother did not ask the questions Marion had expected, and would perhaps have welcomed ; they might have eased the dual strain. The strain was dual because Mrs. Cameron, too, was often cool now about little things—the cocoa, for example. It was always there when Marion came in late, but there with an effect of duty, not of glad excited revel, as on that first night. Marion sometimes felt a strange depression. Life seemed altered ; though outwardly more exhilarating, it was inwardly less happy. Her toil was not the cause—that grew more dear and glorious every day. No one could have told her articles from Bergsma's now, and still he didn't seem to notice, or if he did, he liked it, to judge by the opportunities he gave her.

One day, Mrs. Wynne said something which infuriated Marion.

“What's your salary now ? I suppose it's a good deal bigger.”

There fell an almost tangible silence. It was as if something they had waited for had happened. . . . Marion looked at her friend. Mrs. Wynne was not looking at Marion, but her eyes had just met Mrs. Cameron's, and Marion caught the gleam. She felt her own eyes flash.

“My salary remains the same.”

There was another little silence ; then Mrs. Wynne said, “Well done, Bergsma !”

“What do you mean ?” cried Marion, choking.

Mrs. Cameron intervened at that point ; she said something about “on probation.”

“Rather a long probation,” Mrs. Wynne observed.

Marion got up. Her voice was gone, her eyes did not flash now, but dimmed with sudden, smarting tears. She stood a moment, looking at the others, then hurried from the room.

So that was what her mother had been plotting. She had asked Mrs. Wynne to say something ; the meeting of their eyes betrayed it. . . . When one was being given such a chance ! If Bergsma knew, he wouldn't think so highly of his lady-secretary. Recko

sordid rise, as if she were indeed a servant ! That was just the difference it made, to be a lady. But mother was a lady too, if Mrs. Wynne was a little too shrewd to be " quite-quite. . . ." However, there was no time to worry about it ; she had a bigger job to-night than she had ever had before—a symphony, a Danish one, produced by a Society on their special Sunday night for the innermost circle (Bergsma was out of town). She must keep fit for that. And supper—Sunday supper here, with her mother ! Could she stand it ? All the time that hateful incident would hover, of the eyes that met and parted furtively. . . . No ; she couldn't go through supper.

When Mrs. Cameron came up to change her dress, she found a note upon the pin-cushion. Marion was supping at a little restaurant, " quite nice and respectable," close to the hall where her job lay ; she would be home at the usual hour.

Her mother was asleep, or seemed to be asleep, when she came in. There was no cocoa.

II

Quite without warning it came—the letter in which Bergsma said he had decided to dispense with a secretary for the present.

Marion read it at breakfast. She managed not to cry out ; if she turned white, nobody saw her, in the pre-occupation with their food which, at breakfast especially, was a source of continual unrest among the boarders. She put the letter in her belt, and blindly took a plate displaying a poached egg. Marion cut her egg mechanically ; it flowed over the toast, and something in the sight made her feel sick. . . . She would have to tell her mother after breakfast. It would be dreadful ; her mother would gush out, like the egg. But the thing could not be hidden : better get it told as soon as possible.

" Come up to our room a moment, mother, before you read the paper," Marion said, when Mrs. Cameron had finished. She had smuggled her own streaming plate away, before it could be noticed that she had not touched the egg except to cut it.

" Are you staying in this morning, then ? " Mrs. Cameron said, wondering.

" Yes," Marion answered, and a bitter wave of woe swept into her. She would be staying in all mornings now. . . . She mounted the steep stairs before her mother, the distress increasing as she

went, until at the last landing (for their room was at the very top) she broke down, and stood with her face hidden, trembling.

"What's the matter?" Mrs. Cameron called sharply from the flight below; she had seen through the balusters.

Without answering, Marion went into their room. When the little staring face appeared, she silently held out the letter.

Mrs. Cameron began to read. Almost as soon as she began, her daughter broke out crying—weakly, the sound muffled by her covering hands.

"What is it, mother, what can I have done? Oh, tell me, tell me!" Marion sobbed.

"Don't cry, Marion," Mrs. Cameron said quickly. "Whatever you do, don't cry."

She was feeling for a prop to clutch at—there was nothing but their pride: they must not cry. That man, whom she had always thought so common—*that* man had done this to them! She dropped the letter; Bergsma's cheque fell out. Money—his . . . she could have stamped upon the cheque.

"Oh, Marion, *do not* cry. Remember what you are—and what he is!" she added fiercely. But the fierceness died. Soon she was crying too, because she could not bear to cry. Their sobs were audible outside, for Mrs. Cameron had forgotten to shut the door; a sloppy servant came and stared into the room. It had not been "done" yet, and the girl's face grew sulky—now they'd stop her doing it, and she was to get out so soon as she had finished upstairs.

Mrs. Cameron went to the door, and locked it. "I saw that horrid Annie staring in," she gulped. Then she did not know what to say. Annie would be cross if they delayed her, and Annie could make a lot of difference to the boarders' comfort. But Marion would certainly not be able to come downstairs for some time yet. She had thrown herself upon her unmade bed; her sobs grew deeper every minute. Mrs. Cameron had never, since the baby-years, heard Marion cry until to-day.

"Oh, mother, tell me what I can have done," she kept on moaning.

Was it not an occasion for the tact?
"I believe," said Mrs. Cameron, "that you were getting to write so well that he was jealous."

But Marion only groaned. "Oh, mother!" on a different note of anguish.

"Mrs. Wynne says your articles really seem like making fun of him sometimes—they are so like."

"Mrs. Wynne!"

"She was your idol, Marion, before . . . all this."

The tact seemed to be working, for Marion suddenly sat up. Her face was blurred, but it could show that she was cross, her mother thought—and then she saw that Marion was not cross, but desperate.

"It's no use," said Marion. "There's no good talking about it. The servant is dismissed, with a quarter's salary in lieu of notice."

Mrs. Cameron's eyes burned. "Extra salary! How dare he?"

"I'll throw his cheque back in his face," the girl said, getting off the bed.

"Not in his *face*, Marion—you wouldn't *go* there?"

"Mother!" Marion groaned again. . . .

They were hunted from their room at last, for Annie knocked at the door violently. Mrs. Cameron put on her hat before she yielded; she was going out to do some shopping, for she couldn't settle to the morning paper now. When she came back, in half-an-hour, Marion still was sitting at a table in the drawing-room, her face buried in her hands, as she had been when Mrs. Cameron had left her. . . . It all began again, and through the whole day it went on. The letter to Bergsma must be written—a dignified, ladylike letter. Marion made draft upon draft: they were not torn up as they accumulated, for in each there was a phrase that seemed essential to her solace—one of gratitude, of meek reproach, of sad affection. But to every phrase like this, her mother objected. "No, not that, Marion—please, not *that*."

So it went on, and they got crosser and crosser. Tea in their bedroom—their own China tea—was the one change from the hot, dingy, saddle-backed drawing-room. The house-tea was in the lounge as usual; they rarely went down. This hotel was their poverty's consent—a place so typical of its kind as to be almost mythical; no aggravation of the cheap private hotel's horrors was absent. But tea in their room did not refresh them. They drank cups down like poison-cups; Marion could "touch nothing," though Mrs. Cameron had specially, that morning, bought some favourite and expensive cakes. Would to-morrow be as bad, the older woman wondered. At any rate, the letter would be sent by then, and Marion might pick up some courage after it had gone.

After dinner Mrs. Wynne came in. The final draft had not been written yet, and they had lingered in the lounge—each shrinking from renewal.

“Shall we tell her?” Mrs. Cameron said in a whisper, as Mrs. Wynne came towards them, threading her way among the chairs. “Just as you like,” said Marion, wearily. “She’ll have to know some day.”

But in her heart she knew that she desired to tell. Despite that incident about the salary, Marion still liked Mrs. Wynne. With her much wider knowledge of the world she might throw light on Bergsma’s action, and anyhow one couldn’t talk or think of any other subject. Mrs. Cameron, on her side, wanted to hear Bergsma blamed “as he deserved”; so eagerly they welcomed Mrs. Wynne, and quickly transferred her and themselves to the drawing-room.

“You can smoke there—nobody ever enters it but ourselves,” Mrs. Cameron assured her.

Sunk in the saddle-back Chesterfield with her cigarette, Mrs. Wynne sat listening. Her expressive monkey-face said more than she did, for at first she only murmured sympathetically. But Marion, watching her face, asked suddenly, “Have you ever heard that Mr. Bergsma was . . . was given to dismissing secretaries without notice?” She laughed—a wretched little laugh, most sadly changed from the big note of other days.

Mrs. Wynne said, “Not exactly that.”

“Then what?” said Marion.

“I may as well tell you. He is a ‘woman’s man,’ they say; attractive to women, I mean. I shouldn’t have supposed so, but that’s his reputation. And there’s a Mrs. Bergsma, you see. Have you ever met her?”

“She has come into the study once or twice,” said Marion coldly, and wished she had not asked her question.

“She may be jealous.”

“Jealous—of *me*!”

“Not of you personally. It’s common enough, you know, with these men’s wives.”

“But Mr. Bergsma never . . .”

Mrs. Cameron interrupted Marion. “You said it yourself.”

“Said what, mother?”

“That he might have been in love with the other one who spoke Dutch. You know you did, Marion.”

Marion saw a smile—at once repressed—break on the visitor's lips. But there was no stopping Mrs. Cameron ; the Dutch episode was told, with "*Marion's*" explanation of it, and in that vein the dialogue developed, while Marion sat and writhed. There was a transition to the other theory of jealousy—Bergsma's jealousy of the articles. Mrs. Wynne rejected it.

"A writer with . . . with *his* sort of style" (Marion wondered what that meant) "would never notice."

There were no more smiles, no looks exchanged with Mrs. Cameron, yet Mrs. Wynne preserved an air of knowing something that they didn't know. Soon she went away, a little bored perhaps, for they had talked of nothing else. Then Mrs. Cameron and Marion went to bed, the letter still unwritten, Mrs. Wynne had said there was no hurry ; Bergsma would anticipate a short delay. It galled Mrs. Cameron—she would have liked to finish with him ; but Marion seemed relieved, and indeed neither could have faced an evening like the day. So they went up to bed, quite early.

. . . A separate room—a room in which she could have cried herself to sleep ! But Marion must be quiet every night—there never would be one when she might cry.

Soon after the candle was put out, her mother spoke.

"Are you awake, Marion ? Mrs. Wynne thinks you're in love with Mr. Bergsma, I am sure."

No answer from the other bed.

"You're not asleep ; I heard you move the pillow. . . . That's what she thinks. I never liked her, but she was your friend, so I said nothing. After all, I daresay it's a blessing the connection is ended. Anything that gives rise to gossip. . . . I should have thought of that ; I blame myself. However, it's all over now, and Neil need never know how it happened. We can let him think that the work had got too hard for you, as indeed I think it had. And with no rise in salary ! Do you remember how Mrs. Wynne remarked on that ?"

But her voice had got drowsy ; soon she was asleep. Marion for a long while did not dare to move. She lay, like a dead body, stiff and straight ; and thought how like she was to one, except that the dead body *would* be dead. It would not wake next morning, and the morning after that, nor go to bed next night and lie so still because it feared to set its mother talking of how it was believed to be in love with Mr. Bergsma, but how Neil need never know.

Miss Cameron had been working too hard, Dr. Ferguson said ; she would have had to take a long rest anyhow—she could not have gone on at that rate.

Marion peered at him suspiciously, and found him peering in a similar way at her. He was a good-looking pompous man, her mother's contemporary. Marion felt that he would be on her mother's side. She could not have accounted for the feeling, nor till now would it have come to her—there had been no "sides" till now. But as he peered at her, she found herself reflecting : "He'll call mother wonderful, too, like Colonel Morris and the Admiral." Though Dr. Ferguson had attended the Camerons for years, he knew nothing of their lives except their ailments and their poverty ; he now was obviously impressed when he heard that Marion had been working with Bergsma. It was his foible to be up-to-date, as he still called it ; Bergsma's work appealed to him—there had been a new Scriabin piece lately : "the Theosophical School," said Dr. Ferguson, with pride, looking at Marion more respectfully. "Exacting work, no doubt, yours must have been."

"I was only his secretary," Marion said.

"'Only!'" said Mrs. Cameron. She was standing, very upright, at the foot of the bed, gazing pathetically from the doctor's face to Marion's, like a child who knew that it was like a child.

Marion groaned. "Be quiet, mother" ; and at the same instant her conviction of the doctor's partisanship changed. He was on her side ! He had been peering at her still more closely, but when Mrs. Cameron spoke he turned his head and peered at *her*. His eyes lit up with a quick gleam ; he prevented Mrs. Cameron from going on by going on himself with animation, ordaining change of air as soon as Marion was well enough ("and rich enough," said Marion, but he took no notice) ; in the meantime she was to see her friends, not read nor write at all, not brood, but look forward instead of backward, make the best of life. . . .

Marion lay and listened. She knew what would happen when her mother and the doctor left the bedroom. He would be told about the extra work, and the not-extra salary, and her too faithful mimicry of Bergsma's style. Perhaps he would not be told of Mrs. Wynne's imputed theory, but she wasn't sure : mother was so . . . so *foolish!* That was the amazing word that came to her, and Marion's thoughts diverged. Her mother foolish—she who had done such marvels with her tact, who had carried her big son and

her big daughter on its shoulders, as it were. "Minnie Cameron's a wonderful woman." Had there ever been a Colonel or an Admiral, among their large acquaintance in the sort, who had not at some time said that to Marion? And Neil too: he was always saying how wonderful mother was . . . *was* she?

Outside the door she heard them whispering. Why didn't her mother take the doctor to the ever-empty drawing-room? *He* couldn't know there was a place that they might, practically, call their own sitting-room, but Mrs. Cameron knew it; and wasn't whispering supposed to be the thing most fatal to a patient's nerves? "No rise in her salary": she could have sworn she caught the words. There could be no need to tell him that; the work would have been just as hard if she *had* had the bigger salary. But it was vain to torment one's-self; mother always did what she "thought right." And as Marion lay and strained her ears, the certainty grew stronger that Mrs. Cameron would put the other view before him—the view that Marion might have been in love with Bergsma. She would think that, also, right. Perhaps it was; perhaps a doctor should be told such things about a helpless, useless daughter who would be a burden again now, instead of a breadwinner. And she had been so proud of earning her own living! Hot tears ran down her cheeks. As a secretary pure and simple, she would not have broken down. It was the hard work, late hours, excitement, mental strain, and—and Bergsma's growing crossness and aloofness, his avoidance of her, even while he used her; the thick eyes that had not flashed for *her* this many a day, but always deadened, deadened more and more with each infrequent interview. How she had watched to see the eyes light up, the way they used, when she had "done" some concert more capably than usual—and the eyes never had, though still he sent her: "in case there should be something startling that I'd better do myself, and then I can write-up your article." That had meant that she must take even more pains than usual, lest Bergsma be "let down," and ignore a masterpiece. But Marion had not minded, or would not have minded, if . . . And then had come the letter.

They had not sent back the cheque. Mrs. Wynne had said it would be futile and undignified; they couldn't bandy money about—Bergsma would insist, it would be horribly uncomfortable; and the "salary in lieu of notice" *was* the proper thing for him to do. So a colourless letter had gone, in which the phrases of affection and reproach were all left out. It had had the effect of making

Bergsma write again, holding forth vague hopes that some day he would be able to resume Miss Cameron's "invaluable services." There had been discussions on what he meant by that. Marion said, "Nothing"; Mrs. Cameron (commenting with much sarcasm on *invaluable*) hoped so, but was afraid he did mean something. That went on for days and nights; inspirations on what Bergsma meant would flock in the darkness. . . . But the breakdown had mercifully come at last, and had done this for Marion—she might cry in her bed now. It was called part of her illness. Without the illness, another explanation of her melancholy had been showing itself as imminent. "I shall begin to think that your friend Mrs. Wynne was right."

Those words had been said one day, in a flurry of temper, at tea-time. Marion could go out of the room then; but if they should be said and added to, at night, when the candle was extinguished. . . .

Mrs. Cameron came back, brisk and brave and pathetic.

"The doctor thinks we shall have rain at last. I'm glad for your sake, Marion; this room gets so hot. The sun is cheerful, but the rain will make things fresh again."

"Did you talk about the weather all that time?" asked Marion.

"Of course we talked of you a little; he had to tell me about your diet. But, Marion, dear, you know there are other things in the world besides your trouble."

"Oh yes—the weather," Marion said.

"Invalids are *never* told what the doctor says about them. You must not be unreasonable, Marion."

Marion fixed her eyes upon the little face, like a ventriloquist's puppet's face. It looked back at her, and the lips drew together, with a kind of peevish patience. "You've been crying. The doctor says (as you insist on being told what he says) that I mustn't let you cry, on any account."

"Then of course you mustn't, mother. How are you going to stop me? Shall I tell you what I was crying about? It was about never being alone. I'm going to ask the doctor to order me a separate bedroom. The extra-quarter's salary will pay for it. It will do me more good than any other change."

Mrs. Cameron began to cry.

"Oh, mother, that's not tactful, is it, showing me a bad example?" Marion loathed herself, yet could not stop. It was too

much for her—the triple wreck, of herself and Bergsma and her mother. . . .

The doctor would not order the separate room. He gave all sorts of unconvincing reasons, very cheerily. Marion lay and looked at him.

“ I shall torment myself till I find out the real reason,” she said. “ Will that be good for me ? ”

He laughed. “ You have far too much intelligence, Miss Cameron. *You* won't waste your mental strength like that.”

“ I have no use for my intelligence,” said Marion. “ I have no use for my mental strength. One way of wasting them is as good as another.”

“ Oh, nonsense, nonsense ! ” laughed the doctor. “ What you've got to do is to get well, and then see if you haven't a use for them. Mr. Bergsma's not the only busy man who needs a secretary.”

A cunning look came in Marion's face. “ And *he* may ' resume my invaluable services, ' ” she said, fixing her eyes on her mother.

Mrs. Cameron winced, but she stood bravely up to Marion's eyes. “ Well, all right, darling, if he does.” She smiled pathetically.

The cunning look died out. “ I'm not mad, I tell you both ! ” cried Marion.

The doctor took her wrist between his fingers. “ What put *that* brilliant idea into your head, may I inquire ? ”

“ You two ! ” Marion shrieked, and tore her wrist away. “ You two think I am. That's why *you* won't let me have a room to myself, and that's why mother grins and pretends she wouldn't rather die than ever let me work again for Mr. Bergsma. She hated him, you know,” she told the doctor in a sudden mood of confidence, “ and all because he forgot to open the drawing-room door for her one day ! ” She sank back on the pillow. “ That was why, just *that* ” ; and she began to sob and moan. . . .

But as time went on, she did get better. Her strength came back, and with it, self-control. It was not often now that she sneered at, or “ flew at,” her mother ; she only lay and watched her, with a smile. Mrs. Cameron did not like the smile, but she avoided looking—it was the most tactful thing to do. And when Marion got better and could be up, and better still and could come out for little walks, the smile, though it was there sometimes, was not so frequent. It, like the crying, had been part of her illness, and *that* was nearly over ; the smile would disappear when all the illness did, and everything would be as it had been before, except that

the horrid Bergsma connection would be done with. Neil need never know that Marion had, for a while, been so—so overstrained that Doctor Ferguson had warned Mrs. Cameron not to let her be alone even for a moment. Neil need never know, and that was all that mattered. . . . She looked at Marion complacently, one day in Kensington Gardens ; but instantly she looked away again. Marion's eyes were fixed on her ; the smile was there.

"You're a wonderful woman, mother," Marion said. "You've got me over it."

"Over what, Marion?" Mrs. Cameron faltered, off her guard.

"My passion for Mr. Bergsma."

"Don't be wicked!" the old woman exclaimed, Marion was nearly well now ; there was no need to humour her to this extent.

"And my suicidal tendency, too," continued Marion. "I wonder which I ought to be most grateful for. Which do you think?"

"I am not aware that either of those things was the matter with you, I assure you, Marion, and neither is Doctor Ferguson. You exaggerate your illness absurdly."

"You and Dr. Ferguson exaggerated it too, then. I often heard you both ; I was able to get out of bed, you know. I always thought you should have taken him down to the drawing-room instead of whispering outside my door, but it didn't seem to occur to you, and as it was convenient to me, I said nothing. . . . Well, mother, if I can't believe in your wisdom any more, I *can* believe in your pluck. It's just as good ; I don't know that it isn't better. But I hope you didn't tell anyone besides the doctor that I was in love with Mr. Bergsma."

The little puppet-face was convulsed in the effort not to cry. "I never could have dreamed that my daughter would *listen*."

"I was mad, you see."

"You were not, Marion, so don't bring that up as an excuse. You were *not* mad, only overstrained. You exaggerate everything. I only told the doctor what your own friend, Mrs. Wynne, had said—or what she thought, at any rate. I never thought so myself."

"You should have thought so, mother. It was true. That was why he dismissed me. He didn't want his secretary to have a passion for him."

"Don't use that wicked word ! And about that man, with his flat face and horrid collars—they were never clean."

"Oh yes, they were clean, but they were lower than the men

you know would wear. That's all, mother. . . . I used to watch for a look from the flat face—was it flat? I suppose so. I only saw his eyes." She spoke in a deep musing tone, with no smile now; she had forgotten her mother.

Mrs. Cameron stood up. "It's nearly lunch-time."

The girl looked at her again. "Won't you let me talk about my passion, a little now and then?"

"Oh, Marion," the other moaned, returning. "How can you torment me so? It's cruel of you!" She sat down again. "You frighten me, indeed you do." Her voice shattered into sobs.

The girl sat unmoved. "We're like two dead bodies tied together. We don't love each other any more, yet we must be forever side by side. . . . I think I won't forgive you for curing the tendency to suicide, mother. The passion's different—I can brood on that. I can think of his flat face, and wonder why a man with a flat face was not more flattered—there's a joke. But he's a woman's man, isn't he? He's tired of passionate secretaries, I suppose. That *was* why he snubbed my Dutch; it would have been dangerous to speak in his own language with a yearning secretary——"

Mrs. Cameron got up again, her pink cheeks glistening. "I won't listen to you. It's disgraceful—that's what it is. You ought to be ashamed."

"Haven't I been ashamed enough? Let me glory in my shame now, for a change." She got up too. "Come home to lunch, mother. Tuesday . . . it will be mutton-hash to-day, and treacle-pudding. That will be so nice; we'll easily forget this painful scene. Yes, let's go—home."

Mrs. Cameron pointed out the beauty of the autumn tints as they went through the Gardens. Marion looked at each example; then looked at her mother, with the smile.

III

That phase also passed. Marion felt abominable while it lasted; it was like sticking daggers into a doll, and the daggers hurt this doll. They made no difference, moreover; Mrs. Cameron said the same kind of things between-times.

Mother and daughter went away together for their change of air, returned, and Marion was nearly well. The doctor still came sometimes, but now as though he were a friend, vigilant and

interested. He seemed, as she had felt before, to be Marion's friend rather than her mother's ; but Marion did not care ; she cared for nothing. In the passage of the months her bitterness had grown beneath the outward self-control ; she had one watchword now—concealment of all feeling. " Feel nothing, but if you must feel hide it—hide everything about you, all you think and are." It became a trial of skill. She paid visits with her mother, watching for good opportunities for lies about herself, especially the lie of being lazy, glad to cease breadwinning and be entirely dependent, hanging as it were upon her mother's arm like a spoilt child.

Mrs. Cameron's friends began to disapprove ; Marion perceived it, fostered it. The plan of the Minnie party was that Marion now should teach the many languages—such work could always be procured. Marion refused to try for pupils, not saying that she liked best to be lazy—that would have spoilt the game. She let it be inferred, amid glances of concern at the sad change in her.

The glances of concern pleased Mrs. Cameron. They made her feel a wonderful woman again. During the later Bergsma period there had been a certain obscuration—Marion had been so prominent with her " inside " knowledge of musical events, her acquaintance with the *virtuosi*, her own remarkable development in capacity and self-reliance. But now people saw again that Minnie was the heroine, with her bravery and cheer, her patience with the lazy daughter. She loved to take the lazy daughter out to tea, to come into a room thus followed, and display her pluck and tact. But as the months drew out and she felt firmer on the pedestal, an insidious change began. At some houses there would sound again a note of interest in Marion rather than in Minnie.

Mrs. Wynne's was one of these. The dark monkey-face would turn and dwell, observing silently but intently taking in. She would talk about music, that inhibited topic on which Marion, lamentably and surprisingly, still enjoyed to talk. Tactless of Mrs. Wynne ! It brought the whole thing up again—the buried past, with all its mystery and invidiousness ; and besides, " Marion would never try for pupils, while she was encouraged to remember those horrible days," said Mrs. Cameron to her friends.

Mrs. Wynne's Irish maid was another grievance. This little creature was " positively insulting " to Mrs. Cameron, one day soon after the return to London. It happened thus. Marion and her mother entered, and put down their umbrellas—Mrs. Cameron thrusting hers into the stand, Marion propping hers against the

table. Bridget (she had an engaging cast in her right eye) gave swimming Irish looks at Marion, whose height and "style" she openly admired—she was far too free with both her eyes and tongue. Then she went towards the stairs, with no admiring glance for Mrs. Cameron, who had on a new grey toque. Marion, undelayed by the small difficulty of getting an umbrella neatly into the narrow stand, had begun to ascend at Bridget's heels, conversing with her.

Suddenly Mrs. Cameron called out: "Come back here, Marion."

The two on the stairs stopped short.

"Come back and put your umbrella in the proper place."

"Oh, ma'am, it doesn't matter," Bridget cried. "The mistress never——"

"Come back here, Marion." The face under the new toque was scarlet.

Marion, pale and silent, stood still on the stair. Her eyes were dreadful. For an instant they met Bridget's.

"Do you hear what I say?" the voice below vibrated shrilly.

"For heaven's sake, mother . . ." Marion gasped, and came down from the stairs. She went by her mother, and put her umbrella into the stand.

"Oh, miss; oh, ma'am!" breathed Bridget, almost crying—but Mrs. Cameron was now on Marion's stair, and was looking at her angrily. Bridget gulped, and went on to the drawing-room door. Her voice broke as she announced them. Mrs. Cameron pushed by her haughtily; Marion. . . . Bridget never knew what Marion did, except that she did not break down, nor speak to Bridget, nor look angry, but——

"Oh, ma'am," said Bridget, choking, to her mistress, "it was awful! As if Mrs. Cameron wanted to shame her before me, turning her into a child like that. The umbrella—Miss Cameron went down and put it in the stand; I could hardly keep quiet when I saw her face. She'll go mad, ma'am, if she can't get away from her mother."

Bridget's agitation was so great that Mrs. Wynne, though she too thought it "awful," tried to calm the girl and herself by saying that there was really nothing in it.

"Oh yes, ma'am, there was, and you'd know if you'd seen it. The way Mrs. Cameron looked at her—you wouldn't believe the wickedness of it."

“Nonsense ; you’re fond of Miss Cameron ; you exaggerate.”
“It’s well some one’s fond of her. You are yourself, ma’am. Is there no way you could get her away from that old——”

But this was decidedly too much ; Mrs. Wynne dismissed the girl. She sat thinking. She had long perceived the trouble. The mother’s jealousy—innate and ineradicable—never roused by Marion till the Bergsma phase, and then appeased by the dismissal, now again was quickened by her daughter’s attitude. If Marion’s friends should show more interest in that than in the mother’s pluck and patience, the jealousy would crouch, a-stretch like a wild beast that sees its prey ; and ah, that prey was visible ! The daughter’s pride—what a long feasting meal. . . . One knew such moods in these undeveloped women, these old children, with the cruelty and blindness of a child, but not the child’s in consequence. No ; the feast once begun, the wild beast would drive out the child ; its prey would not be loosened till consumed. “And one can do not one least thing to save—unless indeed one should abandon Marion, and join with Mrs. Cameron ! Shall I urge the poor girl to the teaching that she shrinks from ? It might help ; I’ll try it.”

When Mrs. Wynne next went to see them, in pursuance of her scheme, she found a message from the Bergsma quarter so absorbing Mrs. Cameron that even *she*—now almost openly cold-shouldered—was called into council.

The message had taken the shape of a visiting-card—Mrs. Bergsma’s, intimating change of address. It had come to Mrs. Cameron, not to Marion.

“Now what ought we to do ?”

“Take no notice,” Mrs. Wynne said, at a venture. She had not yet surveyed the ground, but it seemed probable that this would please.

It did not please, and as that showed, the visitor began to see the rest. Marion sat by, silent. Not even by a look did she confess herself, but Mrs. Wynne’s nerves shuddered for her.

“There’s nothing in it,” Mrs. Wynne continued. “Mrs. Bergsma just went through her address-book, or some one else did for her, more likely. They’ll not expect a call.”

The argument began, went on ; and Mrs. Wynne knew horror. All cruelty seemed in it, all base vengeance, all that once meant woman ; each word seemed chosen to retaliate for that brief spell

of bliss and glory ; yet as the listener looked into the little face, she told herself that she, like Bridget, was imputing that which was not in its owner's competence. This could be only sheer stupidity ; the worst evil was not there. But then again some glance, some word, abominable, would upset the milder judgment.

"What does Marion say ?" her friend broke out at last, unable longer to fight single-handed. She turned to the dumb girl and saw her quiver momentarily, then constrain herself to sit impassive as before. But it were kindlier to force her speech, and Mrs. Wynne persisted.

"Tell *me*, Marion," she entreated, casting aside caution, putting all her friendship into the low tone. It was as if she challenged the fell mother for the daughter's voice. No answer came. The girl's eyes met hers for an instant, and she caught her breath. What a look—what weary wastes of suffering. . . . And yet the thing was trivial—almost certainly, a mere card-leaving : they would not be admitted ; no one ever was at home on chance, in London. But Mrs. Wynne could understand the girl's repugnance.

"I can't see why Marion should be with you, if you wish to go," she repeated, for this had been of course the first thing she had said.

"It is only through her that I ever knew these people"—yes, the tone, the look. . . . "It is for *her* sake that I wish to go."

"But if she doesn't want it ?"

"Such morbid nonsense ! 'Hanging round the house,' she calls it. I think it is we who confer the favour by calling."

But as if this, in its absurdity, were the breaking-point, Marion spoke at last.

"Mother has never consented to recognize Mr. Bergsma as a social being. He's only a common little man with a crushed collar to her. 'No one' goes to his house ; 'no one' knows the Bergsmas." She smiled—the old smile which once had frightened Mrs. Cameron, but now had lost its power.

"I don't profess to understand the society in which people like the Bergsmas move. I leave that to you . . . and your friends."

There was a silence.

"*Could* you, Marion ?" Mrs. Wynne then murmured. "Could you go, I mean. It wouldn't be a case of getting in, I'm sure."

Marion, having spoken at all, seemed to have abandoned wholly her new attitude, for she gave her friend an overwhelming answer.

"I could go, but I won't. I won't be dragged *there* at mother's

chariot-wheels." She stood up. "Now you know, mother. I dare say you'll say you don't understand, but I'll explain another time. Don't drag Mrs. Wynne into a scene like this morning's. She wouldn't like it. Let her off the rest."

But the teeth were firm in the flesh now, and Mrs. Wynne heard all the rest. She heard that Marion was still absurdly "sorry for herself" and that her friends encouraged her, while Mrs. Cameron's were more and more disgusted every day; that "that man" would imagine, if no one else did, all that their omission to call might signify; that indeed his wife could not be blamed if she had been suspicious, and her card was intended for a delicate hint that, having nipped the thing in the bud, she was prepared to resume a friendly acquaintance. "Anything more disgusting, more indecent, than Marion's whole behaviour since that man cast her off. . . ."

And Marion stood and heard, without the smile, and said at last in a pause: "The most devoted and most tactful mother, you can see—and Mrs. Bergsma is to see. How do you know I haven't been 'hanging round the house' in secret, mother? Mr. Bergsma cast me off, as you say, but men do that and women hang about them, still. Perhaps that's why I stick at going to call—how do you know it isn't?"

But this was a bad slip.

"I know," said Mrs. Cameron, "because I've never let you out of my sight for a single instant, and never intend to."

Mrs. Wynne saw Marion pale at that. She exclaimed after a moment: "But Dr. Ferguson said yesterday that I'm to have a room to myself, in future. They're getting it ready now; you know they are." Her voice was harsh with fear.

"They're not getting it ready. I countermanded it, after this morning's 'scene,' as you call it."

The girl sank on a chair. Her face was terrible to see, but Mrs. Wynne did not see it—she had hidden her own. She sat, crumpled into a heap, in her corner of the sofa. Marion looked at her, then at her mother. Mrs. Cameron was by the tea-table; she was picking biscuits from a plate and nibbling at them, and then dropping them; her face was red and angry, but exultant.

"Look at Mrs. Wynne, mother," Marion said at last, in the old languid tone. "She seems distressed. It's not a pretty scene. We ought to let her go."

Mrs. Wynne sprang up. "I'm going. I can't stand it. You two

should be entirely apart—it's monstrous. Is there no one who could take you, Marion, for a while? *I* will, if you like. I can't stand by and let this be—it's not safe; I feel responsible. . . . Let her come to me!" She turned to the mother, speaking gently now: she had regained her self-control.

Mrs. Cameron, a biscuit at her lips, laughed slightly. Her voice took a vile note as she replied: "I'll keep my unfortunate daughter, thank you."

"Then some day you'll have to keep her in a mad-house," Mrs. Wynne exclaimed, once more forgetting prudence.

"That's no worse than the kind of house *you'd* keep her in."

Mrs. Wynne did not hear; she was looking at Marion, who had got up again.

"Stop!" she cried.

But Marion laughed, and threw the biscuit-plate—now empty—in her mother's face.

It grazed the skin, that was all. Mrs. Cameron wept, Marion stood and laughed. Mrs. Wynne took out her handkerchief to stop the blood. The plate lay whole upon the floor some distance off; it had fallen into a thick woolly rug. The blood soon ceased—it was the merest graze; Marion stopped laughing; and Mrs. Wynne escaped. There was nothing she could do, except go to Dr. Ferguson. He must insist upon the separate room, at any rate.

She went, straight from the hotel—she found him in and told her tale, and Dr. Ferguson confessed that he was anxious. He would see the Camerons to-morrow. As a measure of precaution—"you understand me?"—he had at first refused the separate bedroom; now he, too, considered it essential.

"There can be no doubt that the mother's constant presence is injurious to Miss Cameron."

"But what should make her so inhuman to the girl? It has been a strain for both, of course; but what happened to-day was more than nerves. I assure you, Dr. Ferguson, it looked like intentional persecution. Yet surely such things cannot be?"

The doctor thought awhile; then said, "Persecution, yes; intentional persecution (in your sense), no. Do you happen to have read what is now being published here about Freud, a German scientist, and his theory of the 'suppressed wish'?"

Mrs. Wynne had not. He set it forth, rudimentarily—a subconscious motive, usually sexual in origin and sinister in aim, underlying the conscious will, and secretly inspiring the action.

In certain conditions, it became the dominant impulse, potent above all others.

"That amiable old lady," he continued, and as Mrs. Wynne exclaimed, he sagely smiled. "As she appears, or appeared, to us to be, and in her own view still is. She knows nothing of the 'wish,' you must consider, either as a psychological theory or in herself—the wish in her case being to dominate, nay, humiliate, her daughter. You have perceived this in her, and may even, being a woman" (he bowed), "have diagnosed it correctly as jealousy: no rare thing, as doubtless you are aware, in a mother towards her daughter, though here it takes a somewhat unusual form. It was awakened, as I early saw, in Mrs. Cameron by her daughter's prominence during the Bergsma period."

"It sounds more devilish than ever," Mrs. Wynne exclaimed.

"You must remember that the state is pathological. To inhibit the 'wish' is not within the victim's competence, did she even know that it exists. A pitiable condition—and the more because it engenders dislike in all who witness its effects."

But Mrs. Wynne could feel no sense of mitigation; rather, the "Freudian wish," in its gaunt determinism, seemed to add despair to all the other ills.

"And the unhappy girl!" she cried. "Is she to be condemned to this, because a German scientist has an interesting psychological theory?"

He had an indulgent smile for her feminine unreason. "Most natural—in a woman, most natural. . . . But reflect that if the daughter's martyrdom can be explained, it is not thereby increased."

She groaned. "Explanations have a way of paralysing us, I think! What are you going to *do*?"

Dr. Ferguson stiffened a little. "What can be done, you may rest assured. The separate room, for example."

His tone annoyed her. "Is that the certain panacea?"

"We are struggling against an occult force in human nature, Mrs. Wynne," he said, more stiffly still.

"But we're not sure it's there; we have only this man's word for it!" And as he shrugged, she exclaimed, "I want to take Marion away from her."

"Do so, by all means, if you can compass it," Dr. Ferguson more cordially rejoined. "Meanwhile, I will ordain the lesser separation." His gesture was dismissive, and she rose.

At the door she turned. "To-morrow?"

"Without delay," the doctor promised, again somewhat stiffly.

But with the morning of the next day, very early, came the secretary of the Camerons' hotel to Mrs. Wynne, who, going out, met her upon the doorstep, and when she learnt who it was, drew her at once into the dining-room. The woman, with a horrible detached annoyance in her manner, told her news. Mrs. Cameron had found her daughter dead in bed at six o'clock that morning—in the same room with herself.

"*In the same room*, Mrs. Wynne, lying in streams of blood." The faded, worried eyes traversed Mrs. Wynne's room curiously, as she talked on. "Miss Cameron had cut open a vein in her arm, and bled to death. Such a state as everything was in—I needn't tell you!"

"It must have been," Mrs. Wynne heard herself inanely answer. She looked at the secretary; there was a kind of pity in her horror at the woman's callousness. She was so much the creature of her job that her blank face, if it could be said to wear any expression, wore only that of anger at the "state" of Marion's bedclothes and the carpet by the bed.

"And the talk and annoyance in the hotel—it's been bad enough without that; people leaving because of the old lady and her tempers. We all thought Miss Cameron would go out of her mind, three months ago, but she seemed better. We were getting a separate bedroom ready for her yesterday, but Mrs. Cameron countermanded it. Well, she might have spared herself something, if she hadn't—not that it would have made much difference, I suppose. And of course there's any amount of trouble and annoyance before us—the inquest, and all the unpleasantness."

The inquest . . . of course there would have to be one. . . . How much could be kept back? Mrs. Wynne controlled her face and voice.

"I'll come over at once and see Mrs. Cameron," she said, though her soul fainted at thought of that interview.

"You won't find her. You wouldn't suppose that she'd be in and out of the house every minute, but that's what she is, and looking so queer with that cut on her face"—the secretary glanced at Mrs. Wynne as she said this—"that she got at tea-time yesterday."

The biscuit-plate—had either of the Camerons remembered to

pick it up, or had a servant found it on the floor, so far from the tea-table? . . . Mrs. Wynne again controlled herself.

"That cut was nothing, I fancy; I remember noticing it yesterday afternoon. You say Mrs. Cameron won't be in?"

"She was out when I left, at Dr. Ferguson's; at least that's where she told the taxi to go—she had a taxi, that time. He was at the house this morning, of course; but she said she must see him again. Goodness knows why."

Even the gleam of curiosity was listless. Mrs. Wynne felt, with shuddering reassurance, that you could never fathom London's indifference.

"I'll wait, then; I won't go back with you to the hotel," she said.

"Mrs. Cameron spoke of you, this morning," the woman apathetically remarked.

"And said what?"

"It's not very pleasant to repeat, but perhaps I'd better. She said on no account to let *you* in."

"I was more Miss Cameron's friend than hers. It's odd, though," Mrs. Wynne returned, and hoped that she seemed only ordinarily troubled. "At such a time, however, one can't wonder at anything. . . . Is there nothing I can do to help in any way?"

"I don't think so." But the woman still sat, looking round the room, and Mrs. Wynne grew fidgety. She wanted her to go at once, that she herself might get to Dr. Ferguson's before Mrs. Cameron should leave him. No place could be so good to meet, and they would have to speak together, let her knowledge be resented as it might.

The secretary seemed to feel at last that they had finished. She rose, but then she paused, and spoke with eyes averted.

"I found the plate myself," she said, as impassively as before. "I happened to go into the drawing-room. I haven't mentioned it." She waited.

"The plate?" said Mrs. Wynne, in a strained voice of questioning.

The faded eyes met hers. "The biscuit-plate. It wasn't broken, fortunately. We may as well leave it out, if we have anything to say at the inquest. It would be a nuisance, if. . . ." She drifted to the door. "You see, I have to think of my employers. People hate a scandal about a private hotel; it ruins business. You won't speak of it?"

"I don't know what you mean," Mrs. Wynne lied bravely.

The secretary looked at her again. "Something happened in the drawing-room," she went on, unmoved. "Any fool could see that—and *you* were there at the time. But it's just as well for me to know nothing about it, so don't tell me if I'm right."

With that, she opened the door at last ; Mrs. Wynne went with her to the steps in a stunned silence.

As she drove to Dr. Ferguson's, Mrs. Wynne reflected on his theory. It, like the biscuit-plate, would have to be kept dark ! Even in her grief, she smiled at a quick thought. The Freudian Wish—and the Bergsma visiting-card . . . but such ironic fellowships would be the very core, no doubt, of speculations in this kind. Was it another Wish that put the silly strip of pasteboard in its halfpenny envelope ? And had Marion had one too—did *she* "wish" Bergsma to know what had been done ? For, without the card, she would have had her separate room ; those words would not have sounded : "I've never left you alone for a single instant, and I never intend to. . . ." Never alone from Mrs. Cameron, ridden by the Freudian Wish ! A new burden had been bound upon humanity, if that frightful theory were true.

She was at once admitted at the doctor's, for she sent in her card. As she drew it from the case, she wondered if she ever should do that again without a shudder—and knew that she would, that this would pass as all things pass. . . . She entered the consulting-room—yes, Mrs. Cameron was there. Instantly the old woman sprang up, and stood defiant of her. But the doctor put his hand upon her arm.

"Keep quiet, Mrs. Cameron," he said, with stern decision. "Sit down, Mrs. Wynne."

Mrs. Wynne sat down. She felt horribly unpitying. Mrs. Cameron looked as usual—the pink face was a little pinker for the sticking-plaster on the cheek, which gave her a weird air of coquetry. Her mouth was quivering, but it looked more peevish than distressed. . . . And she had seen that sight, not many hours ago !

"Go on with what you were telling me," Dr. Ferguson said.

Still standing, with one hand on the table and her angry eyes on Mrs. Wynne, Mrs. Cameron obeyed eagerly, as if she trusted the man to be her friend against the woman. She had evidently been telling him about the visiting-card.

"I thought it seemed unnecessary, but *my* opinion was that

Marion and I should call. I considered it my duty to uphold Marion's dignity."

She stopped, still fixing Mrs. Wynne with her malignant eyes. Mrs. Wynne dropped hers before them. A coroner's jury would not have heard of Freud.

"Yes—your daughter's dignity?" Dr. Ferguson said, smoothly. His eyes met Mrs. Wynne's when she lifted her head again.

APPENDIX

(See note on page 456)

THE following is the solution of the end-game referred to in the chess story entitled *A Happy Solution*.

1. P to K 6 ; 2.

Q to R 6 (a), Q to R 5, ch. ; 3.

Q (or B) takes Q, B to B 5 ; 4. Kt to Kt 3, B takes Kt and mates, very shortly, with R to R 8.

(a) 2. Kt to Kt 4, Q takes Kt ; 3. Q (or P) takes Q (b), B to B 5 as before.

(b) If 3. Q to R 6, Q to R 5, ch., as before.

If 2. P to K Kt 4, B to Kt 6 ; 3. Kt takes B, Q takes Kt and wins.

The following is the proof, from the position of the pieces, that a white queen must have been taken by the pawn at Q Kt 3 : All the black men except two are on the board ; therefore White made only two captures. These two captures must have been made with the two pawns now at K 5 and B 3, because they have left their original files. White, therefore, never made a capture with his Q R P, and therefore it never got on to the knight's file. Therefore the black pawn at Q Kt 3 captured a *piece* (not a pawn). The game having been played at the odds of queen's rook, the white Q R was off the board before the game began, and the white K R was captured on its own square, or one of two adjacent squares, there being no way out for it.

Now, since Black captured a *piece* with the pawn at Q Kt 3, and there are no white *pieces* off the board (except the two white rooks that have been accounted for), it follows that whatever piece was captured by the pawn at Q Kt 3 must have been replaced on the board in exchange for the white Q R P when it reached its eighth square. It was not a rook that was captured at Q Kt 3, because the two white rooks have been otherwise accounted for. The pawn, on reaching its eighth square, cannot have been exchanged for a bishop, or the bishop would still be on that square, there being no way out for it, nor can the pawn have been exchanged for a knight for the same reason (remembering that the capture at Q Kt 3 must necessarily have happened *before* the pawn could reach its eighth square).

Therefore the pawn was exchanged for a queen, and therefore it was a queen that was captured at Q Kt 3, and when she went there she did not make a capture, because only two captures were made by White, both with pawns. Q.E.D.

