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VOL. 4252.

## THE NEW MACHIAVELLI.

BY

## H. G. WELLS.

IN TWO VOLUMES. — VOL. 2.

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THE NEW MACHIAVELLI. By H. G. WELLS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

# THE NEW MACHIAVELLI

BY

H. G. WELLS

AUTHOR OF "THE STOLEN BACILLUS," "TONO-BUNGAY," "FIRST AND LAST THINGS," ETC.

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IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. II

LEIPZIG

BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1911.

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# BOOK III.

## THE HEART OF POLITICS.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE RIDDLE FOR THE STATESMAN.

§ 1.

I HAVE been planning and replanning, writing and rewriting, this next portion of my book for many days. I perceive I must leave it raw edged and ill joined. I have learnt something of the impossibility of History. For all I have had to tell is the story of one man's convictions and aims and how they reacted upon his life; and I find it too subtle and involved and intricate for the doing. I find it taxes all my powers to convey even the main forms and forces in that development. It is like looking through moving media of changing hue and variable refraction at something vitally unstable. Broad theories and generalisations are mingled with personal influences, with prevalent prejudices; and not only coloured but altered by phases of hopefulness and moods of depression. The web is made up of the most diverse elements, beyond treatment multitudinous. . . .

For a week or so I desisted altogether, and walked over the mountains and returned to sit through the warm soft mornings among the shaded rocks above this little perched-up house of ours, discussing my difficulties with Isabel and I think on the whole complicating them further in the effort to simplify them to manageable and stateable elements.

Let me, nevertheless, attempt a rough preliminary analysis of this confused process. A main strand is quite easily traceable. This main strand is the story of my obvious life, my life as it must have looked to most of my acquaintances. It presents you with a young couple, bright, hopeful, and energetic, starting out under Altiora's auspices to make a career. You figure us well dressed and active, running about in motor-cars, visiting in great people's houses, dining amidst brilliant companies, going to the theatre, meeting in the lobby. Margaret wore hundreds of beautiful dresses. We must have had an air of succeeding meritoriously during that time.

We did very continually and faithfully serve our joint career. I thought about it a great deal, and did and refrained from doing ten thousand things for the sake of it. I kept up a solicitude for it, as it were by inertia, long after things had happened and changes occurred in me that rendered its completion impossible. Under certain very artless pretences, we wanted steadfastly to make a handsome position in the world, achieve respect, *succeed*. Enormous unseen changes had been in progress for years in my mind and the realities of my life, before our general circle could have had any inkling of their existence, or suspected the appearances

of our life. Then suddenly our proceedings began to be deflected, our outward unanimity visibly strained and marred by the insurgence of these so long-hidden developments.

That career had its own hidden side, of course; but when I write of these unseen factors I do not mean that but something altogether broader. I do not mean the everyday pettinesses which gave the cynical observer scope and told of a narrower, baser aspect of the fair but limited ambitions of my ostensible self. This "sub-careerist" element noted little things that affected the career, made me suspicious of the rivalry of so-and-so, propitiatory to so-and-so, whom, as a matter of fact, I didn't respect or feel in the least sympathetic towards; guarded with that man, who for all his charm and interest wasn't helpful, and a little touchy at the appearance of neglect from that. No, I mean something greater and not something smaller when I write of a hidden life.

In the ostensible self who glowed under the approbation of Altiora Bailey, and was envied and discussed, praised and depreciated, in the House and in smoking-room gossip, you really have as much of a man as usually figures in a novel or an obituary notice. But I am tremendously impressed now in the retrospect by the realisation of how little that frontage represented me, and just how little such frontages do represent the complexities of the intelligent contemporary. Behind it, yet struggling to disorganise and alter it, altogether, was a far more essential reality, a self less personal, less individualised, and broader in its references. Its aims were never simply to get on; it had an altogether different

system of demands and satisfactions. It was critical, curious, more than a little unfeeling—and relentlessly illuminating.

It is just the existence and development of this more generalised self-behind-the-frontage that is making modern life so much more subtle and intricate to render, and so much more hopeful in its relations to the perplexities of the universe. I see this mental and spiritual hinterland vary enormously in the people about me, from a type which seems to keep, as people say, all its goods in the window, to others who, like myself, come to regard the ostensible existence more and more as a mere experimental feeder and agent for that greater personality behind. And this back-self has its history of phases, its crises and happy accidents and irrevocable conclusions, more or less distinct from the adventures and achievements of the ostensible self. It meets persons and phrases, it assimilates the spirit of a book, it is startled into new realisations by some accident that seems altogether irrelevant to the general tenor of one's life. Its increasing independence of the ostensible career makes it the organ of corrective criticism; it accumulates disturbing energy. Then it breaks our overt promises and repudiates our pledges, coming down at last like an overbearing mentor upon the small engagements of the pupil.

In the life of the individual it takes the rôle that the growth of philosophy, science, and creative literature may play in the development of mankind.

§ 2.

It is curious to recall how Britten helped shatter that obvious, lucidly explicable presentation of myself upon which I had embarked with Margaret. He returned to revive a memory of adolescent dreams and a habit of adolescent frankness; he reached through my shallow frontage as no one else seemed capable of doing, and dragged that back-self into relation with it.

I remember very distinctly a dinner and a subsequent walk with him which presents itself now as altogether typical of the quality of his influence.

I had come upon him one day while lunching with Somers and Sutton at the Playwrights' Club, and had asked him to dinner on the spur of the moment. He was oddly the same curly-headed, red-faced ventriloquist, and oddly different, rather seedy as well as untidy, and at first a little inclined to make comparisons with my sleek successfulness. But that disposition presently evaporated, and his talk was good and fresh and provocative. And something that had long been straining at its checks in my mind flapped over, and he and I found ourselves of one accord.

Altiora wasn't at this dinner. When she came matters were apt to become confusedly strenuous. There was always a slight and ineffectual struggle at the end on the part of Margaret to anticipate Altiora's overpowering tendency to a rally and the establishment of some entirely unjustifiable conclusion by a *coup-de-main*. When, however, Altiora was absent, the quieter influence of the Cramptons prevailed; temperance and information for its own sake prevailed excessively over

dinner and the play of thought. . . . Good Lord! what bores the Cramptons were! I wonder I endured them as I did. They had all of them the trick of lying in wait conversationally; they had no sense of the self-exposures, the gallant experiments in statement that are necessary for good conversation. They would watch one talking with an expression exactly like peeping through bushes. Then they would, as it were, dash out, dissent succinctly, contradict some secondary fact, and back to cover. They gave one twilight nerves. Their wives were easier but still difficult at a stretch; they talked a good deal about children and servants, but with an air caught from Altiora of making observations upon sociological types. Lewis gossiped about the House in an entirely finite manner. He never raised a discussion; nobody ever raised a discussion. He would ask what we thought of Evesham's question that afternoon, and Edward would say it was good, and Mrs. Willie, who had been behind the grille, would think it was very good, and then Willie, parting the branches, would say rather conclusively that he didn't think it was very much good, and I would deny hearing the question in order to evade a profitless statement of views in that vacuum, and then we would cast about in our minds for some other topic of equal interest. . . .

On this occasion Altiora was absent, and to qualify our Young Liberal bleakness we had Mrs. Millingham, with her white hair and her fresh mind and complexion, and Esmeer. Willie Crampton was with us, but not his wife, who was having her third baby on principle; his brother Edward was present, and the Lewises, and of course the Bunting Harblows. There was also some

other lady. I remember her as pale blue, but for the life of me I cannot remember her name.

Quite early there was a little breeze between Edward Crampton and Esmeer, who had ventured an opinion about the partition of Poland. Edward was at work then upon the seventh volume of his monumental Life of Kosciusko, and a little impatient with views perhaps not altogether false but betraying a lamentable ignorance of accessible literature. At any rate, his correction of Esmeer was magisterial. After that there was a distinct and not altogether delightful pause, and then someone, it may have been the pale-blue lady, asked Mrs. Lewis whether her aunt Lady Carmixter had returned from her rest-and-sun-cure in Italy. That led to a rather anxiously sustained talk about regimen, and Willie told us how he had profited by the no-breakfast system. It had increased his power of work enormously. He could get through ten hours a day now without inconvenience.

"What do you do?" said Esmeer abruptly.

"Oh! no end of work. There's all the estate and looking after things."

"But publicly?"

"I asked three questions yesterday. And for one of them I had to consult nine books!"

We were drifting, I could see, towards Doctor Haig's system of dietary, and whether the exclusion or inclusion of fish and chicken were most conducive to high efficiency, when Britten, who had refused lemonade and claret and demanded Burgundy, broke out, and was discovered to be demanding in his throat just what we Young Liberals thought we were up to?

"I want," said Britten, repeating his challenge a little louder, "to hear just exactly what you think you are doing in Parliament?"

Lewis laughed nervously, and thought we were "Seeking the Good of the Community."

"*How?*"

"Beneficient Legislation," said Lewis.

"Beneficient in what direction?" insisted Britten. "I want to know where you think you are going."

"Amelioration of Social Conditions," said Lewis.

"That's only a phrase!"

"You wouldn't have me sketch bills at dinner?"

"I'd like you to indicate directions," said Britten, and waited.

"Upward and On," said Lewis with conscious neatness, and turned to ask Mrs. Bunting Harblow about her little boy's French.

For a time talk frothed over Britten's head, but the natural mischief in Mrs. Millingham had been stirred, and she was presently echoing his demand in lisping, quasi-confidential undertones. "What *are* we Liberals doing?" Then Esmeer fell in with the revolutionaries.

To begin with, I was a little shocked by this clamour for fundamentals—and a little disconcerted. I had the experience that I suppose comes to everyone at times of discovering oneself together with two different sets of people with whom one has maintained two different sets of attitudes. It had always been, I perceived, an instinctive suppression in our circle that we shouldn't be more than vague about our political ideals. It had almost become part of my morality to respect this convention. It was understood we were all working hard,

and keeping ourselves fit, tremendously fit, under Altiora's inspiration, Pro Bono Publico. Bunting Harblow had his under-secretaryship, and Lewis was on the verge of the Cabinet, and these things we considered to be in the nature of confirmations. . . . It added to the discomfort of the situation that these plunging enquiries were being made in the presence of our wives.

The rebel section of our party forced the talk.

Edward Crampton was presently declaring—I forget in what relation: "The country is with us."

My long-controlled hatred of the Cramptons' stereotyped phrases about the Country and the House got the better of me. I showed my cloven hoof to my friends for the first time.

"We don't respect the Country as we used to do," I said. "We haven't the same belief we used to have in the will of the people. It's no good, Crampton, trying to keep that up. We Liberals know as a matter of fact—nowadays everyone knows—that the monster that brought us into power has, among other deficiencies, no head. We've got to give it one—if possible with brains and a will. That lies in the future. For the present if the country is with us, it means merely that we happen to have hold of its tether."

Lewis was shocked. A "mandate" from the Country was sacred to his system of pretences.

Britten wasn't subdued by his first rebuff; presently he was at us again. There were several attempts to check his outbreak of interrogation; I remember the Cramptons asked questions about the welfare of various cousins of Lewis who were unknown to the rest of us, and Margaret tried to engage Britten in a sympathetic

discussion of the Arts and Crafts exhibition. But Britten and Esmeer were persistent, Mrs. Millingham was mischievous, and in the end our rising hopes of Young Liberalism took to their thickets for good, while we talked all over them of the prevalent vacuity of political intentions. Margaret was perplexed by me. It is only now I perceive just how perplexing I must have been. "Of course," she said with that faint stress of apprehension in her eyes, "one must have aims." And, "it isn't always easy to put everything into phrases." "Don't be long," said Mrs. Edward Crampton to her husband as the wives trooped out. And afterwards when we went upstairs I had an indefinable persuasion that the ladies had been criticising Britten's share in our talk in an altogether unfavourable spirit. Mrs. Edward evidently thought him aggressive and impertinent, and Margaret with a quiet firmness that brooked no resistance, took him at once into a corner and showed him Italian photographs by Coburn. We dispersed early.

I walked with Britten along the Chelsea back streets towards Battersea Bridge—he lodged on the south side.

"Mrs. Millingham's a dear," he began.

"She's a dear."

"I liked her demand for a hansom because a four-wheeler was too safe."

"She was worked up," I said. "She's a woman of faultless character, but her instincts, as Altiora would say, are anarchistic—when she gives them a chance."

"So she takes it out in hansom cabs."

"Hansom cabs."

"She's wise," said Britten. . . .

"I hope, Remington," he went on after a pause, "I didn't rag your other guests too much. I've a sort of feeling at moments—— Remington, those chaps are so infernally not—not bloody. It's part of a man's duty sometimes at least to eat red beef and get drunk. How is he to understand government if he doesn't? It scares me to think of your lot—by a sort of misapprehension—being in power. A kind of neuralgia in the head, by way of government. I don't understand where *you* come in. Those others—they've no lusts. Their ideal is anæmia. You and I, we had at least a lust to take hold of life and make something of it. They—they want to take hold of life and make nothing of it. They want to cut out all the stimulants. Just as though life was anything else but a reaction to stimulation!" . . .

He began to talk of his own life. He had had ill-fortune through most of it. He was poor and unsuccessful, and a girl he had been very fond of had been attacked and killed by a horse in a field in a very horrible manner. These things had wounded and tortured him, but they hadn't broken him. They had, it seemed to me, made a kind of crippled and ugly demigod of him. He was, I began to perceive, so much better than I had any right to expect. At first I had been rather struck by his unkempt look, and it made my reaction all the stronger. There was about him something, a kind of raw and bleeding faith in the deep things of life, that stirred me profoundly as he showed it. My set of people had irritated him and disappointed him. I discovered at his touch how they irritated him. He reproached me boldly. He made me feel ashamed of

my easy acquiescences as I walked in my sleek tall neatness beside his rather old coat, his rather battered hat, his sturdier shorter shape, and listened to his denunciations of our self-satisfied New Liberalism and Progressivism.

"It has the same relation to progress—the reality of progress—that the things they paint on door panels in the suburbs have to art and beauty. There's a sort of filiation. . . . Your Altiora's just the political equivalent of the ladies who sell traced cloth for embroidery; she's a dealer in Refined Social Reform for the Parlour. The real progress, Remington, is a graver thing and a painfuller thing and a slower thing altogether. Look! *that*"—and he pointed to where under a hoarding in the light of a gas-lamp a dingy prostitute stood lurking —"was in Babylon and Nineveh. Your little lot make believe there won't be anything of the sort after this Parliament! They're going to vanish at a few top notes from Altiora Bailey! Remington!—it's foolery. It's prigs at play. It's make-believe, make-believe! Your people there haven't got hold of things, aren't beginning to get hold of things, don't know anything of life at all, shirk life, avoid life, get in little bright clean rooms and talk big over your bumpers of lemonade while the Night goes by outside—untouched. Those Crampton fools slink by all this,"—he waved at the woman again—"pretend it doesn't exist, or is going to be banished root and branch by an Act to keep children in the wet outside public-houses. Do you think they really care, Remington? *I* don't. It's make-believe. What they want to do, what Lewis wants to do, what Mrs. Bunting Harblow wants her husband to do, is to

sit and feel very grave and necessary and respected on the Government benches. They think of putting their feet out like statesmen, and tilting shiny hats with becoming brims down over their successful noses. Presentation portrait to a club at fifty. That's their Reality. That's their scope. They don't, it's manifest, *want* to think beyond that. The things there *are,* Remington, they'll never face! the wonder and the depth of life,—lust, and the night-sky,—pain."

"But the good intention," I pleaded, "the Good Will!"

"Sentimentality," said Britten. "No Good Will is anything but dishonesty unless it frets and burns and hurts and destroys a man. That lot of yours have nothing but a good will to think they have good will. Do you think they lie awake of nights searching their hearts as we do? Lewis? Crampton? Or those neat, admiring, satisfied little wives? See how they shrank from the probe!"

"We all," I said, "shrink from the probe."

"God help us!" said Britten. . . .

"We are but vermin at the best, Remington," he broke out, "and the greatest saint only a worm that has lifted its head for a moment from the dust. We are damned, we are meant to be damned, coral animalculæ building upward, upward in a sea of damnation. But of all the damned things that ever were damned, your damned shirking, temperate, sham-efficient, self-satisfied, respectable, make-believe, Fabian-spirited Young Liberal is the utterly damnedest." He paused for a moment, and resumed in an entirely different note:

"Which is why I was so surprised, Remington, to find *you* in this set!"

"You're just the old plunger you used to be, Britten," I said. "You're going too far with all your might for the sake of the damns. Like a donkey that drags its cart up a bank to get thistles. There's depths in Liberalism——"

"We were talking about Liberals."

"Liberty!"

"Liberty! What do *your* little lot know of liberty?"

"What does any little lot know of liberty?"

"It waits outside, too big for our understanding. Like the night and the stars. And lust, Remington! lust and bitterness! Don't I know them? with all the sweetness and hope of life bitten and trampled, the dear eyes and the brain that loved and understood—and my poor mumble of a life going on! I'm within sight of being a drunkard, Remington! I'm a failure by most standards! Life has cut me to the bone. But I'm not afraid of it any more. I've paid something of the price, I've seen something of the meaning."

He flew off at a tangent. "I'd rather die in Delirium Tremens," he cried, "than be a Crampton or a Lewis. . . ."

"Make-believe. Make-believe." The phrase and Britten's squat gestures haunted me as I walked homeward alone. I went to my room and stood before my desk and surveyed papers and files and Margaret's admirable equipment of me.

I perceived in the lurid light of Britten's suggestions that so it was Mr. George Alexander would have mounted a statesman's private room. . . .

§ 3.

I was never at any stage a loyal party man. I doubt if party will ever again be the force it was during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Men are becoming increasingly constructive and selective, less patient under tradition and the bondage of initial circumstances. As education becomes more universal and liberating, men will sort themselves more and more by their intellectual temperaments and less and less by their accidental associations. The past will rule them less; the future more. It is not simply party but school and college and county and country that lose their glamour. One does not hear nearly as much as our forefathers did of the "old Harrovian," "old Arvonian," "old Etonian" claim to this or that unfair advantage or unearnt sympathy. Even the Scotch and the Devonians weaken a little in their clannishness. A widening sense of fair play destroys such things. They follow freemasonry down—freemasonry of which one is chiefly reminded nowadays in England by propitiatory symbols outside shady public-houses. . . .

There is, of course, a type of man which clings very obstinately to party ties. These are the men with strong reproductive imaginations and no imaginative initiative, such men as Cladingbowl, for example, or Dayton. They are the scholars-at-large in life. For them the fact that the party system has been essential in the history of England for two hundred years gives it an overwhelming glamour. They have read histories and memoirs, they see the great grey pile of Westminster not so much for what it is as for what it was,

rich with dramatic memories, populous with glorious ghosts, phrasing itself inevitably in anecdotes and quotations. It seems almost scandalous that new things should continue to happen, swamping with strange qualities the savour of these old associations.

That Mr. Ramsay Macdonald should walk through Westminster Hall, thrust himself, it may be, through the very piece of space that once held Charles the Martyr pleading for his life, seems horrible profanation to Dayton, a last posthumous outrage; and he would, I think, like to have the front benches left empty now for ever, or at most adorned with laureated ivory tablets: "Here Dizzy sat," and "On this Spot William Ewart Gladstone made his First Budget Speech." Failing this, he demands, if only as signs of modesty and respect on the part of the survivors, meticulous imitation. "Mr. G.," he murmurs, "would not have done that," and laments a vanished subtlety even while Mr. Evesham is speaking. He is always gloomily disposed to lapse into wonderings about what things are coming to, wonderings that have no grain of curiosity. His conception of perfect conduct is industrious persistence along the worn-down, well-marked grooves of the great recorded days. So infinitely more important to him is the documented, respected thing than the elusive present.

Cladingbowl and Dayton do not shine in the House, though Cladingbowl is a sound man on a committee, and Dayton keeps the *Old Country Gazette,* the most gentlemanly paper in London. They prevail, however, in their clubs at lunch time. There, with the pleasant consciousness of a morning's work free from either zeal

or shirking, they mingle with permanent officials, prominent lawyers, even a few of the soberer type of business men, and relax their minds in the discussion of the morning paper, of the architecture of the West End, and of the latest public appointments, of gold, of holiday resorts, of the last judicial witticisms and forensic "crushers." The New Year and Birthday honours lists are always very sagely and exhaustively considered, and anecdotes are popular and keenly judged. They do not talk of the things that are really active in their minds, but in the formal and habitual manner they suppose to be proper to intelligent but still honourable men. Socialism, individual money matters, and religion are forbidden topics, and sex and women only in so far as they appear in the law courts. It is to me the strangest of conventions, this assumption of unreal loyalties and traditional respects, this repudiation and concealment of passionate interests. It is like wearing gloves in summer fields, or bathing in a gown, or falling in love with the heroine of a novel, or writing under a pseudonym, or becoming a masked Tuareg. . . .

It is not, I think, that men of my species are insensitive to the great past that is embodied in Westminster and its traditions; we are not so much wanting in the historical sense as alive to the greatness of our present opportunities and the still vaster future that is possible to us. London is the most interesting, beautiful, and wonderful city in the world to me, delicate in her incidental and multitudinous littleness, and stupendous in her pregnant totality; I cannot bring myself to use her as a museum or an old bookshop. When I think of Whitehall that little affair on the scaffold outside the

Banqueting Hall seems trivial and remote in comparison with the possibilities that offer themselves to my imagination within the great grey Government buildings close at hand.

It gives me a qualm of nostalgia even to name those places now. I think of St. Stephen's tower streaming upwards into the misty London night and the great wet quadrangle of New Palace Yard, from which the hansom cabs of my first experiences were ousted more and more by taxicabs as the second Parliament of King Edward the Seventh aged; I think of the Admiralty and War office with their tall Marconi masts sending out invisible threads of direction to the armies in the camps, to great fleets about the world. The crowded, darkly shining river goes flooding through my memory once again, on to those narrow seas that part us from our rival nations; I see quadrangles and corridors of spacious grey-toned offices in which undistinguished little men and little files of papers link us to islands in the tropics, to frozen wildernesses gashed for gold, to vast temple-studded plains, to forest worlds and mountain worlds, to ports and fortresses and lighthouses and watch-towers and grazing lands and corn lands all about the globe. Once more I traverse Victoria Street, grimy and dark, where the Agents of the Empire jostle one another, pass the big embassies in the West End with their flags and scutcheons, follow the broad avenue that leads to Buckingham Palace, witness the coming and going of troops and officials and guests along it from every land on earth. . . . Interwoven in the texture of it all, mocking, perplexing, stimulating beyond measure, is the gleaming consciousness, the challenging knowledge: "You

and your kind might still, if you could but grasp it here, mould all the destiny of Man!"

§ 4.

My first three years in Parliament were years of active discontent. The little group of younger Liberals to which I belonged was very ignorant of the traditions and qualities of our older leaders, and quite out of touch with the mass of the party. For a time Parliament was enormously taken up with moribund issues and old quarrels. The early Educational legislation was sectarian and unenterprising, and the Licensing Bill went little further than the attempted rectification of a Conservative mistake. I was altogether for the nationalisation of the public-houses, and of this end the Bill gave no intimations. It was just beer-baiting. I was recalcitrant almost from the beginning, and spoke against the Government so early as the second reading of the first Education Bill, the one the Lords rejected in 1906. I went a little beyond my intention in the heat of speaking,—it is a way with inexperienced man. I called the Bill timid, narrow, a mere sop to the jealousies of sects and little-minded people. I contrasted its aim and methods with the manifest needs of the time.

I am not a particularly good speaker; after the manner of a writer I worry to find my meaning too much; but this was one of my successes. I spoke after dinner and to a fairly full House, for people were already a little curious about me because of my writings. Several of the Conservative leaders were present and stayed, and Mr. Evesham, I remember, came ostentatiously to

hear me, with that engaging friendliness of his, and gave me at the first chance an approving "Hear, Hear!" I can still recall quite distinctly my two futile attempts to catch the Speaker's eye before I was able to begin, the nervous quiver of my rather too prepared opening, the effect of hearing my own voice and my subconscious wonder as to what I could possibly be talking about, the realisation that I was getting on fairly well, the immense satisfaction afterwards of having on the whole brought it off, and the absurd gratitude I feit for that encouraging cheer.

Addressing the House of Commons is like no other public speaking in the world. Its semi-colloquial methods give it an air of being easy, but its shifting audience, the comings and goings and hesitations of members behind the chair—not mere audience units, but men who matter—the desolating emptiness that spreads itself round the man who fails to interest, the little compact, disciplined crowd in the strangers' gallery, the light, elusive, flickering movements high up behind the grill, the wigged, attentive, weary Speaker, the table and the mace and the chapel-like Gothic background with its sombre shadows, conspire together, produce a confused, uncertain feeling in me, as though I was walking upon a pavement full of trap-doors and patches of uncovered morass. A misplaced, well-meant "Hear, Hear!" is apt to be extraordinarily disconcerting, and under no other circumstances have I had to speak with quite the same sideways twist that the arrangement of the House imposes. One does not recognise one's own voice threading out into the stirring brown. Unless I was excited or speaking to the mind of some particular person in

the House, I was apt to lose my feeling of an auditor. I had no sense of whither my sentences were going, such as one has with a public meeting well under one's eye. And to lose one's sense of an auditor is for a man of my temperament to lose one's sense of the immediate, and to become prolix and vague with qualifications.

§ 5.

My discontents with the Liberal party and my mental exploration of the quality of party generally is curiously mixed up with certain impressions of things and people in the National Liberal Club. The National Liberal Club is Liberalism made visible in the flesh—and Doultonware. It is an extraordinary big club done in a bold, wholesale, shiny, marbled style, richly furnished with numerous paintings, steel engravings, busts, and full-length statues of the late Mr. Gladstone; and its spacious dining-rooms, its long, hazy, crowded smoking-room with innumerable little tables and groups of men in armchairs, its magazine room and library upstairs, have just that undistinguished and unconcentrated diversity which is for me the Liberal note. The pensive member sits and hears perplexing dialects and even fragments of foreign speech, and among the clustering masses of less insistent whites his roving eye catches profiles and complexions that send his mind afield to Calcutta or Rangoon or the West Indies or Sierra Leone or the Cape. . . .

I was not infrequently that pensive member. I used to go to the Club to doubt about Liberalism.

About two o'clock in the day the great smoking-

room is crowded with countless little groups. They sit about small round tables, or in circles of chairs, and the haze of tobacco seems to prolong the great narrow place, with its pillars and bays, to infinity. Some of the groups are big, as many as a dozen men talk in loud tones; some are duologues, and there is always a sprinkling of lonely, dissociated men. At first one gets an impression of men going from group to group and as it were linking them, but as one watches closely one finds that these men just visit three or four groups at the outside, and know nothing of the others. One begins to perceive more and more distinctly that one is dealing with a sort of human mosaic; that each patch in that great place is of a different quality and colour from the next and never to be mixed with it. Most clubs have a common link, a lowest common denominator in the Club Bore, who spares no one, but even the National Liberal bores are specialised and sectional. As one looks round one sees here a clump of men from the North Country or the Potteries, here an island of South London politicians, here a couple of young Jews ascendant from Whitechapel, here a circle of journalists and writers, here a group of Irish politicians, here two East Indians, here a priest or so, here a clump of old-fashioned Protestants, here a little knot of eminent Rationalists indulging in a blasphemous story *sotto voce*. Next them are a group of anglicised Germans and highly specialised chess-players, and then two of the oddest-looking persons—bulging with documents and intent upon extraordinary business transactions over long cigars. . . .

I would listen to a stormy sea of babblement, and try to extract some constructive intimations. Every now

and then I got a whiff of politics. It was clear they were against the Lords—against plutocrats—against Cossington's newspapers—against the brewers. . . . It was tremendously clear what they were against. The trouble was to find out what on earth they were for! . . .

As I sat and thought, the streaked and mottled pillars and wall, the various views, aspects, and portraits of Mr. and Mrs. Gladstone, the partitions of polished mahogany, the yellow-vested waiters, would dissolve and vanish, and I would have a vision of this sample of miscellaneous men of limited, diverse interests and a universal littleness of imagination enlarged, unlimited, no longer a sample but a community, spreading, stretching out to infinity—all in little groups and duologues and circles, all with their special and narrow concerns, all with their backs to most of the others.

What but a common antagonism would ever keep these multitudes together? I understood why modern electioneering is more than half of it denunciation. Let us condemn, if possible, let us obstruct and deprive, but not let us do. There is no real appeal to the commonplace mind in "Let us do." That calls for the creative imagination, and few have been accustomed to respond to that call. The other merely needs jealousy and hate, of which there are great and easily accessible reservoirs in every human heart. . . .

I remember that vision of endless, narrow, jealous individuality very vividly. A seething limitlessness it became at last, like a waste place covered by crawling locusts that men sweep up by the sackload and drown by the million in ditches. . . .

Grotesquely against it came the lean features, the

sidelong shy movements of Edward Crampton, seated in a circle of talkers close at hand. I had a whiff of his strained, unmusical voice, and behold! he was saying something about the "Will of the People. . . ."

The immense and wonderful disconnectednesses of human life! I forgot the smoke and jabber of the club altogether; I became a lonely spirit flung aloft by some queer accident, a stone upon a ledge in some high and rocky wilderness, and below as far as the eye could reach stretched the swarming infinitesimals of humanity, like grass upon the field, like pebbles upon unbounded beaches. Was there ever to be in human life more than that endless struggling individualism? Was there indeed some giantry, some immense valiant synthesis, still to come—or present it might be and still unseen by me, or was this the beginning and withal the last phase of mankind? . . .

I glimpsed for awhile the stupendous impudence of our ambitions, the tremendous enterprise to which the modern statesman is implicitly addressed. I was as it were one of a little swarm of would-be reef builders looking back at the teeming slime upon the ocean floor. All the history of mankind, all the history of life, has been and will be the story of something struggling out of the indiscriminated abyss, struggling to exist and prevail over and comprehend individual lives—an effort of insidious attraction, an idea of invincible appeal. That something greater than ourselves, which does not so much exist as seek existence, palpitating between being and not-being, how marvellous it is! It has worn the form and visage of ten thousand different gods, sought a shape for itself in stone and ivory and music

and wonderful words, spoken more and more clearly of a mystery of love, a mystery of unity, dabbling meanwhile in blood and cruelty beyond the common impulses of men. It is something that comes and goes, like a light that shines and is withdrawn, withdrawn so completely that one doubts if it has ever been. . . .

§ 6.

I would mark with a curious interest the stray country member of the club up in town for a night or so. My mind would be busy with speculations about him, about his home, his family, his reading, his horizons, his innumerable fellows who didn't belong and never came up. I would fill in the outline of him with memories of my uncle and his Staffordshire neighbours. He was perhaps Alderman This or Councillor That down there, a great man in his ward, J. P. within seven miles of the boundary of the borough, and a God in his home. Here he was nobody, and very shy, and either a little too arrogant or a little too meek towards our very democratic mannered but still liveried waiters. Was he perhaps the backbone of England? He overate himself lest he should appear mean, went through our Special Dinner conscientiously, drank, unless he was teetotal, of unfamiliar wines, and did his best, in spite of the rules, to tip. Afterwards, in a state of flushed repletion, he would have old brandy, black coffee, and a banded cigar, or in the name of temperance omit the brandy and have rather more coffee, in the smoking-room. I would sit and watch that stiff dignity of self-indulgence, and wonder, wonder. . . .

An infernal clairvoyance would come to me. I would have visions of him in relation to his wife, checking always, sometimes bullying, sometimes being ostentatiously "kind"; I would see him glance furtively at his domestic servants upon his staircase, or stiffen his upper lip against the reluctant, protesting business employee. We imaginative people are base enough, heaven knows, but it is only in rare moods of bitter penetration that we pierce down to the baser lusts, the viler shames, the everlasting lying and muddle-headed self-justification of the dull.

I would turn my eyes down the crowded room and see others of him and others. What did he think he was up to? Did he for a moment realise that his presence under that ceramic glory of a ceiling with me meant, if it had any rational meaning at all, that we were jointly doing something with the nation and the empire and mankind? . . . How on earth could anyone get hold of him, make any noble use of him? He didn't read beyond his newspaper. He never thought, but only followed imaginings in his heart. He never discussed. At the first hint of discussion his temper gave way. He was, I knew, a deep, thinly-covered tank of resentments and quite irrational moral rages. Yet withal I would have to resist an impulse to go over to him and nudge him and say to him, "Look here! What indeed do you think we are doing with the nation and the empire and mankind? You know—*Mankind!*"

I wonder what reply I should have got.

So far as any average could be struck and so far as any backbone could be located, it seemed to me

that this silent, shy, replete, sub-angry, middle-class sentimentalist was in his endless species and varieties and dialects the backbone of our party. So far as I could be considered as representing anything in the House, I pretended to sit for the elements of *him*. . . .

§ 7.

For a time I turned towards the Socialists. They at least had an air of coherent intentions. At that time Socialism had come into politics again after a period of depression and obscurity, with a tremendous *éclat*. There was visibly a following of Socialist members to Chris Robinson; mysteriously uncommunicative gentlemen in soft felt hats and short coats and square-toed boots who replied to casual advances a little surprisingly in rich North Country dialects. Members became aware of a "seagreen incorruptible," as Colonel Marlow put it to me, speaking on the Address, a slender twisted figure supporting itself on a stick and speaking with a fire that was altogether revolutionary. This was Philip Snowden, the member for Blackburn. They had come in nearly forty strong altogether, and with an air of presently meaning to come in much stronger. They were only one aspect of what seemed at that time a big national movement. Socialist societies, we gathered, were springing up all over the country, and everyone was enquiring about Socialism and discussing Socialism. It had taken the Universities with particular force, and any youngster with the slightest intellectual pretension was either actively for or brilliantly against. For a time our Young Liberal group was ostentatiously sympathetic. . . .

When I think of the Socialists there comes a vivid memory of certain evening gatherings at our house. . . .

These gatherings had been organised by Margaret as the outcome of a discussion at the Baileys'. Altiora had been very emphatic and uncharitable upon the futility of the Socialist movement. It seemed that even the leaders fought shy of dinner-parties.

"They never meet each other," said Altiora, "much less people on the other side. How can they begin to understand politics until they do that?"

"Most of them have totally unpresentable wives," said Altiora, "totally!" and quoted instances, "and they *will* bring them. Or they won't come! Some of the poor creatures have scarcely learnt their table manners. They just make holes in the talk. . . ."

I thought there was a great deal of truth beneath Altiora's outburst. The presentation of the Socialist case seemed very greatly crippled by the want of a common intimacy in its leaders; the want of intimacy didn't at first appear to be more than an accident, and our talk led to Margaret's attempt to get acquaintance and easy intercourse afoot among them and between them and the Young Liberals of our group. She gave a series of weekly dinners, planned, I think, a little too accurately upon Altiora's model, and after each we had as catholic a reception as we could contrive.

Our receptions were indeed, I should think, about as catholic as receptions could be. Margaret found herself with a weekly houseful of insoluble problems in intercourse. One did one's best, but one got a nightmare feeling as the evening wore on.

It was one of the few unanimities of these parties

that everyone should be a little odd in appearance, funny about the hair or the tie or the shoes or more generally, and that bursts of violent aggression should alternate with an attitude entirely defensive. A number of our guests had an air of waiting for a clue that never came, and stood and sat about silently, mildly amused but not a bit surprised that we did not discover their distinctive Open-Sesames. There was a sprinkling of manifest seers and prophetesses in shapeless garments, far too many, I thought, for really easy social intercourse, and any conversation at any moment was liable to become oracular. One was in a state of tension from first to last; the most innocent remark seemed capable of exploding resentment, and replies came out at the most unexpected angles. We Young Liberals went about puzzled but polite to the gathering we had evoked. The Young Liberals' tradition is on the whole wonderfully discreet, superfluous steam is let out far away from home in the Balkans or Africa, and the neat, stiff figures of the Cramptons, Bunting Harblow, and Lewis, either in extremely well-cut morning coats indicative of the House, or in what is sometimes written of as "faultless evening-dress," stood about on those evenings, they and their very quietly and simply and expensively dressed little wives, like a datum line amidst lakes and mountains.

I didn't at first see the connection between systematic social reorganisation and arbitrary novelties in dietary and costume, just as I didn't realise why the most comprehensive constructive projects should appear to be supported solely by odd and exceptionally personalities. On one of these evenings a little group of

rather jolly-looking pretty young people seated themselves for no particular reason in a large circle on the floor of my study, and engaged, so far as I could judge, in the game of Hunt the Meaning, the intellectual equivalent of Hunt the Slipper. It must have been that same evening I came upon an unbleached young gentleman before the oval mirror on the landing engaged in removing the remains of an anchovy sandwich from his protruded tongue—visible ends of cress having misled him into the belief that he was dealing with doctrinally permissible food. It was not unusual to be given hand-bills and printed matter by our guests, but there I had the advantage over Lewis, who was too tactful to refuse the stuff, too neatly dressed to pocket it, and had no writing-desk available upon which he could relieve himself in a manner flattering to the giver. So that his hands got fuller and fuller. A relentless, compact little woman in what Margaret declared to be an extremely expensive black dress has also printed herself on my memory; she had set her heart upon my contributing to a weekly periodical in the lentil interest with which she was associated, and I spent much time and care in evading her.

Mingling with the more hygienic types were a number of Anti-Puritan Socialists, bulging with bias against temperance, and breaking out against austere methods of living all over their faces. Their manner was packed with heartiness. They were apt to choke the approaches to the little buffet Margaret had set up downstairs, and there engage in discussions of Determinism—it always seemed to be Determinism—which became heartier and noisier, but never acrimonious even

in the small hours. It seemed impossible to settle about this Determinism of theirs—ever. And there were worldly Socialists also. I particularly recall a large, active, buoyant, lady-killing individual with an eyeglass borne upon a broad black ribbon, who swam about us one evening. He might have been a slightly frayed actor, in his large frock-coat, his white waistcoat, and the sort of black and white check trousers that twinkle. He had a high pitched voice with aristocratic intonations, and he seemed to be in a perpetual state of interrogation. "What are we all he-a for?" he would ask only too audibly. "What are we doing he-a? What's the connection?"

What *was* the connection?

We made a special effort with our last assembly in June, 1907. We tried to get something like a representative collection of the parliamentary leaders of Socialism, the various exponents of Socialist thought and a number of Young Liberal thinkers into one room. Dorvil came, and Horatio Bulch; Featherstonehaugh appeared for ten minutes and talked charmingly to Margaret and then vanished again; there was Wilkins the novelist and Toomer and Dr. Tumpany. Chris Robinson stood about for a time in a new comforter, and Magdeberg and Will Pipes and five or six Labour members. And on our side we had our particular little group, Bunting Harblow, Crampton, Lewis, all looking as broad-minded and open to conviction as they possibly could, and even occasionally talking out from their bushes almost boldly. But the gathering as a whole refused either to mingle or dispute, and as an experiment in intercourse the evening was a failure. Unexpected dissociations appeared between Socialists one

had supposed friendly. I could not have imagined it was possible for half so many people to turn their backs on everybody else in such small rooms as ours. But the unsaid things those backs expressed broke out, I remarked, with refreshed virulence in the various organs of the various sections of the party next week.

I talked, I remember, with Dr. Tumpany, a large young man in a still larger professional frock-coat, and with a great shock of very fair hair, who was candidate for some North Country constituency. We discussed the political outlook, and, like so many Socialists at that time, he was full of vague threatenings against the Liberal party. I was struck by a thing in him that I had already observed less vividly in many others of these Socialist leaders, and which gave me at last a clue to the whole business. He behaved exactly like a man in possession of valuable patent rights, who wants to be dealt with. He had an air of having a corner in ideas. Then it flashed into my head that the whole Socialist movement was an attempted corner in ideas. . . .

§ 8.

Late that night I found myself alone with Margaret amid the debris of the gathering.

I sat before the fire, hands in pockets, and Margaret, looking white and weary, came and leant upon the mantel.

"Oh, Lord!" said Margaret.

I agreed. Then I resumed my meditation.

"Ideas," I said, "count for more than I thought in the world."

Margaret regarded me with that neutral expression behind which she was accustomed to wait for clues.

"When you think of the height and depth and importance and wisdom of the Socialist ideas, and see the men who are running them," I explained. . . . "A big system of ideas like Socialism grows up out of the obvious commonsense of our present conditions. It's as impersonal as science. All these men——They've given nothing to it. They're just people who have pegged out claims upon a big intellectual No-Man's-Land—and don't feel quite sure of the law. There's a sort of quarrelsome uneasiness. . . . If we professed Socialism do you think they'd welcome us? Not a man of them! They'd feel it was burglary. . . ."

"Yes," said Margaret, looking into the fire. "That is just what *I* felt about them all the evening. . . . Particularly Dr. Tumpany."

"We mustn't confuse Socialism with the Socialists, I said; "that's the moral of it. I suppose if God were to find He had made a mistake in dates or something, and went back and annihilated everybody from Owen onwards who was in any way known as a Socialist leader or teacher, Socialism would be exactly where it is and what it is to-day—a growing realisation of constructive needs in every man's mind, and a little corner in party politics. So, I suppose, it will always be. . . . But they *were* a damned lot, Margaret!"

I looked up at the little noise she made. *"Twice!"* she said, smiling indulgently, "to-day!" (Even the smile was Altiora's.)

I returned to my thoughts. They *were* a damned

human lot. It was an excellent word in that connection. . . .

But the ideas marched on, the ideas marched on, just as though men's brains were no more than stepping-stones, just as though some great brain in which we are all little cells and corpuscles was thinking them! . . .

"I don't think there is a man among them who makes me feel he is trustworthy," said Margaret; "unless it is Featherstonehaugh."

I sat taking in this proposition.

"They'll never help us, I feel," said Margaret.

"Us?"

"The Liberals."

"Oh, damn the Liberals!" I said. "They'll never even help themselves."

"I don't think I could possibly get on with any of those people," said Margaret, after a pause.

She remained for a time looking down at me and, I could feel, perplexed by me, but I wanted to go on with my thinking, and so I did not look up, and presently she stooped to my forehead and kissed me and went rustling softly to her room.

I remained in my study for a long time with my thoughts crystallising out. . . .

It was then, I think, that I first apprehended clearly how that opposition to which I have already alluded of the immediate life and the mental hinterland of a man, can be applied to public and social affairs. The ideas go on—and no person or party succeeds in embodying them. The reality of human progress never comes to the surface, it is a power in the deeps, an undertow. It goes on in silence while men think, in

studies where they write self-forgetfully, in laboratories under the urgency of an impersonal curiosity, in the rare illumination of honest talk, in moments of emotional insight, in thoughtful reading, but not in everyday affairs. Everyday affairs and whatever is made an everyday affair, are transactions of the ostensible self, the being of habits, interests, usage. Temper, vanity, hasty reaction to imitation, personal feeling, are their substance. No man can abolish his immediate self and specialise in the depths; if he attempt that, he simply turns himself into something a little less than the common man. He may have an immense hinterland, but that does not absolve him from a frontage. That is the essential error of the specialist philosopher, the specialist teacher, the specialist publicist. They repudiate frontage; claim to be pure hinterland. That is what bothered me about Codger, about those various schoolmasters who had prepared me for life, about the Baileys and their dream of an official ruling class. A human being who is a philosopher in the first place, a teacher in the first place, or a statesman in the first place, is thereby and inevitably, though he bring God-like gifts to the pretence—a quack. These are attempts to live deep-side shallow, inside out. They produce merely a new pettiness. To understand Socialism, again, is to gain a new breadth of outlook; to join a Socialist organisation is to join a narrow cult which is not even tolerably serviceable in presenting or spreading the ideas for which it stands. . . .

I perceived I had got something quite fundamental here. It had taken me some years to realise the true relation of the great constructive ideas that swayed me

not only to political parties, but to myself. I had been disposed to identify the formulæ of someone party with social construction, and to regard the other as necessarily anti-constructive, just as I had been inclined to follow the Baileys in the self-righteousness of supposing myself to be wholly constructive. But I saw now that every man of intellectual freedom and vigour is necessarily constructive-minded nowadays, and that no man is disinterestedly so. Each one of us repeats in himself the conflict of the race between the splendour of its possibilities and its immediate associations. We may be shaping immortal things, but we must sleep and answer the dinner gong, and have our salt of flattery and self-approval. In politics a man counts not for what he is in moments of imaginative expansion, but for his common workaday, selfish self; and political parties are held together not by a community of ultimate aims, but by the stabler bond of an accustomed life. Everybody almost is for progress in general, and nearly everybody is opposed to any change, except in so far as gross increments are change, in his particular method of living and behaviour. Every party stands essentially for the interests and mental usages of some definite class or group of classes in the exciting community, and every party has its scientific-minded and constructive leading section, with well-defined hinterlands formulating its social functions in a public-spirited form, and its superficial-minded following confessing its meannesses and vanities and prejudices. No class will abolish itself, materially alter its way of life, or drastically reconstruct itself, albeit no class is indisposed to co-operate in the unlimited socialisation of

any other class. In that capacity for aggression upon other classes lies the essential driving force of modern affairs. The instincts, the persons, the parties, and vanities sway and struggle. The ideas and understandings march on and achieve themselves for all—in spite of everyone. . . .

The methods and traditions of British politics maintain the form of two great parties, with rider groups seeking to gain specific ends in the event of a small Government majority. These two main parties are more or less heterogeneous in composition. Each, however, has certain necessary characteristics. The Conservative Party has always stood quite definitely for the established propertied interests. The landowner, the big lawyer, the Established Church, and latterly the huge private monopoly of the liquor trade which has been created by temperance legislation, are the essential Conservatives. Interwoven now with the native wealthy are the families of the great international usurers, and a vast miscellaneous mass of financial enterprise. Outside the range of resistance implied by these interests, the Conservative Party has always shown itself just as constructive and collectivist as any other party. The great landowners have been as well-disposed towards the endowment of higher education, and as willing to co-operate with the Church in protective and mildly educational legislation for children and the working class, as any political section. The financiers, too, are adventurous-spirited and eager for mechanical progress and technical efficiency. They are prepared to spend public money upon research, upon ports and harbours and public communications, upon

sanitation and hygienic organisation. A certain rude benevolence of public intention is equally characteristic of the liquor trade. Provided his comfort leads to no excesses of temperance, the liquor trade is quite eager to see the common man prosperous, happy, and with money to spend in a bar. All sections of the party are aggressively patriotic and favourably inclined to the idea of an upstanding, well-fed, and well-exercised population in uniform. Of course there are reactionary landowners and old-fashioned country clergy, full of localised self-importance, jealous even of the cottager who can read, but they have neither the power nor the ability to retard the constructive forces in the party as a whole. On the other hand, when matters point to any definitely confiscatory proposal, to the public ownership and collective control of land, for example, or state mining and manufactures, or the nationalisation of the so-called public-house or extended municipal enterprise, or even to an increase of the taxation of property, then the Conservative Party presents a nearly adamantine bar. It does not stand for, it *is,* the existing arrangement in these affairs.

Even more definitely a class party is the Labour Party, whose immediate interest is to raise wages, shorten hours of labour, increase employment, and make better terms for the working-man tenant and working-man purchaser. Its leaders are no doubt constructive minded, but the mass of the following is naturally suspicious of education and discipline, hostile to the higher education, and—except for an obvious antagonism to employers and property owners—almost destitute of ideas. What else can it be? It stands for

the expropriated multitude, whose whole situation and difficulty arise from its individual lack of initiative and organising power. It favours the nationalisation of land and capital with no sense of the difficulties involved in the process; but, on the other hand, the equally reasonable socialisation of individuals which is implied by military service is steadily and quite naturally and quite illogically opposed by it. It is only in recent years that Labour has emerged as a separate party from the huge hospitable caravanserai of Liberalism, and there is still a very marked tendency to step back again into that multitudinous assemblage.

For multitudinousness has always been the Liberal characteristic. Liberalism never has been nor ever can be anything but a diversified crowd. Liberalism has to voice everything that is left out by these other parties. It is the party against the predominating interests. It is at once the party of the failing and of the untried; it is the party of decadence and hope. From its nature it must be a vague and planless association in comparison with its antagonist, neither so constructive on the one hand, nor on the other so competent to hinder the inevitable constructions of the civilised state. Essentially it is the party of criticism, the "Anti" party. It is a system of hostilities and objections that somehow achieves at times an elusive common soul. It is a gathering together of all the smaller interests which find themselves at a disadvantage against the big established classes, the leasehold tenant as against the landowner, the retail tradesman as against the merchant and the moneylender, the Nonconformist as against the Churchman, the small employer as against the demoralising

hospitable publican, the man without introductions and broad connections against the man who has these things. It is the party of the many small men against the fewer prevailing men. It has no more essential reason for loving the Collectivist state than the Conservatives; the small dealer is doomed to absorption in that just as much as the large owner; but it resorts to the state against its antagonists as in the middle ages common men pitted themselves against the barons by siding with the king. The Liberal Party is the party against "class privilege" because it represents no class advantages, but it is also the party that is on the whole most set against Collective control because it represents no established responsilibity. It is constructive only so far as its antagonism to the great owner is more powerful than its jealousy of the state. It organises only because organisation is forced upon it by the organisation of its adversaries. It lapses in and out of alliance with Labour as it sways between hostility to wealth and hostility to public expenditure. . . .

Every modern European state will have in some form or other these three parties: the resistent, militant, authoritative, dull, and unsympathetic party of establishment and success, the rich party; the confused, sentimental, spasmodic, numerous party of the small, struggling, various, undisciplined men, the poor man's party; and a third party sometimes detaching itself from the second and sometimes reuniting with it, the party of the altogether expropriated masses, the proletarians, Labour. Change Conservative and Liberal to Republican and Democrat, for example, and you have the conditions in the United States. The Crown or a dethroned dy-

nasty, the Established Church or a dispossessed church, nationalist secessions, the personalities of party leaders, may break up, complicate, and confuse the self-expression of these three necessary divisions in the modern social drama, the analyst will make them out none the less for that. . . .

And then I came back as if I came back to a refrain;—the ideas go on—as though we are all no more than little cells and corpuscles in some great brain beyond our understanding. . . .

So it was I sat and thought my problem out. . . . I still remember my satisfaction at seeing things plainly at last. It was like clouds dispersing to show the sky. Constructive ideas, of course, couldn't hold a party together alone, "interests and habits, not ideas," I had that now, and so the great constructive scheme of Socialism, invading and inspiring all parties, was necessarily claimed only by this collection of odds and ends, this residuum of disconnected and exceptional people. This was true not only of the Socialist idea, but of the scientific idea, the idea of veracity—of human confidence in humanity—of all that mattered in human life outside the life of individuals. . . . The only real party that would ever profess Socialism was the Labour Party, and that in the entirely one-sided form of an irresponsible and non-constructive attack on property. Socialism in that mutilated form, the teeth and claws without the eyes and brain, I wanted as little as I wanted anything in the world.

Perfectly clear it was, perfectly clear, and why

hadn't I seen it before? . . . I looked at my watch, and it was half-past two.

I yawned, stretched, got up and went to bed.

§ 9.

My ideas about statecraft have passed through three main phases to the final convictions that remain. There was the first immediacy of my dream of ports and harbours and cities, railways, roads, and administered territories—the vision I had seen in the haze from that little church above Locarno. Slowly that had passed into a more elaborate legislative constructiveness, which had led to my uneasy association with the Baileys and the professedly constructive Young Liberals. To get that ordered life I had realised the need of organisation, knowledge, expertness, a wide movement of co-ordinated methods. On the individual side I thought that a life of urgent industry, temperance, and close attention was indicated by my perception of these ends. I married Margaret and set to work. But something in my mind refused from the outset to accept these determinations as final. There was always a doubt lurking below, always a faint resentment, a protesting criticism, a feeling of vitally important omissions.

I arrived at last at the clear realisation that my political associates, and I in my association with them, were oddly narrow, priggish, and unreal, that the Socialists with whom we were attempting co-operation were preposterously irrelevant to their own theories, that my political life didn't in some way comprehend

more than itself, that rather perplexingly I was missing the thing I was seeking. Britten's footnotes to Altiora's self-assertions, her fits of energetic planning, her quarrels and rallies and vanities, his illuminating attacks on Cramptonism and the heavy-spirited triviality of such Liberalism as the Children's Charter, served to point my way to my present conclusions. I had been trying to deal all along with human progress as something immediate in life, something to be immediately attacked by political parties and groups pointing primarily to that end. I now began to see that just as in my own being there was the rather shallow, rather vulgar, self-seeking careerist, who wore an admirable silk hat and bustled self-consciously through the lobby, and a much greater and indefinitely growing unpublished personality behind him—my hinterland, I have called it—so in human affairs generally the permanent reality is also a hinterland, which is never really immediate, which draws continually upon human experience and influences human action more and more, but which is itself never the actual player upon the stage. It is the unseen dramatist who never takes a call. Now it was just through the fact that our group about the Baileys didn't understand this, that with a sort of frantic energy they were trying to develop that sham expert officialdom of theirs to plan, regulate, and direct the affairs of humanity, that the perplexing note of silliness and shallowness that I had always felt and felt now most acutely under Britten's gibes, came in. They were neglecting human life altogether in social organisation.

In the development of intellectual modesty lies the

growth of statesmanship. It has been the chronic mistake of statecraft and all organising spirits to attempt immediately to scheme and arrange and achieve. Priests, schools of thought, political schemers, leaders of men, have always slipped into the error of assuming that they can think out the whole—or at any rate completely think out definite parts—of the purpose and future of man, clearly and finally; they have set themselves to legislate and construct on that assumption, and, experiencing the perplexing obduracy and evasions of reality, they have taken to dogma, persecution, training, pruning, secretive education; and all the stupidities of self-sufficient energy. In the passion of their good intentions they have not hesitated to conceal fact, suppress thought, crush disturbing initiatives and apparently detrimental desires. And so it is blunderingly and wastefully, destroying with the making, that any extension of social organisation is at present achieved.

Directly, however, this idea of an emancipation from immediacy is grasped, directly the dominating importance of this critical, less personal, mental hinterland in the individual and of the collective mind in the race is understood, the whole problem of the statesman and his attitude towards politics gain a new significance, and becomes accessible to a new series of solutions. He wants no longer to "fix up," as people say, human affairs, but to devote his forces to the development of that needed intellectual life without which all his shallow attempts at fixing up are futile. He ceases to build on the sands, and sets himself to gather foundations.

You see, I began in my teens by wanting to plan

and build cities and harbours for mankind; I ended in the middle thirties by desiring only to serve and increase a general process of thought, a process fearless, critical, real-spirited, that would in its own time give cities, harbours, air, happiness, everything at a scale and quality and in a light altogether beyond the match-striking imaginations of a contemporary mind. I wanted freedom of speech and suggestion, vigour of thought, and the cultivation of that impulse of veracity that lurks more or less discouraged in every man. With that I felt there must go an emotion. I hit upon a phrase that became at last something of a refrain in my speech and writings, to convey the spirit that I felt was at the very heart of real human progress—love and fine thinking.

(I suppose that nowadays no newspaper in England gets through a week without the repetition of that phrase.)

My convictions crystallised more and more definitely upon this. The more of love and fine thinking the better for men, I said; the less, the worse. And upon this fresh basis I set myself to examine what I as a politician might do. I perceived I was at last finding an adequate expression for all that was in me, for those forces that had rebelled at the crude presentations of Bromstead, at the secrecies and suppressions of my youth, at the dull unrealities of City Merchants, at the conventions and timidities of the Pinky Dinkys, at the philosophical recluse of Trinity and the phrases and tradition-worship of my political associates. None of these things were half alive, and I wanted life to be intensely alive and awake. I wanted thought like an

edge of steel and desire like a flame. The real work before mankind now, I realised once and for all, is the enlargement of human expression, the release and intensification of human thought, the vivider utilisation of experience and the invigoration of research—and whatever one does in human affairs has or lacks value as it helps or hinders that.

With that I had got my problem clear, and the solution, so far as I was concerned, lay in finding out the point in the ostensible life of politics at which I could most subserve these ends. I was still against the muddles of Bromstead, but I had hunted them down now to their essential form. The jerry-built slums, the roads that went nowhere, the tarred fences, litigious notice-boards and barbed wire fencing, the litter and the heaps of dump, were only the outward appearances whose ultimate realities were jerry-built conclusions, hasty purposes, aimless habits of thought, and imbecile bars and prohibitions in the thoughts and souls of men. How are we through politics to get at that confusion?

We want to invigorate and reinvigorate education. We want to create a sustained counter effort to the perpetual tendency of all educational organisations towards classicalism, secondary issues, and the evasion of life.

We want to stimulate the expression of life through art and literature, and its exploration through research.

We want to make the best and finest thought accessible to everyone, and more particularly to create and sustain an enormous free criticism, without which art,

literature, and research alike degenerate into tradition or imposture.

Then all the other problems which are now so insoluble, destitution, disease, the difficulty of maintaining international peace, the scarcely faced possibility of making life generally and continually beautiful, become—*easy*. . . .

It was clear to me that the most vital activities in which I could engage would be those which most directly affected the Church, public habits of thought, education, organised research, literature, and the channels of general discussion. I had to ask myself how my position as Liberal member for Kinghamstead squared with and conduced to this essential work.

## CHAPTER II.

### SEEKING ASSOCIATES.

§ 1.

I HAVE told of my gradual abandonment of the pretensions and habits of party Liberalism. In a sense I was moving towards aristocracy. Regarding the development of the social and individual mental hinterland as the essential thing in human progress, I passed on very naturally to the practical assumption that we wanted what I may call "hinterlanders." Of course I do not mean by aristocracy the changing unorganised medley of rich people and privileged people who dominate the civilised world of to-day, but as opposed to this, a possibility of co-ordinating the will of the finer individuals, by habit and literature, into a broad common aim. We must have an aristocracy—not of privilege, but of understanding and purpose—or mankind will fail. I find this dawning more and more clearly when I look through my various writings of the years between 1903 and 1910. I was already emerging to plain statements in 1908.

I reasoned after this fashion. The line of human improvement and the expansion of human life lies in the direction of education and finer initiatives. If humanity cannot develop an education far beyond any-

thing that is now provided, if it cannot collectively invent devices and solve problems on a much richer, broader scale than it does at the present time, it cannot hope to achieve any very much finer order or any more general happiness than it now enjoys. We must believe, therefore, that it *can* develop such a training and education, or we must abandon secular constructive hope. And here my peculiar difficulty as against crude democracy comes in. If humanity at large is capable of that high education and those creative freedoms our hope demands, much more must its better and more vigorous types be so capable. And if those who have power and leisure now, and freedom to respond to imaginative appeals, cannot be won to the idea of collective self-development, then the whole of humanity cannot be won to that. From that one passes to what has become my general conception in politics, the conception of the constructive imagination working upon the vast complex of powerful people, clever people, enterprising people, influential people, amidst whom power is diffused to-day, to produce that self-conscious, highly selective, open-minded, devoted aristocratic culture, which seems to me to be the necessary next phase in the development of human affairs. I see human progress, not as the spontaneous product of crowds of raw minds swayed by elementary needs, but as a natural but elaborate result of intricate human interdependencies, of human energy and curiosity liberated and acting at leisure, of human passions and motives, modified and redirected by literature and art. . . .

But now the reader will understand how it came about that, disappointed by the essential littleness of

Liberalism, and disillusioned about the representative quality of the professed Socialists, I turned my mind more and more to a scrutiny of the big people, the wealthy and influential people, against whom Liberalism pits its forces. I was asking myself definitely whether, after all, it was not my particular job to work through them and not against them. Was I not altogether out of my element as an Anti-? Weren't there big bold qualities about these people that common men lack, and the possibility of far more splendid dreams? Were they really the obstacles, might they not be rather the vehicles of the possible new braveries of life?

§ 2.

The faults of the Imperialist movement were obvious enough. The conception of the Boer War had been clumsy and puerile, the costly errors of that struggle appalling, and the subsequent campaign of Mr. Chamberlain for Tariff Reform seemed calculated to combine the financial adventurers of the Empire in one vast conspiracy against the consumer. The cant of Imperialism was easy to learn and use; it was speedily adopted by all sorts of base enterprises and turned to all sorts of base ends. But a big child is permitted big mischief, and my mind was now continually returning to the persuasion that after all in some development of the idea of Imperial patriotism might be found that wide, rough, politically acceptable expression of a constructive dream capable of sustaining a great educational and philosophical movement such as no formula of Liberalism supplied. The fact that it readily took

vulgar forms only witnessed to its strong popular appeal. Mixed in with the noisiness and humbug of the movement there appeared a real regard for social efficiency, a real spirit of animation and enterprise. There suddenly appeared in my world—I saw them first, I think, in 1908—a new sort of little boy, a most agreeable development of the slouching, cunning, cigarette-smoking, town-bred youngster, a small boy in a khaki hat, and with bare knees and athletic bearing, earnestly engaged in wholesome and invigorating games up to and occasionally a little beyond his strength—the Boy Scout. I liked the Boy Scout, and I find it difficult to express how much it mattered to me, with my growing bias in favour of deliberate national training, that Liberalism hadn't been able to produce, and had indeed never attempted to produce, anything of this kind.

§ 3.

In those days there existed a dining club called—there was some lost allusion to the exorcism of party feeling in its title—the Pentagram Circle. It included Bailey and Dayton and myself, Sir Herbert Thorns, Lord Charles Kindling, Minns the poet, Gerbault the big railway man, Lord Gane, fresh from the settlement of Framboya, and Rumbold, who later became Home Secretary and left us. We were men of all parties and very various experiences, and our object was to discuss the welfare of the Empire in a disinterested spirit. We dined monthly at the Mermaid in Westminster, and for a couple of years we kept up an average attendance of ten out of fourteen. The dinner-time was given up to

desultory conversation, and it is odd how warm and good the social atmosphere of that little gathering became as time went on; then over the dessert, so soon as the waiters had swept away the crumbs and ceased to fret us, one of us would open with perhaps fifteen or twenty minutes' exposition of some specially prepared question, and after him we would deliver ourselves in turn, each for three or four minutes. When every one present had spoken once talk became general again, and it was rare we emerged upon Hendon Street before midnight. Sometimes, as my house was conveniently near, a knot of men would come home with me and go on talking and smoking in my dining-room until two or three. We had Fred Neal, that wild Irish journalist, among us towards the end, and his stupendous flow of words materially prolonged our closing discussions and made our continuance impossible.

I learned very much and very many things at those dinners, but more particularly did I become familiarised with the habits of mind of such men as Neal, Crupp, Gane, and the one or two other New Imperialists who belonged to us. They were nearly all like Bailey Oxford men, though mostly of a younger generation, and they were all mysteriously and inexplicably advocates of Tariff Reform, as if it were the principal instead of at best a secondary aspect of constructive policy. They seemed obsessed by the idea that streams of trade could be diverted violently so as to link the parts of the Empire by common interests, and they were persuaded, I still think mistakenly, that Tariff Reform would have an immense popular appeal. They were also very keen on military organisation, and with a curious little

martinet twist in their minds that boded ill for that side of public liberty. So much against them. But they were disposed to spend money much more generously on education and research of all sorts than our formless host of Liberals seemed likely to do; and they were altogether more accessible than the Young Liberals to bold, constructive ideas affecting the universities and upper classes. The Liberals are abjectly afraid of the universities. I found myself constantly falling into line with these men in our discussions, and more and more hostile to Dayton's sentimentalising evasions of definite schemes and Minns' trust in such things as the "Spirit of our People" and the "General Trend of Progress." It wasn't that I thought them very much righter than their opponents; I believe all definite party "sides" at any time are bound to be about equally right and equally lop-sided; but that I thought I could get more out of them and what was more important to me, more out of myself if I co-operated with them. By 1908 I had already arrived at a point where I could be definitely considering a transfer of my political allegiance.

These abstract questions are inseparably interwoven with my memory of a shining long white table, and our hock bottles and burgundy bottles, and bottles of Perrier and St. Galmier and the disturbed central trophy of dessert, and scattered glasses and nut-shells and cigarette-ends and menu-cards used for memoranda. I see old Dayton sitting back and cocking his eye to the ceiling in a way he had while he threw warmth into the ancient platitudes of Liberalism, and Minns leaning forward, and a little like a cockatoo with a taste for confidences, telling us in a hushed voice of

his faith in the Destiny of Mankind. Thorns lounges, rolling his round face and round eyes from speaker to speaker and sounding the visible depths of misery whenever Neal begins. Gerbault and Gane were given to conversation in undertones, and Bailey pursued mysterious purposes in lisping whispers. It was Crupp attracted me most. He had, as people say, his eye on me from the beginning. He used to speak at me, and drifted into a custom of coming home with me very regularly for an after-talk.

He opened his heart to me.

"Neither of us," he said, "are dukes, and neither of us are horny-handed sons of toil. We want to get hold of the handles, and to do that, one must go where the power is, and give it just as constructive a twist as we can. That's *my* Toryism."

"Is it Kindling's—or Gerbault's?"

"No. But theirs is soft, and mine's hard. Mine will wear theirs out. You and I and Bailey are all after the same thing, and why aren't we working together?"

"Are you a Confederate?" I asked suddenly.

"That's a secret nobody tells," he said.

"What are the Confederates after?"

"Making aristocracy work, I suppose. Just as, I gather, *you* want to do." . . .

The Confederates were being heard of at that time. They were at once attractive and repellent to me, an odd secret society whose membership nobody knew, pledged, it was said, to impose Tariff Reform and an ample constructive policy upon the Conservatives. In the press, at any rate, they had an air of deliberately

organised power. I have no doubt the rumour of them greatly influenced my ideas. . . .

In the end I made some very rapid decisions, but for nearly two years I was hesitating. Hesitations were inevitable in such a matter. I was not dealing with any simple question of principle, but with elusive and fluctuating estimates of the trend of diverse forces and of the nature of my own powers. All through that period I was asking over and over again: how far are these Confederates mere dreamers? How far—and this was more vital—are they rendering lip-service to social organisations? Is it true they desire war because it confirms the ascendency of their class? How far can Conservatism be induced to plan and construct before it resists the thrust towards change. Is it really in bulk anything more than a mass of prejudice and conceit, cynical indulgence, and a hard suspicion of and hostility to the expropriated classes in the community?

That is a research which yields no statistics, an enquiry like asking what is the ruling colour of a chameleon. The shadowy answer varied with my health, varied with my mood and the conduct of the people I was watching. How fine can people be? How generous?—not incidentally, but all round? How far can you educate sons beyond the outlook of their fathers, and how far lift a rich, proud, self-indulgent class above the protests of its business agents and solicitors and its own habits and vanity? Is chivalry in a class possible? —was it ever, indeed, or will it ever indeed be possible? Is the progress that seems attainable in certain directions worth the retrogression that may be its price?

§ 4.

It was to the Pentagram Circle that I first broached the new conceptions that were developing in my mind. I count the evening of my paper the beginning of the movement that created the *Blue Weekly* and our wing of the present New Tory party. I do that without any excessive egotism, because my essay was no solitary man's production; it was my reaction to forces that had come to me very large through my fellow-members; its quick reception by them showed that I was, so to speak, merely the first of the chestnuts to pop. The atmospheric quality of the evening stands out very vividly in my memory. The night, I remember, was warmly foggy when after midnight we went to finish our talk at my house.

We had recently changed the rules of the club to admit visitors, and so it happened that I had brought Britten, and Crupp introduced Arnold Shoesmith, my former schoolfellow at City Merchants, and now the wealthy successor of his father and elder brother. I remember his heavy, inexpressively handsome face lighting to his rare smile at the sight of me, and how little I dreamt of the tragic entanglement that was destined to involve us both. Gane was present, and Esmeer, a newly-added member, but I think Bailey was absent. Either he was absent, or he said something so entirely characteristic and undistinguished that it has left no impression on my mind.

I had broken a little from the traditions of the club even in my title, which was deliberately a challenge to

the liberal idea: it was, "The World Exists for Exceptional People." It is not the title I should choose now—for since that time I have got my phrase of "mental hinterlander" into journalistic use. I should say now, "The World Exists for Mental Hinterland."

The notes I made of that opening have long since vanished with a thousand other papers, but some odd chance has preserved and brought with me to Italy the menu for the evening; its back black with the scrawled notes I made of the discussion for my reply. I found it the other day among some letters from Margaret and a copy of the 1909 Report of the Poor Law Commission, also rich with pencilled marginalia.

My opening was a criticism of the democratic idea and method, upon lines such as I have already sufficiently indicated in the preceding sections. I remember how old Dayton fretted in his chair, and tushed and pished at that, even as I gave it, and afterwards we were treated to one of his platitudinous harangues, he sitting back in his chair with that small obstinate eye of his fixed on the ceiling, and a sort of cadaverous glow upon his face, repeating—quite regardless of all my reasoning and all that had been said by others in the debate—the sacred empty phrases that were his soul's refuge from reality. "You may think it very clever," he said with a nod of his head to mark his sense of his point, "not to Trust in the People. *I* do." And so on. Nothing in his life or work had ever shown that he did trust in the people, but that was beside the mark. He was the party Liberal, and these were the party incantations.

After my preliminary attack on vague democracy I went on to show that all human life was virtually aristocratic; people must either recognise aristocracy in general or else follow leaders, which is aristocracy in particular, and so I came to my point that the reality of human progress lay necessarily through the establishment of freedoms for the human best and a collective receptivity and understanding. There was a disgusted grunt from Dayton, "Superman rubbish—Nietzsche. Shaw! Ugh!" I sailed on over him to my next propositions. The prime essential in a progressive civilisation was the establishment of a more effective selective process for the privilege of higher education, and the very highest educational opportunity for the educable. We were too apt to patronise scholarship winners, as though a scholarship was toffee given as a reward for virtue. It wasn't any reward at all; it was an invitation to capacity. We had no more right to drag in virtue, or any merit but quality, than we had to involve it in a search for the tallest man. We didn't want a mere process for the selection of good as distinguished from gifted and able boys—"No, you *don't,*" from Dayton—we wanted all the brilliant stuff in the world concentrated upon the development of the world. Just to exasperate Dayton further I put in a plea for gifts as against character in educational, artistic, and legislative work. "Good teaching," I said, "is better than good conduct. We are becoming idiotic about character."

Dayton was too moved to speak. He slewed round upon me an eye of agonised aversion.

I expatiated on the small proportion of the available ability that is really serving humanity to-day. "I sup-

pose to-day all the thought, all the art, all the increments of knowledge that matter, are supplied so far as the English-speaking community is concerned by—how many?—by three or four thousand individuals. ('Less,' said Thorns.) To be more precise, by the mental hinterlands of three or four thousand individuals. We who know some of the band entertain no illusions as to their innate rarity. We know that they are just the few out of many, the few who got in our world of chance and confusion, the timely stimulus, the apt suggestion at the fortunate moment, the needed training, the leisure. The rest are lost in the crowd, fail through the defects of their qualities, become commonplace workmen and second-rate professional men, marry commonplace wives, are as much waste as the driftage of superfluous pollen in a pine forest is waste."

"Decent honest lives!" said Dayton to his breadcrumbs, with his chin in his necktie. *"Waste!"*

"And the people who do get what we call opportunity get it usually in extremely limited and cramping forms. No man lives a life of intellectual productivity alone; he needs not only material and opportunity, but helpers, resonators. Round and about what I might call the *real* men, you want the sympathetic co-operators, who help by understanding. It isn't that our—*salt* of three or four thousand is needlessly rare; it is sustained by far too small and undifferentiated a public. Most of the good men we know are not really doing the very best work of their gifts; nearly all are a little adapted, most are shockingly adapted to some second-best use. Now, I take it, this is the very centre and origin of the muddle, futility, and unhappiness that dis-

tresses us; it's the cardinal problem of the state—to discover, develop, and use the exceptional gifts of men. And I see that best done—I drift more and more away from the common stuff of legislative and administrative activity—by a quite revolutionary development of the educational machinery, but by a still more unprecedented attempt to keep science going, to keep literature going, and to keep what is the necessary spur of all science and literature, an intelligent and appreciative criticism going. You know none of these things have ever been kept going hitherto; they've come unexpectedly and inexplicably."

"Hear, hear!" from Dayton, cough, nodding of the head, and an expression of mystical profundity.

"They've lit up a civilisation and vanished, to give place to darkness again. Now the modern state doesn't mean to go back to darkness again—and so it's got to keep its light burning." I went on to attack the present organisation of our schools and universities, which seemed elaborately designed to turn the well-behaved, uncritical, and uncreative men of each generation into the authoritative leaders of the next, and I suggested remedies upon lines that I have already indicated in the earlier chapters of this story. . . .

So far I had the substance of the club with me, but I opened new ground and set Crupp agog by confessing my doubt from which party or combination of groups these developments of science and literature and educational organisation could most reasonably be expected. I looked up to find Crupp's dark little eye intent upon me.

There I left it to them.

We had an astonishingly good discussion; Neal burst once, but we emerged from his flood after a time, and Dayton had his interlude. The rest was all close, keen examination of my problem.

I see Crupp now with his arm bent before him on the table in a way we had, as though it was jointed throughout its length like a lobster's antenna, his plump, short-fingered hand crushing up a walnut shell into smaller and smaller fragments. "Remington," he said, "has given us the data for a movement, a really possible movement. It's not only possible, but necessary—urgently necessary, I think, if the Empire is to go on."

"We're working altogether too much at the social basement in education and training," said Gane. "Remington is right about our neglect of the higher levels."

Britten made a good contribution with an analysis of what he called the spirit of a country and what made it. "The modern community needs its serious men to be artistic and its artists to be taken seriously," I remember his saying. "The day has gone by for either dull responsibility or merely witty art."

I remember very vividly how Shoesmith harped on an idea I had thrown out of using some sort of review or weekly to express and elaborate these conceptions of a new, severer, aristocratic culture.

"It would have to be done amazingly well," said Britten, and my mind went back to my school days and that ancient enterprise of ours, and how Cossington had rushed it. Well, Cossington had too many

papers nowadays to interfere with us, and we perhaps had learnt some defensive devices.

"But this thing has to be linked to some political party," said Crupp, with his eye on me. "You can't get away from that. The Liberals," he added, "have never done anything for research or literature."

"They had a Royal Commission on the Dramatic Censorship," said Thorns, with a note of minute fairness. "It shows what they were made of," he added.

"It's what I've told Remington again and again," said Crupp, "we've got to pick up the tradition of aristocracy, reorganise it, and make it work. But he's certainly suggested a method."

"There won't be much aristocracy to pick up," said Dayton, darkly to the ceiling, "if the House of Lords throws out the Budget."

"All the more reason for picking it up," said Neal. "For we can't do without it."

"Will they go to the bad, or will they rise from the ashes, aristocrats indeed—if the Liberals come in overwhelmingly?" said Britten.

"It's we who might decide that," said Crupp, insidiously.

"I agree," said Gane.

"No one can tell," said Thorns. "I doubt if they will get beaten."

It was an odd, fragmentary discussion that night. We were all with ideas in our minds at once fine and imperfect. We threw out suggestions that showed themselves at once far inadequate, and we tried to qualify them by minor self-contradictions. Britten, I think, got more said than anyone. "You all seem to think you

want to organise people, particular groups and classes of individuals," he insisted. "It isn't that. That's the standing error of politicians. You want to organise a culture. Civilisation isn't a matter of concrete groupings; it's a matter of prevailing ideas. The problem is how to make bold, clear ideas prevail. The question for Remington and us is just what groups of people will most help this culture forward."

"Yes, but how are the Lords going to behave?" said Crupp. "You yourself were asking that a little while ago."

"If they win or if they lose," Gane maintained, "there will be a movement to reorganise aristocracy—Reform of the House of Lords, they'll call the political form of it."

"Bailey thinks that," said someone.

"The labour people want abolition," said someone. "Let 'em," said Thorns.

He became audible, sketching a possibility of action.

"Suppose all of us were able to work together. It's just one of those indeterminate, confused, eventful times ahead when a steady jet of ideas might produce enormous results."

"Leave me out of it," said Dayton, "*if* you please."

"We should," said Thorns under his breath.

I took up Crupp's initiative, I remember, and expanded it.

"I believe we could do—extensive things," I insisted.

"Revivals and revisions of Toryism have been tried so often," said Thorns, "from the Young England movement onward."

"Not one but has produced its enduring effects," I

said. "It's the peculiarity of English conservatism that it's persistently progressive and rejuvenescent."

I think it must have been about that point that Dayton fled our presence, after some clumsy sentence that I decided upon reflection was intended to remind me of my duty to my party.

Then I remember Thorns firing doubts at me obliquely across the table. "You can't run a country through its spoilt children," he said. "What you call aristocrats are really spoilt children. They've had too much of everything, except bracing experience."

"Children can always be educated," said Crupp.

"I said *spoilt* children," said Thorns.

"Look here, Thorns!" said I. "If this Budget row leads to a storm, and these big people get their power clipped, what's going to happen? Have you thought of that? When they go out lock, stock, and barrel, who comes in?"

"Nature abhors a Vacuum," said Crupp, supporting me.

"Bailey's trained officials," suggested Gane.

"Quacks with a certificate of approval from Altiora," said Thorns. "I admit the horrors of the alternative. There'd be a massacre in three years."

"One may go on trying possibilities for ever," I said. "One thing emerges. Whatever accidents happen, our civilisation needs, and almost consciously needs, a culture of fine creative minds, and all the necessary tolerances, opennesses, considerations, that march with that. For my own part, I think that is the Most Vital Thing. Build your ship of state as you will; get your men as you will; I concentrate on what is clearly the affair of

my sort of man,—I want to ensure the quality of the quarter deck."

"Hear, hear!" said Shoesmith, suddenly—his first remark for a long time. "A first-rate figure," said Shoesmith, gripping it.

"Our danger is in missing that," I went on. "Muddle isn't ended by transferring power from the muddle-headed few to the muddle-headed many, and then cheating the many out of it again in the interests of a bureaucracy of sham experts. But that seems the limit of the liberal imagination. There is no real progress in a country, except a rise in the level of its free intellectual activity. All other progress is secondary and dependant. If you take on Bailey's dreams of efficient machinery and a sort of fanatical discipline with no free-moving brains behind it, confused ugliness becomes rigid ugliness,—that's all. No doubt things are moving from looseness to discipline, and from irresponsible controls to organised controls—and also and rather contrariwise everything is becoming as people say, democratised; but all the more need in that, for an ark in which the living element may be saved."

"Hear, hear!" said Shoesmith, faint but pursuing.

It must have been in my house afterwards that Shoesmith became noticeable. He seemed trying to say something vague and difficult that he didn't get said at all on that occasion. "We could do immense things with a weekly," he repeated, echoing Neal, I think. And there he left off and became a mute expressiveness, and it was only afterwards, when I was in bed, that I saw we had our capitalist in our hands. . . .

We parted that night on my doorstep in a tremendous

glow—but in that sort of glow one doesn't act upon without much reconsideration, and it was some months before I made my decision to follow up the indications of that opening talk.

§ 5.

I find my thoughts lingering about the Pentagram Circle. In my developments it played a large part, not so much by starting new trains of thought as by confirming the practicability of things I had already hesitatingly entertained. Discussion with these other men so prominently involved in current affairs endorsed views that otherwise would have seemed only a little less remote from actuality than the guardians of Plato or the labour laws of More. Among other questions that were never very distant from our discussions, that came apt to every topic, was the true significance of democracy, Tariff Reform as a method of international hostility, and the imminence of war. On the first issue I can still recall little Bailey, glib and winking, explaining that democracy was really just a dodge for getting assent to the ordinances of the expert official by means of the polling booth. "If they don't like things," said he, "they can vote for the opposition candidate and see what happens then—and that, you see, is why we don't want proportional representation to let in the wild men." I opened my eyes—the lids had dropped for a moment under the caress of those smooth sounds—to see if Bailey's artful forefinger wasn't at the side of his predominant nose.

The international situation exercised us greatly. Our

meetings were pervaded by the feeling that all things moved towards a day of reckoning with Germany, and I was largely instrumental in keeping up the suggestion that India was in a state of unstable equilibrium, that sooner or later something must happen there—something very serious to our Empire. Dayton frankly detested these topics. He was full of that old Middle Victorian persuasion that whatever is inconvenient or disagreeable to the English mind could be annihilated by not thinking about it. He used to sit low in his chair and look mulish. "Militarism," he would declare in a tone of the utmost moral fervour, "is a curse. It's an unmitigated curse." Then he would cough shortly and twitch his head back and frown, and seem astonished beyond measure that after this conclusive statement we could still go on talking of war.

All our Imperialists were obsessed by the thought of international conflict, and their influence revived for a time those uneasinesses that had been aroused in me for the first time by my continental journey with Willersley and by Meredith's "One of Our Conquerors." That quite justifiable dread of a punishment for all the slackness, mental dishonesty, presumption, mercenary respectability and sentimentalised commercialism of the Victorian period, at the hands of the better organised, more vigorous, and now far more highly civilised peoples of Central Europe, seemed to me to have both a good and bad series of consequences. It seemed the only thing capable of bracing English minds to education, sustained constructive effort and research; but on the other hand it produced the quality of a panic, hasty preparation, impatience of thought, a wasteful and

sometimes quite futile immediacy. In 1909, for example, there was a vast clamour for eight additional Dreadnoughts—

> "We want eight
> And we won't wait,"

but no clamour at all about our national waste of inventive talent, our mean standard of intellectual attainment, our disingenuous criticism, and the consequent failure to distinguish men of the quality needed to carry on the modern type of war. Almost universally we have the wrong men in our places of responsibility and the right men in no place at all, almost universally we have poorly qualified, hesitating, and resentful subordinates, because our criticism is worthless and, so habitually as to be now almost unconsciously, dishonest. Germany is beating England in every matter upon which competition is possible, because she attended sedulously to her collective mind for sixty pregnant years, because in spite of tremendous defects she is still far more anxious for quality in achievement than we are. I remember saying that in my paper. From that, I remember, I went on to an image that had flashed into my mind. "The British Empire," I said, "is like some of those early vertebrated monsters, the Brontosaurus and the Atlantosaurus and such-like; it sacrifices intellect to character; its backbone, that is to say,—especially in the visceral region—is bigger than its cranium. It's no accident that things are so. We've worked for backbone. We brag about backbone, and if the joints are anchylosed so much the better. We're still but only half awake to our error. You can't change that suddenly."

"Turn it round and make it go backwards," interjected Thorns.

"It's trying to do that," I said, "in places."

And afterwards Crupp declared I had begotten a nightmare which haunted him of nights; he was trying desperately and belatedly to blow a brain as one blows soap-bubbles on such a mezoroic saurian as I had conjured up, while the clumsy monster's fate, all teeth and brains, crept nearer and nearer. . . .

I've grown, I think, since those days out of the urgency of that apprehension. I still think a European war, and conceivably a very humiliating war for England, may occur at no very distant date, but I do not think there is any such heroic quality in our governing class as will make that war catastrophic. The prevailing spirit in English life—it is one of the essential secrets of our imperial endurance—is one of underbred aggression in prosperity and diplomatic compromise in moments of danger; we bully haughtily where we can and assimilate where we must. It is not for nothing that our upper and middle-class youth is educated by teachers of the highest character, scholars and gentlemen, men who can pretend quite honestly that Darwinism hasn't upset the historical fall of man, that cricket is moral training, and that Socialism is an outrage upon the teachings of Christ. A sort of dignified dexterity of evasion is the national reward. Germany, with a larger population, a vigorous and irreconcilable proletariat, a bolder intellectual training, a harsher spirit, can scarcely fail to drive us at last to a realisation of intolerable strain. So we may never fight at all. The war of preparations that has been going on for thirty

years may end like a sham-fight at last in an umpire's decision. We shall proudly but very firmly take the second place. For my own part, since I love England as much as I detest her present lethargy of soul, I pray for a chastening war—I wouldn't mind her flag in the dirt if only her spirit would come out of it. So I was able to shake off that earlier fear of some final and irrevocable destruction truncating all my schemes. At the most, a European war would be a dramatic episode in the reconstruction I had in view.

In India, too, I no longer foresee, as once I was inclined to see, disaster. The English rule in India is surely one of the most extraordinary accidents that has ever happened in history. We are there like a man who has fallen off a ladder onto the neck of an elephant, and doesn't know what to do or how to get down. Until something happens he remains. Our functions in India are absurd. We English do not own that country, do not even rule it. We made nothing happen; at the most we prevent things happening. We suppress our own literature there. Most English people cannot even go to this land they possess; the authorities would prevent it. If Messrs. Perowne or Cook organised a cheap tour of Manchester operatives, it would be stopped. No one dare bring the average English voter face to face with the reality of India, or let the Indian native have a glimpse of the English voter. In my time I have talked to English statesmen, Indian officials and ex-officials, viceroys, soldiers, everyone who might be supposed to know what India signifies, and I have prayed them to tell me what they thought we were up to there. I am not writing without my book in these

matters. And beyond a phrase or so about "even-handed justice"—and look at our sedition trials!—they told me nothing. Time after time I have heard of that apochryphal native ruler in the north-west, who, when asked what would happen if we left India, replied that in a week his men would be in the saddle, and in six months not a rupee nor a virgin would be left in Lower Bengal. That is always given as our conclusive justification. But is it our business to preserve the rupees and virgins of Lower Bengal in a sort of magic inconclusiveness? Better plunder than paralysis, better fire and sword than futility. Our flag is spread over the peninsula, without plans, without intentions—a vast preventive. The sum total of our policy is to arrest any discussion, any conferences that would enable the Indians to work out a tolerable scheme of the future for themselves. But that does not arrest the resentment of men held back from life. Consider what it must be for the educated Indian sitting at the feast of contemporary possibilities with his mouth gagged and his hands bound behind him! The spirit of insurrection breaks out in spite of espionage and seizures. Our conflict for inaction develops stupendous absurdities. The other day the British Empire was taking off and examining printed cotton stomach wraps for seditious emblems and inscriptions. . . .

In some manner we shall have to come out of India. We have had our chance, and we have demonstrated nothing but the appalling dulness of our national imagination. We are not good enough to do anything with India. Codger and Flack, and Gates and Dayton, Cladingbowl in the club, and the *Home Churchman* in

the home, cant about "character," worship of strenuous force and contempt of truth; for the sake of such men and things as these, we must abandon in fact, if not in appearance, that empty domination. Had we great schools and a powerful teaching, could we boast great men, had we the spirit of truth and creation in our lives, then indeed it might be different. But a race that bears a sceptre must carry gifts to justify it.

It does not follow that we shall be driven catastrophically from India. That was my earlier mistake. We are not proud enough in our bones to be ruined by India as Spain was by her empire. We may be able to abandon India with an air of still remaining there. It is our new method. We train our future rulers in the public schools to have a very wholesome respect for strength, and as soon as a power arises in India in spite of us, be it a man or a culture, or a native state, we shall be willing to deal with it. We may or may not have a war, but our governing class will be quick to learn when we are beaten. Then they will repeat our South African diplomacy, and arrange for some settlement that will abandon the reality, such as it is, and preserve the semblance of power. The conqueror *de facto* will become the new "loyal Briton," and the democracy at home will be invited to celebrate our recession—triumphantly. I am no believer in the imminent dissolution of our Empire; I am less and less inclined to see in either India or Germany the probability of an abrupt truncation of those slow intellectual and moral constructions which are the essentials of statecraft.

§ 6.

I sit writing in this little loggia to the sound of dripping water—this morning we had rain, and the roof of our little casa is still not dry, there are pools in the rocks under the sweet chestnuts, and the torrent that crosses the salita is full and boastful,—and I try to recall the order of my impressions during that watching, dubious time, before I went over to the Conservative Party. I was trying—chaotic task!—to gauge the possibilities inherent in the quality of the British aristocracy. There comes a broad spectacular effect of wide parks, diversified by woods and bracken valleys, and dappled with deer; of great smooth lawns shaded by ancient trees; of big façades of sunlit buildings dominating the country side; of large fine rooms full of handsome, easy-mannered people. As a sort of representative picture to set off against those other pictures of Liberals and of Socialists I have given, I recall one of those huge assemblies the Duchess of Clynes inaugurated at Stamford House. The place itself is one of the vastest private houses in London, a huge clustering mass of white and gold saloons with polished floors and wonderful pictures, and staircases and galleries on a Gargantuan scale. And there she sought to gather all that was most representative of English activities, and did, in fact, in those brilliant nocturnal crowds, get samples of nearly every section of our social and intellectual life, with a marked predominance upon the political and social side.

I remember sitting in one of the recesses at the end

of the big saloon with Mrs. Redmondson, one of those sharp-minded, beautiful rich women one meets so often in London, who seem to have done nothing and to be capable of everything, and we watched the crowd—uniforms and splendours were streaming in from a State ball—and exchanged information. I told her about the politicians and intellectuals, and she told me about the aristocrats, and we sharpened our wit on them and counted the percentage of beautiful people among the latter, and wondered if the general effect of tallness was or was not an illusion.

They were, we agreed, for the most part bigger than the average of people in London, and a handsome lot, even when they were not subtly individualised. "They look so well nurtured," I said, "well cared for. I like their quiet, well-trained movements, their pleasant consideration for each other."

"Kindly, good-tempered, and at bottom utterly selfish," she said, "like big, rather carefully trained, rather pampered children. What else can you expect from them?"

"They are good-tempered, anyhow," I witnessed, "and that's an achievement. I don't think I could ever be content under a bad-tempered, sentimentalising, strenuous Government. That's why I couldn't stand the Roosevelt *régime* in America. One's chief surprise when one comes across these big people for the first time is their admirable easiness and a real personal modesty. I confess I admire them. Oh! I like them. I wouldn't at all mind, I believe, giving over the country to this aristocracy—given *something*——"

"Which they haven't got."

"Which they haven't got—or they'd be the finest sort of people in the world."

"That something?" she enquired.

"I don't know. I've been puzzling my wits to know. They've done all sorts of things——"

"That's Lord Wrassleton," she interrupted, "whose leg was broken—you remember?—at Spion Kop."

"It's healed very well. I like the gold lace and the white glove resting, with quite a nice awkwardness, on the sword. When I was a little boy I wanted to wear clothes like that. And the stars! He's got the V. C. Most of these people here have at any rate shown pluck, you know—brought something off."

"Not quite enough," she suggested.

"I think that's it," I said. "Not quite enough—not quite hard enough," I added.

She laughed and looked at me. "You'd like to make us," she said.

"What?"

"Hard."

"I don't think you'll go on if you don't get hard."

"We sha'n't be so pleasant if we do."

"Well, there my puzzled wits come in again. I don't see why an aristocracy shouldn't be rather hard trained, and yet kindly. I'm not convinced that the resources of education are exhausted. I want to better this, because it already looks so good."

"How are we to do it?" asked Mrs. Redmondson.

"Oh, there you have me! I've been spending my time lately in trying to answer that! It makes me quarrel with"—I held up my fingers and ticked the

items off—"the public schools, the private tutors, the army exams., the Universities, the Church, the general attitude of the country towards science and literature——"

"We all do," said Mrs. Redmondson. "We can't begin again at the beginning," she added.

"Couldn't one," I nodded at the assembly in general, "start a movement?"

"There's the Confederates," she said, with a faint smile that masked a gleam of curiosity. . . . "You want," she said, "to say to the aristocracy, 'Be aristocrats. *Noblesse oblige.*' Do you remember what happened to the monarch who was told to 'Be a King'?"

"Well," I said, "I want an aristocracy."

"This," she said, smiling, "is the pick of them. The backwoodsmen are off the stage. These are the brilliant ones—the smart and the blues. . . . They cost a lot of money, you know."

So far Mrs. Redmondson, but the picture remained full of things not stated in our speech. They were on the whole handsome people, charitable minded, happy, and easy. They led spacious lives, and there was something free and fearless about their bearing that I liked extremely. The women particularly were wide-reading, fine-thinking. Mrs. Redmondson talked as fully and widely and boldly as a man, and with those flashes of intuition, those startling, sudden delicacies of perception few men display. I liked, too, the relations that held between women and men, their general tolerance, their antagonism to the harsh jealousies that are the essence of the middle-class order. . . .

After all, if one's aim resolved itself into the develop-

ment of a type and culture of men, why shouldn't one begin at this end?

It is very easy indeed to generalise about a class of human beings, but much harder to produce a sample. Was old Lady Forthundred, for instance, fairly a sample? I remember her as a smiling, magnificent presence, a towering accumulation of figure and wonderful shimmering blue silk and black lace and black hair, and small fine features and chins and chins and chins, disposed in a big cane-chair with wraps and cushions upon the great terrace of Champneys. Her eye was blue and hard, and her accent and intonation were exactly what you would expect from a rather commonplace dressmaker pretending to be aristocratic. I was, I am afraid, posing a little as the intelligent but respectful enquirer from below investigating the great world, and she was certainly posing as my informant. She affected a cynical coarseness. She developed a theory on the governance of England, beautifully frank and simple. "Give 'um all a peerage when they get twenty thousand a year," she maintained. "That's my remedy."

In my new *rôle* of theoretical aristocrat I felt a little abashed.

"Twenty thousand," she repeated with conviction.

It occurred to me that I was in the presence of the aristocratic theory currently working as distinguished from my as yet unformulated intentions.

"You'll get a lot of loafers and scamps among 'um," said Lady Forthundred. "You get loafers and scamps everywhere, but you'll get a lot of men who'll work hard to keep things together, and that's what we're all after, isn't ut?"

"It's not an ideal arrangement."

"Tell me anything better," said Lady Forthundred.

On the whole, and because she refused emphatically to believe in education, Lady Forthundred scored.

We had been discussing Cossington's recent peerage, for Cossington, my old schoolfellow at City Merchants', and my victor in the affair of the magazine, had clambered to an amazing wealth up a piled heap of energetically pushed penny and halfpenny magazines, and a group of daily newspapers. I had expected to find the great lady hostile to the new-comer, but she accepted him, she gloried in him.

"We're a peerage," she said, "but none of us have ever had any nonsense about nobility."

She turned and smiled down on me. "We English," she said, "are a practical people. We assimilate 'um."

"Then, I suppose, they don't give trouble?"

"Then they don't give trouble."

"They learn to shoot?"

"And all that," said Lady Forthundred. "Yes. And things go on. Sometimes better than others, but they go on—somehow. It depends very much on the sort of butler who pokes 'um about."

I suggested that it might be possible to get a secure twenty thousand a year by at least detrimental methods —socially speaking.

"We must take the bad and the good of 'um," said Lady Forthundred, courageously. . . .

Now, was she a sample? It happened she talked. What was there in the brains of the multitude of her first, second, third, fourth, and fifth cousins, who didn't talk, who shone tall, and bearing themselves finely,

against a background of deft, attentive maids and valets, on every spacious social scene? How did things look to them?

§ 7.

Side by side with Lady Forthundred, it is curious to put Evesham with his tall, bent body, his little-featured almost elfish face, his unequal mild brown eyes, his gentle manner, his sweet, amazing oratory. He led all these people wonderfully. He was always curious and interested about life, wary beneath a pleasing frankness—and I tormented my brain to get to the bottom of him. For a long time he was the most powerful man in England under the throne; he had the Lords in his hand, and a great majority in the Commons, and the discontents and intrigues that are the concomitants of an overwhelming party advantage broke against him as waves break against a cliff. He foresaw so far in these matters that it seemed he scarcely troubled to foresee. He brought political art to the last triumph of naturalness. Always for me he has been the typical aristocrat, so typical and above the mere forms of aristocracy, that he remained a commoner to the end of his days.

I had met him at the beginning of my career; he read some early papers of mine, and asked to see me, and I conceived a flattered liking for him that strengthened to a very strong feeling indeed. He seemed to me to stand alone without an equal, the greatest man in British political life. Some men one sees through and understands, some one cannot see into or round because they

are of opaque clay, but about Evesham I had a sense of things hidden as it were by depth and mists, because he was so big and atmospheric a personality. No other contemporary has had that effect upon me. I've sat beside him at dinners, stayed in houses with him—he was in the big house-party at Champneys—talked to him, sounded him, watching him as I sat beside him. I could talk to him with extraordinary freedom and a rare sense of being understood. Other men have to be treated in a special manner; approached through their own mental dialect, flattered by a minute regard for what they have said and done. Evesham was as widely and charitably receptive as any man I have ever met. The common politicians beside him seemed like rows of stuffy little rooms looking out upon the sea.

And what was he up to? What did *he* think we were doing with Mankind? That I thought worth knowing.

I remember his talking on one occasion at the Hartsteins', at a dinner so tremendously floriferous and equipped that we were almost forced into duologues, about the possible common constructive purpose in politics.

"I feel so much," he said, "that the best people in every party converge. We don't differ at Westminster as they do in the country towns. There's a sort of extending common policy that goes on under every government, because on the whole it's the right thing to do, and people know it. Things that used to be matters of opinion become matters of science—and cease to be party questions."

He instanced education.

"Apart," said I, "from the religious question."

"Apart from the religious question."

He dropped that aspect with an easy grace, and went on with his general theme that political conflict was the outcome of uncertainty. "Directly you get a thing established, so that people can say, 'Now this is Right,' with the same conviction that people can say water is a combination of oxygen and hydrogen, there's no more to be said. The thing has to be done. . . ."

And to put against this effect of Evesham, broad and humanely tolerant, posing as the minister of a steadily developing constructive conviction, there are other memories.

Have I not seen him in the House, persistent, persuasive, indefatigable, and by all my standards wickedly perverse, leaning over the table with those insistent movements of his hand upon it, or swaying forward with a grip upon his coat lapel, fighting with a diabolical skill to preserve what are in effect religious tests, tests he must have known would outrage and humiliate and injure the consciences of a quarter—and that perhaps the best quarter—of the youngsters who come to the work of elementary education?

In playing for points in the game of party advantage Evesham displayed at times a quite wicked unscrupulousness in the use of his subtle mind. I would sit on the Liberal benches and watch him, and listen to his urbane voice, fascinated by him. Did he really care? Did anything matter to him? And if it really mattered nothing, why did he trouble to serve the narrowness and passion of his side? Or did he see far beyond my scope, so that this petty iniquity was justi-

fied by greater, remoter ends of which I had no intimation?

They accused him of nepotism. His friends and family were certainly well cared for. In private life he was full of an affectionate intimacy; he pleased by being charmed and pleased. One might think at times there was no more of him than a clever man happily circumstanced, and finding an interest and occupation in politics. And then came a glimpse of thought, of imagination, like the sight of a soaring eagle through a staircase skylight. Oh, beyond question he was great! No other contemporary politician had his quality. In no man have I perceived so sympathetically the great contrast between warm, personal things and the white dream of statecraft. Except that he had it seemed no hot passions, but only interests and fine affections and indolences, he paralleled the conflict of my life. He saw and thought widely and deeply; but at times it seemed to me his greatness stood over and behind the reality of his life, like some splendid servant, thinking his own thoughts, who waits behind a lesser master's chair. . . .

§ 8.

Of course, when Evesham talked of this ideal of the organised state becoming so finely true to practicability and so clearly stated as to have the compelling conviction of physical science, he spoke quite after my heart. Had he really embodied the attempt to realise that, I could have done no more than follow him blindly. But neither he nor I embodied that, and there lies the gist of my story. And when it came to a study of others

among the leading Tories and Imperialists the doubt increased, until with some at last it was possible to question whether they had any imaginative conception of constructive statecraft at all; whether they didn't opaquely accept the world for what it was, and set themselves single-mindedly to make a place for themselves and cut a figure in it.

There were some very fine personalities among them: there were the great peers who had administered Egypt, India, South Africa, Framboya—Cromer, Kitchener, Curzon, Milner, Gane, for example. So far as that easier task of holding sword and scales had gone, they had shown the finest qualities, but they had returned to the perplexing and exacting problem of the home country, a little glorious, a little too simply bold. They wanted to arm and they wanted to educate, but the habit of immediate necessity made them far more eager to arm than to educate, and their experience of heterogeneous controls made them overrate the need for obedience in a homogeneous country. They didn't understand raw men, ill-trained men, uncertain minds, and intelligent women; and these are the things that matter in England. . . . There were also the great business adventurers, from Cranber to Cossington (who was now Lord Paddockhurst). My mind remained unsettled, and went up and down the scale between a belief in their far-sighted purpose and the perception of crude vanities, coarse ambitions, vulgar competitiveness, and a mere habitual persistence in the pursuit of gain. For a time I saw a good deal of Cossington—I wish I had kept a diary of his talk and gestures, to mark how he could vary from day to day between a *poseur,* a

smart tradesman, and a very bold and wide-thinking political schemer. He had a vanity of sweeping actions, motor-car pounces, Napoleonic rushes, that led to violent ineffectual changes in the policy of his papers, and a haunting pursuit by parallel columns in the liberal press that never abashed him in the slightest degree. By an accident I plumbed the folly in him—but I feel I never plumbed his wisdom. I remember him one day after a lunch at the Barhams' saying suddenly, out of profound meditation over the end of a cigar, one of those sentences that seem to light the whole interior being of a man. "Some day," he said softly, rather to himself than to me, and *à propos* of nothing——"some day I will raise the country."

"Why not?" I said, after a pause, and leant across him for the little silver spirit-lamp, to light my cigarette. . . .

Then the Tories had for another section the ancient creations, and again there were the financial peers, men accustomed to reserve, and their big lawyers, accustomed to—well, qualified statement. And below the giant personalities of the party were the young bloods, young, adventurous men of the type of Lord Tarvrille, who had seen service in South Africa, who had travelled and hunted; explorers, keen motorists, interested in aviation, active in army organisation. Good, brown-faced stuff they were, but impervious to ideas outside the range of their activities, more ignorant of science than their chauffeurs, and of the quality of English people than Welt-politicians; contemptuous of school and university by reason of the Gateses and Flacks and Codgers who had come their way, witty,

light-hearted, patriotic at the Kipling level, with a certain aptitude for bullying. They varied in insensible gradations between the noble sportsmen on the one hand, and men like Gane and the Tories of our Pentagram Club on the other. You perceive how a man might exercise his mind in the attempt to strike an average of public serviceability in this miscellany! And mixed up with these, mixed up sometimes in the same man, was the pure reactionary, whose predominant idea was that the village schools should confine themselves to teaching the catechism, hat-touching and courtesying, and be given a holiday whenever beaters were in request. . . .

I find now in my mind as a sort of counterpoise to Evesham the figure of old Lord Wardingham, asleep in the largest armchair in the library of Stamford Court after lunch. One foot rested on one of those things—I think they are called gout stools. He had been playing golf all the morning and wearied a weak instep; at lunch he had sat at my table and talked in the overbearing manner permitted to irascible important men whose insteps are painful. Among other things he had flouted the idea that women would ever understand statecraft or be more than a nuisance in politics, denied flatly that Hindoos were capable of anything whatever except excesses in population, regretted he could not censor picture-galleries and circulating libraries, and declared that dissenters were people who pretended to take theology seriously with the express purpose of upsetting the entirely satisfactory compromise of the Established Church. "No sensible people, with anything to gain or lose, argue about

religion," he said. "They mean mischief." Having delivered his soul upon these points, and silenced the little conversation to the left of him from which they had arisen, he became, after an appreciative encounter with a sanguinary woodcock, more amiable, responded to some respectful initiatives of Crupp's, and related a number of classical anecdotes of those blighting snubs, vindictive retorts and scandalous miscarriages of justice that are so dear to the forensic mind. Now he reposed. He was breathing heavily with his mouth a little open and his head on one side. One whisker was turned back against the comfortable padding. His plump strong hands gripped the arms of his chair, and his frown was a little assuaged. How tremendously fed up he looked! Honours, wealth, influence, respect, he had them all. How scornful and hard it had made his unguarded expression!

I note without comment that it didn't even occur to me then to wake him up and ask him what *he* was up to with mankind.

§ 9.

One countervailing influence to my drift to Toryism in those days was Margaret's quite religious faith in the Liberals. I realised that slowly and with a mild astonishment. It set me, indeed, even then questioning my own change of opinion. We came at last incidentally, as our way was, to an exchange of views. It was as nearly a quarrel as we had before I came over to the Conservative side. It was at Champneys, and I think during the same visit that witnessed my exploration of

Lady Forthundred. It arose indirectly, I think, out of some comments of mine upon our fellow-guests, but it is one of those memories of which the scene and quality remain more vivid than the things said, a memory without any very definite beginning or end. It was afternoon, in the pause between tea and the dressing-bell, and we were in Margaret's big silver-adorned, chintz-bright room, looking out on the trim Italian garden. . . . Yes, the beginning of it has escaped me altogether, but I remember it as an odd exceptional little wrangle.

At first we seem to have split upon the moral quality of the aristocracy, and I had an odd sense that in some way too feminine for me to understand our hostess had aggrieved her. She said, I know, that Champneys distressed her; made her "eager for work and reality again."

"But aren't these people real?"

"They're so superficial, so extravagant!"

I said I was not shocked by their unreality. They seemed the least affected people I had ever met. "And are they really so extravagant?" I asked, and put it to her that her dresses cost quite as much as any other woman's in the house.

"It's not only their dresses," Margaret parried. "It's the scale and spirit of things."

I questioned that. "They're cynical," said Margaret, staring before her out of the window.

I challenged her, and she quoted the Brabants, about whom there had been an ancient scandal. She'd heard of it from Altiora, and it was also Altiora who'd given her a horror of Lord Carnaby, who was also with

us. "You know his reputation," said Margaret. "That Normandy girl. Everyone knows about it. I shiver when I look at him. He seems—oh! like something not of *our* civilisation. He *will* come and say little things to me."

"Offensive things?"

"No, politenesses and things. Of course his manners are—quite right. That only makes it worse, I think. It shows he might have helped—all that happened. I do all I can to make him see I don't like him. But none of the others make the slightest objection to him."

"Perhaps these people imagine something might be said for him."

"That's just it," said Margaret.

"Charity," I suggested.

"I don't like that sort of toleration."

I was oddly annoyed. "Like eating with publicans and sinners," I said. "No! . . ."

But scandals, and the contempt for rigid standards their condonation displayed, weren't more than the sharp edge of the trouble. "It's their whole position, their selfish predominance, their class conspiracy against the mass of people," said Margaret. "When I sit at dinner in that splendid room, with its glitter and white reflections and candlelight, and its flowers and its wonderful service and its candelabra of solid gold, I seem to feel the slums and the mines and the over-crowded cottages stuffed away under the table."

I reminded Margaret that she was not altogether innocent of unearned increment.

"But aren't we doing our best to give it back?" she said.

I was moved to question her. "Do you really think," I asked, "that the Tories and peers and rich people are to blame for social injustice as we have it to-day? Do you really see politics as a struggle of light on the Liberal side against darkness on the Tory?"

"They *must* know," said Margaret.

I found myself questioning that. I see now that to Margaret it must have seemed the perversest carping against manifest things, but at the time I was concentrated simply upon the elucidation of her view and my own; I wanted to get at her conception in the sharpest, hardest lines that were possible. It was perfectly clear that she saw Toryism as the diabolical element in affairs. The thing showed in its hopeless untruth all the clearer for the fine, clean emotion with which she gave it out to me. My sleeping peer in the library at Stamford Court and Evesham talking luminously behind the Hartstein flowers embodied the devil, and my replete citizen sucking at his cigar in the National Liberal Club, Willie Crampton discussing the care and management of the stomach over a specially hygienic lemonade, and Dr. Tumpany in his aggressive frock-coat pegging out a sort of copyright in Socialism, were the centre and wings of the angelic side. It was nonsense. But how was I to put the truth to her?

"I don't see things at all as you do," I said. "I don't see things in the same way."

"Think of the poor," said Margaret, going off at a tangent.

"Think of everyone," I said. "We Liberals have

done more mischief through well-intentioned benevolence than all the selfishness in the world could have done. We built up the liquor interest."

"*We!*" cried Margaret. "How can you say that? It's against us."

"Naturally. But we made it a monopoly in our clumsy efforts to prevent people drinking what they liked, because it interfered with industrial regularity——"

"Oh!" cried Margaret, stung; and I could see she thought I was talking mere wickedness.

"That's it," I said.

"But would you have people drink whatever they pleased?"

"Certainly. What right have I to dictate to other men and women?"

"But think of the children!"

"Ah! there you have the folly of modern Liberalism, its half-cunning, half-silly way of getting at everything in a roundabout fashion. If neglecting children is an offence, and it *is* an offence, then deal with it as such, but don't go badgering and restricting people who sell something that may possibly in some cases lead to a neglect of children. If drunkenness is an offence, punish it, but don't punish a man for selling honest drink that perhaps after all won't make anyone drunk at all. Don't intensify the viciousness of the public-house by assuming the place isn't fit for women and children. That's either spite or folly. Make the public-house *fit* for women and children. Make it a real public-house. If we Liberals go on as we are going, we shall presently want to stop the sale of ink and

paper because those things tempt men to forgery. We do already threaten the privacy of the post because of betting tout's letters. The drift of all that kind of thing is narrow, unimaginative, mischievous, stupid. . . ."

I stopped short and walked to the window and surveyed a pretty fountain, facsimile of one in Verona, amidst trim-cut borderings of yew. Beyond, and seen between the stems of ilex-trees, was a great blaze of yellow flowers. . . .

"But prevention," I heard Margaret behind me, "is the essence of our work."

I turned. "There's no prevention but education. There's no antiseptics in life but love and fine thinking. Make people fine, make fine people. Don't be afraid. These Tory leaders are better people individually than the average; why cast them for the villains of the piece? The real villain in the piece—in the whole human drama—is the muddle-headedness, and it matters very little if it's virtuous-minded or wicked. I want to get at muddle-headedness. If I could do that I could let all that you call wickedness in the world run about and do what it jolly well pleased. It would matter about as much as a slightly neglected dog—in an otherwise well-managed home."

My thoughts had run away with me.

"I can't understand you," said Margaret, in the profoundest distress. "I can't understand how it is you are coming to see things like this."

§ 10.

The moods of a thinking man in politics are curiously evasive and difficult to describe. Neither the

public nor the historian will permit the statesman moods. He has from the first to assume he has an Aim, a definite Aim, and to pretend to an absolute consistency with that. Those subtle questionings about the very fundamentals of life which plague us all so relentlessly nowadays are supposed to be silenced. He lifts his chin and pursues his Aim explicitly in the sight of all men. Those who have no real political experience can scarcely imagine the immense mental and moral strain there is between one's everyday acts and utterances on the one hand and the "thinking-out" process on the other. It is perplexingly difficult to keep in your mind, fixed and firm, a scheme essentially complex, to keep balancing a swaying possibility while at the same time under jealous, hostile, and stupid observation you tread your part in the platitudinous, quarrelsome, ill-presented march of affairs. . . .

The most impossible of all autobiographies is an intellectual autobiography. I have thrown together in the crudest way the elements of the problem I struggled with, but I can give no record of the subtle details; I can tell nothing of the long vacillations between Protean values, the talks and re-talks, the meditations, the bleak lucidities of sleepless nights. . . .

And yet these things I have struggled with must be thought out, and, to begin with, they must be thought out in this muddled, experimenting way. To go into a study to think about statecraft is to turn your back on the realities you are constantly needing to feel and test and sound if your thinking is to remain vital; to choose an aim and pursue it in despite of all subsequent questionings is to bury the talent of your

mind. It is no use dealing with the intricate as though it were simple, to leap haphazard at the first course of action that presents itself; the whole world of politicians is far too like a man who snatches a poker to a failing watch. It is easy to say he wants to "get something done," but the only sane thing to do for the moment is to put aside that poker and take thought and get a better implement. . . .

One of the results of these fundamental pre-occupations of mine was a curious irritability towards Margaret that I found difficult to conceal. It was one of the incidental cruelties of our position that this should happen. I was in such doubt myself, that I had no power to phrase things for her in a form she could use. Hitherto I had stage-managed our "serious" conversations. Now I was too much in earnest and too uncertain to go on doing this. I avoided talk with her. Her serene, sustained confidence in vague formulæ and sentimental aspirations exasperated me; her want of sympathetic apprehension made my few efforts to indicate my changing attitudes distressing and futile. It wasn't that I was always thinking right, and that she was always saying wrong. It was that I was struggling to get hold of a difficult thing that was, at any rate, half true, I could not gauge how true, and that Margaret's habitual phrasing ignored these elusive elements of truth, and without premeditation fitted into the weaknesses of my new intimations, as though they had nothing but weaknesses. It was, for example, obvious that these big people, who were the backbone of Imperialism and Conservatism, were temperamentally lax, much more indolent, much more sensuous, than our deliberately vir-

tuous Young Liberals. I didn't want to be reminded of that, just when I was in full effort to realise the finer elements in their composition. Margaret classed them and disposed of them. It was our incurable differences in habits and gestures of thought coming between us again.

The desert of misunderstanding widened. I was forced back upon myself and my own secret councils. For a time I went my way alone; an unmixed evil for both of us. Except for that Pentagram evening, a series of talks with Isabel Rivers, who was now becoming more and more important in my intellectual life, and the arguments I maintained with Crupp, I never really opened my mind at all during that period of indecisions, slow abandonments, and slow acquisitions.

## CHAPTER III.

### SECESSION.

§ 1.

At last, out of a vast accumulation of impressions, decision distilled quite suddenly. I succumbed to Evesham and that dream of the right thing triumphant through expression. I determined I would go over to the Conservatives, and use my every gift and power on the side of such forces on that side as made for educational reorganisation, scientific research, literature, criticism, and intellectual development. That was in 1909. I judged the Tories were driving straight at a conflict with the country, and I thought them bound to incur an electoral defeat. I under-estimated their strength in the counties. There would follow, I calculated, a period of profound reconstruction in method and policy alike. I was entirely at one with Crupp in perceiving in this an immense opportunity for the things we desired. An aristocracy quickened by conflict and on the defensive, and full of the idea of justification by reconstruction, might prove altogether more apt for thought and high professions than Mrs. Redmondson's spoilt children. Behind the now inevitable struggle for a reform of the House of Lords, there would be great

heart searchings and educational endeavour. On that we reckoned. . . .

At last we talked it out to the practical pitch, and Crupp and Shoesmith, and I and Gane, made our definite agreement together. . . .

I emerged from enormous silences upon Margaret one evening.

She was just back from the display of some new musicians at the Hartsteins. I remember she wore a dress of golden satin, very rich-looking and splendid. About her slender neck there was a rope of gold-set amber beads. Her hair caught up and echoed and returned these golden notes. I, too, was in evening-dress, but where I had been escapes me,—some forgotten dinner, I suppose. I went into her room. I remember I didn't speak for some moments. I went across to the window and pulled the blind aside, and looked out upon the railed garden of the square, with its shrubs and shadowed turf gleaming pallidly and irregularly in the light of the big electric standard in the corner.

"Margaret," I said, "I think I shall break with the party."

She made no answer. I turned presently, a movement of enquiry.

"I was afraid you meant to do that," she said.

"I'm out of touch," I explained. "Altogether."

"Oh! I know."

"It places me in a difficult position," I said.

Margaret stood at her dressing-table, looking steadfastly at herself in the glass, and with her fingers play-

ing with a litter of stoppered bottles of tinted glass. "I was afraid it was coming to this," she said.

"In a way," I said, "we've been allies. I owe my seat to you. I couldn't have gone into Parliament. . . ."

"I don't want considerations like that to affect us," she interrupted.

There was a pause. She sat down in a chair by her dressing-table, lifted an ivory hand-glass, and put it down again.

"I wish," she said, with something like a sob in her voice, "it were possible that you shouldn't do this." She stopped abruptly, and I did not look at her, because I could feel the effort she was making to control herself.

"I thought," she began again, "when you came into Parliament——"

There came another silence. "It's all gone so differently," she said. "Everything has gone so differently."

I had a sudden memory of her, shining triumphant after the Kinghampstead election, and for the first time I realised just how perplexing and disappointing my subsequent career must have been to her.

"I'm not doing this without consideration," I said.

"I know," she said, in a voice of despair, "I've seen it coming. But—I still don't understand it. I don't understand how you can go over."

"My ideas have changed and developed," I said.

I walked across to her bearskin hearthrug, and stood by the mantel.

"To think that you," she said; "you who might have been leader——" She could not finish it. "All the forces of reaction," she threw out.

"I don't think they are the forces of reaction," I said. "I think I can find work to do—better work on that side."

"Against us!" she said. "As if progress wasn't hard enough! As if it didn't call upon every able man!"

"I don't think Liberalism has a monopoly of progress."

She did not answer that. She sat quite still looking in front of her. "*Why* have you gone over?" she asked abruptly as though I had said nothing.

There came a silence that I was impelled to end. I began a stiff dissertation from the hearthrug. "I am going over, because I think I may join in an intellectual renascence on the Conservative side. I think that in the coming struggle there will be a partial and altogether confused and demoralising victory for democracy, that will stir the classes which now dominate the Conservative party into an energetic revival. They will set out to win back, and win back. Even if my estimate of contemporary forces is wrong and they win, they will still be forced to reconstruct their outlook. A war abroad will supply the chastening if home politics fail. The effort at renascence is bound to come by either alternative. I believe I can do more in relation to that effort than in any other connexion in the world of politics at the present time. That's my case, Margaret."

She certainly did not grasp what I said. "And so you will throw aside all the beginnings, all the beliefs and pledges——" Again her sentence remained incomplete. "I doubt if even, once you have gone over, they will welcome you."

"That hardly matters."

I made an effort to resume my speech.

"I came into Parliament, Margaret," I said, "a little prematurely. Still—I suppose it was only by coming into Parliament that I could see things as I do now in terms of personality and imaginative range. . . ." I stopped. Her stiff, unhappy, unlistening silence broke up my disquisition.

"After all," I remarked, "most of this has been implicit in my writings."

She made no sign of admission.

"What are you going to do?" she asked.

"Keep my seat for a time and make the reasons of my breach clear. Then either I must resign or—probably this new Budget will lead to a General Election. It's evidently meant to strain the Lords and provoke a quarrel."

"You might, I think, have stayed to fight for the Budget."

"I'm not," I said, "so keen against the Lords."

On that we halted.

"But what are you going to do?" she asked.

"I shall make my quarrel over some points in the Budget. I can't quite tell you yet where my chance will come. Then I shall either resign my seat—or if things drift to dissolution I shall stand again."

"It's political suicide."

"Not altogether."

"I can't imagine you out of Parliament again. It's just like—like undoing all we have done. What will you do?"

"Write. Make a new, more definite place for my-

self. You know, of course, there's already a sort of group about Crupp and Gane."

Margaret seemed lost for a time in painful thought.

"For me," she said at last, "our political work has been a religion—it has been more than a religion."

I heard in silence. I had no form of protest available against the implications of that.

"And then I find you turning against all we aimed to do—talking of going over, almost lightly—to those others." . . .

She was white-lipped as she spoke. In the most curious way she had captured the moral values of the situation. I found myself protesting ineffectually against her fixed conviction. "It's because I think my duty lies in this change that I make it," I said.

"I don't see how you can say that," she replied quietly.

There was another pause between us.

"Oh!" she said and clenched her hand upon the table. "That it should have come to this!"

She was extraordinarily dignified and extraordinarily absurd. She was hurt and thwarted beyond measure. She had no place in her ideas, I thought, for me. I could see how it appeared to her, but I could not make her see anything of the intricate process that had brought me to this divergence. The opposition of our intellectual temperaments was like a gag in my mouth. What was there for me to say? A flash of intuition told me that behind her white dignity was a passionate disappointment, a shattering of dreams that needed before everything else the relief of weeping.

"I've told you," I said awkwardly, "as soon as I could."

There was another long silence. "So that is how we stand," I said with an air of having things defined. I walked slowly to the door.

She had risen and stood now staring in front of her.

"Good night," I said, making no movement towards our habitual kiss.

"Good night," she answered in a tragic note. . . .

I closed the door softly. I remained for a moment or so on the big landing, hesitating between my bedroom and my study. As I did so I heard the soft rustle of her movement and the click of the key in her bedroom door. Then everything was still. . . .

She hid her tears from me. Something gripped my heart at the thought.

"Damnation!" I said wincing. "Why the devil can't people at least *think* in the same manner?"

§ 2.

And that insufficient colloquy was the beginning of a prolonged estrangement between us. It was characteristic of our relations that we never reopened the discussion. The thing had been in the air for some time; we had recognised it now; the widening breach between us was confessed. My own feelings were curiously divided. It is remarkable that my very real affection for Margaret only became evident to me with this quarrel. The changes of the heart are very subtle changes. I am quite unaware how or when my early romantic love for her purity and beauty and high-principled devotion evaporated from my life; but I do know that quite early in my parliamentary days there had

come a vague, unconfessed resentment at the tie that seemed to hold me in servitude to her standards of private living and public act. I felt I was caught, and none the less so because it had been my own act to rivet on my shackles. So long as I still held myself bound to her that resentment grew. Now, since I had broken my bonds and taken my line it withered again, and I could think of Margaret with a returning kindliness.

But I still felt embarrassment with her. I felt myself dependent upon her for house room and food and social support, as it were under false pretences. I would have liked to have separated our financial affairs altogether. But I knew that to raise the issue would have seemed a last brutal indelicacy. So I tried almost furtively to keep my personal expenditure within the scope of the private income I made by writing, and we went out together in her motor brougham, dined and made appearances, met politely at breakfast—parted at night with a kiss upon her cheek. The locking of her door upon me, which at that time I quite understood, which I understand now, became for a time in my mind, through some obscure process of the soul, an offence. I never crossed the landing to her room again.

In all this matter, and, indeed, in all my relations with Margaret, I perceive now I behaved badly and foolishly. My manifest blunder is that I, who was several years older than she, much subtler and in many ways wiser, never in any measure sought to guide and control her. After our marriage I treated her always as an equal, and let her go her way; held her responsible for all the weak and ineffective and unfortunate things she

said and did to me. She wasn't clever enough to justify that. It wasn't fair to expect her to sympathise, anticipate, and understand. I ought to have taken care of her, roped her to me when it came to crossing the difficult places. If I had loved her more, and wiselier and more tenderly, if there had not been the consciousness of my financial dependence on her always stiffening my pride, I think she would have moved with me from the outset, and left the Liberals with me. But she did not get any inkling of the ends I songht in my change of sides. It must have seemed to her inexplicable perversity. She had, I knew—for surely I knew it then!—an immense capacity for loyalty and devotion. There she was with these treasures untouched, neglected and perplexed. A woman who loves wants to give. It is the duty and business of the man she has married for love to help her to help and give. But I was stupid. My eyes had never been opened. I was stiff with her and difficult to her, because even on my wedding morning there had been, deep down in my soul, voiceless though present, something weakly protesting, a faint perception of wrong-doing, the infinitesimally small, slow-multiplying germs of shame.

§ 3.

I made my breach with the party on the Budget.

In many ways I was disposed to regard the 1909 Budget as a fine piece of statecraft. Its production was certainly a very unexpected display of vigour on the Liberal side. But, on the whole, this movement towards collectivist organisation on the part of the Liberals

rather strengthened than weakened my resolve to cross the floor of the house. It made it more necessary, I thought, to leaven the purely obstructive and reactionary elements that were at once manifest in the opposition. I assailed the land taxation proposals in one main speech, and a series of minor speeches in committee. The line of attack I chose was that the land was a great public service that needed to be controlled on broad and far-sighted lines. I had no objection to its nationalisation, but I did object most strenuously to the idea of leaving it in private hands, and attempting to produce beneficial social results through the pressure of taxation upon the land-owning class. That might break it up in an utterly disastrous way. The drift of the government proposals was all in the direction of sweating the landowner to get immediate values from his property, and such a course of action was bound to give us an irritated and vindictive land-owning class, the class upon which we had hitherto relied—not unjustifiably—for certain broad, patriotic services and an influence upon our collective judgments that no other class seemed prepared to exercise. Abolish landlordism if you will, I said, buy it out, but do not drive it to a defensive fight, and leave it still sufficiently strong and wealthy to become a malcontent element in your state. You have taxed and controlled the brewer and the publican until the outraged Liquor Interest has become a national danger. You now propose to do the same thing on a larger scale. You turn a class which has many fine and truly aristocratic traditions towards revolt, and there is nothing in these or any other of your proposals that shows any sense of the

need for leadership to replace these traditional leaders you are ousting. This was the substance of my case, and I hammered at it not only in the House, but in the press. . . .

The Kinghampstead division remained for some time insensitive to my defection.

Then it woke up suddenly, and began, in the columns of the *Kinghampstead Guardian,* an indignant, confused outcry. I was treated to an open letter, signed "Junius Secundus," and I replied in provocative terms. There were two thinly attended public meetings at different ends of the constituency, and then I had a correspondence with my old friend Parvill, the photographer, which ended in my seeing a deputation.

My impression is that it consisted of about eighteen or twenty people. They had had to come upstairs to me and they were manifestly full of indignation and a little short of breath. There was Parvill himself, J.P., dressed wholly in black—I think to mark his sense of the occasion—and curiously suggestive in his respect for my character and his concern for the honourableness of the *Kinghampstead Guardian* editor, of Mark Antony at the funeral of Cæsar. There was Mrs. Bulger, also in mourning; she had never abandoned the widow's streamers since the death of her husband ten years ago, and her loyalty to Liberalism of the severest type was part as it were of her weeds. There was a nephew of Sir Roderick Newton, a bright young Hebrew of the graver type, and a couple of dissenting ministers in high collars and hats that stopped halfway between the bowler of this world and the shovel-hat of heaven. There was also a young solicitor from Lurky

done in the horsey style, and there was a very little nervous man with a high brow and a face contracting below as though the jawbones and teeth had been taken out and the features compressed. The rest of the deputation, which included two other public-spirited ladies and several ministers of religion, might have been raked out of any omnibus going Strandward during the May meetings. They thrust Parvill forward as spokesman, and manifested a strong disposition to say "Hear, hear!" to his more strenuous protests provided my eye wasn't upon them at the time.

I regarded this appalling deputation as Parvill's apologetic but quite definite utterances drew to an end. I had a moment of vision. Behind them I saw the wonderful array of skeleton forces that stand for public opinion, that are as much public opinion as exists indeed at the present time. The whole process of politics which bulks so solidly in history seemed for that clairvoyant instant but a froth of petty motives above abysms of indifference. . . .

Someone had finished. I perceived I had to speak.

"Very well," I said, "I won't keep you long in replying. I'll resign if there isn't a dissolution before next February, and if there is I sha'n't stand again. You don't want the bother and expense of a bye-election (approving murmurs) if it can be avoided. But I may tell you plainly now that I don't think it will be necessary for me to resign, and the sooner you find my successor the better for the party. The Lords are in a corner; they've got to fight now or never, and I think they will throw out the Budget. Then they will go on fighting. It is a fight that will last

for years. They have a sort of social discipline, and you haven't. You Liberals will find yourselves with a country behind you, vaguely indignant perhaps, but totally unprepared with any ideas whatever in the matter, face to face with the problem of bringing the British constitution up-to-date. Anything may happen, provided only that it is sufficiently absurd. If the King backs the Lords—and I don't see why he shouldn't—you have no Republican movement whatever to fall back upon. You lost it during the Era of Good Taste. The country, I say, is destitute of ideas, and you have no ideas to give it. I don't see what you will do. . . . For my own part, I mean to spend a year or so between a window and my writing-desk."

I paused. "I think, gentlemen," began Parvill, "that we hear all this with very great regret. . . ."

§ 4.

My estrangement from Margaret stands in my memory now as something that played itself out within the four walls of our house in Radnor Square, which was, indeed, confined to those limits. I went to and fro between my house and the House of Commons, and the dining-rooms and clubs and offices in which we were preparing our new developments, in a state of aggressive and energetic dissociation, in the nascent state, as a chemist would say. I was free now, and greedy for fresh combination. I had a tremendous sense of released energies. I had got back to the sort of thing I could do, and to the work that had been shaping itself for so long in my imagination. Our purpose now was plain, bold, and extraordinarily congenial. We

meant no less than to organise a new movement in English thought and life, to resuscitate a Public Opinion and prepare the ground for a revised and renovated ruling culture.

For a time I seemed quite wonderfully able to do whatever I wanted to do. Shoesmith responded to my first advances. We decided to create a weekly paper as our nucleus, and Crupp and I set to work forthwith to collect a group of writers and speakers, including Esmeer, Britten, Lord Gane, Neal, and one or two younger men, which should constitute a more or less definite editorial council about me, and meet at a weekly lunch on Tuesday to sustain our general co-operations. We marked our claim upon Toryism even in the colour of our wrapper, and spoke of ourselves collectively as the Blue Weeklies. But our lunches were open to all sorts of guests, and our deliberations were never of a character to control me effectively in my editorial decisions. My only influential councillor at first was old Britten, who became my sub-editor. It was curious how we two had picked up our ancient intimacy again and resumed the easy give and take of our speculative dreaming schoolboy days.

For a time my life centred altogether upon this journalistic work. Britten was an experienced journalist, and I had most of the necessary instincts for the business. We meant to make the paper right and good down to the smallest detail, and we set ourselves at this with extraordinary zeal. It wasn't our intention to show our political motives too markedly at first, and through all the dust storm and tumult and stress of the political struggle of 1910, we made a little intellectual oasis of

good art criticism and good writing. It was the firm belief of nearly all of us that the Lords were destined to be beaten badly in 1910, and our game was the longer game of reconstruction that would begin when the shouting and tumult of that immediate conflict were over. Meanwhile we had to get into touch with just as many good minds as possible.

As we felt our feet, I developed slowly and carefully a broadly conceived and consistent political attitude. As I will explain later, we were feminist from the outset, though that caused Shoesmith and Gane great searching of heart; we developed Esmeer's House of Lords reform scheme into a general cult of the aristocratic virtues, and we did much to humanise and liberalise the narrow excellencies of that Break-up of the Poor Law agitation, which had been organised originally by Beatrice and Sidney Webb. In addition, without any very definite explanation to anyone but Esmeer and Isabel Rivers, and as if it was quite a small matter, I set myself to secure a uniform philosophical quality in our columns.

That, indeed, was the peculiar virtue and characteristic of the *Blue Weekly*. I was now very definitely convinced that much of the confusion and futility of contemporary thought was due to the general need of metaphysical training. . . . The great mass of people—and not simply common people, but people active and influential in intellectual things—are still quite untrained in the methods of thought and absolutely innocent of any criticism of method; it is scarcely a caricature to call their thinking a crazy patchwork, discontinuous and chaotic. They arrive at conclusions by a kind of

accident, and do not suspect any other way may be found to their attainment. A stage above this general condition stands that minority of people who have at some time or other discovered general terms and a certain use for generalisations. They are—to fall back on the ancient technicality—Realists of a crude sort. When I say Realist of course I mean Realist as opposed to Nominalist, and not Realist in the almost diametrically different sense of opposition to Idealist. Such are the Baileys; such, to take their great prototype, was Herbert Spencer (who couldn't read Kant); such are whole regiments of prominent and entirely self-satisfied contemporaries. They go through queer little processes of definition and generalisation and deduction with the completest belief in the validity of the intellectual instrument they are using. They are Realists—Cocksurists—in matter of fact; sentimentalists in behaviour. The Baileys having got to this glorious stage in mental development—it is glorious because it has no doubts—were always talking about training "Experts" to apply the same simple process to all the affairs of mankind. Well, Realism isn't the last word of human wisdom. Modest-minded people, doubtful people, subtle people, and the like—the kind of people William James writes of as "tough-minded," go on beyond this methodical happiness, and are forever after critical of premises and terms. They are truer—and less confident. They have reached scepticism and the artistic method. They have emerged into the new Nominalism.

Both Isabel and I believe firmly that these differences of intellectual method matter profoundly in the affairs of mankind, that the collective mind of this intricate

complex modern state can only function properly upon neo-Nominalist lines. This has always been her side of our mental co-operation rather than mine. Her mind has the light movement that goes so often with natural mental power; she has a wonderful art in illustration, and, as the reader probably knows already, she writes of metaphysical matters with a rare charm and vividness. So far there has been no collection of her papers published, but they are to be found not only in the *Blue Weekly* columns but scattered about the monthlies; many people must be familiar with her style. It was an intention we did much to realise before our private downfall, that we would use the *Blue Weekly* to maintain a stream of suggestion against crude thinking, and at last scarcely a week passed but some popular distinction, some large imposing generalisation, was touched to flaccidity by her pen or mine. . . .

I was at great pains to give my philosophical, political, and social matter the best literary and critical backing we could get in London. I hunted sedulously for good descriptive writing and good criticism; I was indefatigable in my readiness to hear and consider, if not to accept advice; I watched every corner of the paper, and had a dozen men alert to get me special matter of the sort that draws in the unattached reader. The chief danger on the literary side of a weekly is that it should fall into the hands of some particular school, and this I watched for closely. It seems almost impossible to get vividness of apprehension and breadth of view together in the same critic. So it falls to the wise editor to secure the first and impose the second. Directly I detected the shrill partisan note in our criti-

cism, the attempt to puff a poor thing because it was "in the right direction," or damn a vigorous piece of work because it wasn't, I tackled the man and had it out with him. Our pay was good enough for that to matter a good deal. . . .

Our distinctive little blue and white poster kept up its neat persistent appeal to the public eye, and before 1911 was out, the *Blue Weekly* was printing twenty pages of publishers' advertisements, and went into all the clubs in London and three-quarters of the country-houses where week-end parties gather together. Its sale by newsagents and bookstalls grew steadily. One got more and more the reassuring sense of being discussed, and influencing discussion.

§ 5.

Our office was at the very top of a big building near the end of Adelphi Terrace; the main window beside my desk, a big undivided window of plate glass, looked out upon Cleopatra's Needle, the corner of the Hotel Cecil, the fine arches of Waterloo Bridge, and the long sweep of south bank with its shot towers and chimneys, past Bankside to the dimly seen piers of the great bridge below the Tower. The dome of St. Paul's just floated into view on the left against the hotel façade. By night and day, in every light and atmosphere, it was a beautiful and various view, alive as a throbbing heart; a perpetual flow of traffic ploughed and splashed the streaming silver of the river, and by night the shapes of things became velvet black and grey, and the water a shining mirror of steel, wearing coruscating gems of light. In the foreground the

Embankment trams sailed glowing by, across the water advertisements flashed and flickered, trains went and came and a rolling drift of smoke reflected unseen fires. By day that spectacle was sometimes a marvel of shining wet and wind-cleared atmosphere, sometimes a mystery of drifting fog, sometimes a miracle of crowded details, minutely fine.

As I think of that view, so variously spacious in effect, I am back there, and this sunlit paper might be lamp-lit and lying on my old desk. I see it all again, feel it all again. In the foreground is a green shaded lamp and crumpled galley slips and paged proofs and letters, two or three papers in manuscript, and so forth. In the shadows are chairs and another table bearing papers and books, a rotating bookcase dimly seen, a long window seat black in the darkness, and then the cool unbroken spectacle of the window. How often I would watch some tram-car, some string of barges go from me slowly out of sight. The people were black animalculae by day, clustering, collecting, dispersing, by night, they were phantom face-specks coming, vanishing, stirring obscurely between light and shade.

I recall many hours at my desk in that room before the crisis came, hours full of the peculiar happiness of effective strenuous work. Once some piece of writing went on, holding me intent and forgetful of time until I looked up from the warm circle of my electric lamp to see the eastward sky above the pale silhouette of the Tower Bridge, flushed and banded brightly with the dawn.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### THE BESETTING OF SEX.

§ 1.

ART is selection and so is most autobiography. But I am concerned with a more tangled business than selection, I want to show a contemporary man in relation to the state and social usage, and the social organism in relation to that man. To tell my story at all I have to simplify. I have given now the broad lines of my political development, and how I passed from my initial liberal-socialism to the conception of a constructive aristocracy. I have tried to set that out in the form of a man discovering himself. Incidentally that self-development led to a profound breach with my wife. One has read stories before of husband and wife speaking severally two different languages and coming to an understanding. But Margaret and I began in her dialect, and, as I came more and more to use my own, diverged.

I had thought when I married that the matter of womankind had ended for me. I have tried to tell all that sex and women had been to me up to my married life with Margaret and our fatal entanglement, tried to show the queer, crippled, embarrassed and limited way in which these interests break upon the life of a young

man under contemporary conditions. I do not think my lot was a very exceptional one. I missed the chance of sisters and girl playmates, but that is not an uncommon misadventure in an age of small families; I never came to know any woman at all intimately until I was married to Margaret. My earlier love-affairs were encounters of sex, under conditions of furtiveness and adventure that made them things in themselves, restricted and unilluminating. From a boyish disposition to be mystical and worshipping towards women I had passed into a disregardful attitude, as though women were things inferior or irrelevant, disturbers in great affairs. For a time Margaret had blotted out all other women; she was so different and so near; she was like a person who stands suddenly in front of a little window through which one has been surveying a crowd. She didn't become womankind for me so much as eliminate womankind from my world. . . . And then came this secret separation. . . .

Until this estrangement and the rapid and uncontrollable development of my relations with Isabel which chanced to follow it, I seemed to have solved the problem of women by marriage and disregard. I thought these things were over. I went about my career with Margaret beside me, her brow slightly knit, her manner faintly strenuous, helping, helping; and if we had not altogether abolished sex we had at least so circumscribed and isolated it that it would not have affected the general tenor of our lives in the slightest degree if we had.

And then, clothing itself more and more in the form of Isabel and her problems, this old, this fundamental

obsession of my life returned. The thing stole upon my mind so that I was unaware of its invasion and how it was changing our long intimacy. I have already compared the lot of the modern publicist to Machiavelli writing in his study; in his day women and sex were as disregarded in these high affairs as, let us say, the chemistry of air or the will of the beasts in the fields; in ours the case has altogether changed, and woman has come now to stand beside the tall candles, half in the light, half in the mystery of the shadows, besetting, interrupting, demanding unrelentingly an altogether unprecedented attention. I feel that in these matters my life has been almost typical of my time. Woman insists upon her presence. She is no longer a mere physical need, an æsthetic bye-play, a sentimental background; she is a moral and intellectual necessity in a man's life. She comes to the politician and demands, Is she a child or a citizen? Is she a thing or a soul? She comes to the individual man, as she came to me and asks, Is she a cherished weakling or an equal mate, an unavoidable helper? Is she to be tried and trusted or guarded and controlled, bound or free? For if she is a mate, one must at once trust more and exact more, exacting toil, courage, and the hardest, most necessary thing of all, the clearest, most shameless, explicitness of understanding. . . .

§ 2.

In all my earlier imaginings of statecraft I had tacitly assumed either that the relations of the sexes were all right or that anyhow they didn't concern the state. It was a matter they, whoever "they" were,

had to settle among themselves. That sort of disregard was possible then. But even before 1906 there were endless intimations that the dams holding back great reservoirs of discussion were crumbling. We political schemers were ploughing wider than anyone had ploughed before in the field of social reconstruction. We had also, we realised, to plough deeper. We had to plough down at last to the passionate elements of sexual relationship and examine and decide upon them.

The signs multiplied. In a year or so half the police of the metropolis were scarce sufficient to protect the House from one clamorous aspect of the new problem. The members went about Westminster with an odd, new sense of being beset. A good proportion of us kept up the pretence that the Vote for Women was an isolated fad, and the agitation an epidemic madness that would presently pass. But it was manifest to anyone who sought more than comfort in the matter that the streams of women and sympathisers and money forthcoming marked far deeper and wider things than an idle fancy for the franchise. The existing laws and conventions of relationship between Man and Woman were just as unsatisfactory a disorder as anything else in our tumbled confusion of a world, and that also was coming to bear upon statecraft.

My first parliament was the parliament of the Suffragettes. I don't propose to tell here of that amazing campaign, with its absurdities and follies, its courage and devotion. There were aspects of that unquenchable agitation that were absolutely heroic and aspects that were absolutely pitiful. It was unreason-

able, unwise, and, except for its one central insistence, astonishingly incoherent. It was amazingly effective. The very incoherence of the demand witnessed, I think, to the forces that lay behind it. It wasn't a simple argument based on a simple assumption; it was the first crude expression of a great mass and mingling of convergent feelings, of a widespread, confused persuasion among modern educated women that the conditions of their relations with men were oppressive, ugly, dishonouring, and had to be altered. They had not merely adopted the Vote as a symbol of equality; it was fairly manifest to me that, given it, they meant to use it, and to use it perhaps even vindictively and blindly, as a weapon against many things they had every reason to hate. . . .

I remember, with exceptional vividness, that great night early in the session of 1909, when—I think it was—fifty or sixty women went to prison. I had been dining at the Barhams', and Lord Barham and I came down from the direction of St. James's Park into a crowd and a confusion outside the Caxton Hall. We found ourselves drifting with an immense multitude towards Parliament Square and parallel with a silent, close-packed column of girls and women, for the most part white-faced and intent. I still remember the effect of their faces upon me. It was quite different from the general effect of staring about and divided attention one gets in a political procession of men. There was an expression of heroic tension.

There had been a pretty deliberate appeal on the part of the women's organisers to the Unemployed, who had been demonstrating throughout that winter, to join

forces with the movement, and the result was shown in the quality of the crowd upon the pavement. It was an ugly, dangerous-looking crowd, but as yet good-tempered and sympathetic. When at last we got within sight of the House the square was a seething seat of excited people, and the array of police on horse and on foot might have been assembled for a revolutionary outbreak. There were dense masses of people up Whitehall, and right on to Westminster Bridge. The scuffle that ended in the arrests was the poorest explosion to follow such stupendous preparations. . . .

§ 3.

Later on in that year the women began a new attack. Day and night, and all through the long nights of the Budget sittings, at all the piers of the gates of New Palace Yard and at St. Stephen's Porch, stood women pickets, and watched us silently and reproachfully as we went to and fro. They were women of all sorts, though, of course, the independent worker-class predominated. There were grey-headed old ladies standing there, sturdily charming in the rain; battered-looking, ambiguous women, with something of the desperate bitterness of battered women showing in their eyes; north-country factory girls; cheaply-dressed suburban women; trim, comfortable mothers of families; valiant-eyed girl graduates and undergraduates; lank, hungry-looking creatures, who stirred one's imagination; one very dainty little woman in deep mourning, I recall, grave and steadfast, with eyes fixed on distant things. Some of those women looked defiant, some timidly aggressive, some full of the stir of adventure,

some drooping with cold and fatigue. The supply never ceased. I had a mortal fear that somehow the supply might halt or cease. I found that continual siege of the legislature extraordinarily impressive— infinitely more impressive than the feeble-forcible "ragging" of the more militant section. I thought of the appeal that must be going through the country, summoning the women from countless scattered homes, rooms, colleges, to Westminster.

I remember too the petty little difficulty I felt whether I should ignore these pickets altogether, or lift a hat as I hurried past with averted eyes, or look them in the face as I did so. Towards the end the House evoked an etiquette of salutation.

§ 4.

There was a tendency, even on the part of its sympathisers, to treat the whole suffrage agitation as if it were a disconnected issue, irrelevant to all other broad developments of social and political life. We struggled, all of us, to ignore the indicating finger it thrust out before us. "Your schemes, for all their bigness," it insisted to our reluctant, averted minds, "still don't go down to the essential things. . . ."

We have to go deeper, or our inadequate children's insufficient children will starve amidst harvests of earless futility. That conservatism which works in every class to preserve in its essentials the habitual daily life is all against a profounder treatment of political issues. The politician, almost as absurdly as the philisopher, tends constantly, in spite of magnificent preludes, vast intimations, to specialise himself out of the reality he has

so stupendously summoned—he bolts back to littleness. The world has to be moulded anew, he continues to admit, but without, he adds, any risk of upsetting his week-end visits, his morning cup of tea. . . .

The discussion of the relations of men and women disturbs everyone. It reacts upon the private life of everyone who attempts it. And at any particular time only a small minority have a personal interest in changing the established state of affairs. Habit and interest are in a constantly recruited majority against conscious change and adjustment in these matters. Drift rules us. The great mass of people, and an overwhelming proportion of influential people, are people who have banished their dreams and made their compromise. Wonderful and beautiful possibilities are no longer to be thought about. They have given up any aspirations for intense love, their splendid offspring, for keen delights, have accepted a cultivated kindliness and an uncritical sense of righteousness as their compensation. It's a settled affair with them, a settled, dangerous affair. Most of them fear, and many hate, the slightest reminder of those abandoned dreams. As Dayton once said to the Pentagram Circle, when we were discussing the problem of a universal marriage and divorce law throughout the Empire, "I am for leaving all these things alone." And then, with a groan in his voice, "Leave them alone! Leave them all alone!"

That was his whole speech for the evening, in a note of suppressed passion, and presently, against all our etiquette, he got up and went out.

For some years after my marriage, I too was for leaving them alone. I developed a dread and dislike

for romance, for emotional music, for the human figure in art—turning my heart to landscape. I wanted to sneer at lovers and their ecstasies, and was uncomfortable until I found the effective sneer. In matters of private morals these were my most uncharitable years. I didn't want to think of these things any more for ever. I hated the people whose talk or practice showed they were not of my opinion. I wanted to believe that their views were immoral and objectionable and contemptible, because I had decided to treat them as at that level. I was, in fact, falling into the attitude of the normal decent man.

And yet one cannot help thinking! The sensible moralised man finds it hard to escape the stream of suggestion that there are still dreams beyond these commonplace acquiescences,—the appeal of beauty suddenly shining upon one, the mothlike stirrings of serene summer nights, the sweetness of distant music. . . .

It is one of the paradoxical factors in our public life at the present time, which penalises abandonment to love so abundantly and so heavily, that power, influence and control fall largely to unencumbered people and sterile people and people who have married for passionless purposes, people whose very deficiency in feeling has left them free to follow ambition, people beauty-blind, who don't understand what it is to fall in love, what it is to desire children or have them, what it is to feel in their blood and bodies the supreme claim of good births and selective births above all other affairs in life, people almost of necessity averse from this most fundamental aspect of existence. . . .

§ 5.

It wasn't, however, my deepening sympathy with and understanding of the position of women in general, or the change in my ideas about all these intimate things my fast friendship with Isabel was bringing about, that led me to the heretical views I have in the last five years dragged from the region of academic and timid discussion into the field of practical politics. Those influences, no doubt, have converged to the same end, and given me a powerful emotional push upon my road, but it was a broader and colder view of things that first determined me in my attempt to graft the Endowment of Motherhood in some form or other upon British Imperialism. Now that I am exiled from the political world, it is possible to estimate just how effectually that grafting has been done.

I have explained how the ideas of a trained aristocracy and a universal education grew to paramount importance in my political scheme. It is but a short step from this to the question of the quantity and quality of births in the community, and from that again to these forbidden and fear-beset topics of marriage, divorce, and the family organisation. A sporadic discussion of these aspects had been going on for years, a Eugenic society existed, and articles on the Falling Birth Rate, and the Rapid Multiplication of the Unfit were staples of the monthly magazines. But beyond an intermittent scolding of prosperous childless people in general—one never addressed them in particular—nothing was done towards arresting those adverse processes. Almost against my natural inclination, I found myself forced to go into these

things. I came to the conclusion that under modern conditions the isolated private family, based on the existing marriage-contract, was failing in its work. It wasn't producing enough children, and children good enough and well trained enough for the demands of the developing civilised state. Our civilisation was growing outwardly, and decaying in its intimate substance, and unless it was presently to collapse, some very extensive and courageous reorganisation was needed. The old haphazard system of pairing, qualified more and more by worldly discretions, no longer secures a young population numerous enough or good enough for the growing needs and possibilities of our Empire. Statecraft sits weaving splendid garments, no doubt, but with a puny, ugly, insufficient baby in the cradle.

No one so far has dared to take up this problem as a present question for statecraft, but it comes unheralded, unadvocated, and sits at every legislative board. Every improvement is provisional except the improvement of the race, and it became more and more doubtful to me if we were improving the race at all! Splendid and beautiful and courageous people must come together and have children, women with their fine senses and glorious devotion must be freed from the net that compels them to be celibate, compels them to be childless and useless, or to bear children ignobly to men whom need and ignorance and the treacherous pressure of circumstances have forced upon them. We all know that, and so few dare even to whisper it for fear that they should seem, in seeking to save the family, to threaten its existence. It is as if a party of pigmies in a not too capacious room had been joined by a car-

nivorous giant—and decided to go on living happily by cutting him dead. . . .

The problem the developing civilised state has to solve is how it can get the best possible increase under the best possible conditions. I became more and more convinced that the independent family unit of to-day, in which the man is master of the wife and owner of the children, in which all are dependent upon him, subordinated to his enterprises and liable to follow his fortunes up or down, does not supply anything like the best conceivable conditions. We want to modernise the family footing altogether. An enormous premium both in pleasure and competitive efficiency is put upon voluntary childlessness, and enormous inducements are held out to women to subordinate instinctive and selective preferences to social and material considerations.

The practical reaction of modern conditions upon the old tradition of the family is this: that beneath the pretence that nothing is changing, secretly and with all the unwholesomeness of secrecy everything is changed. Offspring fall away, the birth rate falls and falls most among just the most efficient and active and best adapted classes in the community. The species is recruited from among its failures and from among less civilised aliens. Contemporary civilisations are in effect burning the best of their possible babies in the furnaces that run the machinery. In the United States the native Anglo-American strain has scarcely increased at all since 1830, and in most Western European countries the same is probably true of the ablest and most energetic elements in the community. The women of these classes still remain legally and practically dependent

and protected, with the only natural excuse for their dependence gone. . . .

The modern world becomes an immense spectacle of unsatisfactory groupings; here childless couples bored to death in the hopeless effort to sustain an incessant honeymoon, here homes in which a solitary child grows unsocially, here small two or three-child homes that do no more than continue the culture of the parents at a great social cost, here numbers of unhappy educated but childless married women, here careless, decivilised fecund homes, here orphanages and asylums for the heedlessly begotten. It is just the disorderly proliferation of Bromstead over again, in lives instead of in houses.

What is the good, what is the commonsense, of rectifying boundaries, pushing research and discovery, building cities, improving all the facilities of life, making great fleets, waging wars, while this aimless decadence remains the quality of the biological outlook? . . .

It is difficult now to trace how I changed from my early aversion until I faced this mass of problems. But so far back as 1910 I had it clear in my mind that I would rather fail utterly than participate in all the surrenders of mind and body that are implied in Dayton's snarl of "Leave it alone; leave it all alone!" Marriage and the begetting and care of children, is the very ground substance in the life of the community. In a world in which everything changes, in which fresh methods, fresh adjustments and fresh ideas perpetually renew the circumstances of life, it is preposterous that we should not even examine into these matters, should rest content to be ruled by the uncriticised traditions of a barbaric age.

Now, it seems to me that the solution of this problem is also the solution of the woman's individual problem. The two go together, are right and left of one question. The only conceivable way out from our *impasse* lies in the recognition of parentage, that is to say of adequate mothering, as no longer a chance product of individual passions but a service rendered to the State. Women must become less and less subordinated to individual men, since this works out in a more or less complete limitation, waste, and sterilisation of their essentially social function; they must become more and more subordinated as individually independent citizens to the collective purpose. Or, to express the thing by a familiar phrase, the highly organised, scientific state we desire must, if it is to exist at all, base itself not upon the irresponsible man-ruled family, but upon the matriarchal family, the citizenship and freedom of women and the public endowment of motherhood.

After two generations of confused and experimental revolt it grows clear to modern women that a conscious, deliberate motherhood and mothering is their special function in the State, and that a personal subordination to an individual man with an unlimited power of control over this intimate and supreme duty is a degradation. No contemporary woman of education put to the test is willing to recognise any claim a man can make upon her but the claim of her freely-given devotion to him. She wants the reality of her choice and she means "family" while a man too often means only possession. This alters the spirit of the family relationships fundamentally. Their form remains just what it was when woman was esteemed a pretty, desirable, and

incidentally a child-producing, chattel. Against these time-honoured ideas the new spirit of womanhood struggles in shame, astonishment, bitterness, and tears. . . .

I confess myself altogether feminist. I have no doubts in the matter. I want this coddling and browbeating of women to cease. I want to see women come in, free and fearless, to a full participation in the collective purpose of mankind. Women, I am convinced, are as fine as men; they can be as wise as men; they are capable of far greater devotion than men. I want to see them citizens, with a marriage law framed primarily for them and for their protection and the good of the race, and not for men's satisfactions. I want to see them bearing and rearing good children in the State as a generously rewarded public duty and service, choosing their husbands freely and discerningly, and in no way enslaved by or subordinated to the men they have chosen. The social consciousness of women seems to me an unworked, an almost untouched mine of wealth for the constructive purpose of the world. I want to change the respective values of the family group altogether, and make the home indeed the women's kingdom and the mother the owner and responsible guardian of her children.

It is no use pretending that this is not novel and revolutionary; it is. The Endowment of Motherhood implies a new method of social organisation, a rearrangement of the social unit, untried in human experience—as untried as electric traction was or flying in 1800. Of course, it may work out to modify men's ideas of marriage profoundly. To me that is a secondary consideration. I do not believe that particular assertion

myself, because I am convinced that a practical monogamy is a psychological necessity to the mass of civilised people. But even if I did believe it I should still keep to my present line, because it is the only line that will prevent a highly organised civilisation from ending in biological decay. The public Endowment of Motherhood is the only possible way which will ensure the permanently developing civilised state at which all constructive minds are aiming. A point is reached in the life-history of a civilisation when either this reconstruction must be effected or the quality and *morale* of the population prove insufficient for the needs of the developing organisation. It is not so much moral decadence that will destroy us as moral inadaptability. The old code fails under the new needs. The only alternative to this profound reconstruction is a decay in human quality and social collapse. Either this unprecedented rearrangement must be achieved by our civilisation, or it must presently come upon a phase of disorder and crumble and perish, as Rome perished, as France declines, as the strain of the Pilgrim Fathers dwindles out of America. Whatever hope there may be in the attempt therefore, there is no alternative to the attempt.

§ 6.

I wanted political success now dearly enough, but not at the price of constructive realities. These questions were no doubt monstrously dangerous in the political world; there wasn't a politician alive who didn't look scared at the mention of "The Family," but if raising these issues were essential to the social reconstructions on which my life was set, that did not matter.

It only implied that I should take them up with deliberate caution. There was no release because of risk or difficulty.

The question of whether I should commit myself to some open project in this direction was going on in my mind concurrently with my speculations about a change of party, like bass and treble in a complex piece of music. The two drew to a conclusion together. I would not only go over to Imperialism, but I would attempt to biologise Imperialism.

I thought at first that I was undertaking a monstrous uphill task. But as I came to look into the possibilities of the matter, a strong persuasion grew up in my mind that this panic fear of legislative proposals affecting the family basis was excessive, that things were much riper for development in this direction than old-experienced people out of touch with the younger generation imagined, that to phrase the thing in a parliamentary fashion, "something might be done in the constituencies" with the Endowment of Motherhood forthwith, provided only that it was made perfectly clear that anything a sane person could possibly intend by "morality" was left untouched by these proposals.

I went to work very carefully. I got Roper of the *Daily Telephone* and Burkett of the *Dial* to try over a silly-season discussion of State Help for Mothers, and I put a series of articles on Eugenics, upon the fall in the birth-rate, and similar topics in the *Blue Weekly*, leading up to a tentative and generalised advocacy of the public endowment of the nation's children. I was more and more struck by the acceptance won by a sober and restrained presentation of this suggestion.

And then, in the fourth year of the *Blue Weekly's* career, came the Handitch election, and I was forced by the clamour of my antagonist, and very willingly forced, to put my convictions to the test. I returned triumphantly to Westminster with the Public Endowment of Motherhood as part of my open profession and with the full approval of the party press. Applauding benches of Imperialists cheered me on my way to the table between the whips.

That second time I took the oath I was not one of a crowd of new members, but salient, an event, a symbol of profound changes and new purposes in the national life.

Here it is my political book comes to an end, and in a sense my book ends altogether. For the rest is but to tell how I was swept out of this great world of political possibilities. I close this Third Book as I opened it, with an admission of difficulties and complexities, but now with a pile of manuscript before me I have to confess them unsurmounted and still entangled.

Yet my aim was a final simplicity. I have sought to show my growing realisation that the essential quality of all political and social effort is the development of a great race mind behind the interplay of individual lives. That is the collective human reality, the basis of morality, the purpose of devotion. To that our lives must be given, from that will come the perpetual fresh release and further ennoblement of individual lives. . . .

I have wanted to make that idea of a collective mind play in this book the part United Italy plays in Machiavelli's *Prince*. I have called it the hinterland of reality, shown it accumulating a dominating truth and

rightness which must force men's now sporadic motives more and more into a disciplined and understanding relation to a plan. And I have tried to indicate how I sought to serve this great clarification of our confusions. . . .

Now I come back to personality and the story of my self-betrayal, and how it is I have had to leave all that far-reaching scheme of mine, a mere project and beginning for other men to take or leave as it pleases them.

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# BOOK IV.

## ISABEL.

In writing this, moreover, there is a very great difficulty in steering my way between two equally undesirable tones in the telling. In the first place I do not want to seem to confess my sins with a penitence I am very doubtful if I feel. Now that I have got Isabel we can no doubt count the cost of it and feel unquenchable regrets, but I am not sure whether, if we could be put back now into such circumstances as we were in a year ago, or two years ago, whether with my eyes fully open I should not do over again very much as I did. And on the other hand I do not want to justify the things we have done. We are two bad people —if there is to be any classification of good and bad at all, we have acted badly, and quite apart from any other considerations we've largely wasted our own very great possibilities. But it is part of a queer humour that underlies all this, that I find myself slipping again and again into a sentimental treatment of our case that is as unpremeditated as it is insincere. When I am a little tired after a morning's writing I find the faint suggestion getting into every other sentence that our blunders and misdeeds embodied, after the fashion of the prophet Hosea, profound moral truths. Indeed, I feel so little confidence in my ability to keep this altogether out of my book that I warn the reader here that in spite of anything he may read elsewhere in the story, intimating however shyly an esoteric and exalted virtue in our proceedings, the plain truth of this business is that Isabel and I wanted each other with a want entirely formless, inconsiderate, and overwhelming. And though I could tell you countless delightful and beautiful things about Isabel, were this a book in her

praise, I cannot either analyse that want or account for its extreme intensity.

I will confess that deep in my mind there is a belief in a sort of wild rightness about any love that is fraught with beauty, but that eludes me and vanishes again, and is not, I feel, to be put with the real veracities and righteousness and virtues in the paddocks and menageries of human reason. . . .

We have already a child, and Margaret was childless, and I find myself prone to insist upon that, as if it was a justification. But, indeed, when we became lovers there was small thought of Eugenics between us. Ours was a mutual and not a philoprogenitive passion. Old Nature behind us may have had such purposes with us, but it is not for us to annex her intentions by a moralising afterthought. There isn't, in fact, any decent justification for us whatever—at that the story must stand.

But if there is no justification there is at least a very effective excuse in the mental confusedness of our time. The evasion of that passionately thorough exposition of belief and of the grounds of morality, which is the outcome of the mercenary religious compromises of the late Vatican period, the stupid suppression of anything but the most timid discussion of sexual morality in our literature and drama, the pervading cultivated and protected muddle-headedness, leaves mentally vigorous people with relatively enormous possibilities of destruction and little effective help. They find themselves confronted by the habits and prejudices of manifestly commonplace people, and by that extraordinary patched-up Christianity, the cult of a "Bromsteadised" deity, dif-

fused, scattered, and aimless, which hides from examination and any possibility of faith behind the plea of good taste. A god about whom there is delicacy is far worse than no god at all. We are *forced* to be laws unto ourselves and to live experimentally. It is inevitable that a considerable fraction of just that bolder, more initiatory section of the intellectual community, the section that can least be spared from the collective life in a period of trial and change, will drift into such emotional crises and such disaster as overtook us. Most perhaps will escape, but many will go down, many more than the world can spare. It is the unwritten law of all our public life, and the same holds true of America, that an honest open scandal ends a career. England in the last quarter of a century has wasted half a dozen statesmen on this score; she would, I believe, reject Nelson now if he sought to serve her. Is it wonderful that to us fretting here in exile this should seem the cruellest as well as the most foolish elimination of a necessary social element? It destroys no vice; for vice hides by nature. It not only rewards dulness as if it were positive virtue, but sets an enormous premium upon hypocrisy. That is my case, and that is why I am telling this side of my story with so much explicitness.

§ 2.

Ever since the Kinghamstead election I had maintained what seemed a desultory friendship with Isabel. At first it was rather Isabel kept it up than I. Whenever Margaret and I went down to that villa, with its three or four acres of garden and shrubbery about it,

which fulfilled our election promise to live at Kinghamstead, Isabel would turn up in a state of frank cheerfulness, rejoicing at us, and talk all she was reading and thinking to me, and stay for all the rest of the day. In her shameless liking for me she was as natural as a savage. She would exercise me vigorously at tennis, while Margaret lay and rested her back in the afternoon, or guide me for some long ramble that dodged the suburban and congested patches of the constituency with amazing skill. She took possession of me in that unabashed, straight-minded way a girl will sometimes adopt with a man, chose my path or criticised my game with a motherly solicitude for my welfare that was absurd and delightful. And we talked. We discussed and criticised the stories of novels, scraps of history, pictures, social questions, socialism, the policy of the Government. She was young and most unevenly informed, but she was amazingly sharp and quick and good. Never before in my life had I known a girl of her age, or a woman of her quality. I had never dreamt there was such talk in the world. Kinghamstead became a lightless place when she went to Oxford. Heaven knows how much that may not have precipitated my abandonment of the seat!

She went to Ridout College, Oxford, and that certainly weighed with me when presently after my breach with the Liberals various little undergraduate societies began to ask for lectures and discussions. I favoured Oxford. I declared openly I did so because of her. At that time I think we neither of us suspected the possibility of passion that lay like a coiled snake in the path before us. It seemed to us that we had the quaintest,

most delightful friendship in the world; she was my pupil, and I was her guide, philosopher, and friend. People smiled indulgently—even Margaret smiled indulgently—at our attraction for one another.

Such friendships are not uncommon nowadays—among easy-going, liberal-minded people. For the most part, there's no sort of harm, as people say, in them. The two persons concerned are never supposed to think of the passionate love that hovers so close to the friendship, or if they do, then they banish the thought. I think we kept the thought as permanently in exile as anyone could do. If it did in odd moments come into our heads we pretended elaborately it wasn't there.

Only we were both very easily jealous of each other's attention, and tremendously insistent upon each other's preference.

I remember once during the Oxford days an intimation that should have set me thinking, and I suppose discreetly disentangling myself. It was one Sunday afternoon, and it must have been about May, for the trees and shrubs of Ridout College were gay with blossom, and fresh with the new sharp greens of spring. I had walked talking with Isabel and a couple of other girls through the wide gardens of the place, seen and criticised the new brick pond, nodded to the daughter of this friend and that in the hammocks under the trees, and picked a way among the scattered tea-parties on the lawn to our own circle on the grass under a Siberian crab near the great bay window. There I sat and ate great quantities of cake, and discussed the tactics of the Suffragettes. I had made some comments upon the spirit of the movement in an address to the men in Pembroke,

and it had got abroad, and a group of girls and women dons were now having it out with me.

I forget the drift of the conversation, or what it was made Isabel interrupt me. She did interrupt me. She had been lying prone on the ground at my right hand, chin on fists, listening thoughtfully, and I was sitting beside old Lady Evershead on a garden seat. I turned to Isabel's voice, and saw her face uplifted, and her dear cheeks and nose and forehead all splashed and barred with sunlight and the shadows of the twigs of the trees behind me. And something—an infinite tenderness, stabbed me. It was a keen physical feeling, like nothing I had ever felt before. It had a quality of tears in it. For the first time in my narrow and concentrated life another human being had really thrust into my being and gripped my very heart.

Our eyes met perplexed for an extraordinary moment. Then I turned back and addressed myself a little stiffly to the substance of her intervention. For some time I couldn't look at her again.

From that time forth I knew I loved Isabel beyond measure.

Yet it is curious that it never occurred to me for a year or so that this was likely to be a matter of passion between us. I have told how definitely I put my imagination into harness in those matters at my marriage, and I was living now in a world of big interests, where there is neither much time nor inclination for deliberate love-making. I suppose there is a large class of men who never meet a girl or a woman without thinking of sex, who meet a friend's daughter and decide: "Mustn't get friendly with her—wouldn't *do*,"

and set invisible bars between themselves and all the wives in the world. Perhaps that is the way to live. Perhaps there is no other method than this effectual annihilation of half—and the most sympathetic and attractive half—of the human beings in the world, so far as any frank intercourse is concerned. I am quite convinced anyhow that such a qualified intimacy as ours, such a drifting into the sense of possession, such untrammelled conversation with an invisible, implacable limit set just where the intimacy glows, it is no kind of tolerable compromise. If men and women are to go so far together, they must be free to go as far as they may want to go, without the vindictive destruction that has come upon us. On the basis of the accepted codes the jealous people are right, and the liberal-minded ones are playing with fire. If people are not to love, then they must be kept apart. If they are not to be kept apart, then we must prepare for an unprecedented toleration of lovers.

Isabel was as unforeseeing as I to begin with, but sex marches into the life of an intelligent girl with demands and challenges far more urgent than the mere call of curiosity and satiable desire that comes to a young man. No woman yet has dared to tell the story of that unfolding. She attracted men, and she encouraged them, and watched them, and tested them, and dismissed them, and concealed the substance of her thoughts about them in the way that seems instinctive in a natural-minded girl. There was even an engagement—amidst the protests and disapproval of the college authorities. I never saw the man, though she gave me a long history of the affair, to which I

listened with a forced and insincere sympathy. She struck me oddly as taking the relationship for a thing in itself, and regardless of its consequences. After a time she became silent about him, and then threw him over; and by that time, I think, for all that she was so much my junior, she knew more about herself and me than I was to know for several years to come.

We didn't see each other for some months after my resignation, but we kept up a frequent correspondence. She said twice over that she wanted to talk to me, that letters didn't convey what one wanted to say, and I went up to Oxford pretty definitely to see her—though I combined it with one or two other engagements—somewhere in February. Insensibly she had become important enough for me to make journeys for her.

But we didn't see very much of one another on that occasion. There was something in the air between us that made a faint embarrassment; the mere fact, perhaps, that she had asked me to come up.

A year before she would have dashed off with me quite unscrupulously to talk alone, carried me off to her room for an hour with a minute of chaperonage to satisfy the rules. Now there was always someone or other near us that it seemed impossible to exorcise.

We went for a walk on the Sunday afternoon with old Fortescue, K. C., who'd come up to see his two daughters, both great friends of Isabel's, and some mute inglorious don whose name I forget, but who was in a state of marked admiration for her. The six of us played a game of conversational entanglements throughout, and mostly I was impressing the Fortescue girls with the want of mental concentration possible in a ris-

ing politician. We went down Carfex, I remember, to Folly Bridge, and inspected the Barges, and then back by way of Merton to the Botanic Gardens and Magdalen Bridge. And in the Botanic Gardens she got almost her only chance with me.

"Last months at Oxford," she said.

"And then?" I asked.

"I'm coming to London," she said.

"To write?"

She was silent for a moment. Then she said abruptly, with that quick flush of hers and a sudden boldness in her eyes: "I'm going to work with you. Why shouldn't I?"

§ 3.

Here, again, I suppose I had a fair warning of the drift of things. I seem to remember myself in the train to Paddington, sitting with a handful of papers—galley proofs for the *Blue Weekly*, I suppose—on my lap, and thinking about her and that last sentence of hers, and all that it might mean to me.

It is very hard to recall even the main outline of anything so elusive as a meditation. I know that the idea of working with her gripped me, fascinated me. That my value in her life seemed growing filled me with pride and a kind of gratitude. I was already in no doubt that her value in my life was tremendous. It made it none the less, that in those days I was obsessed by the idea that she was transitory, and bound to go out of my life again. It is no good trying to set too fine a face upon this complex business, there is gold and clay and sunlight and savagery in every love-story,

and a multitude of elfish elements peeped out beneath the fine rich curtain of affection that masked our future. I've never properly weighed how immensely my vanity was gratified by her clear preference for me. Nor can I for a moment determine how much deliberate intention I hide from myself in this affair.

Certainly I think some part of me must have been saying in the train: "Leave go of her. Get away from her. End this now." I can't have been so stupid as not to have had that in my mind. . . .

If she had been only a beautiful girl in love with me, I think I could have managed the situation. Once or twice since my marriage and before Isabel became of any significance in my life, there had been incidents with other people, flashes of temptation—no telling is possible of the thing resisted. I think that mere beauty and passion would not have taken me. But between myself and Isabel things were incurably complicated by the intellectual sympathy we had, the jolly march of our minds together. That has always mattered enormously. I should have wanted her company nearly as badly if she had been some crippled old lady; we would have hunted shoulder to shoulder, as two men. Only two men would never have had the patience and readiness for one another we two had. I had never for years met anyone with whom I could be so carelessly sure of understanding or to whom I could listen so easily and fully. She gave me, with an extraordinary completeness, that rare, precious effect of always saying something fresh, and yet saying it so that it filled into and folded about all the little recesses and corners of my mind with an infinite, soft familiarity. It is impossible

to explain that. It is like trying to explain why her voice, her voice heard speaking to anyone—heard speaking in another room—pleased my ears.

She was the only Oxford woman who took a first that year. She spent the summer in Scotland and Yorkshire, writing to me continually of all she now meant to do, and stirring my imagination. She came to London for the autumn session. For a time she stayed with old Lady Colbeck, but she fell out with her hostess when it became clear she wanted to write, not novels, but journalism, and then she set everyone talking by taking a flat near Victoria and installing as her sole protector an elderly German governess she had engaged through a scholastic agency. She began writing, not in that copious flood the undisciplined young woman of gifts is apt to produce, but in exactly the manner of an able young man, experimenting with forms, developing the phrasing of opinions, taking a definite line. She was, of course, tremendously discussed. She was disapproved of, but she was invited out to dinner. She got rather a reputation for the management of elderly distinguished men. It was an odd experience to follow Margaret's soft rustle of silk into some big drawing-room and discover my snub-nosed girl in the blue sack transformed into a shining creature in the soft splendour of pearls and ivory-white and lace, and with a silver band about her dusky hair.

For a time we did not meet very frequently, though always she professed an unblushing preference for my company, and talked my views and sought me out. Then her usefulness upon the *Blue Weekly* began to link us closelier. She would come up to the office, and

sit by the window, and talk over the proofs of the next week's articles, going through my intentions with a keen investigatory scalpel. Her talk always puts me in mind of a steel blade. Her writing became rapidly very good; she had a wit and a turn of the phrase that was all her own. We seemed to have forgotten the little shadow of embarrassment that had fallen over our last meeting at Oxford. Everything seemed natural and easy between us in those days; a little unconventional, but that made it all the brighter.

We developed something like a custom of walks, about once a week or so, and letters and notes became frequent. I won't pretend things were not keenly personal between us, but they had an air of being innocently mental. She used to call me "Master" in our talks, a monstrous and engaging flattery, and I was inordinately proud to have her as my pupil. Who wouldn't have been? And we went on at that distance for a long time—until within a year of the Handitch election.

After Lady Colbeck threw her up as altogether too "intellectual" for comfortable control, Isabel was taken up by the Balfes in a less formal and compromising manner, and week-ended with them and their cousin Leonora Sparling, and spent large portions of her summer with them in Herefordshire. There was a lover or so in that time, men who came a little timidly at this brilliant young person with the frank manner and the Amazonian mind, and, she declared, received her kindly refusals with manifest relief. And Arnold Shoesmith struck up a sort of friendship that oddly imitated mine. She took a liking to him because he was clumsy

and shy and inexpressive; she embarked upon the dangerous interest of helping him to find his soul. I had some twinges of jealousy about that. I didn't see the necessity of him. He invaded her time, and I thought that might interfere with her work. If their friendship stole some hours from Isabel's writing, it did not for a long while interfere with our walks or our talks, or the close intimacy we had together.

§ 4.

Then suddenly Isabel and I found ourselves passionately in love.

The change came so entirely without warning or intention that I find it impossible now to tell the order of its phases. What disturbed pebble started the avalanche I cannot trace. Perhaps it was simply that the barriers between us and this masked aspect of life had been wearing down unperceived.

And there came a change in Isabel. It was like some change in the cycle of nature, like the onset of spring—a sharp brightness, an uneasiness. She became restless with her work; little encounters with men began to happen, encounters not quite in the quality of the earlier proposals; and then came an odd incident of which she told me, but somehow, I felt, didn't tell me completely. She told me all she was able to tell me. She had been at a dance at the Ropers', and a man, rather well-known in London, had kissed her. The thing amazed her beyond measure. It was the sort of thing immediately possible between any man and any woman, that one never expects to happen until it happens. It had the surprising effect of a judge

generally known to be bald suddenly whipping off his wig in court. No absolutely unexpected revelation could have quite the same quality of shock. She went through the whole thing to me with a remarkable detachment, told me how she had felt—and the odd things it seemed to open to her.

"I *want* to be kissed, and all that sort of thing," she avowed. "I suppose every woman does."

She added after a pause: "And I don't want anyone to do it."

This struck me as queerly expressive of the woman's attitude to these things. "Someone presently will—solve that," I said.

"Someone will perhaps."

I was silent.

"Someone will," she said, almost viciously. "And then we'll have to stop these walks and talks of ours, dear Master. . . . I'll be sorry to give them up."

"It's part of the requirements of the situation," I said, "that he should be—oh, very interesting! He'll start, no doubt, all sorts of new topics, and open no end of attractive vistas. . . . You can't, you know, always go about in a state of pupillage."

"I don't think I can," said Isabel. "But it's only just recently I've begun to doubt about it."

I remember these things being said, but just how much we saw and understood, and just how far we were really keeping opaque to each other then, I cannot remember. But it must have been quite soon after this that we spent nearly a whole day together at Kew Gardens, with the curtains up and the barriers down, and the thing that had happened plain before our eyes.

I don't remember we ever made any declaration. We just assumed the new footing. . . .

It was a day early in that year—I think in January, because there was thin, crisp snow on the grass, and we noted that only two other people had been to the Pagoda that day. I've a curious impression of greenish colour, hot, moist air and huge palm fronds about very much of our talk, as though we were nearly all the time in the Tropical House. But I also remember very vividly looking at certain orange and red spray-like flowers from Patagonia, which could not have been there. It is a curious thing that I do not remember we made any profession of passionate love for one another; we talked as though the fact of our intense love for each other had always been patent between us. There was so long and frank an intimacy between us that we talked far more like brother and sister or husband and wife than two people engaged in the war of the sexes. We wanted to know what we were going to do, and whatever we did we meant to do in the most perfect concert. We both felt an extraordinary accession of friendship and tenderness then, and, what again is curious, very little passion. But there was also, in spite of the perplexities we faced, an immense satisfaction about that day. It was as if we had taken off something that had hindered our view of each other, like people who unvizard to talk more easily at a masked ball.

I've had since to view our relations from the standpoint of the ordinary observer. I find that vision in the most preposterous contrast with all that really went on between us. I suppose there I should figure as a

wicked seducer, while an unprotected girl succumbed to my fascinations. As a matter of fact, it didn't occur to us that there was any personal inequality between us. I knew her for my equal mentally; in so many things she was beyond comparison cleverer than I; her courage outwent mine. The quick leap of her mind evoked a flash of joy in mine like the response of an induction wire; her way of thinking was like watching sunlight reflected from little waves upon the side of a boat, it was so bright, so mobile, so variously and easily true to its law. In the back of our minds we both had a very definite belief that making love is full of joyous, splendid, tender, and exciting possibilities, and we had to discuss why we shouldn't be to the last degree lovers.

Now, what I should like to print here, if it were possible, in all the screaming emphasis of red ink, is this: that the circumstances of my upbringing and the circumstances of Isabel's upbringing had left not a shadow of belief or feeling that the utmost passionate love between us was in itself intrinsically *wrong*. I've told with the fullest particularity just all that I was taught or found out for myself in these matters, and Isabel's reading and thinking, and the fierce silences of her governesses and the breathless warnings of teachers, and all the social and religious influences that had been brought to bear upon her, had worked out to the same void of conviction. The code had failed with us altogether. We didn't for a moment consider anything but the expediency of what we both, for all our quiet faces and steady eyes, wanted most passionately to do.

Well, here you have the state of mind of whole

brigades of people, and particularly of young people, nowadays. The current morality hasn't gripped them; they don't really believe in it at all. They may render it lip-service, but that is quite another thing. There are scarcely any tolerable novels to justify its prohibitions; its prohibitions do, in fact, remain unjustified amongst these ugly suppressions. You may, if you choose, silence the admission of this in literature and current discussion; you will not prevent it working out in lives. People come up to the great moments of passion crudely unaware, astoundingly unprepared as no really civilised and intelligently planned community would let anyone be unprepared. They find themselves hedged about with customs that have no organic hold upon them, and mere discretions all generous spirits are disposed to despise.

Consider the infinite absurdities of it! Multitudes of us are trying to run this complex modern community on a basis of "Hush" without explaining to our children or discussing with them anything about love and marriage at all. Doubt and knowledge creep about in enforced darknesses and silences. We are living upon an ancient tradition which everybody doubts and nobody has ever analysed. We affect a tremendous and cultivated shyness and delicacy about imperatives of the most arbitrary appearance. What ensues? What did ensue with us, for example? On the one hand was a great desire, robbed of any appearance of shame and grossness by the power of love, and on the other hand, the possible jealousy of so and so, the disapproval of so and so, material risks and dangers. It is only in the retrospect that we have been able to grasp something

of the effectual case against us. The social prohibition lit by the intense glow of our passion, presented itself as preposterous, irrational, arbitrary, and ugly, a monster fit only for mockery. We might be ruined! Well, there is a phase in every love affair, a sort of heroic hysteria, when death and ruin are agreeable additions to the prospect. It gives the business a gravity, a solemnity. Timid people may hesitate and draw back with a vague instinctive terror of the immensity of the oppositions they challenge, but neither Isabel nor I are timid people.

We weighed what was against us. We decided just exactly as scores of thousands of people have decided in this very matter, that if it were possible to keep this thing to ourselves, there was nothing against it. And so we took our first step. With the hunger of love in us, it was easy to conclude we might be lovers, and still keep everything to ourselves. That cleared our minds of the one persistent obstacle that mattered to us—the haunting presence of Margaret.

And then we found, as all those scores of thousands of people scattered about us have found, that we could not keep it to ourselves. Love will out. All the rest of this story is the chronicle of that. Love with sustained secrecy cannot be love. It is just exactly the point people do not understand.

§ 5.

But before things came to that pass, some months and many phases and a sudden journey to America intervened.

"This thing spells disaster," I said. "You are too

big and I am too big to attempt this secrecy. Think of the intolerable possibility of being found out! At any cost we have to stop—even at the cost of parting."

"Just because we may be found out!"

"Just because we may be found out."

"Master, I shouldn't in the least mind being found out with you. I'm afraid—I'd be proud."

"Wait till it happens."

There followed a struggle of immense insincerity between us. It is hard to tell who urged and who resisted.

She came to me one night to the editorial room of the *Blue Weekly,* and argued and kissed me with wet salt lips, and wept in my arms; she told me that now passionate longing for me and my intimate life possessed her, so that she could not work, could not think, could not endure other people for the love of me. . . .

I fled absurdly. That is the secret of the futile journey to America that puzzled all my friends.

I ran away from Isabel. I took hold of the situation with all my strength, put in Britten with sketchy, hasty instructions to edit the paper, and started headlong and with luggage, from which, among other things, my shaving things were omitted, upon a tour round the world.

Preposterous flight that was! I remember as a thing almost farcical my explanations to Margaret, and how frantically anxious I was to prevent the remote possibility of her coming with me, and how I crossed in the *Tuscan,* a bad, wet boat, and mixed seasickness with ungovernable sorrow. I wept—tears. It was inexpressibly queer and ridiculous—and, good God! how I hated my fellow-passengers!

New York inflamed and excited me for a time, and when things slackened, I whirled westward to Chicago —eating and drinking, I remember, in the train from shoals of little dishes, with a sort of desperate voracity. I did the queerest things to distract myself—no novelist would dare to invent my mental and emotional muddle. Chicago also held me at first, amazing lapse from civilisation that the place is! and then abruptly, with hosts expecting me, and everything settled for some days in Denver, I found myself at the end of my renunciations, and turned and came back headlong to London.

Let me confess it wasn't any sense of perfect and incurable trust and confidence that brought me back, or any idea that now I had strength to refrain. It was a sudden realisation that after all the separation might succeed; some careless phrasing in one of her jealously read letters set that idea going in my mind—the haunting perception that I might return to London and find it empty of the Isabel who had pervaded it. Honour, discretion, the careers of both of us, became nothing at the thought. I couldn't conceive my life resuming there without Isabel. I couldn't, in short, stand it.

I don't even excuse my return. It is inexcusable. I ought to have kept upon my way westward—and held out. I couldn't. I wanted Isabel, and I wanted her so badly now that everything else in the world was phantom-like until that want was satisfied. Perhaps you have never wanted anything like that. I went straight to her.

But here I come to untellable things. There is no

describing the reality of love. The shapes of things are nothing, the actual happenings are nothing, except that somehow there falls a light upon them and a wonder. Of how we met, and the thrill of the adventure, the curious bright sense of defiance, the joy of having dared, I can't tell—I can but hint of just one aspect, of what an amazing *lark*—it's the only word—it seemed to us. The beauty which was the essence of it, which justifies it so far as it will bear justification, eludes statement.

What can a record of contrived meetings, of sundering difficulties evaded and overcome, signify here? Or what can it convey to say that one looked deep into two dear, steadfast eyes, or felt a heart throb and beat, or gripped soft hair softly in a trembling hand? Robbed of encompassing love, these things are of no more value than the taste of good wine or the sight of good pictures, or the hearing of music,—just sensuality and no more. No one can tell love—we can only tell the gross facts of love and its consequences. Given love—given mutuality, and one has effected a supreme synthesis and come to a new level of life—but only those who know can know. This business has brought me more bitterness and sorrow than I had ever expected to bear, but even now I will not say that I regret that wilful home-coming altogether. We loved—to the uttermost. Neither of us could have loved anyone else as we did and do love one another. It was ours, that beauty; it existed only between us when we were close together, for no one in the world ever to know save ourselves.

My return to the office sticks out in my memory

with an extreme vividness, because of the wild eagle of pride that screamed within me. It was Tuesday morning, and though not a soul in London knew of it yet except Isabel, I had been back in England a week. I came in upon Britten and stood in the doorway.

"*God!*" he said at the sight of me.

"I'm back," I said.

He looked at my excited face with those red-brown eyes of his. Silently I defied him to speak his mind.

"Where did you turn back?" he said at last.

§ 6.

I had to tell what were, so far as I can remember, my first positive lies to Margaret in explaining that return. I had written to her from Chicago and again from New York, saying that I felt I ought to be on the spot in England for the new session, and that I was coming back—presently. I concealed the name of my boat from her, and made a calculated prevarication when I announced my presence in London. I telephoned before I went back for my rooms to be prepared. She was, I knew, with the Bunting Harblows in Durham, and when she came back to Radnor Square I had been at home a day.

I remember her return so well.

My going away and the vivid secret of the present had wiped out from my mind much of our long estrangement. Something, too, had changed in her. I had had some hint of it in her letters, but now I saw it plainly. I came out of my study upon the landing when I heard the turmoil of her arrival below, and she came upstairs with a quickened gladness. It

was a cold March, and she was dressed in unfamiliar dark furs that suited her extremely and reinforced the delicate flush of her sweet face. She held out both her hands to me, and drew me to her unhesitatingly and kissed me.

"So glad you are back, dear," she said. "Oh! so very glad you are back."

I returned her kiss with a queer feeling at my heart, too undifferentiated to be even a definite sense of guilt or meanness. I think it was chiefly amazement—at the universe—at myself.

"I never knew what it was to be away from you," she said.

I perceived suddenly that she had resolved to end our estrangement. She put herself so that my arm came caressingly about her.

"These are jolly furs," I said.

"I got them for you."

The parlourmaid appeared below dealing with the maid and the luggage cab.

"Tell me all about America," said Margaret. "I feel as though you'd been away six years."

We went arm in arm into our little sitting-room, and I took off the furs for her and sat down upon the chintz-covered sofa by the fire. She had ordered tea, and came and sat by me. I don't know what I had expected, but of all things I had certainly not expected this sudden abolition of our distances.

"I want to know all about America," she repeated, with her eyes scrutinising me. "Why did you come back?"

I repeated the substance of my letters rather lamely, and she sat listening.

"But why did you turn back—without going to Denver?"

"I wanted to come back. I was restless."

"Restlessness," she said, and thought. "You were restless in Venice. You said it was restlessness took you to America."

Again she studied me. She turned a little awkwardly to her tea-things, and poured needless water from the silver kettle into the teapot. Then she sat still for some moments looking at the equipage with expressionless eyes. I saw her hand upon the edge of the table tremble slightly. I watched her closely. A vague uneasiness possessed me. What might she not know or guess?

She spoke at last with an effort. "I wish you were in Parliament again," she said. "Life doesn't give you events enough."

"If I was in Parliament again, I should be on the Conservative side."

"I know," she said, and was still more thoughtful.

"Lately," she began, and paused. "Lately I've been reading—you."

I didn't help her out with what she had to say. I waited.

"I didn't understand what you were after. I had misjudged. I didn't know. I think perhaps I was rather stupid." Her eyes were suddenly shining with tears. "You didn't give me much chance to understand."

She turned upon me suddenly with a voice full of tears.

"Husband," she said abruptly, holding her two hands out to me, "I want to begin over again!"

I took her hands, perplexed beyond measure. "My dear!" I said.

"I want to begin over again."

I bowed my head to hide my face, and found her hand in mine and kissed it.

"Ah!" she said, and slowly withdrew her hand. She leant forward with her arm on the sofa-back, and looked very intently into my face. I felt the most damnable scoundrel in the world as I returned her gaze. The thought of Isabel's darkly shining eyes seemed like a physical presence between us. . . .

"Tell me," I said presently, to break the intolerable tension, "tell me plainly what you mean by this."

I sat a little away from her, and then took my tea-cup in hand, with an odd effect of defending myself. "Have you been reading that old book of mine?" I asked.

"That and the paper. I took a complete set from the beginning down to Durham with me. I have read it over, thought it over. I didn't understand—what you were teaching."

There was a little pause.

"It all seems so plain to me now," she said, "and so true."

I was profoundly disconcerted. I put down my tea-cup, stood up in the middle of the hearthrug, and began talking. "I'm tremendously glad, Margaret, that you've come to see I'm not altogether perverse," I began. I launched out into a rather trite and windy exposition of my views, and she sat close to me on the sofa, looking up into my face, hanging on my words, a deliberate and invincible convert,

"Yes," she said, "yes." . . .

I had never doubted my new conceptions before; now I doubted them profoundly. But I went on talking. It's the grim irony in the lives of all politicians, writers, public teachers, that once the audience is at their feet, a new loyalty has gripped them. It isn't their business to admit doubt and imperfections. They have to go on talking. And I was now so accustomed to Isabel's vivid interruptions, qualifications, restatements, and confirmations. . . .

Margaret and I dined together at home. She made me open out my political projects to her. "I have been foolish," she said. "I want to help."

And by some excuse I have forgotten she made me come to her room. I think it was some book I had to take her, some American book I had brought back with me, and mentioned in our talk. I walked in with it, and put it down on the table and turned to go.

"Husband!" she cried, and held out her slender arms to me. I was compelled to go to her and kiss her, and she twined them softly about my neck and drew me to her and kissed me. I disentangled them very gently, and took each wrist and kissed it, and the backs of her hands.

"Good night," I said. There came a little pause. "Good night, Margaret," I repeated, and walked very deliberately and with a kind of sham preoccupation to the door.

I did not look at her, but I could feel her standing, watching me. If I had looked up, she would, I knew, have held out her arms to me. . . .

At the very outset that secret, which was to touch

no one but Isabel and myself, had reached out to stab another human being.

§ 7.

The whole world had changed for Isabel and me; and we tried to pretend that nothing had changed except a small matter between us. We believed quite honestly at that time that it was possible to keep this thing that had happened from any reaction at all, save perhaps through some magically enhanced vigour in our work, upon the world about us! Seen in retrospect, one can realise the absurdity of this belief; within a week I realised it; but that does not alter the fact that we did believe as much, and that people who are deeply in love and unable to marry will continue to believe so to the very end of time. They will continue to believe out of existence every consideration that separates them until they have come together. Then they will count the cost, as we two had to do.

I am telling a story, and not propounding theories in this book; and chiefly I am telling of the ideas and influences and emotions that have happened to me—me as a sort of sounding board for my world. The moralist is at liberty to go over my conduct with his measure and say, "At this point or at that you went wrong, and you ought to have done"—so-and-so. The point of interest to the statesman is that it didn't for a moment occur to us to do so-and-so when the time for doing it came. It amazes me now to think how little either of us troubled about the established rights or wrongs of the situation. We hadn't an atom of respect for them, innate or acquired. The guardians of public

morals will say we were very bad people; I submit in defence that they are very bad guardians—provocative guardians. . . . And when at last there came a claim against us that had an effective validity for us, we were in the full tide of passionate intimacy.

I had a night of nearly sleepless perplexity after Margaret's return. She had suddenly presented herself to me like something dramatically recalled, fine, generous, infinitely capable of feeling. I was amazed how much I had forgotten her. In my contempt for vulgarised and conventionalised honour I had forgotten that for me there was such a reality as honour. And here it was, warm and near to me, living, breathing, unsuspecting. Margaret's pride was my honour, that I had had no right even to imperil.

I do not now remember if I thought at that time of going to Isabel and putting this new aspect of the case before her. Perhaps I did. Perhaps I may have considered even then the possibility of ending what had so freshly and passionately begun. If I did, it vanished next day at the sight of her. Whatever regrets came in the darkness, the daylight brought an obstinate confidence in our resolution again. We would, we declared, "pull the thing off." Margaret must not know. Margaret should not know. If Margaret did not know, then no harm whatever would be done. We tried to sustain that. . . .

For a brief time we had been like two people in a magic cell, magically cut off from the world and full of a light of its own, and then we began to realise that we were not in the least cut off, that the world was all about us and pressing in upon us, limiting us, threaten-

ing us, resuming possession of us. I tried to ignore the injury to Margaret of her unreciprocated advances. I tried to maintain to myself that this hidden love made no difference to the now irreparable breach between husband and wife. But I never spoke of it to Isabel or let her see that aspect of our case. How could I? The time for that had gone. . . .

Then in new shapes and relations came trouble. Distressful elements crept in by reason of our unavoidable furtiveness; we ignored them, hid them from each other, and attempted to hide them from ourselves. Successful love is a thing of abounding pride, and we had to be secret. It was delightful at first to be secret, a whispering, warm conspiracy; then presently it became irksome and a little shameful. Her essential frankness of soul was all against the masks and falsehoods that many women would have enjoyed. Together in our secrecy we relaxed, then in the presence of other people again it was tiresome to have to watch for the careless, too easy phrase, to snatch back one's hand from the limitless betrayal of a light, familiar touch.

Love becomes a poor thing, at best a poor beautiful thing, if it develops no continuing and habitual intimacy. We were always meeting, and most gloriously loving and beginning—and then we had to snatch at remorseless ticking watches, hurry to catch trains, and go back to this or that. That is all very well for the intrigues of idle people perhaps, but not for an intense personal relationship. It is like lighting a candle for the sake of lighting it, over and over again, and each time blowing it out. That, no doubt, must be very amusing to children playing with the matches, but not to people who

love warm light, and want it in order to do fine and honourable things together. We had achieved—I give the ugly phrase that expresses the increasing discolouration in my mind—"illicit intercourse." To end at that, we now perceived, wasn't in our style. But where were we to end? . . .

Perhaps we might at this stage have given it up. I think if we could have seen ahead and around us we might have done so. But the glow of our cell blinded us. . . . I wonder what might have happened if at that time we had given it up. . . . We propounded it, we met again in secret to discuss it, and our overpowering passion for one another reduced that meeting to absurdity. . . .

Presently the idea of children crept between us. It came in from all our conceptions of life and public service; it was, we found, in the quality of our minds that physical love without children is a little weak, timorous, more than a little shameful. With imaginative people there very speedily comes a time when that realisation is inevitable. We hadn't thought of that before—it isn't natural to think of that before. We hadn't known. There is no literature in English dealing with such things.

There is a necessary sequence of phases in love. These came in their order, and with them, unanticipated tarnishings on the first bright perfection of our relations. For a time these developing phases were no more than a secret and private trouble between us, little shadows spreading by imperceptible degrees across that vivid and luminous cell.

§ 8.

The Handitch election flung me suddenly into prominence.

It is still only two years since that struggle, and I will not trouble the reader with a detailed history of events that must be quite sufficiently present in his mind for my purpose already. Huge stacks of journalism have dealt with Handitch and its significance. For the reader very probably, as for most people outside a comparatively small circle, it meant my emergence from obscurity. We obtruded no editor's name in the *Blue Weekly;* I had never as yet been on the London hoardings. Before Handitch I was a journalist and writer of no great public standing; after Handitch, I was definitely a person, in the little group of persons who stood for the Young Imperialist movement. Handitch was, to a very large extent, my affair. I realised then, as a man comes to do, how much one can still grow after seven-and-twenty. In the second election I was a man taking hold of things; at Kinghamstead I had been simply a young candidate, a party unit, led about the constituency, told to do this and that, and finally washed in by the great Anti-Imperialist flood, like a starfish rolling up a beach.

My feminist views had earned the mistrust of the party, and I do not think I should have got the chance of Handitch or indeed any chance at all of Parliament for a long time, if it had not been that the seat with its long record of Liberal victories and its Liberal majority of 3642 at the last election, offered a hopeless contest. The Liberal dissensions and the belated but by no means

contemptible Socialist candidate were providential interpositions. I think, however, the conduct of Gane, Crupp, and Tarvrille in coming down to fight for me, did count tremendously in my favour. "We aren't going to win, perhaps," said Crupp, "but we are going to talk." And until the very eve of victory, we treated Handitch not so much as a battlefield as a hoarding. And so it was the Endowment of Motherhood as a practical form of Eugenics got into English politics.

Plutus, our agent, was scared out of his wits when the thing began.

"They're ascribing all sorts of queer ideas to you about the Family," he said.

"I think the Family exists for the good of the children," I said; "is that queer?"

"Not when you explain it—but they won't let you explain it. And about marriage——?"

"I'm all right about marriage—trust me."

"Of course, if *you* had children," said Plutus, rather inconsiderately. . . .

They opened fire upon me in a little electioneering rag call the *Handitch Sentinel,* with a string of garbled quotations and misrepresentations that gave me an admirable text for a speech. I spoke for an hour and ten minutes with a more and more crumpled copy of the *Sentinel* in my hand, and I made the fullest and completest exposition of the idea of endowing motherhood that I think had ever been made up to that time in England. Its effect on the press was extraordinary. The Liberal papers gave me quite unprecedented space under the impression that I had only to be given rope to hang myself; the Conservatives cut

me down or tried to justify me; the whole country was talking. I had had a pamphlet in type upon the subject, and I revised this carefully and put it on the bookstalls within three days. It sold enormously and brought me bushels of letters. We issued over three thousand in Handitch alone. At meeting after meeting I was heckled upon nothing else. Long before polling day Plutus was converted.

"It's catching on like old age pensions," he said. "We've dished the Liberals! To think that such a project should come from our side!"

But it was only with the declaration of the poll that my battle was won. No one expected more than a snatch victory, and I was in by over fifteen hundred. At one bound Cossington's papers passed from apologetics varied by repudiation to triumphant praise. "A renascent England, breeding men," said the leader in his chief daily on the morning after the polling, and claimed that the Conservatives had been ever the pioneers in sanely bold constructive projects.

I came up to London with a weary but rejoicing Margaret by the night train.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE IMPOSSIBLE POSITION.

#### § 1.

To anyone who did not know of that glowing secret between Isabel and myself, I might well have appeared at that time the most successful and enviable of men. I had recovered rapidly from an uncongenial start in

political life; I had become a considerable force through the *Blue Weekly*, and was shaping an increasingly influential body of opinion; I had re-entered Parliament with quite dramatic distinction, and in spite of a certain faltering on the part of the orthodox Conservatives towards the bolder elements in our propaganda, I had loyal and unenvious associates who were making me a power in the party. People were coming to our group, understandings were developing. It was clear we should play a prominent part in the next general election, and that, given a Conservative victory, I should be assured of office. The world opened out to me brightly and invitingly. Great schemes took shape in my mind, always more concrete, always more practicable; the years ahead seemed falling into order, shining with the credible promise of immense achievement.

And at the heart of it all, unseen and unsuspected, was the secret of my relations with Isabel—like a seed that germinates and thrusts, thrusts relentlessly.

From the onset of the Handitch contest onward, my meetings with her had been more and more pervaded by the discussion of our situation. It had innumerable aspects. It was very present to us that we wanted to be together as much as possible—we were beginning to long very much for actual living together in the same house, so that one could come as it were carelessly—unawares—upon the other, busy perhaps about some trivial thing. We wanted to feel each other in the daily atmosphere. Preceding our imperatively sterile passion, you must remember, outside it, altogether greater than it so far as our individual lives were concerned, there had grown and still grew an enormous

affection and intellectual sympathy between us. We brought all our impressions and all our ideas to each other, to see them in each other's light. It is hard to convey that quality of intellectual unison to anyone who has not experienced it. I thought more and more in terms of conversation with Isabel; her possible comments upon things would flash into my mind, oh!—with the very sound of her voice.

I remember, too, the odd effect of seeing her in the distance going about Handitch, like any stranger canvasser; the queer emotion of her approach along the street, the greeting as she passed. The morning of the polling she vanished from the constituency. I saw her for an instant in the passage behind our Committee rooms.

"Going?" said I.

She nodded.

"Stay it out. I want you to see the fun. I remember—the other time."

She didn't answer for a moment or so, and stood with face averted.

"It's Margaret's show," she said abruptly. "If I see her smiling there like a queen by your side——! She did—last time. I remember." She caught at a sob and dashed her hand across her face impatiently. "Jealous fool, mean and petty, jealous fool! . . . Good luck, old man, to you! You're going to win. But I don't want to see the end of it all the same. . . ."

"Good-bye!" said I, clasping her hand as some supporter appeared in the passage. . . .

I came back to London victorious, and a little flushed and coarse with victory; and so soon as I could break away I went to Isabel's flat and found her white

and worn, with the stain of secret weeping about her eyes. I came into the room to her and shut the door.

"You said I'd win," I said, and held out my arms.

She hugged me closely for a moment.

"My dear," I whispered, "it's nothing—without you —nothing!"

We didn't speak for some seconds. Then she slipped from my hold. "Look!" she said, smiling like winter sunshine. "I've had in all the morning papers —the pile of them, and you—resounding."

"It's more than I dared hope."

"Or I."

She stood for a moment still smiling bravely, and then she was sobbing in my arms. "The bigger you are—the more you show," she said—"the more we are parted. I know, I know——"

I held her close to me, making no answer.

Presently she became still. "Oh, well," she said, and wiped her eyes and sat down on the little sofa by the fire; and I sat down beside her.

"I didn't know all there was in love," she said, staring at the coals, "when we went love-making."

I put my arm behind her and took a handful of her dear soft hair in my hand and kissed it.

"You've done a great thing this time," she said. "Handitch will make you."

"It opens big chances," I said. "But why are you weeping, dear one?"

"Envy," she said, "and love."

"You're not lonely?"

"I've plenty to do—and lots of people."

"Well?"

"I want you."

"You've got me."

She put her arm about me and kissed me. "I want you," she said, "just as if I had nothing of you. You don't understand—how a woman wants a man. I thought once if I just gave myself to you it would be enough. It was nothing—it was just a step across the threshold. My dear, every moment you are away I ache for you—ache! I want to be about when it isn't love-making or talk. I want to be doing things for you, and watching you when you're not thinking of me. All those safe, careless, intimate things. And something else——" She stopped. "Dear, I don't want to bother you. I just want you to know I love you. . . ."

She caught my head in her hands and kissed it, then stood up abruptly.

I looked up at her, a little perplexed.

"Dear heart," said I, "isn't this enough? You're my councillor, my colleague, my right hand, the secret soul of my life——"

"And I want to darn your socks," she said, smiling back at me.

"You're insatiable."

She smiled. "No," she said. "I'm not insatiable, Master. But I'm a woman in love. And I'm finding out what I want, and what is necessary to me—and what I can't have. That's all."

"We get a lot."

"We want a lot. You and I are greedy people for the things we like, Master. It's very evident we've got nearly all we can ever have of one another—and I'm not satisfied."

"What more is there?"

"For you—very little. I wonder. For me—everything. Yes—everything. You didn't mean it, Master; you didn't know any more than I did when I began, but love between a man and a woman is sometimes very one-sided. Fearfully one-sided! That's all. . . ."

"Don't *you* ever want children?" she said abruptly.

"I suppose I do."

"You don't!"

"I haven't thought of them."

"A man doesn't, perhaps. But I have. . . . I want them—like hunger. *Your* children, and home with you. Really, continually you! That's the trouble. . . . I can't have 'em, Master, and I can't have you."

She was crying, and through her tears she laughed.

"I'm going to make a scene," she said, "and get this over. I'm so discontented and miserable; I've got to tell you. It would come between us if I didn't. I'm in love with you, with everything—with all my brains. I'll pull through all right. I'll be good, Master, never you fear. But to-day I'm crying out with all my being. This election—— You're going up; you're going on. In these papers—you're a great big fact. It's suddenly come home to me. At the back of my mind I've always had the idea I was going to have you somehow presently for myself—I mean to have you to go long tramps with, to keep house for, to get meals for, to watch for of an evening. It's a sort of habitual background to my thought of you. And it's nonsense—utter nonsense!" She stopped. She was crying and choking. "And the child, you know—the child!"

I was troubled beyond measure, but Handitch and its intimations were clear and strong.

"We can't have that," I said.

"No," she said, "we can't have that."

"We've got our own things to do."

"*Your* things," she said.

"Aren't they yours too?"

"Because of you," she said.

"Aren't they your very own things?"

"Women don't have that sort of very own thing. Indeed, it's true! And think! You've been down there preaching the goodness of children, telling them the only good thing in a state is happy, hopeful children, working to free mothers and children——"

"And we give our own children to do it?" I said.

"Yes," she said. "And sometimes I think it's too much to give—too much altogether. . . . Children get into a woman's brain—when she mustn't have them, especially when she must never hope for them. Think of the child we might have now!—the little creature with soft, tender skin, and little hands and little feet! At times it haunts me. It comes and says, Why wasn't I given life? I can hear it in the night. . . . The world is full of such little ghosts, dear lover—little things that asked for life and were refused. They clamour to me. It's like a little fist beating at my heart. Love children, beautiful children. Little cold hands that tear at my heart! Oh, my heart and my lord!" She was holding my arm with both her hands and weeping against it, and now she drew herself to my shoulder and wept and sobbed in my embrace. "I shall never sit with your child on my knee and you

beside me—never, and I am a woman and your lover! . . ."

§ 2.

But the profound impossibility of our relation was now becoming more and more apparent to us. We found ourselves seeking justification, clinging passionately to a situation that was coldly, pitilessly, impossible and fated. We wanted quite intensely to live together and have a child, but also we wanted very many other things that were incompatible with these desires. It was extraordinarily difficult to weigh our political and intellectual ambitions against those intimate wishes. The weights kept altering according as one found oneself grasping this valued thing or that. It wasn't as if we could throw everything aside for our love, and have that as we wanted it. Love such as we bore one another isn't altogether, or even chiefly, a thing in itself—it is for the most part a value set upon things. Our love was interwoven with all our other interests; to go out of the world and live in isolation seemed to us like killing the best parts of each other; we loved the sight of each other engaged finely and characteristically, we knew each other best as activities. We had no delusions about material facts; we didn't want each other alive or dead, we wanted each other fully alive. We wanted to do big things together, and for us to take each other openly and desperately would leave us nothing in the world to do. We wanted children indeed passionately, but children with every helpful chance in the world, and children born in scandal

would be handicapped at every turn. We wanted to share a home, and not a solitude.

And when we were at this stage of realisation, began the intimations that we were found out, and that scandal was afoot against us. . . .

I heard of it first from Esmeer, who deliberately mentioned it, with that steady grey eye of his watching me, as an instance of the preposterous falsehoods people will circulate. It came to Isabel almost simultaneously through a married college friend, who made it her business to demand either confirmation or denial. It filled us both with consternation. In the surprise of the moment Isabel admitted her secret, and her friend went off "reserving her freedom of action."

Discovery broke out in every direction. Friends with grave faces and an atmosphere of infinite tact invaded us both. Other friends ceased to invade either of us. It was manifest we had become—we knew not how—a private scandal, a subject for duologues, an amazement, a perplexity, a vivid interest. In a few brief weeks it seemed London passed from absolute unsuspiciousness to a chattering exaggeration of its knowledge of our relations.

It was just the most inappropriate time for that disclosure. The long smouldering antagonism to my Endowment of Motherhood ideas had flared up into an active campaign in the *Expurgator,* and it would be altogether disastrous to us if I should be convicted of any personal irregularity. It was just because of the manifest and challenging respectability of my position that I had been able to carry the thing as far as I had done. Now suddenly my fortunes had sprung a leak,

and scandal was pouring in. . . . It chanced, too, that a wave of moral intolerance was sweeping through London, one of those waves in which the bitterness of the consciously just finds an ally in the panic of the undiscovered. A certain Father Blodgett had been preaching against social corruption with extraordinary force, and had roused the Church of England people to a kind of competition in denunciation. The old methods of the Anti-Socialist campaign had been renewed, and had offered far too wide a scope and too tempting an opportunity for private animosity, to be restricted to the private affairs of the Socialists. I had intimations of an extensive circulation of "private and confidential" letters. . . .

I think there can be nothing else in life quite like the unnerving realisation that rumour and scandal are afoot about one. Abruptly one's confidence in the solidity of the universe disappears. One walks silenced through a world that one feels to be full of inaudible accusations. One cannot challenge the assault, get it out into the open, separate truth and falsehood. It slinks from you, turns aside its face. Old acquaintances suddenly evaded me, made extraordinary excuses; men who had presumed on the verge of my world and pestered me with an intrusive enterprise, now took the bold step of flat repudiation. I became doubtful about the return of a nod, retracted all those tentacles of easy civility that I had hitherto spread to the world. I still grow warm with amazed indignation when I recall that Edward Crampton, meeting me full on the steps of the Climax Club, cut me dead. "By God!" I cried, and came near catching him by the throat and wringing out

of him what of all good deeds and bad, could hearten him, a younger man than I and empty beyond comparison, to dare to play the judge to me. And then I had an open slight from Mrs. Millingham, whom I had counted on as one counts upon the sunrise. I had not expected things of that sort; they were disconcerting beyond measure; it was as if the world were giving way beneath my feet, as though something failed in the essential confidence of life, as though a hand of wet ice had touched my heart. Similar things were happening to Isabel. Yet we went on working, visiting, meeting, trying to ignore this gathering of implacable forces against us.

For a time I was perplexed beyond measure to account for this campaign. Then I got a clue. The centre of diffusion was the Bailey household. The Baileys had never forgiven me my abandonment of the young Liberal group they had done so much to inspire and organise; their dinner-table had long been a scene of hostile depreciation of the *Blue Weekly* and all its allies; week after week Altiora proclaimed that I was "doing nothing," and found other causes for our bye-election triumphs; I counted Chambers Street a dangerous place for me. Yet, nevertheless, I was astonished to find them using a private scandal against me. They did. I think Handitch had filled up the measure of their bitterness, for I had not only abandoned them, but I was succeeding beyond even their power of misrepresentation. Always I had been a wasp in their spider's web, difficult to claim as a tool, uncritical, antagonistic. I admired their work and devotion enormously, but I had never concealed my contempt for a

certain childish vanity they displayed, and for the frequent puerility of their political intrigues. I suppose contempt galls more than injuries, and anyhow they had me now. They had me. Bailey, I found, was warning fathers of girls against me as a "reckless libertine," and Altiora, flushed, roguish, and dishevelled, was sitting on her fender curb after dinner, and pledging little parties of five or six women at a time with infinite gusto not to let the matter go further. Our cell was open to the world, and a bleak, distressful daylight streaming in.

I had a gleam of a more intimate motive in Altiora from the reports that came to me. Isabel had been doing a series of five or six articles in the *Political Review* in support of our campaign, the *Political Review* which had hitherto been loyally Baileyite. Quite her best writing up to the present, at any rate, is in those papers, and no doubt Altiora had had not only to read her in those invaded columns, but listen to her praises in the mouths of the tactless influential. Altiora, like so many people who rely on gesture and vocal insistence in conversation, writes a poor and slovenly prose and handles an argument badly; Isabel has her University training behind her and wrote from the first with the stark power of a clear-headed man. "Now we know," said Altiora, with just a gleam of malice showing through her brightness, "now we know who helps with the writing!"

She revealed astonishing knowledge.

For a time I couldn't for the life of me discover her sources. I had, indeed, a desperate intention of challenging her, and then I bethought me of a youngster named Curmain, who had been my supplemental typist and

secretary for a time, and whom I had sent on to her before the days of our breach. "Of course!" said I, "Curmain!" He was a tall, drooping, sidelong youth with sandy hair, a little forward head, and a long thin neck. He stole stamps, and, I suspected, rifled my private letter drawer, and I found him one day on a turn of the stairs looking guilty and ruffled with a pretty Irish housemaid of Margaret's manifestly in a state of hot indignation. I saw nothing, but I felt everything in the air between them. I hate this pestering of servants, but at the same time I didn't want Curmain wiped out of existence, so I had packed him off without unnecessary discussion to Altiora. He was quick and cheap anyhow, and I thought her general austerity ought to redeem him if anything could; the Chambers Street housemaid wasn't for any man's kissing and showed it, and the stamps and private letters were looked after with an efficiency altogether surpassing mine. And Altiora, I've no doubt left now whatever, pumped this young undesirable about me, and scenting a story, had him to dinner alone one evening to get to the bottom of the matter. She got quite to the bottom of it,—it must have been a queer duologue. She read Isabel's careless, intimate letters to me, so to speak, by this proxy, and she wasn't ashamed to use this information in the service of the bitterness that had sprung up in her since our political breach. It was essentially a personal bitterness; it helped no public purpose of theirs to get rid of me. My downfall in any public sense was sheer waste,—the loss of a man. She knew she was behaving badly, and so, when it came to remonstrance, she behaved worse. She'd got names and dates and

places; the efficiency of her information was irresistible. And she set to work at it marvellously. Never before, in all her pursuit of efficient ideals, had Altiora achieved such levels of efficiency. I wrote a protest that was perhaps ill-advised and angry, I went to her and tried to stop her. She wouldn't listen, she wouldn't think, she denied and lied, she behaved like a naughty child of six years old which has made up its mind to be hurtful. It wasn't only, I think, that she couldn't bear our political and social influence; she also—I realised at that interview couldn't bear our loving. It seemed to her the sickliest thing,—a thing quite unendurable. While such things were, the virtue had gone out of her world.

I've the vividest memory of that call of mine. She'd just come in and taken off her hat, and she was grey and dishevelled and tired, and in a business-like dress of black and crimson that didn't suit her and was muddy about the skirts; she'd a cold in her head and sniffed penetratingly, she avoided my eye as she talked and interrupted everything I had to say; she kept stabbing fiercely at the cushions of her sofa with a long hat-pin and pretending she was overwhelmed with grief at the *débâcle* she was deliberately organising.

"Then part," she cried, "part. If you don't want a smashing up,—part! You two have got to be parted. You've got never to see each other ever, never to speak." There was a zest in her voice. "We're not circulating stories," she denied. "No! And Curmain never told us anything—Curmain is an *excellent* young man; oh! a quite excellent young man. You misjudged him altogether" . . .

I was equally unsuccessful with Bailey. I caught the little wretch in the League Club, and he wriggled and lied. He wouldn't say where he had got his facts, he wouldn't admit he had told anyone. When I gave him the names of two men who had come to me astonished and incredulous, he attempted absurdly to make me think they had told *him*. He did his horrible little best to suggest that honest old Quackett, who had just left England for the Cape, was the real scandal-monger. That struck me as mean, even for Bailey. I've still the odd vivid impression of his fluting voice, excusing the inexcusable, his big, shifty face evading me, his perspiration-beaded forehead, the shrugging shoulders, and the would-be exculpatory gestures—Houndsditch gestures—of his enormous ugly hands.

"I can assure you, my dear fellow," he said; "I can assure you we've done everything to shield you—everything." . . .

§ 3.

Isabel came after dinner one evening and talked in the office. She made a white-robed, dusky figure against the deep blues of my big window. I sat at my desk and tore a quill pen to pieces as I talked.

"The Baileys don't intend to let this drop," I said. "They mean that everyone in London is to know about it."

"I know."

"Well!" I said.

"Dear heart," said Isabel, facing it, "it's no good waiting for things to overtake us; we're at the parting of the ways."

"What are we to do?"

"They won't let us go on."

"Damn them!"

"They are *organising* scandal."

"It's no good waiting for things to overtake us," I echoed; "they have overtaken us." I turned on her. "What do you want to do?"

"Everything," she said. "Keep you and have our work. Aren't we Mates?"

"We can't."

"And we can't!"

"I've got to tell Margaret," I said.

"Margaret!"

"I can't bear the idea of anyone else getting in front with it. I've been wincing about Margaret secretly——"

"I know. You'll have to tell her—and make your peace with her."

She leant back against the bookcases under the window.

"We've had some good times, Master," she said, with a sigh in her voice.

And then for a long time we stared at one another in silence.

"We haven't much time left," she said.

"Shall we bolt?" I said.

"And leave all this?" she asked, with her eyes going round the room. "And that?" And her head indicated Westminster. "No!"

I said no more of bolting.

"We've got to screw ourselves up to surrender," she said.

"Something."

"A lot."

"Master," she said, "it isn't all sex and stuff between us?"

"No!"

"I can't give up the work. Our work's my life."

We came upon another long pause.

"No one will believe we've ceased to be lovers—if we simply do," she said.

"We shouldn't."

"We've got to do something more parting than that."

I nodded, and again we paused. She was coming to something.

"I could marry Shoesmith," she said abruptly.

"But——" I objected.

"He knows. It wasn't fair. I told him."

"Oh, that explains," I said. "There's been a kind of sulkiness—— But—you told him?"

She nodded. "He's rather badly hurt," she said. "He's been a good friend to me. He's curiously loyal. But something, something he said one day— forced me to let him know. . . . That's been the beastliness of all this secrecy. That's the beastliness of all secrecy. You have to spring surprises on people. But he keeps on. He's steadfast. He'd already suspected. He wants me very badly to marry him. . . ."

"But you don't want to marry him?"

"I'm forced to think of it."

"But does he want to marry you at that? Take you as a present from the world at large?—against your will and desire? . . . I don't understand him."

"He cares for me."

"How?"

"He thinks this is a fearful mess for me. He wants to pull it straight."

We sat for a time in silence, with imaginations that obstinately refused to take up the realities of this proposition.

"I don't want you to marry Shoesmith," I said at last.

"Don't you like him?"

"Not as your husband."

"He's a very clever and sturdy person—and very generous and devoted to me."

"And me?"

"You can't expect that. He thinks you are wonderful—and, naturally, that you ought not to have started this."

"I've a curious dislike to anyone thinking that but myself. I'm quite ready to think it myself."

"He'd let us be friends—and meet."

"Let us be friends!" I cried, after a long pause. "You and me!"

"He wants me to be engaged soon. Then, he says, he can go round fighting these rumours, defending us both—and force a quarrel on the Baileys."

"I don't understand him," I said, and added, "I don't understand you."

I was staring at her face. It seemed white and set in the dimness.

"Do you really mean this, Isabel?" I asked.

"What else is there to do, my dear?—what else is there to do at all? I've been thinking day and night. You can't go away with me. You can't smash your-

self suddenly in the sight of all men. I'd rather die than that should happen. Look what you are becoming in the country! Look at all you've built up!—me helping. I wouldn't let you do it if you could. I wouldn't let you—if it were only for Margaret's sake. *This* . . . closes the scandal, closes everything."

"It closes all our life together," I cried.

She was silent.

"It never ought to have begun," I said.

She winced. Then abruptly she was on her knees before me, with her hands upon my shoulder and her eyes meeting mine.

"My dear," she said very earnestly, "don't misunderstand me! Don't think I'm retreating from the things we've done! Our love is the best thing I could ever have had from life. Nothing can ever equal it; nothing could ever equal the beauty and delight you and I have had together. Never! You have loved me; you do love me. . . .

"No one could ever know how to love you as I have loved you; no one could ever love me as you have loved me, my king. And it's just because it's been so splendid, dear; it's just because I'd die rather than have a tithe of all this wiped out of my life again—for it's made me, it's all I am—dear, it's years since I began loving you—it's just because of its goodness that I want not to end in wreckage now, not to end in the smashing up of all the big things I understand in you and love in you. . . .

"What is there for us if we keep on and go away?" she went on. "All the big interests in our lives will vanish—everything. We shall become specialised people

—people overshadowed by a situation. We shall be an elopement, a romance—all our breadth and meaning gone! People will always think of it first when they think of us; all our work and aims will be warped by it and subordinated to it. Is it good enough, dear? Just to specialise. . . . I think of you. We've got a case, a passionate case, the best of cases, but do we want to spend all our lives defending it and justifying it? And there's that other life. I know now you care for Margaret—you care more than you think you do. You have said fine things of her. I've watched you about her. Little things have dropped from you. She's given her life for you; she's nothing without you. You feel that to your marrow all the time you are thinking about these things. Oh, I'm not jealous, dear. I love you for loving her. I love you in relation to her. But there it is, an added weight against us, another thing worth saving."

Presently, I remember, she sat back on her heels and looked up into my face. "We've done wrong—and parting's paying. It's time to pay. We needn't have paid, if we'd kept to the track. . . . You and I, Master, we've got to be men."

"Yes," I said; "we've got to be men."

§ 4.

I was driven to tell Margaret about our situation by my intolerable dread that otherwise the thing might come to her through some stupid and clumsy informant. She might even meet Altiora, and have it from her.

I can still recall the feeling of sitting at my desk that night in that large study of mine in Radnor Square,

waiting for Margaret to come home. It was oddly like the feeling of a dentist's reception-room; only it was for me to do the dentistry with clumsy, cruel hands. I had left the door open so that she would come in to me.

I heard her silken rustle on the stairs at last, and then she was in the doorway. "May I come in?" she said.

"Do," I said, and turned round to her.

"Working?" she said.

"Hard," I answered. "Where have *you* been?"

"At the Vallerys'. Mr. Evesham was talking about you. They were all talking. I don't think everybody knew who I was. Just Mrs. Mumble I'd been to them. Lord Wardenham doesn't like you."

"He doesn't."

"But they all feel you're rather big, anyhow. Then I went on to Park Lane to hear a new pianist and some other music at Eva's."

"Yes."

"Then I looked in at the Brabants' for some midnight tea before I came on here. They'd got some writers—and Grant was there."

"You *have* been flying round. . . ."

There was a little pause between us.

I looked at her pretty, unsuspecting face, and at the slender grace of her golden-robed body. What gulfs there were between us! "You've been amused," I said.

"It's been amusing. You've been at the House?"

"The Medical Education Bill kept me." . . .

After all, why should I tell her? She'd got to a way of living that fulfilled her requirements. Perhaps she'd never hear. But all that day and the day before I'd been making up my mind to do the thing.

"I want to tell you something," I said. "I wish you'd sit down for a moment or so." . . .

Once I had begun, it seemed to me I had to go through with it.

Something in the quality of my voice gave her an intimation of unusual gravity. She looked at me steadily for a moment and sat down slowly in my armchair. "What is it?" she said.

I went on awkwardly. "I've got to tell you—something extraordinarily distressing," I said.

She was manifestly altogether unaware.

"There seems to be a good deal of scandal abroad —I've only recently heard of it—about myself—and Isabel."

"Isabel!"

I nodded.

"What do they say?" she asked.

It was difficult, I found, to speak.

"They say she's my mistress."

"Oh! How abominable!"

She spoke with the most natural indignation. Our eyes met.

"We've been great friends," I said.

"Yes. And to make *that* of it. My poor dear! But how can they?" She paused and looked at me. "It's so incredible. How can anyone believe it? I couldn't."

She stopped, with her distressed eyes regarding me. Her expression changed to dread. There was a tense stillness for a second, perhaps.

I turned my face towards the desk, and took up and dropped a handful of paper fasteners.

"Margaret," I said, "I'm afraid you'll have to believe it."

§ 5.

Margaret sat very still. When I looked at her again, her face was very white, and her distressed eyes scrutinised me. Her lips quivered as she spoke. "You really mean—*that?*" she said.

I nodded.

"I never dreamt."

"I never meant you to dream."

"And that is why—we've been apart?"

I thought. "I suppose it is."

"Why have you told me now?"

"Those rumours. I didn't want anyone else to tell you."

"Or else it wouldn't have mattered?"

"No."

She turned her eyes from me to the fire. Then for a moment she looked about the room she had made for me, and then quite silently, with a childish quivering of her lips, with a sort of dismayed distress upon her face, she was weeping. She sat weeping in her dress of cloth of gold, with her bare slender arms dropped limp over the arms of her chair, and her eyes averted from me, making no effort to stay or staunch her tears. "I am sorry, Margaret," I said. "I was in love. . . . I did not understand. . . ."

Presently she asked: "What are you going to do?"

"You see, Margaret, now it's come to be your affair —I want to know what you—what you want."

"You want to leave me?"

"If you want me to, I must."

"Leave Parliament—leave all the things you are doing,—all this fine movement of yours?"

"No." I spoke sullenly. "I don't want to leave anything. I want to stay on. I've told you, because I think we—Isabel and I, I mean—have got to drive through a storm of scandal anyhow. I don't know how far things may go, how much people may feel, and I can't, I can't have you unconscious, unarmed, open to any revelation——"

She made no answer.

"When the thing began—I knew it was stupid but I thought it was a thing that wouldn't change, wouldn't be anything but itself, wouldn't unfold—consequences. . . . People have got hold of these vague rumours. . . . Directly it reached anyone else but—but us two—I saw it had to come to you."

I stopped. I had that distressful feeling I have always had with Margaret, of not being altogether sure she heard, of being doubtful if she understood. I perceived that once again I had struck at her and shattered a thousand unsubstantial pinnacles. And I couldn't get at her, to help her, or touch her mind! I stood up, and at my movement she moved. She produced a dainty little handkerchief, and made an effort to wipe her face with it, and held it to her eyes. "Oh, my Husband!" she sobbed.

"What do you mean to do?" she said, with her voice muffled by her handkerchief.

"We're going to end it," I said.

Something gripped me tormentingly as I said that. I drew a chair beside her and sat down. "You and I,

Margaret, have been partners," I began. "We've built up this life of ours together; I couldn't have done it without you. We've made a position, created a work——"

She shook her head. "You," she said.

"You helping. I don't want to shatter it—if you don't want it shattered. I can't leave my work. I can't leave you. I want you to have—all that you have ever had. I've never meant to rob you. I've made an immense and tragic blunder. You don't know how things took us, how different they seemed! My character and accident have conspired—— We'll pay—in ourselves, not in our public service."

I halted again. Margaret remained very still.

"I want you to understand that the thing is at an end. It is definitely at an end. We—we talked—yesterday. We mean to end it altogether." I clenched my hands. "She's—she's going to marry Arnold Shoesmith."

I wasn't looking now at Margaret any more, but I heard the rustle of her movement as she turned on me.

"It's all right," I said, clinging to my explanation. "We're doing nothing shabby. He knows. He will. It's all as right—as things can be now. We're not cheating anyone, Margaret. We're doing things straight—now. Of course, you know. . . . We shall—we shall have to make sacrifices. Give things up pretty completely. Very completely. . . . We shall have not to see each other for a time, you know. Perhaps not a long time. Two or three years. Or write—or just any of that sort of thing ever——"

Some subconscious barrier gave way in me. I found

myself crying uncontrollably—as I have never cried since I was a little child. I was amazed and horrified at myself. And wonderfully, Margaret was on her knees beside me, with her arms about me, mingling her weeping with mine. "Oh, my Husband!" she cried, "my poor Husband! Does it hurt you so? I would do anything! Oh, the fool I am! Dear, I love you. I love you over and away and above all these jealous little things!"

She drew down my head to her as a mother might draw down the head of a son. She caressed me, weeping bitterly with me. "Oh! my dear," she sobbed, "my dear! I've never seen you cry! I've never seen you cry. Ever! I didn't know you could. Oh! my dear! Can't you have her, my dear, if you want her? I can't bear it! Let me help you, dear. Oh! my Husband! My Man! I can't bear to have you cry!" For a time she held me in silence.

"I've thought this might happen, I dreamt it might happen. You two, I mean. It was dreaming put it into my head. When I've seen you together, so glad with each other. . . . Oh! Husband mine, believe me! believe me! I'm stupid, I'm cold, I'm only beginning to realise how stupid and cold, but all I want in all the world is to give my life to you." . . .

§ 6.

"We can't part in a room," said Isabel.

"We'll have one last talk together," I said, and planned that we should meet for half a day between Dover and Walmer and talk ourselves out. I still recall that day very well, recall even the curious exalta-

tion of grief that made our mental atmosphere distinctive and memorable. We had seen so much of one another, had become so intimate, that we talked of parting even as we parted with a sense of incredible remoteness. We went together up over the cliffs, and to a place where they fall towards the sea, past the white, quaint-lanterned lighthouses of the South Foreland. There, in a kind of niche below the crest, we sat talking. It was a spacious day, serenely blue and warm, and on the wrinkled water remotely below a black tender and six hooded submarines came presently, and engaged in mysterious manœuvres. Shrieking gulls and chattering jackdaws circled over us and below us, and dived and swooped; and a skerry of weedy, fallen chalk appeared, and gradually disappeared again, as the tide fell and rose.

We talked and thought that afternoon on every aspect of our relations. It seems to me now we talked so wide and far that scarcely an issue in the life between man and woman can arise that we did not at least touch upon. Lying there at Isabel's feet, I have become for myself a symbol of all this world-wide problem between duty and conscious, passionate love the world has still to solve. Because it isn't solved; there's a wrong in it either way. . . . The sky, the wide horizon, seemed to lift us out of ourselves until we were something representative and general. She was womanhood become articulate, talking to her lover.

"I ought," I said, "never to have loved you."

"It wasn't a thing planned," she said.

"I ought never to have let our talk slip to that, never to have turned back from America."

"I'm glad we did it," she said. "Don't think I repent."

I looked at her.

"I will never repent," she said. "Never!" as though she clung to her life in saying it.

I remember we talked for a long time of divorce. It seemed to us then, and it seems to us still, that it ought to have been possible for Margaret to divorce me, and for me to marry without the scandalous and ugly publicity, the taint and ostracism that follow such a readjustment. We went on to the whole perplexing riddle of marriage. We criticised the current code, how muddled and conventionalised it had become, how modified by subterfuges and concealments and new necessities, and the increasing freedom of women. "It's all like Bromstead when the building came," I said; for I had often talked to her of that early impression of purpose dissolving again into chaotic forces. "There is no clear right in the world any more. The world is Byzantine. The justest man to-day must practise a tainted goodness."

These questions need discussion—a magnificent frankness of discussion—if any standards are again to establish an effective hold upon educated people. Discretions, as I have said already, will never hold anyone worth holding—longer than they held us. Against every "shalt not" there must be a "why not" plainly put,—the "why not" largest and plainest, the law deduced from its purpose. "You and I, Isabel," I said, "have always been a little disregardful of duty, partly at least because the idea of duty comes to us so ill-clad. Oh! I know there's an extravagant insubordinate strain

in us, but that wasn't all. I wish humbugs would leave duty alone. I wish all duty wasn't covered with slime. That's where the real mischief comes in. Passion can always contrive to clothe itself in beauty, strips itself splendid. That carried us. But for all its mean associations there *is* this duty. . . ."

"Don't we come rather late to it?"

"Not so late that it won't be atrociously hard to do."

"It's queer to think of now," said Isabel. "Who could believe we did all we have done honestly? Well, in a manner honestly. Who could believe we thought this might be hidden? Who could trace it all step by step from the time when we found that a certain boldness in our talk was pleasing? We talked of love. . . . Master, there's not much for us to do in the way of Apologia that anyone will credit. And yet if it were possible to tell the very heart of our story. . . .

"Does Margaret really want to go on with you?" she asked—"shield you—knowing of . . . *this?*"

"I'm certain. I don't understand—just as I don't understand Shoesmith, but she does. These people walk on solid ground which is just thin air to us. They've got something we haven't got. Assurances? I wonder."

Then it was, or later, we talked of Shoesmith, and what her life might be with him.

"He's good," she said; "he's kindly. He's everything but magic. He's the very image of the decent, sober, honourable life. You can't say a thing against him or I—except that something—something in his imagination, something in the tone of his voice—fails for me. Why don't I love him?—he's a better man

than you! Why don't you? *Is* he a better man than you? He's usage, he's honour, he's the right thing, he's the breed and the tradition,—a gentleman. You're your erring, incalculable self. I suppose we women will trust this sort and love your sort to the very end of time. . . ."

We lay side by side and nibbled at grass stalks as we talked. It seemed enormously unreasonable to us that two people who had come to the pitch of easy and confident affection and happiness that held between us should be obliged to part and shun one another, or murder half the substance of their lives. We felt ourselves crushed and beaten by an indiscriminating machine which destroys happiness in the service of jealousy. "The mass of people don't feel these things in quite the same manner as we feel them," she said. "Is it because they're different in grain, or educated out of some primitive instinct?"

"It's because we've explored love a little, and they know no more than the gateway," I said. "Lust and then jealousy; their simple conception—and we have gone past all that and wandered hand in hand. . . ."

I remember that for a time we watched two of that larger sort of gull, whose wings are brownish-white, circle and hover against the blue. And then we lay and looked at a band of water mirror clear far out to sea, and wondered why the breeze that rippled all the rest should leave it so serene.

"And in this State of ours," I resumed.

"Eh!" said Isabel, rolling over into a sitting posture and looking out at the horizon. "Let's talk no more of things we can never see. Talk to me of the work

you are doing and all we shall do—after we have parted. We've said too little of that. We've had our red life, and it's over. Thank Heaven!—though we stole it! Talk about your work, dear, and the things we'll go on doing—just as though we were still together. We'll still be together in a sense—through all these things we have in common."

And so we talked of politics and our outlook. We were interested to the pitch of self-forgetfulness. We weighed persons and forces, discussed the probabilities of the next general election, the steady drift of public opinion in the north and west away from Liberalism towards us. It was very manifest that in spite of Wardenham and the *Expurgator,* we should come into the new Government strongly. The party had no one else, all the young men were formally or informally with us; Esmeer would have office, Lord Tarvrille, I . . . and very probably there would be something for Shoesmith. "And for my own part," I said, "I count on backing on the Liberal side. For the last two years we've been forcing competition in constructive legislation between the parties. The Liberals have not been long in following up our Endowment of Motherhood lead. They'll have to give votes and lip service anyhow. Half the readers of the *Blue Weekly,* they say, are Liberals. . . .

"I remember talking about things of this sort with old Willersley," I said, "ever so many years ago. It was some place near Locarno, and we looked down the lake that shone weltering—just as now we look over the sea. And then we dreamt in an indistinct featureless way of all that you and I are doing now."

"I!" said Isabel, and laughed.

"Well, of some such thing," I said, and remained for awhile silent, thinking of Locarno.

I recalled once more the largeness, the release from small personal things that I had felt in my youth; statecraft became real and wonderful again with the memory, the gigantic handling of gigantic problems. I began to talk out my thoughts, sitting up beside her, as I could never talk of them to anyone but Isabel; began to recover again the purpose that lay under all my political ambitions and adjustments and anticipations. I saw the State, splendid and wide as I had seen it in that first travel of mine, but now it was no mere distant prospect of spires and pinnacles, but populous with fine-trained, bold-thinking, bold-doing people. It was as if I had forgotten for a long time and now remembered with amazement.

At first, I told her, I had been altogether at a loss how I could do anything to battle against the aimless muddle of our world; I had wanted a clue—until she had come into my life questioning, suggesting, unconsciously illuminating. "But I have done nothing," she protested. I declared she had done everything in growing to education under my eyes, in reflecting again upon all the processes that had made myself, so that instead of abstractions and blue-books and bills and devices, I had realised the world of mankind as a crowd needing before all things fine women and men. We'd spoilt ourselves in learning that, but anyhow we had our lesson. Before her I was in a nineteenth-century darkness, dealing with the nation as if it were a crowd of selfish men, forgetful of women and children and

that shy wild thing in the hearts of men, love, which must be drawn upon as it has never been drawn upon before, if the State is to live. I saw now how it is possible to bring the loose factors of a great realm together, to create a mind of literature and thought in it, and the expression of a purpose to make it self-conscious and fine. I had it all clear before me, so that at a score of points I could presently begin. The *Blue Weekly* was a centre of force. Already we had given Imperialism a criticism, and leavened half the press from our columns. Our movement consolidated and spread. We should presently come into power. Everything moved towards our hands. We should be able to get at the schools, the services, the universities, the church; enormously increase the endowment of research, and organise what was sorely wanted, a criticism of research; contrive a closer contact between the press and creative intellectual life; foster literature, clarify, strengthen the public consciousness, develop social organisation and a sense of the State. Men were coming to us every day, brilliant young peers like Lord Dentonhill, writers like Carnot and Cresswell. It filled me with pride to win such men. "We stand for so much more than we seem to stand for," I said. I opened my heart to her, so freely that I hesitate to open my heart even to the reader, telling of projects and ambitions I cherished, of my consciousness of great powers and widening opportunities. . . .

Isabel watched me as I talked.

She too, I think, had forgotten these things for awhile. For it is curious and I think a very significant thing that since we had become lovers, we had talked

very little of the broader things that had once so strongly gripped our imaginations.

"It's good," I said, "to talk like this to you, to get back to youth and great ambitions with you. There have been times lately when politics has seemed the pettiest game played with mean tools for mean ends—and none the less so that the happiness of three hundred million people might be touched by our follies. I talk to no one else like this. . . . And now I think of parting, I think but of how much more I might have talked to you." . . .

Things drew to an end at last, but after we had spoken of a thousand things.

"We've talked away our last half day," I said, staring over my shoulder at the blazing sunset sky behind us. "Dear, it's been the last day of our lives for us. . . . It doesn't seem like the last day of our lives. Or any day."

"I wonder how it will feel?" said Isabel.

"It will be very strange at first—not to be able to tell you things."

"I've a superstition that after—after we've parted—if ever I go into my room and talk, you'll hear. You'll be—somewhere."

"I shall be in the world—yes."

"I don't feel as though these days ahead were real. Here we are, here we remain."

"Yes, I feel that. As though you and I were two immortals, who didn't live in time and space at all, who never met, who couldn't part, and here we lie on Olympus. And those two poor creatures who did meet, poor little Richard Remington and Isabel Rivers, who

met and loved too much and had to part, they part and go their ways, and we lie here and watch them, you and I. She'll cry, poor dear."

"She'll cry. She's crying now!"

"Poor little beasts! I think he'll cry too. He winces. He could—for tuppence. I didn't know he had lachrymal glands at all until a little while ago. I suppose all love is hysterical—and a little foolish. Poor mites! Silly little pitiful creatures! How we have blundered! Think how we must look to God! Well, we'll pity them, and then we'll inspire him to stiffen up again—and do as we've determined he shall do. We'll see it through,—we who lie here on the cliff. They'll be mean at times, and horrid at times; we know them! Do you see her, a poor little fine lady in a great house,—she sometimes goes to her room and writes."

"She writes for his *Blue Weekly* still."

"Yes. Sometimes—I hope. And he's there in the office with a bit of her copy in his hand."

"Is it as good as if she still talked it over with him before she wrote it? Is it?"

"Better, I think. Let's play it's better—anyhow. It may be that talking over was rather mixed with love-making. After all, love-making is joy rather than magic. Don't let's pretend about that even. . . . Let's go on watching him. (I don't see why her writing shouldn't be better. Indeed I don't.) See! There he goes down along the Embankment to Westminster just like a real man, for all that he's smaller than a grain of dust. What is running round inside that speck of a head of his? Look at him going past the

policemen, specks too—selected large ones from the country. I think he's going to dinner with the Speaker —some old thing like that. Is his face harder or commoner or stronger?—I can't quite see. . . . And now he's up and speaking in the House. Hope he'll hold on to the thread. He'll have to plan his speeches to the very end of his days—and learn the headings."

"Isn't she up in the women's gallery to hear him?"

"No. Unless it's by accident."

"She's there," she said.

"Well, by accident it happens. Not too many accidents, Isabel. Never any more adventures for us, dear, now. No! . . . They play the game, you know. They've begun late, but now they've got to. You see it's not so very hard for them since you and I, my dear, are here always, always faithfully here on this warm cliff of love accomplished, watching and helping them under high heaven. It isn't so *very* hard. Rather good in some ways. Some people *have* to be broken a little. Can you see Altiora down there, by any chance?"

"She's too little to be seen," she said.

"Can you see the sins they once committed?"

"I can only see you here beside me, dear—for ever. For all my life, dear, till I die. Was that—the sin?" . . .

I took her to the station, and after she had gone I was to drive to Dover, and cross to Calais by the night boat. I couldn't, I felt, return to London. We walked over the crest and down to the little station of Martin Mill side by side, talking at first in broken fragments, for the most part of unimportant things.

"None of this," she said abruptly, "seems in the

slightest degree real to me. I've got no sense of things ending."

"We're parting," I said.

"We're parting—as people part in a play. It's distressing. But I don't feel as though you and I were really never to see each other again for years. Do you?"

I thought. "No," I said.

"After we've parted I shall look to talk it over with you."

"So shall I."

"That's absurd."

"Absurd."

"I feel as if you'd always be there, just about where you are now. Invisible perhaps, but there. We've spent so much of our lives joggling elbows." . . .

"Yes. Yes. I don't in the least realise it. I suppose I shall begin to when the train goes out of the station. Are we wanting in imagination, Isabel?"

"I don't know. We've always assumed it was the other way about."

"Even when the train goes out of the station——! I've seen you into so many trains."

"I shall go on thinking of things to say to you—things to put in your letters. For years to come. How can I ever stop thinking in that way now? We've got into each other's brains."

"It isn't real," I said; "nothing is real. The world's no more than a fantastic dream. Why are we parting, Isabel?"

"I don't know. It seems now supremely silly. I suppose we have to. Can't we meet?—don't you think we shall meet even in dreams?"

"We'll meet a thousand times in dreams," I said.

"I wish we could dream at the same time," said Isabel. . . . "Dream walks. I can't believe, dear, I shall never have a walk with you again."

"If I'd stayed six months in America," I said, "we might have walked long walks and talked long talks for all our lives."

"Not in a world of Baileys," said Isabel. "And anyhow——"

She stopped short. I looked interrogation.

"We've loved," she said.

I took her ticket, saw to her luggage, and stood by the door of the compartment. "Good-bye," I said a little stiffly, conscious of the people upon the platform. She bent above me, white and dusky, looking at me very steadfastly.

"Come here," she whispered. "Never mind the porters. What can they know? Just one time more —I must."

She rested her hand against the door of the carriage and bent down upon me, and put her cold, moist lips to mine.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE BREAKING POINT.

### § 1.

And then we broke down. We broke our faith with both Margaret and Shoesmith, flung career and duty out of our lives, and went away together.

It is only now, almost a year after these events, that

I can begin to see what happened to me. At the time it seemed to me I was a rational, responsible creature, but indeed I had not parted from her two days before I became a monomaniac to whom nothing could matter but Isabel. Every truth had to be squared to that obsession, every duty. It astounds me to think how I forgot Margaret, forgot my work, forgot everything but that we two were parted. I still believe that with better chances we might have escaped the consequences of the emotional storm that presently seized us both. But we had no foresight of that, and no preparation for it, and our circumstances betrayed us. It was partly Shoesmith's unwisdom in delaying his marriage until after the end of the session—partly my own amazing folly in returning within four days to Westminster. But we were all of us intent upon the defeat of scandal and the complete restoration of appearances. It seemed necessary that Shoesmith's marriage should not seem to be hurried, still more necessary that I should not vanish inexplicably. I had to be visible with Margaret in London just as much as possible; we went to restaurants, we visited the theatre; we could even contemplate the possibility of my presence at the wedding. For that, however, we had schemed a week-end visit to Wales, and a fictitious sprained ankle at the last moment which would justify my absence. . . .

I cannot convey to you the intolerable wretchedness and rebellion of my separation from Isabel. It seemed that in the past two years all my thoughts had spun commisures to Isabel's brain and I could think of nothing that did not lead me surely to the need of the one intimate I had found in the world. I came back

to the House and the office and my home, I filled all my days with appointments and duty, and it did not save me in the least from a lonely emptiness such as I had never felt before in all my life. I had little sleep. In the daytime I did a hundred things, I even spoke in the House on two occasions, and by my own low standards spoke well, and it seemed to me that I was going about in my own brain like a hushed survivor in a house whose owner lies dead upstairs.

I came to a crisis after that wild dinner of Tarvrille's. Something in that stripped my soul bare.

It was an occasion made absurd and strange by the odd accident that the house caught fire upstairs while we were dining below. It was a men's dinner—"A dinner of all sorts," said Tarvrille, when he invited me; "everything from Evesham and Gane to Wilkins the author, and Heaven knows what will happen!" I remember that afterwards Tarvrille was accused of having planned the fire to make his dinner a marvel and a memory. It was indeed a wonderful occasion, and I suppose if I had not been altogether drenched in misery, I should have found the same wild amusement in it that glowed in all the others. There were one or two university dons, Lord George Fester, the racing man, Panmure, the artist, two or three big City men, Weston Massinghay and another prominent Liberal whose name I can't remember, the three men Tarvrille had promised and Esmeer, Lord Wrassleton, Waulsort, the member for Monckton, Neal and several others. We began a little coldly, with duologues, but the conversation was already becoming general—so far as such a long table permitted—when the fire asserted itself.

It asserted itself first as a penetrating and emphatic smell of burning rubber,—it was caused by the fusing of an electric wire. The reek forced its way into the discussion of the Pekin massacres that had sprung up between Evesham, Waulsort, and the others at the end of the table. "Something burning," said the man next to me.

"Something must be burning," said Panmure.

Tarvrille hated undignified interruptions. He had a particularly imperturbable butler with a cadaverous sad face and an eye of rigid disapproval. He spoke to this individual over his shoulder. "Just see, will you," he said, and caught up the pause in the talk to his left.

Wilkins was asking questions, and I, too, was curious. The story of the siege of the Legations in China in the year 1900 and all that followed upon that, is just one of those disturbing interludes in history that refuse to join on to that general scheme of protestation by which civilisation is maintained. It is a break in the general flow of experience as disconcerting to statecraft as the robbery of my knife and the scuffle that followed it had been to me when I was a boy at Penge. It is like a tear in a curtain revealing quite unexpected backgrounds. I had never given the business a thought for years; now this talk brought back a string of pictures to my mind; how the reliefs arrived and the plundering began, how section after section of the International Army was drawn into murder and pillage, how the infection spread upward until the wives of Ministers were busy looting, and the very sentinels stripped and crawled like snakes into the Palace they were set to

guard. It did not stop at robbery, men were murdered, women, being plundered, were outraged, children were butchered, strong men had found themselves with arms in a lawless, defenceless city, and this had followed. Now it was all recalled.

"Respectable ladies addicted to district visiting at home were as bad as anyone," said Panmure. "Glazebrook told me of one—flushed like a woman at a bargain sale, he said—and when he pointed out to her that the silk she'd got was bloodstained, she just said, 'Oh, bother!' and threw it aside and went back. . . ."

We became aware that Tarvrille's butler had returned. We tried not to seem to listen.

"Beg pardon, m'lord," he said. "The house *is* on fire, m'lord."

"Upstairs, m'lord."

"Just overhead, m'lord."

"The maids are throwing water, m'lord, and I've telephoned *fire*."

"No, m'lord, no immediate danger."

"It's all right," said Tarvrille to the table generally. "Go on! It's not a general conflagration, and the fire brigade won't be five minutes. Don't see that it's our affair. The stuff's insured. They say old Lady Paskershortly was dreadful. Like a harpy. The Dowager Empress had shown her some little things of hers. Pet things—hidden away. Susan went straight for them—used to take an umbrella for the silks. Born shoplifter."

It was evident he didn't want his dinner spoilt, and we played up loyally.

"This is recorded history," said Wilkins,—"prac-

tically. It makes one wonder about unrecorded history. In India, for example."

But nobody touched that.

"Thompson," said Tarvrille to the imperturbable butler, and indicating the table generally, "champagne. Champagne. Keep it going."

"M'lord," and Thompson marshalled his assistants.

Some man I didn't know began to remember things about Mandalay. "It's queer," he said, "how people break out at times;" and told his story of an army doctor, brave, public-spirited, and, as it happened, deeply religious, who was caught one evening by the excitement of plundering—and stole and hid, twisted the wrist of a boy until it broke, and was afterwards overcome by wild remorse.

I watched Evesham listening intently. "Strange," he said, "very strange. We are such stuff as thieves are made of. And in China, too, they murdered people—for the sake of murdering. Apart, so to speak, from mercenary considerations. I'm afraid there's no doubt of it in certain cases. No doubt at all. Young soldiers—fresh from German high schools and English homes!"

"Did *our* people?" asked some patriot.

"Not so much. But I'm afraid there were cases. . . . Some of the Indian troops were pretty bad."

Game picked up the tale with confirmations.

It is all printed in the vividest way as a picture upon my memory, so that were I a painter I think I could give the deep rich browns and warm greys beyond the brightly lit table, the various distinguished faces, strongly illuminated, interested and keen, above the

black and white of evening dress, the alert men-servants with their heavier, clean-shaved faces indistinctly seen in the dimness behind. Then this was coloured emotionally for me by my aching sense of loss and sacrifice, and by the chance trend of our talk to the breaches and unrealities of the civilised scheme. We seemed a little transitory circle of light in a universe of darkness and violence; an effect to which the diminishing smell of burning rubber, the trampling of feet overhead, the swish of water, added enormously. Everybody—unless, perhaps, it was Evesham—drank rather carelessly because of the suppressed excitement of our situation, and talked the louder and more freely.

"But what a flimsy thing our civilisation is!" said Evesham; "a mere thin net of habits and associations!"

"I suppose those men came back," said Wilkins.

"Lady Paskershortly did!" chuckled Evesham.

"How do they fit it in with the rest of their lives?" Wilkins speculated. "I suppose there's Pekin-stained police officers, Pekin-stained J.P.'s—trying petty pilferers in the severest manner." . . .

Then for a time things became preposterous. There was a sudden cascade of water by the fireplace, and then absurdly the ceiling began to rain upon us, first at this point and then that. "My new suit!" cried someone. "Perrrrrr-up pe-rr"—a new vertical line of blackened water would establish itself and form a spreading pool upon the gleaming cloth. The men nearest would arrange catchment areas of plates and flower bowls. "Draw up!" said Tarvrille, "draw up. That's the bad end of the table!" He turned to the imperturbable butler. "Take round bath towels," he said; and pre-

sently the men behind us were offering—with inflexible dignity—"Port wine, Sir. Bath towel, Sir!" Waulsort, with streaks of blackened water on his forehead, was suddenly reminded of a wet year when he had followed the French army manœuvres. An animated dispute sprang up between him and Neal about the relative efficiency of the new French and German field guns. Wrassleton joined in and a little drunken shrivelled Oxford don of some sort with a black-splashed shirt front who presently silenced them all by the immensity and particularity of his knowledge of field artillery. Then the talk drifted to Sedan and the effect of dead horses upon drinking-water, which brought Wrassleton and Weston Massinghay into a dispute of great vigour and emphasis. "The trouble in South Africa," said Weston Massinghay, "wasn't that we didn't boil our water. It was that we didn't boil our men. The Boers drank the same stuff we did. *They* didn't get dysentery."

That argument went on for some time. I was attacked across the table by a man named Burshort about my Endowment of Motherhood schemes, but in the gaps of that debate I could still hear Weston Massinghay at intervals repeat in a rather thickened voice: "*They* didn't get dysentery."

I think Evesham went early. The rest of us clustered more and more closely towards the drier end of the room, the table was pushed along, and the area beneath the extinguished conflagration abandoned to a tinkling, splashing company of pots and pans and bowls and baths. Everybody was now disposed to be hilarious and noisy, to say startling and aggressive things; we

must have sounded a queer clamour to a listener in the next room. The devil inspired them to begin baiting me. "Ours isn't the Tory party any more," said Burshort. "Remington has made it the Obstetric Party."

"That's good!" said Weston Massinghay, with all his teeth gleaming; "I shall use that against you in the House!"

"I shall denounce you for abusing private confidences if you do," said Tarvrille.

"Remington wants us to give up launching Dreadnoughts and launch babies instead," Burshort urged. "For the price of one Dreadnought——"

The little shrivelled don who had been omniscient about guns joined in the baiting, and displayed himself a venomous creature. Something in his eyes told me he knew Isabel and hated me for it. "Love and fine thinking," he began, a little thickly, and knocking over a wine-glass with a too easy gesture. "Love and fine thinking. Two things don't go together. No ph'losophy worth a damn ever came out of excesses of love. Salt Lake City—Piggott—Ag—Agapemone again—no works to matter."

Everybody laughed.

"Got to rec'nise these facts," said my assailant. "Love and fine think'n pretty phrase—attractive. Suitable for p'litical dec'rations. Postcard, Christmas, gilt lets, in a wreath of white flow's. Not oth'wise valu'ble."

I made some remark, I forget what, but he overbore me.

"Real things we want are Hate—Hate and *coarse* think'n. I b'long to the school of Mrs. F's Aunt——"

"What?" said someone, intent.

"In 'Little Dorrit,'" explained Tarvrille; "go on!"

"Hate a fool," said my assailant.

Tarvrille glanced at me. I smiled to conceal the loss of my temper.

"Hate," said the little man, emphasising his point with a clumsy fist. "Hate's the driving force. What's m'rality?—hate of rotten goings on. What's patriotism?—hate of int'loping foreigners. What's Radicalism?—hate of lords. What's Toryism?—hate of disturbance. It's all hate—hate from top to bottom. Hate of a mess. Remington owned it the other day, said he hated a mu'll. There you are! If you couldn't get hate into an election, damn it (hic) people wou'n't poll. Poll for love!—no' me!"

He paused, but before anyone could speak he had resumed.

"Then this about fine thinking. Like going into a bear pit armed with a tagle—talgent—talgent galv'nometer. Like going to fight a mad dog with Shasepear and the Bible. Fine thinking—what we want is the thickes' thinking we can get. Thinking that stands up alone. Taf Reform means work for all,—thassort of thing."

The gentleman from Cambridge paused, "*You* a flag!" he said. "I'd as soon go to ba'ell und' wet tissue paper!"

My best answer on the spur of the moment was: "The Japanese did." Which was absurd.

I went on to some other reply, I forget exactly what, and the talk of the whole table drew round me. It was an extraordinary revelation to me. Everyone was un-

usually careless and outspoken, and it was amazing how manifestly they echoed the feeling of this old Tory spokesman. They were quite friendly to me, they regarded me and the *Blue Weekly* as valuable party assets for Toryism, but it was clear they attached no more importance to what were my realities than they did to the remarkable therapeutic claims of Mrs. Eddy. They were flushed and amused, perhaps they went a little too far in their resolves to draw me, but they left the impression on my mind of men irrevocably set upon narrow and cynical views of political life. For them the political struggle was a game, whose counters were human hate and human credulity; their real aim was just everyone's aim, the preservation of the class and way of living to which their lives were attuned. They did not know how tired I was, how exhausted mentally and morally, nor how cruel their convergent attack on me chanced to be. But my temper gave way, I became tart and fierce, perhaps my replies were a trifle absurd, and Tarvrille, with that quick eye and sympathy of his, came to the rescue. Then for a time I sat silent and drank port wine while the others talked. The disorder of the room, the still dripping ceiling, the noise, the displaced ties and crumpled shirts of my companions, jarred on my tormented nerves. . . .

It was long past midnight when we dispersed. I remember Tarvrille coming with me into the hall, and then suggesting we should go upstairs to see the damage. A manservant carried up two flickering candles for us. One end of the room was gutted, curtains, hangings, several chairs and tables were completely burnt, the panelling was scorched and warped,

three smashed windows made the candles flare and gutter, and some scraps of broken china still lay on the puddled floor.

As we surveyed this, Lady Tarvrille appeared, back from some party, a slender, white-cloaked, satin-footed figure with amazed blue eyes beneath her golden hair. I remember how stupidly we laughed at her surprise.

§ 2.

I parted from Panmure at the corner of Aldington Street, and went my way alone. But I did not go home, I turned westward and walked for a long way, and then struck northward aimlessly. I was too miserable to go to my house.

I wandered about that night like a man who has discovered his Gods are dead. I can look back now detached yet sympathetic upon that wild confusion of moods and impulses, and by it I think I can understand, oh! half the wrongdoing and blundering in the world.

I do not feel now the logical force of the process that must have convinced me then that I had made my sacrifice and spent my strength in vain. At no time had I been under any illusion that the Tory party had higher ideals than any other party, yet it came to me like a thing newly discovered that the men I had to work with had for the most part no such dreams, no sense of any collective purpose, no atom of the faith I held. They were just as immediately intent upon personal ends, just as limited by habits of thought, as the men in any other group or party. Perhaps I had slipped

unawares for a time into the delusions of a party man —but I do not think so.

No, it was the mood of profound despondency that had followed upon the abrupt cessation of my familiar intercourse with Isabel, that gave this fact that had always been present in my mind its quality of devastating revelation. It seemed as though I had never seen before nor suspected the stupendous gap between the chaotic aims, the routine, the conventional acquiescences, the vulgarisations of the personal life, and that clearly conscious development and service of a collective thought and purpose at which my efforts aimed. I had thought them but a little way apart, and now I saw they were separated by all the distance between earth and heaven. I saw now in myself and everyone around me, a concentration upon interests close at hand, an inability to detach oneself from the provocations, tendernesses, instinctive hates, dumb lusts and shy timidities that touched one at every point; and, save for rare exalted moments, a regardlessness of broader aims and remoter possibilities that made the white passion of statecraft seem as unearthly and irrelevant to human life as the story an astronomer will tell, half proven but altogether incredible, of habitable planets and answering intelligences, suns' distances uncounted across the deep. It seemed to me I had aspired too high and thought too far, had mocked my own littleness by presumption, had given the uttermost dear reality of life for a theoriser's dream.

All through that wandering agony of mine that night a dozen threads of thought interwove; now I was a soul speaking in protest to God against a task too cold and high for it, and now I was an angry man,

scorned and pointed upon, who had let life cheat him of the ultimate pride of his soul. Now I was the fool of ambition, who opened his box of gold to find blank emptiness, and now I was a spinner of flimsy thoughts, whose web tore to rags at a touch. I realised for the first time how much I had come to depend upon the mind and faith of Isabel, how she had confirmed me and sustained me, how little strength I had to go on with our purposes now that she had vanished from my life. She had been the incarnation of those great abstractions, the saving reality, the voice that answered back. There was no support that night in the things that had been. We were alone together on the cliff for ever more!—that was very pretty in its way, but it had no truth whatever that could help me now, no ounce of sustaining value. I wanted Isabel that night, no sentiment or memory of her, but Isabel alive,—to talk to me, to touch me, to hold me together. I wanted unendurably the dusky gentleness of her presence, the consolation of her voice.

We were alone together on the cliff! I startled a passing cabman into interest by laughing aloud at that magnificent and characteristic sentimentality. What a lie it was, and how satisfying it had been! That was just where we shouldn't remain. We of all people had no distinction from that humanity whose lot is to forget. We should go out to other interests, new experiences, new demands. That tall and intricate fabric of ambitious understandings we had built up together in our intimacy would be the first to go; and last perhaps to endure with us would be a few gross memories of sights and sounds, and trivial incidental excitements. . . .

I had a curious feeling that night that I had lost touch with life for a long time, and had now been reminded of its quality. That infernal little don's parody of my ruling phrase, "Hate and coarse thinking," stuck in my thoughts like a poisoned dart, a centre of inflammation. Just as a man who is debilitated has no longer the vitality to resist an infection, so my mind, slackened by the crisis of my separation from Isabel, could find no resistance to his emphatic suggestion. It seemed to me that what he had said was overpoweringly true, not only of contemporary life, but of all possible human life. Love is the rare thing, the treasured thing; you lock it away jealously and watch, and well you may; hate and aggression and force keep the streets and rule the world. And fine thinking is, in the rough issues of life, weak thinking, is a balancing indecisive process, discovers with disloyal impartiality a justice and a defect on each disputing side. "Good honest men," as Dayton calls them, rule the world, with a way of thinking out decisions like shooting cartloads of bricks, and with a steadfast pleasure in hostility. Dayton liked to call his antagonists "blaggards and scoundrels"—it justified his opposition—the Lords were "scoundrels," all people richer than he were "scoundrels," all Socialists, all troublesome poor people; he liked to think of jails and justice being done. His public spirit was saturated with the sombre joys of conflict and the pleasant thought of condign punishment for all recalcitrant souls. That was the way of it, I perceived. That had survival value, as the biologists say. He was fool enough in politics to be a consistent and happy politician. . . .

Hate and coarse thinking; how the infernal truth

of the phrase beat me down that night! I couldn't remember that I had known this all along, and that it did not really matter in the slightest degree. I had worked it all out long ago in other terms, when I had seen how all parties stood for interests inevitably, and how the purpose in life achieves itself, if it achieves itself at all, as a bye product of the war of individuals and classes. Hadn't I always known that science and philosophy elaborate themselves in spite of all the passion and narrowness of men, in spite of the vanities and weakness of their servants, in spite of all the heated disorder of contemporary things? Wasn't it my own phrase to speak of "that greater mind in men, in which we are but moments and transitorily lit cells?" Hadn't I known that the spirit of man still speaks like a thing that struggles out of mud and slime, and that the mere effort to speak means choking and disaster? Hadn't I known that we who think without fear and speak without discretion will not come to our own for the next two thousand years?

It was the last was most forgotten of all that faith mislaid. Before mankind, in my vision that night, stretched new centuries of confusion, vast stupid wars, hastily conceived laws, foolish temporary triumphs of order, lapses, set-backs, despairs, catastrophes, new beginnings, a multitudinous wilderness of time, a nigh plotless drama of wrong-headed energies. In order to assuage my parting from Isabel we had set ourselves to imagine great rewards for our separation, great personal rewards; we had promised ourselves success visible and shining in our lives. To console ourselves in our separation we had made out of the *Blue Weekly* and our

young Tory movement preposterously enormous things —as though those poor fertilising touches at the soil were indeed the germinating seeds of the millennium, as though a million lives such as ours had not to contribute before the beginning of the beginning. That poor pretence had failed. That magnificent proposition shrivelled to nothing in the black loneliness of that night.

I saw that there were to be no such compensations. So far as my real services to mankind were concerned I had to live an unrecognised and unrewarded life. If I made successes it would be by the way. Our separation would alter nothing of that. My scandal would cling to me now for all my life, a thing affecting relationships, embarrassing and hampering my spirit. I should follow the common lot of those who live by the imagination, and follow it now in infinite loneliness of soul; the one good comforter, the one effectual familiar, was lost to me for ever; I should do good and evil together, no one caring to understand; I should produce much weary work, much bad-spirited work, much absolute evil; the good in me would be too often ill-expressed and missed or misinterpreted. In the end I might leave one gleaming flake or so amidst the slag heaps for a moment of postmortem sympathy. I was afraid beyond measure of my derelict self. Because I believed with all my soul in love and fine thinking that did not mean that I should necessarily either love steadfastly or think finely. I remember how I fell talking to God—I think I talked out loud. "Why do I care for these things?" I cried, "when I can do so little! Why am I apart from the jolly thoughtless fighting life

of men? These dreams fade to nothingness, and leave me bare!"

I scolded. "Why don't you speak to a man, show yourself? I thought I had a gleam of you in Isabel,—and then you take her away. Do you really think I can carry on this game alone, doing your work in darkness and silence, living in muddled conflict, half living, half dying?"

Grotesque analogies arose in my mind. I discovered a strange parallelism between my now tattered phrase of "Love and fine thinking" and the "Love and the Word" of Christian thought. Was it possible the Christian propaganda had at the outset meant just that system of attitudes I had been feeling my way towards from the very beginning of my life? Had I spent a lifetime making my way back to Christ? It mocks humanity to think how Christ has been overlaid. I went along now, recalling long-neglected phrases and sentences; I had a new vision of that great central figure preaching love with hate and coarse thinking even in the disciples about Him, rising to a tidal wave at last in that clamour for Barabbas, and the public satisfaction in His fate. . . .

It's curious to think that hopeless love and a noisy disordered dinner should lead a man to these speculations, but they did. "He *did* mean that!" I said, and suddenly thought of what a bludgeon they'd made of His Christianity. Athwart that perplexing, patient enigma sitting inaudibly among publicans and sinners, danced and gibbered a long procession of the champions of orthodoxy. "He wasn't human," I said, and remembered

that last despairing cry, "My God! My God! why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

"Oh, *He* forsakes everyone," I said, flying out as a tired mind will, with an obvious repartee. . . .

I passed at a bound from such monstrous theology to a towering rage against the Baileys. In an instant and with no sense of absurdity I wanted—in the intervals of love and fine thinking—to fling about that strenuously virtuous couple; I wanted to kick Keyhole of the *Peepshow* into the gutter and make a common massacre of all the prosperous rascaldom that makes a trade and rule of virtue. I can still feel that transition. In a moment I had reached that phase of weakly decisive anger which is for people of my temperament the concomitant of exhaustion.

"I will have her," I cried. "By Heaven! I *will* have her! Life mocks me and cheats me. Nothing can be made good to me again. . . . Why shouldn't I save what I can? I can't save myself without her. . . ."

I remember myself—as a sort of anti-climax to that—rather tediously asking my way home. I was somewhere in the neighbourhood of Holland Park. . . .

It was then between one and two. I felt that I could go home now without any risk of meeting Margaret. It had been the thought of returning to Margaret that had sent me wandering that night. It is one of the ugliest facts I recall about that time of crisis, the intense aversion I felt for Margaret. No sense of her goodness, her injury and nobility, and the enormous generosity of her forgiveness, sufficed to mitigate that. I hope now that in this book I am able to give some-

thing of her silvery splendour, but all through this crisis I felt nothing of that. There was a triumphant kindliness about her that I found intolerable. She meant to be so kind to me, to offer unstinted consolation, to meet my needs, to supply just all she imagined Isabel had given me.

When I left Tarvrille's, I felt I could anticipate exactly how she would meet my homecoming. She would be perplexed by my crumpled shirt front, on which I had spilt some drops of wine; she would overlook that by an effort, explain it sentimentally, resolve it should make no difference to her. She would want to know who had been present, what we had talked about, show the alertest interest in whatever it was—it didn't matter what. . . . No, I couldn't face her.

So I did not reach my study until two o'clock.

There, I remember, stood the new and very beautiful old silver candlesticks that she had set there two days since to please me—the foolish kindliness of it! But in her search for expression, Margaret heaped presents upon me. She had fitted these candlesticks with electric lights, and I must, I suppose, have lit them to write my note to Isabel. "Give me a word—the world aches without you," was all I scrawled, though I fully meant that she should come to me. I knew, though I ought not to have known, that now she had left her flat, she was with the Balfes—she was to have been married from the Balfes—and I sent my letter there. And I went out into the silent square and posted the note forthwith, because I knew quite clearly that if I left it until morning I should never post it at all.

§ 3.

I had a curious revulsion of feeling that morning of our meeting. (Of all places for such a clandestine encounter she had chosen the bridge opposite Buckingham Palace.) Overnight I had been full of self pity, and eager for the comfort of Isabel's presence. But the ill-written scrawl in which she had replied had been full of the suggestion of her own weakness and misery. And when I saw her, my own selfish sorrows were altogether swept away by a wave of pitiful tenderness. Something had happened to her that I did not understand. She was manifestly ill. She came towards me wearily, she who had always borne herself so bravely; her shoulders seemed bent, and her eyes were tired, and her face white and drawn. All my life has been a narrow self-centred life; no brothers, no sisters or children or weak things had ever yet made any intimate appeal to me, and suddenly—I verily believe for the first time in my life!—I felt a great passion of protective ownership; I felt that here was something that I could die to shelter, something that meant more than joy or pride or splendid ambitions or splendid creation to me, a new kind of hold upon me, a new power in the world. Some sealed fountain was opened in my breast. I knew that I could love Isabel broken, Isabel beaten, Isabel ugly and in pain, more than I could love any sweet or delightful or glorious thing in life. I didn't care any more for anything in the world but Isabel, and that I should protect her. I trembled as I came near her, and could scarcely speak to her for the emotion that filled me. . . .

"I had your letter," I said.

"I had yours."

"Where can we talk?"

I remember my lame sentences. "We'll have a boat. That's best here."

I took her to the little boat-house, and there we hired a boat, and I rowed in silence under the bridge and into the shade of a tree. The square grey stone masses of the Foreign Office loomed through the twigs, I remember, and a little space of grass separated us from the pathway and the scrutiny of passers-by. And there we talked.

"I had to write to you," I said.

"I had to come."

"When are you to be married?"

"Thursday week."

"Well?" I said. "But—can we?"

She leant forward and scrutinised my face with eyes wide open. "What do you mean?" she said at last in a whisper.

"Can we stand it? After all?"

I looked at her white face. "Can you?" I said.

She whispered, "Your career?"

Then suddenly her face was contorted,—she wept silently, exactly as a child tormented beyond endurance might suddenly weep. . . .

"Oh! I don't care," I cried, "now. I don't care. Damn the whole system of things! Damn all this patching of the irrevocable! I want to take care of you, Isabel! and have you with me."

"I can't stand it," she blubbered.

"You needn't stand it. I thought it was best for

you. . . . I thought indeed it was best for you. I thought even you wanted it like that."

"Couldn't I live alone—as I meant to do?"

"No," I said, "you couldn't. You're not strong enough. I've thought of that. I've got to shelter you."

"And I want you," I went on. "I'm not strong enough—I can't stand life without you."

She stopped weeping, she made a great effort to control herself, and looked at me steadfastly for a moment. "I was going to kill myself," she whispered. "I was going to kill myself quietly—somehow. I meant to wait a bit and have an accident. I thought—you didn't understand. You were a man, and couldn't understand. . . ."

"People can't do as we thought we could do," I said. "We've gone too far together."

"Yes," she said, and I stared into her eyes.

"The horror of it," she whispered. "The horror of being handed over. It's just only begun to dawn upon me, seeing him now as I do. He tries to be kind to me. . . . I didn't know. I felt adventurous before. . . . It makes me feel like all the women in the world who have ever been owned and subdued. . . . It's not that he isn't the best of men, it's because I'm a part of you. . . . I can't go through with it. If I go through with it, I shall be left—robbed of pride—outraged—a woman beaten. . . ."

"I know," I said, "I know."

"I want to live alone. . . . I don't care for anything now but just escape. If you can help me. . . ."

"I must take you away. There's nothing for us but to go away together."

"But your work," she said; "your career! Margaret! Our promises!"

"We've made a mess of things, Isabel—or things have made a mess of us. I don't know which. Our flags are in the mud, anyhow. It's too late to save those other things! They have to go. You can't make terms with defeat. I thought it was Margaret needed me most. But it's you. And I need you. I didn't think of that either. I haven't a doubt left in the world now. We've got to leave everything rather than leave each other. I'm sure of it. Now we have gone so far. We've got to go right down to earth and begin again. . . . Dear, I *want* disgrace with you. . . ."

So I whispered to her as she sat crumpled together on the faded cushions of the boat, this white and weary young woman who had been so valiant and careless a girl. "I don't care," I said. "I don't care for anything, if I can save you out of the wreckage we have made together."

§ 4.

The next day I went to the office of the *Blue Weekly* in order to get as much as possible of its affairs in working order before I left London with Isabel. I just missed Shoesmith in the lower office. Upstairs I found Britten amidst a pile of outside articles, methodically reading the title of each and sometimes the first half-dozen lines, and either dropping them in a growing heap on the floor for a clerk to return, or putting them aside for consideration. I interrupted him, squatted on the window-sill of the open window, and sketched out my ideas for the session.

"You're far-sighted," he remarked at something of mine which reached out ahead.

"I like to see things prepared," I answered.

"Yes," he said, and ripped open the envelope of a fresh aspirant.

I was silent while he read.

"You're going away with Isabel Rivers," he said abruptly.

"Well!" I said, amazed.

"I know," he said, and lost his breath. "Not my business. Only——"

It was queer to find Britten afraid to say a thing.

"It's not playing the game," he said.

"What do you know?"

"Everything that matters."

"Some games," I said, "are too hard to play."

There came a pause between us.

"I didn't know you were watching all this," I said.

"Yes," he answered, after a pause, "I've watched."

"Sorry—sorry you don't approve."

"It means smashing such an infernal lot of things, Remington."

I did not answer.

"You're going away then?"

"Yes."

"Soon?"

"Right away."

"There's your wife."

"I know."

"Shoesmith—whom you're pledged to in a manner. You've just picked him out and made him conspicuous.

Everyone will know. Oh! of course—it's nothing to you. Honour——"

"I know."

"Common decency."

I nodded.

"All this movement of ours. That's what *I* care for most. . . . It's come to be a big thing, Remington."

"That will go on."

"We have a use for you—no one else quite fills it. No one. . . . I'm not sure it will go on."

"Do you think I haven't thought of all these things?"

He shrugged his shoulders, and rejected two papers unread.

"I knew," he remarked, "when you came back from America. You were alight with it." Then he let his bitterness gleam for a moment. "But I thought you would stick to your bargain."

"It's not so much choice as you think," I said.

"There's always a choice."

"No," I said.

He scrutinised my face.

"I can't live without her—I can't work. She's all mixed up with this—and everything. And besides, there's things you can't understand. There's feelings you've never felt. . . . You don't understand how much we've been to one another."

Britten frowned and thought.

"Some things one's *got* to do," he threw out.

"Some things one can't do."

"These infernal institutions——"

"Someone must begin," I said.

He shook his head. "Not *you*," he said. "No!"

He stretched out his hands on the desk before him, and spoke again.

"Remington," he said, "I've thought of this business day and night too. It matters to me. It matters immensely to me. In a way—it's a thing one doesn't often say to a man—I've loved you. I'm the sort of man who leads a narrow life. . . . But you've been something fine and good for me, since that time, do you remember? when we talked about Mecca together."

I nodded.

"Yes. And you'll always be something fine and good for me anyhow. I know things about you,—qualities—no mere act can destroy them. . . . Well, I can tell you, you're doing wrong. You're going on now like a man who is hypnotised and can't turn round. You're piling wrong on wrong. It was wrong for you two people ever to be lovers."

He paused.

"It gripped us hard," I said.

"Yes!—but in your position! And hers! It was vile!"

"You've not been tempted."

"How do you know? Anyhow—having done that, you ought to have stood the consequences and thought of other people. You could have ended it at the first pause for reflection. You didn't. You blundered again. You kept on. You owed a certain secrecy to all of us! You didn't keep it. You were careless. You made things worse. This engagement and this publicity!—— Damn it, Remington!"

"I know," I said, with smarting eyes. "Damn it!—

with all my heart! It came of trying to patch. . . . You *can't* patch."

"And now, as I care for anything under heaven, Remington, you two ought to stand these last consequences—and part. You ought to part. Other people have to stand things! Other people have to part. You ought to. You say—what do you say? It's loss of so much life to lose each other. So is losing a hand or a leg. But it's what you've incurred. Amputate. Take your punishment——. After all, you chose it."

"Oh, damn!" I said, standing up and going to the window.

"Damn by all means. I never knew a topic so full of justifiable damns. But you two did choose it. You ought to stick to your undertaking."

I turned upon him with a snarl in my voice. "My dear Britten!" I cried. "Don't I *know* I'm doing wrong? Aren't I in a net? Suppose I don't go! Is there any right in that? Do you think we're going to be much to ourselves or anyone after this parting? I've been thinking all last night of this business, trying it over and over again from the beginning. How was it we went wrong? Since I came back from America—I grant you *that*—but *since,* there's never been a step that wasn't forced, that hadn't as much right in it or more, as wrong. You talk as though I was a thing of steel that could bend this way or that and never change. You talk as though Isabel was a cat one could give to any kind of owner. . . . We two are things that change and grow and alter all the time. We're—so interwoven that being parted now will leave us just misshapen cripples. . . . You don't know the motives, you don't

know the rush and feel of things, you don't know how it was with us, and how it is with us. You don't know the hunger for the mere sight of one another; you don't know anything."

Britten looked at his finger-nails closely. His red face puckered to a wry frown. "Haven't we all at times wanted the world put back?" he grunted, and looked hard and close at one particular nail.

There was a long pause.

"I want her," I said, "and I'm going to have her. I'm too tired for balancing the right or wrong of it any more. You can't separate them. I saw her yesterday. . . . She's—ill. . . . I'd take her now, if death were just outside the door waiting for us."

"Torture?"

I thought. "Yes."

"For her?"

"There isn't," I said.

"If there was?"

I made no answer.

"It's blind Want. And there's nothing ever been put into you to stand against it. What are you going to do with the rest of your lives?"

"No end of things."

"Nothing."

"I don't believe you are right," I said. "I believe we can save something——"

Britten shook his head. "Some scraps of salvage won't excuse you," he said.

His indignation rose. "In the middle of life!" he said. "No man has a right to take his hand from the plough!"

He leant forward on his desk and opened an argumentative palm. "You know, Remington," he said, "and I know, that if this could be fended off for six months—if you could be clapped in prison, or got out of the way somehow,—until this marriage was all over and settled down for a year, say—you know then you two could meet, curious, happy, as friends. Saved! You *know* it."

I turned and stared at him. "You're wrong, Britten," I said. "And does it matter if we could?"

I found that in talking to him I could frame the apologetics I had not been able to find for myself alone.

"I am certain of one thing, Britten. It is our duty not to hush up this scandal."

He raised his eyebrows. I perceived now the element of absurdity in me, but at the time I was as serious as a man who is burning.

"It's our duty," I went on, "to smash now openly in the sight of everyone. Yes! I've got that as clean and plain—as prison whitewash. I am convinced that we have got to be public to the uttermost now—I mean it—until every corner of our world knows this story, knows it fully, adds it to the Parnell story and the Ashton Dean story and the Carmel story and the Witterslea story, and all the other stories that have picked man after man out of English public life, the men with active imaginations, the men of strong initiative. To think this tottering old-woman ridden Empire should dare to waste a man on such a score! You say I ought to be penitent——"

Britten shook his head and smiled very faintly.

"I'm boiling with indignation," I said. "I lay in bed last night and went through it all. What in God's name was to be expected of us but what has happened? I went through my life bit by bit last night, I recalled all I've had to do with virtue and women, and all I was told and how I was prepared. I was born into cowardice and debasement. We all are. Our generation's grimy with hypocrisy. I came to the most beautiful things in life—like peeping Tom of Coventry. I was never given a light, never given a touch of natural manhood by all this dingy, furtive, canting, humbugging English world. Thank God! I'll soon be out of it! The shame of it! The very savages in Australia initiate their children better than the English do to-day. Neither of us was ever given a view of what they call morality that didn't make it show as shabby subservience, as the meanest discretion, an abject submission to unreasonable prohibitions! meek surrender of mind and body to the dictation of pedants and old women and fools. We weren't taught—we were mumbled at! And when we found that the thing they called unclean, unclean, was Pagan beauty—God! it was a glory to sin, Britten, it was a pride and splendour like bathing in the sunlight after dust and grime!"

"Yes," said Britten. "That's all very well——"

I interrupted him. "I know there's a case—I'm beginning to think it a valid case against us; but we never met it! There's a steely pride in self-restraint, a nobility of chastity, but only for those who see and think and act—untrammelled and unafraid. The other thing, the current thing, why! it's worth as much as the chastity of a monkey kept in a cage by itself!" I put

my foot in a chair, and urged my case upon him. "This is a dirty world, Britten, simply because it is a muddled world, and the thing you call morality is dirtier now than the thing you call immorality. Why don't the moralists pick their stuff out of the slime if they care for it, and wipe it?—damn them! I am burning now to say: 'Yes, we did this and this,' to all the world. All the world! . . . I will!"

Britten rubbed the palm of his hand on the corner of his desk. "That's all very well, Remington," he said. "You mean to go."

He stopped and began again. "If you didn't know you were in the wrong you wouldn't be so damned rhetorical. You're in the wrong. It's as plain to you as it is to me. You're leaving a big work, you're leaving a wife who trusted you, to go and live with your jolly mistress. . . . You won't see you're a statesman that matters, that no single man, maybe, might come to such influence as you in the next ten years. You're throwing yourself away and accusing your country of rejecting you."

He swung round upon his swivel at me. "Remington," he said, "have you forgotten the immense things our movement means?"

I thought. "Perhaps I am rhetorical," I said.

"But the things we might achieve! If you'd only stay now—even now! Oh! you'd suffer a little socially, but what of that? You'd be able to go on—perhaps all the better for hostility of the kind you'd get. You know, Remington—you *know.*"

I thought and went back to his earlier point. "If I am rhetorical, at any rate it's a living feeling behind

it. Yes, I remember all the implications of our aims—very splendid, very remote. But just now it's rather like offering to give a freezing man the sunlit Himalayas from end to end in return for his camp-fire. When you talk of me and my jolly mistress, it isn't fair. That misrepresents everything. I'm not going out of this—for delights. That's the sort of thing men like Snuffles and Keyhole imagine—that excites them! When I think of the things these creatures think! Ugh! But *you* know better? You know that physical passion that burns like a fire—ends clean. I'm going for love, Britten—if I sinned for passion. I'm going, Britten, because when I saw her the other day she *hurt* me. She hurt me damnably, Britten. . . . I've been a cold man—I've led a rhetorical life—you hit me with that word!—I put things in a windy way, I know, but what has got hold of me at last is her pain. She's ill. Don't you understand? She's a sick thing—a weak thing. She's no more a goddess than I'm a god. . . . I'm not in love with her now; I'm *raw* with love for her. I feel like a man that's been flayed. I have been flayed. . . . You don't begin to imagine the sort of helpless solicitude. . . . She's not going to do things easily; she's ill. Her courage fails. . . . It's hard to put things when one isn't rhetorical, but it's this, Britten—there are distresses that matter more than all the delights or achievements in the world. . . . I made her what she is—as I never made Margaret. I've made her—I've broken her. . . . I'm going with my own woman. The rest of my life and England, and so forth, must square itself to that. . . ."

For a long time, as it seemed, we remained silent

and motionless. We'd said all we had to say. My eyes caught a printed slip upon the desk before him, and I came back abruptly to the paper.

I picked up this galley proof. It was one of Winter's essays. "This man goes on doing first-rate stuff," I said. "I hope you will keep him going."

He did not answer for a moment or so. "I'll keep him going," he said at last with a sigh.

§ 5.

I have a letter Margaret wrote me within a week of our flight. I cannot resist transcribing some of it here, because it lights things as no word of mine can do. It is a string of nearly inconsecutive thoughts written in pencil in a fine, tall, sprawling hand. Its very inconsecutiveness is essential. Many words are underlined. It was in answer to one from me; but what I wrote has passed utterly from my mind. . . .

"Certainly," she says, "I want to hear from you, but I do not want to see you. There's a sort of abstract *you* that I want to go on with. Something I've made *out* of you. . . . I want to know things about you—but I don't want to see or feel or imagine. When some day I have got rid of my intolerable sense of proprietorship, it may be different. Then perhaps we may meet again. I think it is even more the loss of our political work and dreams that I am feeling than the loss of your presence. Aching loss. I thought so much of the things we were *doing* for the world—had given myself so unreservedly. You've left me with nothing to *do*. I am suddenly at loose ends. . . .

"We women are trained to be so dependent on a

man. I've got no life of my own at all. It seems now to me that I wore my clothes even for you and your schemes. . . .

"After I have told myself a hundred times why this has happened, I ask again, 'Why did he give things up? Why did he give things up?' . . .

"It is just as though you were wilfully dead. . . .

"Then I ask again and again whether this thing need have happened at all, whether if I had had a warning, if I had understood better, I might not have adapted myself to your restless mind and made this catastrophe impossible. . . .

"Oh, my dear! why hadn't you the pluck to hurt me at the beginning, and tell me what you thought of me and life? You didn't give me a chance; not a chance. I suppose you couldn't. All these things you and I stood away from. You let my first repugnances repel you. . . .

"It is strange to think after all these years that I should be asking myself, do I love you? have I loved you? In a sense I think I *hate* you. I feel you have taken my life, dragged it in your wake for a time, thrown it aside. I am resentful. Unfairly resentful, for why should I exact that you should watch and understand my life, when clearly I have understood so little of yours. But I am savage—savage at the wrecking of all you were to do.

"Oh, why—why did you give things up?

"No human being is his own to do what he likes with. You were not only pledged to my tiresome, ineffectual companionship, but to great purposes. They *are* great purposes. . . .

"If only I could take up your work as you leave it, with the strength you had—then indeed I feel I could let you go—you and your young mistress. . . . All that matters so little to me. . . .

"Yet I think I must indeed love you yourself in my slower way. At times I am mad with jealousy at the thought of all I hadn't the wit to give you. . . . I've always hidden my tears from you—and what was in my heart. It's my nature to hide—and you, you want things brought to you to see. You are so curious as to be almost cruel. You don't understand reserves. You have no mercy with restraints and reservations. You are not really a *civilised* man at all. You hate pretences—and not only pretences but decent coverings. . . .

"It's only after one has lost love and the chance of loving that slow people like myself find what they might have done. Why wasn't I bold and reckless and abandoned? It's as reasonable to ask that, I suppose, as to ask why my hair is fair. . . .

"I go on with these perhapses over and over again here when I find myself alone. . . .

"My dear, my dear, you can't think of the desolation of things—— I shall never go back to that house we furnished together, that was to have been the laboratory (do you remember calling it a laboratory?) in which you were to forge so much of the new order. . . .

"But, dear, if I can help you—even now—in any way—help both of you, I mean. . . . It tears me when I think of you poor and discredited. You will let me help you if I can—it will be the last wrong not to let me do that. . . .

"You had better not get ill. If you do, and I hear of it—I shall come after you with a troupe of doctors and nurses. If I am a failure as a wife, no one has ever said I was anything but a success as a district visitor. . . ."

There are other sheets, but I cannot tell whether they were written before or after the ones from which I have quoted. And most of them have little things too intimate to set down. But this oddly penetrating analysis of our differences must, I think, be given.

"There are all sorts of things I can't express about this and want to. There's this difference that has always been between us, that you like nakedness and wildness, and I, clothing and restraint. It goes through everything. You are always *talking* of order and system, and the splendid dream of the order that might replace the muddled system you hate, but by a sort of instinct you seem to want to break the law. I've watched you so closely. Now *I* want to obey laws, to make sacrifices, to follow rules. I don't want to make, but I do want to keep. You are at once makers and rebels, you and Isabel too. You're bad people—criminal people, I feel, and yet full of something the world must have. You're so much better than me, and so much viler. It may be there is no making without destruction, but it seems to me sometimes that it is nothing but an instinct for lawlessness that drives you. You remind me—do you remember?—of that time we went from Naples to Vesuvius, and walked over the hot new lava there. Do you remember how tired I was? I know it disappointed you that I was tired. One walked there in spite of the heat because there was a crust; like custom, like law. But

directly a crust forms on things, you are restless to break down to the fire again. You talk of beauty, both of you, as something terrible, mysterious, imperative. *Your* beauty is something altogether different from anything I know or feel. It has pain in it. Yet you always speak as though it was something I ought to feel and am dishonest not to feel. *My* beauty is a quiet thing. You have always laughed at my feeling for old-fashioned chintz and blue china and Sheraton. But I like all these familiar *used* things. My beauty is *still* beauty, and yours, is excitement. I know nothing of the fascination of the fire, or why one should go deliberately out of all the decent fine things of life to run dangers and be singed and tormented and destroyed. I don't understand. . . ."

§ 6.

I remember very freshly the mood of our departure from London, the platform of Charing Cross with the big illuminated clock overhead, the bustle of porters and passengers with luggage, the shouting of newsboys and boys with flowers and sweets, and the groups of friends seeing travellers off by the boat train. Isabel sat very quiet and still in the compartment, and I stood upon the platform with the door open, with a curious reluctance to take the last step that should sever me from London's ground. I showed our tickets, and bought a handful of red roses for her. At last came the guards crying: "Take your seats," and I got in and closed the door on me. We had, thank Heaven! a compartment to ourselves. I let down the window and stared out.

There was a bustle of final adieux on the platform, a cry of "Stand away, please, stand away!" and the train was gliding slowly and smoothly out of the station.

I looked out upon the river as the train rumbled with slowly gathering pace across the bridge, and the bobbing black heads of the pedestrians in the footway, and the curve of the river and the glowing great hotels, and the lights and reflections and blacknesses of that old, familiar spectacle. Then with a common thought, we turned our eyes westward to where the pinnacles of Westminster and the shining clock tower rose hard and clear against the still, luminous sky.

"They'll be in Committee on the Reformatory Bill to-night," I said, a little stupidly.

"And so," I added, "good-bye to London!"

We said no more, but watched the south-side streets below—bright gleams of lights and movement, and the dark, dim, monstrous shapes of houses and factories. We ran through Waterloo Station, London Bridge, New Cross, St. John's. We said never a word. It seemed to me that for a time we had exhausted our emotions. We had escaped, we had cut our knot, we had accepted the last penalty of that headlong return of mine from Chicago a year and a half ago. That was all settled. That harvest of feelings we had reaped. I thought now only of London, of London as the symbol of all we were leaving and all we had lost in the world. I felt nothing now but an enormous and overwhelming regret. . . .

The train swayed and rattled on its way. We ran through old Bromstead, where once I had played with