SIR HARRY

Title: Sir Harry
A Love Story

Author: Archibald Marshall

Release Date: May 07, 2017 [eBook #54673]

Language: English

*** START OF THIS PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK SIR HARRY ***

Produced by Al Haines.

SIR HARRY

A Love Story

BY

ARCHIBALD MARSHALL

NEW YORK
DODD, MEAD AND COMPANY
1919

The Quinn & Boden Company BOOK MANUFACTURERS RAHWAY NEW JERSEY

dedication info

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE HOUSE OF MERRILEES
RICHARD BALDOCK
EXTON MANOR
THE SQUIRE'S DAUGHTER
THE ELDEST SON
THE HONOUR OF THE CLINTONS
THE GREATEST OF THESE
THE OLD ORDER CHANGETH
WATERMEADS
UPSIDONIA
ABINGTON ABBEY

THE GRAFTONS
THE CLINTONS, AND OTHERS
SIR HARRY

CONTENTS

CHAPTER

SIR HARRY

CHAPTER I
ROYD CASTLE

The Reverend David Grant, Vicar-elect of Royd, was a novelist as well as a priest. So when he paid his preliminary visit to Royd Castle, and sat himself down to write to his wife about it he did so with the idea of making his letter a piece of literature; or at least of making her see. For that was literature—making people see. He would take as much trouble over his letter as he would over a chapter of a novel; and when she had read it she would have a clear picture in her mind of the place she was coming to and the people she would meet there. She had not been able to come herself because she was close to her confinement. Poor girl!

It was rather hard luck that she should have to miss all this excitement. They had been married thirteen years and had always looked forward to settling into the ideal country parsonage. But either he would have to settle in himself, or else wait a couple of months or so until the baby was born and Ethel was well enough to take a hand in the blissful arrangements. Longing to get to work at it as he was, with money saved from his royalties to be spent in making their home what they wanted it to be, he yet thought that he would prefer to wait until she was strong again. After thirteen years of married life, in circumstances not of the easiest, this couple still liked doings things together.

The time and the place invited to literary composition. The time was shortly after ten o'clock of a warm spring night, for the Castle retired early. The place was a room which David Grant had sometimes imagined for himself as the background for a scene in a novel, but never yet had the satisfaction of occupying. It was a great state Tudor bedroom, with carved and panelled walls, a stone fireplace with a fire of logs burning in it, Flemish tapestry above, a polished oak floor with old carpets in front of the hearth, by the heavy pillared canopied bed and in the deep embrasure of the window. There were heavy oak chairs and tables and presses. The washing arrangements, necessarily more modern, since in Tudor days they washed very little, were in a closet apart. The writing-table alone showed modernity, with everything on it in the way of apparatus that could please a person who loved writing for its own sake, and could appreciate its accessories. It stood in the windowed recess, which was as large as a fair-sized room, and contained another table for books, with a cushioned chair by its side, and still left space for moving about from one window to the other. Wax candles in heavy silver candle-sticks stood invitingly on the writing-table, and elsewhere about the room. There were six of these lit when David Grant came up, but it was so large that the effect was still one of rich dimness, warmed into life by the glowing fire on the hearth.

David Grant's soul was full of content as he came into the room and shut the heavy door behind him. If he couldn't write a letter in this atmosphere that would eventually read well in his biography, he wasn't worth his salt. He was not without occasional qualms as to whether he actually was worth his salt as a novelist, but none of them troubled him to-night. He was wakeful and alert; he had half a mind to sit down at that inviting silver-laden table and write a chapter of "A Love Apart." But no. Ethel, poor girl, must come first. He felt tender towards her; they were going to be so happy together at Royd. And, after all, this was a chapter in the story of their own lives, and more interesting to both of them than a chapter in the lives of fictitious characters.

He took off his coat and put on the flannel jacket in which he was accustomed to write. Then he went to the windows and drew back all the heavy

curtains, and opened one of the casements. His facile emotions, always ready to be stirred by beauty, and to turn it immediately into words, were stirred for a moment into something that he could not have put into words as he stood there, though they came to him the moment afterwards as he recognized how it all fitted in with the impression encouraged in his mind by the old rich room in the old castle—the moonlight outside, silvering the fairy glades of the park into mysterious beauty, the silence and the sweet scents of the slumbering earth.

The grass of the park grew right up to the stones of the castle wall on this side. Just above him were some great beeches, which seemed to be climbing the hill that rose behind. Below there were more trees, and between them stretched a glade which led the eye to further undulations of moonlit grass, and the bare trunks and branches of the trees that bordered them. He had been rather disappointed, in coming first into his room, to find that it did not look out on to the gardens; but under the moon this romantic glimpse of silvered trees and fairy glades seemed to him more beautiful than any tamed or ordered garden.

Anything might happen out there, on such a night. Oberon and Titania suggested themselves to him; the least that could be expected to happen was that a herd of deer led by a many-antlered stag should wander across a moonlit glade, and give just that touch of life that was wanted to enhance the lovely scene.

What actually did happen was that his eye was caught by a moving figure in the shadow of the trees, and, before he had had time to wonder, or even to be startled by it, came out into the bright stretch of grass in front of his window, and stood looking up at him.

It was young Sir Harry, owner of Royd Castle and all the magic beauty connected with it that was making such an impression upon the clerico-novelist's susceptible mind, but though in that fortunate position not yet of an age to be out under the trees of his park at this time of night. At nine o'clock he had said goodnight to his grandmother's guest downstairs. Grant had thought it full early for a boy of his age to be sent up to bed, as Lady Brent had actually sent him, though without insistence, and with no protest on his part. He was no more than sixteen, but a well-grown boy, in the evening garb of a man; and he had sat opposite to his grandmother at the head of the table and taken a bright part in the conversation, so that, with his title to give him still further dignity, he had seemed altogether beyond the stage of being sent early to bed.

However, it appeared that bed had not been the aim of his departure, after all. He stood looking up at the window, not far above the ground, with a smile upon his handsome young face, and asked his grandmother's guest not to give him away. "I come out sometimes like this, when everybody is asleep," he said. "There's no harm in it, but Granny would try to stop me if she knew—lock me in, perhaps." He laughed freely. "So please don't tell her," he said, and melted away

into the shadows without waiting for a promise of secrecy.

Grant rather liked that in him. He had been much attracted by young Sir Harry, who had shown himself charmingly friendly to him in a frank and boyish way that had yet seemed to contain something of the dignity of a *grand seigneur*. There was something pleasing in the thought of this handsome boy, master of the old rich beautiful house, even if he was as yet only nominal master. It was not unpleasing either to think of him roaming about his lovely demesne under the moonlight which made it still more fair. Certainly there was nothing wrong in it. If he was up to some mischief, it would only be of a kind that the women who held him in check might call such. He was too young and too frank for the sort of nocturnal mischief that a man might take notice of. At his age a sense of adventure would be satisfied by being abroad in the night while he was thought to be asleep. David Grant smiled to himself as he shut the window. He would like to make friends with this charming boy. He was rather pleased to have this little secret in common with him.

Now he walked about the great room, composing the lines of his letter, as he was accustomed to walk about composing the lines of a chapter in one of his novels. Its main "idea" was to be the pleasure he and his wife and the children were to have in Royd Vicarage. But that must be led up to. He must begin at the beginning, "make her see" the place, and the people among whom they would lead their lives. The people especially; there was room here for the neat little touches of description upon which he prided himself. The Vicarage must come last, and he would end on a tender note, which would please the dear girl, and make her feel that she was part of it all, as indeed she was.

And now he was ready to begin, and sat down at the table, all on fire with his subject. He wrote on and on until late into the night. Sometimes he rose to put another log on to the fire, to enjoy the crackle it made, and to sense the grateful atmosphere of the old room. Once or twice he went to the window and looked out, never failing to be charmed by the beauty of the scene. At these times he thought of the boy, out there under the moon or in the dim shadows of the trees, and wondered what he was doing, and if he would come and call up at his window again as he returned from his wandering. He rather hoped that he might, and left the casement open the second time he went to the window. But by the time he had finished his letter no sound had broken the stillness, except now and then the soft hooting of owls, and with a last look at the moonlit glades he blew out the candles and climbed into the great bed, very well satisfied with himself and with life in general.

"Oh, the tiresome old dear, he's trying to be literary," said Mrs. Grant, as she

embarked eagerly upon the voluminous pages. She turned them over until she came to the description of the Vicarage towards the end:

"Lady Brent said very kindly, 'I expect you would like to go over the house by yourself, Mr. Grant. Harry shall go with you and show you the cottage where the key is kept. The church, I believe, is open. We shall expect you back to tea at half-past four, and if you have not finished you can go back again afterwards.'

"This was just what I wanted—to moon about the house which is to be our happy home, dearest, alone, and to build castles in the air about it. So we started off, the boy and I. We went down the avenue——"

"H'm. H'm." Mrs. Grant skipped a page.

"It was the Vicarage of our dreams, a low stone house, facing south, embowered in massy trees, its walls covered with creepers, the sun glinting on its small-paned windows."

Mrs. Grant skipped a little more. She wanted to know the number of rooms, and if possible the size of the principal ones, what the kitchen and the back premises were like, whether the kitchen garden was large enough to supply the house, and if it could all be managed by one man, who would also look after the pony, and perhaps clean the boots and knives.

She gained a hint or two as she turned over the pages quickly, and then read them more carefully. "Well, he doesn't tell me much," she said, "but I expect it will be all right and I'm sure I shall love it. The drawing-room opening into the garden and the best bedroom with a view of the sea in the distance sound jolly, and I'm glad the old darling will have a nice room to write his nonsense in. If he is pleased with his surroundings he always does more work, and that means more money. Oh, I do hope his sales will go up and we shall have enough to live comfortably on there." She went on to the end of the letter, which gave her pleasure, as had been intended. "Dear old thing, he does lean on me," she said. "And well he may. Well, I shall bustle about and make things happy and comfortable for him directly I'm strong enough. Oh, my little love, why didn't you put off your arrival for a few months longer? But I shall adore you when you do come, and it will be lovely to bring you up in that beautiful place. Now let's see what these Brent people are like, if he's clever enough to give me any idea of them."

She turned back to the beginning of the letter, and read it through in the

same way as she read his novels. She knew by intuition when it was worth while to read every word, and—well, when it wasn't.

"Young Sir Harry met me at the station. He is a handsome boy, very bright and friendly. My heart warmed to him, and especially when he showed a lively interest in our Jane and Pobbles. I told him that Jane was only eleven and Pobbles nine, but he said that he wasn't so very much older himself, and laughed as he said it, like a young wood-god, with all the youth of the world in him. I remember once walking in an olive wood in Italy, and suddenly meeting...

"I was rather surprised at the carriage sent to meet us. It was a stately affair, but with the varnish dull and cracked, and the horses fat and slow. In spite of the liveried coachman and footman on the box, the equipage was not what one might have expected from such a house as Royd Castle. I was inclined at first to think that it meant poverty, which is not always unallied to state; but there are all the signs of very ample means in this house, and I incline now to the opinion that in a woman's house, as Royd Castle is at present, stable arrangements are not much bothered about. Lady Brent goes about very little. In fact there are no other houses near for her to visit. Poldaven Castle, I am told, one of the seats of the Marquis of Avalon, lies about seven miles off, but the family is hardly ever there. We ourselves, my dearest, shall be very much to ourselves in this out-of-the-way corner of the world. We shall have the people at the Castle, and our own more humble parishioners, and—ourselves. But how happy we shall be! The beauty of our surroundings alone would give us..."

Mrs. Grant skimmed lightly over a description of the seven-mile drive from the little town by the sea, through rocky hilly country, bare of trees, but golden with gorse under a soft April sky flecked with fleecy clouds, and accepted without enthusiasm the statement that all nature, including the young lambs and the rabbits, seemed to be laughing with glee. She was anxious to get to Royd, which was to be her home, perhaps for the rest of her life.

Trees had made their appearance in the landscape by the time it was reached, and she gained an impression of a kinder richer country than that of the coast. As they neared Royd there were picturesque stone-built farm-houses, and then a steep village street lined with stone-roofed cottages, their gardens bright with coloured primroses, daffodils, ribes, berberi, aubretia and arabis, and here and there a gay splash of cydonia japonica against a white-washed wall.

Her husband was always particular about the names of plants. No mere "early spring flowers" for him! His descriptions were apt to read rather like a nurseryman's catalogue, but as they both of them knew their way about nurserymen's catalogues, she gained her picture of spring-garden colour and was pleased with it. It would be lovely to have a real big garden to play with, instead of the narrow oblong behind their semi-detached villa. But she did want to get to Lady Brent, and the rest of the household at the Castle.

The old church was at one end of the village, with a squat stone spire on a squat tower. Description of its interior was reserved until later. The Vicarage was beyond it, round the corner. The principal lodge gates were opposite,—handsome iron gates between heavy stone pillars surmounted by the Brent armorial leopards, collared and chained. A little Tudor lodge stood on either side of the gate-pillars, and a high stone wall ran off on either side. Young Sir Harry had told him that it ran right round the park, which was three miles in circumference.

The description of the drive broke off here for an account of some other things that young Sir Harry had told him. Expectation was to be maintained a little longer. She wanted to get to the Castle, but did not skip this part because it was rather interesting.

"The boy has never been to school. In fact, he has never slept a night away from the Castle in all his sixteen years. He has a tutor—a Mr. Wilbraham, who seems to have grounded him well in his classics. More of him anon. The boy reads poetry too, and of a good kind. Altogether rather a remarkable boy, and very good to look upon, with his crisp fair hair, white teeth and friendly open look—a worthy head of the old family from which he is descended. His father was killed in the South African War, before Harry was born. He was born at the Castle and he and his mother have lived here ever since. So much I learnt as we drove together, and formed some picture in my mind of the people I was about to meet."

Here followed the mental portraits of Lady Brent, Mrs. Brent and Mr. Wilbraham, but as they bore small likeness to the originals, as afterwards appeared, they may be omitted.

"We entered by the lodge gates, and drove through the beautiful park, I should say for the best part of a mile. With the trees not yet in leaf, and the great stretches of fern showing nothing but the russet of last year's fronds, it was yet

very beautiful. Herds of fallow deer were feeding quietly on the green lawns, and a noble stag lifted his head to look at us as we drove past, but made no attempt to escape, though he can have been distant from us only a long mashie shot. Wood-pigeons flew from tree-top to tree-top across the glades. I heard the tap-tap of a woodpecker as we began to mount a rise where the trees grew thicker, and the harsh screech of a jay, of which I caught a glimpse of garish colour. There was a sense of peace and seclusion about this beautiful enclosed space, as if nothing ugly from the world outside could penetrate behind those high stone walls, and nature here rejoiced in freedom and beauty.

"The hill became steeper, and the horses walked up it until we came to the open ground at the top. There at last, as we drew out from under the trees, I saw the ancient mass of the Castle with the flag flying proudly above it, perhaps a quarter of a mile away. The ground sloped down towards it. There was a wide open space of grass with the road winding through, and here and there a noble beech, with which this part of the park is chiefly planted. The ground rose again behind the massive pile, and was once more thick with trees, so that it appeared backed by a mass of delicate purple, which will soon take on that delicious delicate green of young beech leaves, than which there is none more beautiful in all nature, unless it be the emerald green of waves in a blue sea."

"I shall look out for that in the next novel," said Mrs. Grant, at this point. "I know that green, but he has always called it translucent before."

"The castle is low and spreading, nowhere more than two stories in height, except for the row of dormers in the roof, and in the middle of the mass, where there is a great gateway leading into an inner court, exactly like the gateway of a college. In fact the building resembles an ancient college in many particulars. The garden is enclosed within a stone wall, which continues the front of the building. It is on one side only, and is very beautiful, though I have not yet explored it, and can speak only of a lawn bounded by an arcading of yew, to which access is gained from the long drawing-room where I was received. The stables are in an inner courtyard behind the first. On the side opposite to the garden, in which the room where I am now writing is situated, one looks out straight into the park.

"Young Sir Harry took me straight into the room where the ladies of the house were sitting at their needlework. It was a long low room, beautifully furnished with what I should judge to be French furniture chiefly, but with deep chintz-covered easy chairs and sofas which took away from any formal effect it might otherwise have had. Lady Brent and Mrs. Brent were sitting by one of the

windows, of which there are a line opening on to a sort of stone built veranda facing the garden that I have mentioned. They rose at once to meet me. Lady Brent, whom I had pictured as rather a dominating old lady, walking possibly with a stick, I was surprised to find not old at all in appearance. She must have married young, and her son, Harry's father, must have married young, as indeed I afterwards found to have been the case. Wilbraham says that she is still a few years short of sixty, and she does not look much over fifty. She is not tall, but holds herself erect and moves in a stately manner. She is not exactly handsome, but her features are pleasant to the eye, and she has an agreeable smile. She made me welcome in a few words, and I felt that I *was* welcome, and immediately at home with her.

"Of Mrs. Brent, Sir Harry's mother, it is more difficult to speak. In the light of what I afterwards heard about her, whatever surprised me on my first introduction to her is explained; but I am trying to give you my first impressions. She is good-looking, but it struck me at once in rather a common way. She would be, I suppose, about five and thirty. She was quietly dressed and quiet-spoken; but there was a *something*. She did not look of Lady Brent's class, and it was something of a surprise to me to see in her the mother of Sir Harry, though in her colouring and facial conformation she undoubtedly resembled him."

At this point Mrs. Grant was aroused by the sounds of violent quarrelling in the little garden below the window at which she was sitting, and looked out to see her son and daughter locked in a close but hostile embrace. She threw up the window and called to them, but they took no notice, and she had to go down to separate them. They were the most charming children, and inseparable companions, but apt to express themselves occasionally in these desperate struggles. When peace had been restored, and they were left amicably planting mustard and cress, she returned to her letter, longing to know more about Mrs. Brent, and especially the reason for her appearance of commonness.

CHAPTER II
LADY BRENT

The explanation came after a description of luncheon in the great hall, which

had greatly impressed the writer, with its high timbered roof, oriel window, and carved gallery. Mr. Wilbraham, the tutor, had been added to the company, and was presented as a middle-aged figure, with a somewhat discontented expression of face, but a gift of ready speech which made the meal lively and interesting. He and the two ladies seemed to be on the most excellent terms, and the way in which Lady Brent deferred to the tutor, not treating him in the least as a dependent, but as a valued member of the family circle, had struck the Vicar-elect of Royd most agreeably. "This is a woman," he wrote, "with brains above the ordinary, who takes pleasure in exercising them. Though living a retired life, far from the centres of human intercourse, she takes a lively interest in what is going on in the world. Politics were discussed over the luncheon-table, and I found her views coincided remarkably with my own, and together we gave, I think, a very good account of ourselves in argument with Wilbraham, who professes to be something of a Radical, though I noticed that he ate a very good lunch, and is evidently not averse to sharing in the good things of the class he affects to deride. It was all, however, very good-humoured, and when the talk veered round to books, I found that these good people knew really more about the latest publications than I did myself. Wilbraham is a great reader. He acts as librarian, as well as tutor to Harry, and seems to have *carte blanche* to order anything down from London that he likes. I imagine that he recommends books to Lady Brent, and she reads a great deal too—not only fiction, but biographies, books of travel, and even stiff works on such subjects as Philosophy.

"Of course I kept very quiet about my own humble productions, as I have never professed to be a scholar, and aim rather at touching the universal human mind, with stories that shall entertain but never degrade, and should not expect to be considered very highly, or perhaps even have been heard of by people of this calibre, though there are many of equal intelligence among my readers. I must confess, however, that I was gratified when Mrs. Brent, who had not taken much part in the conversation, said: 'I have read all your books, Mr. Grant, and think they are lovely. So touching!'

"This is the sort of compliment that I value. It is to the *simple* mind that I make my appeal, and Mrs. Brent is quite evidently of a lower class of intelligence than those about her. I think I detected some deprecation in the glance that she threw at her mother-in-law immediately after she had expressed herself with this simple, and evidently *felt* enthusiasm. Perhaps her opinions on literary subjects are not considered very highly, but Lady Brent would be far too well-bred and courteous to snub her. She said at once, very kindly: 'The Bishop told us that you were a novelist, Mr. Grant. Mr. Wilbraham was about to send for your books, but we found that my daughter-in-law had them already. I have not had time more than to dip into one of them, but I promise myself much pleasure from

them when I have a little more time.' Wilbraham saved me from the necessity of finding an answer by breaking in at once: 'I don't intend to read a single one of them, either now or hereafter. Let that be plainly understood.' Everybody laughed at this, and it was said in such a way that I felt no offence. This man is evidently something of a character, and I should say had made himself felt in this household of women. The boy likes him too. I could see that by the way they addressed one another. They are more like friends than master and pupil.

"Well, I felt that I had sized up Lady Brent, Wilbraham and young Harry pretty well by the end of the meal, and the conversation that went with it. I have a knack of doing so with people I meet, and find that upon closer acquaintance I have seldom been wrong in my first impressions. Mrs. Brent puzzled me a little more. Was she entirely happy? I thought not, though there was nothing very definite to go upon. If not, it could not be the fault of any of the three other members of the household. She evidently adores her boy, for her face lights up whenever she looks at him, and he treats her with an affection and consideration that are very pleasant to see. Lady Brent treats her in much the same way, and is evidently a woman of much kindness of heart, for Mrs. Brent, as I have already said, is not up to her level, and living in constant companionship with her might be expected to grate a little on the nerves of a lady of her sort. Wilbraham would not be likely to hide any contempt that he might feel for some one of less intelligence than himself. He might not show it openly to the mother of his pupil, but I should certainly have noticed it if it had been there. But he behaved beautifully to her, and smiled when he spoke to her as if he really liked her, and found pleasure in anything that she said. And she seemed grateful, and smiled at him in return. They are in fact a very happy little party, these curiously assorted people who live so much to themselves. And yet, as I said above, the one member of it did not strike me as being entirely happy, and I could not help wondering why.

"Wilbraham enlightened me, as we smoked together after lunch, walking up and down a broad garden path under the April sunshine. 'What do you think of Mrs. Brent?' he asked me, with a side-long whimsical glance that is very characteristic of the man.

"I was a little put out by the suddenness of the question, but took advantage of it to be equally direct and to ask my question. 'Is there anything to make her unhappy?'

"He laughed at that. 'I see you have your eyes open,' he said. 'I suppose it's the novelist's trick. Any questions to ask about the rest of us?'

"'You haven't answered my first one yet,' I replied, and he laughed again, and said: 'Did you ever hear of Lottie Lansdowne?'

"The name seemed vaguely familiar to me, but he said, without waiting for my reply: 'I don't suppose you ever did, but if I were you I should tell Mrs. Brent

on the first opportunity that when you were young and going the round of the theatres that was the one name in the bill you never could resist.'

"'I suppose you mean that Mrs. Brent was once on the stage and that was her name,' I said. 'But I don't remember her all the same.'

"'No, I don't suppose you would,' he said again. 'As a matter of fact the poor little thing never got beyond the smallest parts, and I doubt if she ever would have done. But Brent fell in love with her, and married her, and since then she has never had a chance of trying. That's what's the matter with her, and I'm afraid it can't be helped. She's pretty, isn't she?'

"'Yes,' I said, as he seemed to expect it of me, but she hadn't struck me as being particularly pretty, though she might have been as a young girl. 'You mean that she doesn't like the quiet life down here?'

"'Yes, that's what I mean,' he said. 'I'm sorry for the poor little soul. She's like a child. Vain, I dare say, but not an ounce of harm in her. I'm telling you this because you'd be bound to find it out for yourself in any case. She'll probably tell you about her early triumphs herself when you know her better. The thing to do is to keep her pleased with herself as much as possible. There's not much to amuse her here. We never see anybody. It suits me all right, and her ladyship; and Harry is happy enough at present, with what he finds to do outside, and what he has to do in. But she's different. There's nothing much for her. She reads a lot of trashy novels——' Here he broke off suddenly and roared with laughter, twisting his body about, and behaving in a curious uncontrolled manner till he'd had his laugh out. Then he said: 'I'm not going to hide from you that I *have* tried to read one of yours, and my opinion is that it's slush, but quite harmless slush, which perhaps makes it worse. However, *she* likes them; so I dare say you'll find something in common with her, and it will be all to the good your coming here. That's why I've told you about her. You'll be able to help.'

"I must confess to some slight annoyance at having my work belittled in this way. However, I suppose to a man of this sort all clean healthy sentiment is 'slush,' and the absence of unwholesome interest in my works would not commend them to him, though I am thankful to say that it is no drawback to the pleasure that the people I aim at take in them. If Mrs. Brent is one of these, I shall hope indeed to be of use to her, and I think it speaks well for her, when her early life is taken into consideration, that she should find my simple tales of quiet natural life 'lovely,' as she said that she did. It has occurred to me that when I get to know her better I may possibly gain from her some information upon life behind the scenes, that I could make use of in my work. I should like to draw the picture of a pure unsullied girl, going through the life of the theatre, unspotted by it, and raising all those about her, while she herself rises to the top of her profession, and marries a good man, perhaps in the higher ranks of

society, thus showing that virtue is virtue everywhere and has its reward, and doing some good in circles that I have not yet touched. However, all that is for the future. Our immediate duty—yours and mine, dearest,—is to make friends with this rather pathetic little lady, and to reconcile her to her lot, which in this beautiful place, with all the love and kindness she receives from those about her, is hardly really to be pitied.

"I told Wilbraham that I had been much struck with Lady Brent's attitude towards her, and he became serious at once and said: 'Lady Brent is a fine character. There's no getting over that. No, there's no getting over that; she's a fine character.'

"I was a little surprised at the way he said it, but he's a queer sort of fellow, though I think likable. He went on at once, as if he wanted to remove some doubt in my mind as to Lady Brent; but, as a matter of fact, I had none, and am as capable of judging her as he is, though of course he has known her longer. '*She* sees,' he said, 'that poor little Lottie—I generally call her that to myself—can't be quite happy shut up down here. But she's right in keeping her here. You see, Brent was rather a wild sort of fellow. He got into mischief once or twice, and from what I've heard she and his father weren't sorry when his regiment was ordered off to South Africa. Well, he went, and was killed the first time he went into action, within a month. By the time the news came over his father himself was dying, and did die, as a matter of fact, without knowing of it. A pretty good shock for the poor lady, eh? Well, she had another when poor little Lottie wrote to her and said that she had been married to Brent the week before he sailed, and there was a baby coming. She went straight up to London and brought her down here, and Harry was born here. Harry is rather an important person, you know. He's the last of his line, which is an old one. This place belongs to him, and he'll have a great deal of money from his grandmother. He's Sir Harry Brent of Royd Castle. What he is on his mother's side must be made as little of as possible. She's a Brent by marriage and she has to learn to be a Brent by manners and customs, if you understand me!'

"I said that I thought I did, and that Lady Brent was quite right in wishing to keep her in this atmosphere. But I said that I quite saw that the more friends she had the better. I should do my best to make friends with her, and I was sure that my wife would, who was extremely kind-hearted.

"'Ah, that's right,' he said, with a great air of satisfaction, and just then Harry came out and we went off together to the village and the vicarage."

Here followed the account of the Vicarage, and of the church, but Mrs. Grant knew there was more to come later about Mrs. Brent, and hurried on till she got

to it.

Dinner in the great hall was described, with allusions to the perfection of the service and the livery of the servants. The conversation was much the same as over the luncheon table, and Mrs. Brent took more part in it. There was something different about her air. She was beautifully dressed and her "commonness" seemed to have dropped from her. She was, indeed, rather stately, in the manner of her mother-in-law, whom it struck Grant that she was anxious to copy. After dinner they sat in the long drawing-room, and Wilbraham played the piano, which he did rather well. Soon after Harry had gone to bed, Lady Brent went out of the room to get some silks for her embroidery. Mrs. Brent had offered to get these for her, but she wouldn't let her. Grant was sitting near to Mrs. Brent, and while Wilbraham played softly at the other end of the room he talked to her.

"I said with a smile: 'I think your name used to be very well known in other scenes than this when I was a young man, Mrs. Brent.'

"My dear, I was never more surprised than by the way she took it. She flushed and drew up her head and looked at me straight, and said: 'Pray what do you mean by that, Mr. Grant?'

"I felt like a fool. Of course if Wilbraham hadn't said what he had I should never have thought of addressing her upon the subject. Being what she is now I should have expected that she would not have wanted her origin alluded to. But I have told you exactly what he did say, and certainly I never meant anything but kindness to her. Still, I saw that she might think I was simply taking a liberty, and made what recovery I could. 'I know that you were a great ornament of the stage before you were married,' I said. 'Please forgive me if I ought not to have alluded to it, but you said that you had read my books, and you will know that I take all life for my province; and when one practises one art with all earnestness and sincerity, it is interesting to talk to some one who has made a great success with another.'

"I think this was well said, wasn't it, dear? I'm afraid it was going rather beyond the truth, as, from what Wilbraham had told me, I doubt if she was much more than a chorus girl, and that only for a very short time. But my conscience doesn't prick me for having drawn the long bow a little. I had to disabuse her mind of the idea that I was taking a liberty with her, and I wanted to please her in the way that Wilbraham had indicated.

"She ceased, I think, to take offence, but she said, rather primly, with her eyes on her needlework, which she had taken up again: 'I prefer to forget that I was ever on the stage, Mr. Grant. It was for a very short time, and I simply went to and from my home to the theatre, always attended by a maid—or nearly

always, and sometimes by my mother. When I married I left the stage altogether, and have never been in a theatre since. I don't know how you knew that I had ever belonged to it.'

"She gave me a quick little glance, and I divined somehow that it would give her pleasure to believe that she was remembered. I won't tell you what I said, but while I steered clear of an actual untruth, I did manage to convey the impression that I had recognized her, and I hope I may be forgiven for it. She said hurriedly: 'Well, we won't talk about it any more, for I have nearly forgotten it all, and wish to forget it altogether. And please don't tell Lady Brent that you know who I was. We don't want Harry to know it at all—ever. She's quite right there. Here she comes. You do like Harry, don't you, Mr. Grant? He's such a dear boy. and all the people about here love him.'

"'What, talking about Harry?' said Lady Brent, as she joined us. 'We all talk a great deal about Harry, Mr. Grant. I don't think there is a boy in the world on whom greater hopes are set. We have made him happy between us so far, but I am glad you are coming here with your young people, to bring a little more life into this quiet place. Young people want young life about them. It is the only thing that has been lacking for him. And it is all too short a time before he will have to go out into the world.'

"This all gave me a great deal to think about. I hope I have given you such an account of everything that passed, and the important parts of what was said to make you see it as I do. Consider this kind good lady, gifted more than most, rich, titled, intellectual, calculated to shine in society, yet content to live a quiet life out of the world for the sake of the bright boy upon whom so many hopes depend. She has gone through much trouble, with her only son and her husband reft from her within a few weeks of one another. She cannot have welcomed the wife whom her son had chosen, but she lives in constant companionship with her, and treats her with every consideration. My heart warms towards her. We are indeed fortunate in having such a chatelaine as Lady Brent in the place in which we are to spend our lives and do our work. Of her kindness and thoughtfulness towards myself I have not time to write, as it is getting very late, and I must to bed. But when you come here you will find her everything that you can wish, and I shall be surprised if you do not make a real friend of her, a friend who will last, and on whom you can in all things depend."

When Mrs. Grant had at last finished this voluminous letter, she summoned Miss Minster to her, and read her many passages from it. Miss Minster was the lady who looked after the education of Jane and Pobbles, and had somewhat of a hard task in doing so, though she fulfilled it without showing outward signs of stress.

She was of about the same age as Mrs. Grant—that is in the early thirties, and they had been friends together at school. They were friends now, and Mrs. Grant trusted Miss Minster's judgment in some things more even than she trusted her husband's.

"Somehow, I don't see Lady Brent," said Mrs. Grant, when she had read out all that had been written about her. "She seems to have made a great impression upon David, but it looks to me as if it was the impression she wanted to make."

"If any other man but David had written all that," said Miss Minster, "I should have said that there was something behind it all. I should have said that Lady Brent had some dark reason for keeping herself and the rest of them shut up there, and that this Mr. Wilbraham, who doesn't seem to behave like a tutor at all, was in the conspiracy. As it is, I think his pen has run away with him, and they are all very ordinary people, and there's nothing behind it at all."

"Well, my idea is just the opposite," said Mrs. Grant. "If David had sniffed a story he would have put it in. He doesn't think there is anything behind it. I do. Perhaps Mrs. Brent wasn't married, and this young Sir Harry isn't the rightful heir. That would be a good reason for Lady Brent to lie low. Perhaps Mr. Wilbraham knows about it, which would be the reason for his not behaving like an ordinary tutor; though, as for that, I don't think there's much in it, and he behaves like an ordinary tutor according to David's account just as much as you behave like an ordinary governess."

"A good point as far as it goes," said Miss Minster, "and a joyous life it would be for you if I did behave like an ordinary governess. But you're worse than David in making up twopence coloured stories. I don't think we need worry ourselves about the Brents till we get down there. Then we shall be able to judge for ourselves. No man ever knows what a woman is really like the first time he sees her. Whatever Lady Brent and Mrs. Brent are like, you may depend upon it that we shan't find them in the least as David has described them. Now read what he says about the Vicarage again, and see if we can make anything of that, beyond that it is embowered in massy trees."

CHAPTER III
THE CHILD

When young Sir Harry had made that laughing appeal to the figure framed in

the square of orange light above him, and turned away into the shadows, he had already forgotten that there had been a witness to his escapade.

It was no escapade to him, but a serious quest, about which played all the warm palpitations and eager emotions of high romance. To-night, if ever, with the earth moving towards the soft riot of spring, with the air still and brooding as if summer were already here, though sharp and clean, scoured by the wind and washed to gentleness again by the showers of April, with the moonlight so strong that in the shadows of the trees there was no darkness, but diffused and quivering light hardly less bright than the light of day, and to the eyes of the spirit infinitely more discerning—surely to-night he might hope to see the fairies dancing in their rings, and the little men stealing in and out among the tree-branches!

He longed passionately to see the fairies. The beauty of the earth meant so much to him. All through his childhood his love for it had grown and grown till it had become almost a pain to him. For though it meant so much he did not know what it meant. It had always seemed to be leading him up to something, some great discovery, or some great joy—at least some great emotion—which would give it just that meaning that would tune his soul to it and entrench him safely behind some knowledge, hidden from mortal eyes, where he could survey life as it was, perfect and blissful, and withal secret. The fairies, if he could only look upon them once, would give him the secret. Surely they would not withhold themselves from him on such a night as this.

He pictured himself lying on the warm beech-mast in the shadows of some great tree that stood sentinel over a stretch of moonlit lawn, watching the delicate gossamer figures at their revels, their iridescent wings softly gleaming, their petalled skirts flying, their tiny limbs twinkling; and perhaps he would hear the high tenuous chime of their laughter as they gave themselves up to their delicious merriment. He would lie very still, hardly breathing. The mortal grossness which he felt to be in him should not cast its shadow over their bright evanescent spirit. He would keep, oh, so still, and just watch, and grow happier and happier, and at last—know. The grossness would be purged from him. When the moon drooped and the fairy dancers melted away, he would have seen behind the veil. After that he would never suffer again from the perplexing thought that there was some great thing hidden from him, that just when beauty gripped his soul and seemed to have something to tell him, and he stood ready to receive the message, there was only silence and a sense of loss, which made him sad. Nature would speak to him, as she had always seemed to be speaking to him, but now he would understand, and answer, and life would be more beautiful than it had ever been before.

He had always hugged secrets to himself ever since he could remember, secrets that it would have seemed to him the deepest shame that any one should surprise. Once on a summer's evening, when he had been lying in his little cot by his mother's bed, whiling away the long daylight hour by telling himself a most absorbing story, which at that time he was going through from night to night, he had become so worked up by it that he carried on the dialogue in a clear audible voice. A warning knock came upon the bedroom door, and that particular story was cut short never to be resumed. It was the time when his mother and grandmother were dining, and his nurse and all the other servants were down below. He had not thought that it was possible that he could have been overheard. He had been acting a garden story. The characters were the Garden, the flowers and himself. The Garden was a very kind and gracious lady who led him, a little boy called Arnold, with black straight hair—he preferred that sort to his own fair curls—to one flower after another, and told him whether they had been good or naughty. The flowers were mostly children, but a few, such as geraniums and fuchsias, were grown up. The geraniums never took any notice of him, and he did not like them on that account, but looked the other way when they were rebuked. This fortunately happened but seldom, as they usually behaved with propriety, though stiff and obstinate in character. The roses he often pleaded for, because they were so beautiful. Vanity was their besetting sin, and the Garden often had to tell them—in language much the same as that used by the Vicar in church—that they were no more in her sight than the humblest and poorest flowers. But he could not bear to see their beautiful petals scattered, which happened as a punishment if they had flaunted themselves beyond hope of forgiveness. It was coming to be his idea, as the story progressed, that some day he would make a strong appeal to the Garden to abolish this punishment altogether. Then no flowers would ever die, but only go to sleep in the winter, and he would be the great hero of the flowers, with hair blacker and straighter than ever, and whenever he went among them they would bow and curtsey to him, but nobody would see them doing it except himself.

On this June evening it was a tall Madonna lily for whom he was pleading in such an impassioned manner. Lilies were very lovely girls, not quite children and not quite grown-up. He had a sentimental affection for them. He would see them incline towards one another as he came near, and hear, or rather make them whisper to one another: "Here is that dear little boy. How good he is! And isn't his hair dark and smooth! I should like to kiss him." (Had he said that aloud, just before the knock came? He would never be able to look the world in the face again if that speech had been heard.) The Garden had accused the lily of leaving her sisters and the place where she belonged to go and talk to a groom in the stables. She might have been kicked by a horse. An example must be made. No

little treats, no sugar on her bread and butter, no favourite stories told her, for a week. The lily had cried, and said she had meant no harm, and wouldn't do it again. He had adjured her not to cry, in very moving terms, which it made him hot all over to imagine overheard, and the lily had said, in no apparent connection with the question under discussion, but in a loud and clear voice: "Arnold is brave and strong; he can run faster than all other boys in the world."

It was just then that the knock came. He was unhappy about it for days, and looked in the faces of all the servants to see if there was any sign of the derision he must have brought upon himself, but could find none, and presently comforted himself with the idea that it was Santa Claus who had knocked at the door; but he dropped the drama of the flowers, and afterwards only whispered the speaking parts of other dramas.

It was not from any lack of love for those about him that he kept his soul's adventures to himself. Of sympathy with them he might instinctively have felt a lack, but he loved everybody with whom he had to do, and everybody loved him. His mother was nearest to him, though his grandmother was felt to be the head of all things and of all people. His mother showed jealousy towards her, but not in her presence. The child divined this, and responded to her craving for his caresses when he was alone with her by little endearments which were very sweet to her. "You and me together, Mummy," he would whisper, snuggling up to her, and stroke her face and kiss her, in a way that he never did when his grandmother was there. He must have divined too that he was the centre of existence for his grandmother, but she never petted him or invited his caresses, though her face showed pleasure when he leant against her knee and prattled to her, which he did without any fear, and as if it was natural that they two should have much to say to one another.

During his earliest days his mother often wept stormily, and there was great antagonism between her and the old nurse, who had also nursed his father. But when he was five years old the nurse suddenly went away, and his mother's weepings, which had saddened and sometimes frightened him, as she clutched him to her and rocked to and fro over him, ceased, so that he presently forgot them. She did much for him herself that the nurse had done before, with the help of a girl from the village, who became a close friend of his, though not in a way to cause his mother jealousy.

Eliza was slow and rather stupid, but she could tell half a dozen stories. She told them in stilted fashion, and never varied the manner, and hardly the words, of her telling. If she did so, he would correct her. By and by she became rather like a dull priest intoning a liturgy, known so well that there was no call to attend to the meeting. He could see after all that himself, and wanted no variations or emotion of hers to get between him and the pictures that her monotonous drone

projected on the curtain of his brain. He was the hero of all the stories himself, and carried them far beyond the bounds of the liturgy. As Jack the Giant-killer, he engaged with foes unknown to fairy lore. As the Beast he drew such interest from his mastery over other beasts that his transformation into a Prince with straight black hair was always being postponed, and was finally dropped out of his own story altogether, together with Beauty, who had become somewhat of a meddler with things that she couldn't be expected to understand. He was Cinderella in the story of that time, because of riding in the coach made out of a pumpkin, and the mice turned into horses, but never felt at home in the character until he turned the story round and gave the leading part to the Prince, with Cinderella's adventures adapted to male habits and dignity.

With Eliza in attendance he sometimes played for hours together in the garden, and he could get away from her if he was careful never to be right out of her sight or hearing. It was then that the drama of the garden and the flowers began, but when it came to an end he returned to the fairy stories.

His mother told him stories too at his earnest pleading. But they were never the same twice running and had little point for him. He much preferred Eliza's rigid version of the classical stories, and the others were all about beautiful girls who married very handsome, noble, rich men, but the men never did anything except love the girls to distraction and give them beautiful presents. There was no ground for his imagination to work on, except in the matter of the presents, and of these he demanded ever growing catalogues, suggesting many additions of his own, so that if his mother remembered these and kept to them, there was some interest to be got out of her stories, but not enough to vie with that of Eliza's repertoire.

His grandmother had no stories, but when he was a little older she told him about his ancestors, who had done a good deal of fighting at one time or another throughout the centuries, which gave him plenty of material. He knew that she got her information from books in the library, and he was encouraged to persevere with his letters so that he would be able to read those books for himself. He gained from her the impression that his family was above other families, and that in some way which he didn't quite understand, seeing that he was subject to her, and to his mother, and even to Eliza, its superiority was also his in a special measure. He must never do anything that would lessen it. He must not be too familiar with servants, and especially with grooms in the stable. He would hang his head at this, for it was the weak point in his behaviour. He was apt to be beguiled by the society of grooms in the stable, to the extent even of using expressions unallowable in the society of his equals. But though he was to bear himself high, he was to deal kindly with those at the same time beneath him and around him; and he was to look upon Royd all his life as the place to

which he belonged. He would go away from it sometimes when he was older, but he must never be away for long, and never get to like being away. This was what young men did sometimes, and it was not good for them. It was not right.

Such exordiums as these, varied in manner but never in principle, continued throughout his childhood, and had a strong effect upon him. A child has a natural preoccupation with the question of right and wrong and it fitted in with all that Harry had learnt for himself that it was right for him to be at Royd and would be wrong for him to be away. He could not imagine any other place that would suit him better, or indeed nearly so well. His mother would sometimes talk to him, when he grew older, of the lights and the movement and the heartening crowds of London. She would do it half furtively, and he understood, without being told, that he must keep the fact of her doing so at all from his grandmother. But he had no wish to talk about it. The picture did not please him. He gained the impression of London as a dirty noisy place, and Royd shone all the more brightly in comparison with it. His mother never mentioned the theatre.

She talked to him sometimes about his father. He had been a soldier—a very brave soldier—like all the rest of the Brents. Harry would be a soldier himself some day, but she prayed that he would not have to go out and fight. He would wear a beautiful red coat with a sash and a sword, and a noble bearskin on his head. There was a photograph of his father, not in this uniform, but in service kit, taken just after his marriage. It showed a good-looking young man, amiable but weak. It was the only photograph of him that Mrs. Brent had in her room. Lady Brent had many photographs of him, but this one was not among them. As a child he had been very like Harry. Lady-Brent seldom mentioned him, and to her daughter-in-law never. Harry knew after a time, as children come to know such things, that she had loved him very dearly. She had all those reminders of his childhood and youth about her. His mother had only the one. She had known him for a few weeks. All the rest of his life had belonged to his own mother, and she was shut out of it. Her references to him, indeed, were hardly more than perfunctory. The poor bewildered little lady had loved him, and looked to him, perhaps, to translate her to a more glamorous life. The life of dignity was hers, but without him, and sometimes it lay very heavy upon her. But she had her child. Nothing mattered much as long as she was allowed to love him and to keep his love.

A French nursery governess came when Harry was five years old, Eliza, who showed great jealousy of her, not unmixed with contempt for her absurd speech and foreign ways, being also retained. She was a gentle little thing, and, when she had got over her homesickness, bright and gay. She loved the child dearly, and he was soon prattling to her in her own language, piping little French songs, and repeating verses with his hands behind his back and his head on one

side, to the great pride of his mother and grandmother. Mrs. Brent made a surreptitious friend of Mademoiselle, and even went so far as to take lessons of her in French. Lady Brent spoke French with an accent "*tout a fait distingué*." Mademoiselle had observed that this was the mark of "*la vraie grande dame Anglaise*" and perhaps Mrs. Brent imagined that the accomplishment would bring her more into line. But it was irksome to sit down to grammar and exercises, and somehow she "never could get her tongue round the queer sounds." It was easier to help Mademoiselle on with her English, and soon they had their heads together constantly, comparing notes about the life of Blois and the life of London, which was so gay and so different from this life of the château, so magnificent but so dull and so always the same. But Harry was not to know that either of them felt like that about it, and the little French girl had enough of the spirit of romance in her to judge his surroundings of castle and park, and wide tract of country over which by and by he was to rule, as fitting to him. It was, after all, the bourgeois life that she and Mrs. Brent pined for, the one in France, the other in England. She recognized that, but when she intimated as much to Mrs. Brent that lady was up in arms at once, and the intimacy between them nearly came to an end. Let it be understood that the life she had known in London was very different from the life Mademoiselle had known in a provincial French city. Hers had been the life of the great lady, in London as well as at Royd, and it was that part of the great lady's life that she missed. Perhaps Mademoiselle, in her ignorance of English customs, believed it, perhaps she didn't; but she adopted the required basis of conversation, and the friendship continued. Mrs. Brent took little trouble to assert her gentility, when once it was accepted, and spoke often of her family, who lived in Kentish Town, where she had been so happy, in a way that must have given Mademoiselle some curious ideas of the ways of the British aristocracy, supposing her to have believed in the claim set up.

But all this passed over the child's head. Mademoiselle had stories to tell him of the old nobility of Touraine, which she was clever enough to connect in his mind with the stories his grandmother told him of his own knightly forbears. It was from that life he had sprung. The ancient glories of the French châteaux were allied to those of his noble English castle. The romance and chivalry were the same. Lady Brent approved very highly of Mademoiselle, and when she went back to France after two years, to fulfil the marriage contract that her parents had made for her, gave her a present which added substantially to her *dot*.

Then Mr. Wilbraham came, and Harry began his education in earnest.

Lady Brent had gone up to London to find a successor for Mademoiselle. She was to be a highly educated Englishwoman, who was to give place to a tutor in three or four years' time. Harry was not to go to school; he was to spend the whole of his boyhood at Royd, but he was to be taught all the things that

boys of his class learnt, except the things that Lady Brent didn't want him to learn—including that precocious knowledge of the world which had entangled his father, and in effect brought Mrs. Brent into the family.

Lady Brent brought Mr. Wilbraham back with her, and never explained why she had changed her plan. In some things she made a confidante of her daughter-in-law; in others she acted as if she had no more to say in her child's upbringing than Eliza. And Mrs. Brent never thought of asking her for an explanation of anything if she volunteered none.

Mr. Wilbraham was then a dejected young man of four or five and twenty. He volunteered no explanation of his substitution for the lady of high education either; nor, indeed, of his past history. It was a long time before Mrs. Brent, who liked to find out things about people, and especially anything that indicated their social status, knew that his father had been a clergyman, and that he expected some day to be a clergyman himself. And that was all that she did know, until he had been at Royd for years, and seemed likely to be there for ever; for gradually he dropped talking about taking orders. She had an idea that there was some secret between him and Lady Brent, but the idea died away as time went on, and at last he told her, quite casually, that he had gained his post at Royd through a Scholastic Agency. Lady Brent had gone there for a tutor, and she had engaged him. That was all. It did not explain why she had changed her mind; but by that time her change of mind had been almost forgotten. Mr. Wilbraham was an integral part of life at Royd Castle.

Harry liked him from the first. He was a good teacher, and there was never any trouble about lessons. Outside lesson time he was not expected to be on duty, and when the boy grew older their companionship was entirely friendly and unofficial. Mr. Wilbraham introduced Harry to all the rich lore of Greek mythology. Here was matter for romance, indeed! Royd became peopled with nymphs and dryads and satyrs, and fabulous but undreaded monsters. Harry knew that Diana hunted the deer in the park when the moon shone; he often heard Pan fluting in the woods, and centaurs galloping over the turf. When he was taken over to Rington Cove, six miles away, he saw the rock upon which the mermaids sat and combed their hair, and on the yellow sands the print of the nereid's dancing feet. It was all very real to him, and Mr. Wilbraham never even smiled at his fancies. That was one of the reasons why he liked him.

CHAPTER IV

FAIRIES

Harry lay quite still under a great tree, his chin propped on his hands, his eyes fixed upon a spot in the glade where he knew there was a fairy ring, upon which he was sure that if he gazed long enough with his eyes clear and his brain free, he would see the gossamer fairies dancing. His couch of beech-mast was dry under him, and not a breath of air stirred the warmth that had settled there during a sunny day, though cool fingers seemed to be touching his cheeks now and then, as of the spirit of the young spring. He was happy and at peace with himself, and his happiness grew as the long minutes passed over him. His world was whole and good all around him. His life contained no regrets and no unfulfilled desires, except this one of learning the secret of his happiness, which touched him as the fingers of the still April night were touching him, to more alertness, not to any trouble or disturbance of mind. Besides, the secret was coming to him at last. He must believe that, or it would not come. And he did believe it. He no more doubted that he would see the fairies under to-night's moon than he doubted of his body, lying there motionless. Indeed, his spirit was more alive than his body, which was in a strange state of quiescence, so that it was not difficult to keep perfectly still for as long as it should be necessary, and no discomfort arose from his immobility.

If Lady Brent was sometimes criticized, as she was, for keeping the boy away from the intercourse that prepared other boys of his age and rank for playing their part in the world, and the criticism had reached her ears, she need have done no more than point to him as he was at the threshold of his manhood, for justification. Shut up in a great house, with two women and a lazy tame-cat of a man; never seeing anybody outside from one year's end to another; no young people about him; no chance even of playing a game with other boys—those were the accusations, brought by Mrs. Fearon, for instance, wife of the Rector of Poldaven, seven miles away, who had sons and daughters round about Harry's age, would have liked them to be in constant companionship with him, and was virulent against Lady Brent, because she would have no such companionship in any degree whatsoever. The boy would grow up a regular milksop. He couldn't always be kept shut up at Royd, and when he did go out into the world the foolish woman would see what a mistake she had made. His own father had made a pretty mess of it, and his early death was no doubt a blessing in disguise. Harry would have even less experience to guide him. It would be a wonder if he did not kick over the traces entirely, and bring actual disgrace upon his name.

Thus Mrs. Fearon, not too happy in the way her own sons were turning out, though they had had all the advantages that Harry lacked, and at her wits' end to cope with the discontent of her elder daughters.

Poldaven Rectory was the only house of any size within a seven-mile radius of Royd except Poldaven Castle, which was hardly ever inhabited. One summer, when Harry was about eight years old, Lady Avalon brought her young family there, and settled them with nurses and governess, while she herself made occasional appearances to see how they were getting on. There was going and coming during that summer between Royd and Poldaven. Harry would be taken there to play with the little Pawles, and a carriage full of them would appear every now and then to spend a long day at Royd. Of all the large family, there was only one with whom he found himself in accord. The little Lords were noisy and grasping, the little Ladies dull and mincing. But one of the girls, Sidney, of exactly the same age as himself, was different from the rest. The two children would go off together, and when out of sight of nurses and governess Sidney became quite natural and they would talk and play games entirely happy in one another's company until they were discovered by the rest, and the disputes would begin again, and the eternal cleavage between male and female. Lady Avalon happened to be there, they were encouraged to be together and she and Lady Brent would have their heads close as they watched them. A sweet little couple, hand in hand—the boy so straight and handsome, the girl so pretty and naturally gay. There was match-making going on, and the nurses were in it too, and left them alone together, and often prevented the other children from seeking them out.

When the Pawle children went away after their secluded summer, Harry and Sidney kissed gravely, under command of the head-nurse, who called them "little sweet'earts." But the kiss meant nothing to Harry, since he had been told to proffer it. He would rather have kissed Lady Ursula, a large-eyed pink and flaxen damsel of twelve, for whom he had an admiration, though she never had much to say to him, and there was no interest in her companionship as there was in Sidney's. He missed Sidney when they went away, but not for long, and by this time he had almost forgotten her. For Poldaven Castle had remained empty ever since that summer, and if Lady Brent had formed any premature matrimonial plans for her grandson she seemed to have forgotten them, for she scarcely ever mentioned the names of her one-time neighbours, and never that of Sidney Pawle, except once when the news of Lady Ursula's marriage was in all the papers. Then she said that Ursula was a beautiful girl, but Sidney had always been her favourite. Harry looked at the picture of bride and bridesmaids. He remembered how he had admired Ursula's beauty, and she was beautiful now, but he hardly recognized her; grown-up, she seemed a generation older. Sidney was recognizable in the photograph; she was not yet grown up. But she looked

different too, in her silken finery. Lady Avalon must have been economizing in her children's clothes during that summer at Poldaven, for the girls had never been dressed in anything more elaborate than linen and rough straw. Somehow this bridesmaid Sidney was different from his old playmate. He could not imagine her playing the Princess to his rescuing knight, as she had done once or twice when they had got quite away by themselves; or indeed his letting her into any of that kind of secret, now. He put the paper away and forgot her afresh.

Harry played no outdoor games in his boyhood, except the games he made up for himself. But he was a horseman from his earliest years. Lady Brent encouraged it, when he was once old enough to go to the stables without fear of danger. He had first a tiny little Shetland, then a forest-bred pony, and a horse when he was big enough to ride one. He roamed all over the country, happy to be by himself and indulge his daydreams. His handsome young face and slim supple boy's figure were known far and wide. He had friends among farmers and cottage people, but the few of his own class who lived in that sparsely populated country he was inclined to avoid. They thought it was by his grandmother's direction, but though it suited her that he should do so, it was in truth from a kind of shyness that he kept away from them. His isolation was beginning to bear fruit. The boys of his own age whom he occasionally came across seemed to have nothing in common with him, nor he with them. The girls eyed him curiously, if admiringly, and he had nothing to talk to them about. He was happier by himself, or with his horse and his dogs. But he was never really by himself. He could always conjure up brave knights and gentle ladies to ride with him through the woods or by the sea, if he wanted company. There was a whole world of varied characters about him, from the highest to the lowest, and his imagination did not stop at mortal companionship; he walked with gods and heroes as often as with men and women.

No one about him suspected this inner life of his, as real to him as his outer life, and still more important. To his mother and grandmother he was a bright active boy, with the outdoor tastes of a boy, who slept soundly, ate enormously, and behaved himself just as a well brought-up boy should. To his tutor he was a pleasant companion during the hours they spent together, and one who did credit to his teaching. Wilbraham had his scholarly tastes and perceptions. He would have hated the drudgery of teaching an ordinary boy who made heavy work of his lessons, but this boy took an interest in them. It is true that there were surprising gaps in the course of study that they followed. Greek and Latin, and English and French literature took up very nearly all their time and attention. Wilbraham looked forward with some apprehension to the time when he should have to tell Lady Brent that in order to prepare Harry for any examination extra cramming would be necessary by somebody else in the subjects that he had neglected. But

at sixteen the boy was a fair classical scholar, and his range of reading was wider than that of many University honours men.

Harry was fortunate in having the Vicar to help and encourage him in his Natural History studies, for this was a subject in which Wilbraham took no interest. Mr. Thomson was an old bachelor, who had been Vicar of Royd for over forty years. His house was a museum, and Harry revelled in it. No doubt he would have developed his tastes in that direction without any guidance, but Mr. Thomson put him on the right lines, and was overjoyed, at the end of his life, to have so apt a pupil. He took him out birds' nesting, geologizing, botanizing, and encouraged him to form his own collections though the boy showed no great keenness in this form of acquisition. He wanted to know about everything around him but to collect specimens did not greatly interest him. However, he was proud enough when the old man died and bequeathed to him all his treasures. At this time he was arranging them in a couple of rooms that had been given up to them in the Castle. But the excitement was already beginning to wear a little thin. When he was not working with Wilbraham he always wanted to be out of doors, even in bad weather. And he missed his old friend; it made him rather sad to be poring over the cases and shelves and cabinets that had been so much a part of him.

Part of the old Vicar's preoccupation had been with the antiquities of the country in which he had lived. He had collected legends and folk-lore, perhaps in rather a dry-as-dust way; but it was all material for the boy's glowing imagination to work upon. All the books were there, now in Harry's possession, and many manuscript notes, too. And scattered over the country were the remnants of old beliefs and old rites, which took one right back to the dim ages of the past. There was a cromlech within the park walls of Royd itself, and from it could be seen a shining stretch of sea under which lay, according to ancient tradition, a deep-forested land that had once been alive with romance. All this was very real to Harry, too. The figures of Celtic heroes mixed themselves up with those of the classical gods and heroes. The fairies and pixies of his own romantic land were still more real to him than the fauns and dryads of ancient Greece; as he grew older his expectation of meeting with a stray woodland nymph during his forest rambles died away, but he was more firmly convinced than ever that the native fairies were all about him, if he could only see them.

He lay for a very long time under the beech, quite motionless, but with his senses acutely alert. He heard every tiny sound made by the creatures of the night, and of nature which sleeps but lightly under the moon, and took in all their meaning, but without thinking about them. The shadow cast by the tree under which he was lying had shifted an appreciable space over the brightly illumined grass since

he had stirred a muscle. And all the time his expectation grew.

He was in a strangely exalted state, but penetrated through and through with a deep sense of calm, and of being in absolute tune with the time and place. If no revelation of the hidden meaning of nature came to him to-night, before the set of the moon, he would arise and go home, not disappointed and vaguely unhappy, as he had done before, but with his belief in that hidden meaning destroyed. Only he knew now that that could not happen. When he had stolen out into the night, he had hoped that he might see something that he had never seen before. Now he knew that he would. He had only to wait until the revelation should come. And he was quite content to wait, in patience that grew if anything as the shadows lengthened towards the east.

He made not the slightest movement, nor was conscious of any quickening of emotion, when the sight he had expected did break upon his eyes. It came suddenly, but with no sense of suddenness. At one moment there was the empty moon-white glade, at the next there were tiny fairies dancing in a ring, so sweet, so light, so gay. And in the middle of them, rhythmically waving her wand, was the queen—Titania perhaps, but he did not think about that until afterwards. Their wings were iridescent, from their gauzy garments was diffused faint light, hardly brighter than the light of the moon, hardly warmer, and yet different, with more glow in it, more colour.

He heard the silvery chime of their laughter—just once. Then where they had been there was nothing.

He arose at once. He had no expectation of seeing them again. He did not go down to the place where they had been, but made his way home by a path under the trees. His mind was full of a deep content. The fairies were, and he had seen them.

CHAPTER V
MRS. BRENT

Mrs. Grant was sitting in her drawing-room at Royd Vicarage. It was a lovely

hot June morning, and she was at her needlework by the French windows, which were pleasantly open to the garden. The rich sweet peace of early summer brooded over shaven lawn and bright flower beds, and was consummated by the drone of the bees, which were as busy as if they were aware of their reputation and were anxious to live up to it. Under the shade of a lime at the corner of the lawn slumbered the Vicarage baby in her perambulator, so placidly that the very spirit of peace seemed to have descended on her infant head. It was eleven o'clock in the morning, and there was nothing to disturb the calm contentment with which Mrs. Grant plied her needle, singing a little song to herself, and occasionally casting an eye in the direction of the perambulator and its precious contents. Jane and Pobbles were at their lessons with Miss Minster, or the scene would not have been so peaceful. The Vicar was in his study, happily at work on a moving chapter of his latest work; for it was Monday, when clerical duties were in abeyance.

He had been at Royd for over a year, and found the place delightfully suited to his taste. He felt his inventive powers blossoming as never before. The first novel he had written at Royd had not long since been published, and its modest popularity was now being reflected in the literary and advertisement columns of the newspapers. It had already brought him an offer for the serial rights of his next novel, from a magazine of good standing, which did not pay high prices, but did demand a high moral tone in the fiction it published, and made quite a good thing out of it. It was all grist to the mill. Royd Vicarage was a good-sized house and cost more to live in comfortably than he or his wife had anticipated, and his income as an incumbent, with all the deductions that had to be made from it, was hardly higher than his stipend as a curate had been. But he had a little money of his own, and his wife had a little money, and with the income that came from the novels there was enough; and it was beginning to look as if there might be a good deal more, perhaps a great deal more. Novelists with less in them than he felt himself to possess were making their two or three thousand a year. Anything in the way of large popularity might happen within the next year. In the meantime life was exceedingly pleasant, and even exciting, with all those possibilities to build upon. He would leave his work sometimes and come into the room where his wife was, rubbing his hands, to tell her how exceedingly jolly it all was. She would look up at him with a smile, pleased to see him so happy, and happy herself, with her nice house, and no anxiety about being able to run it properly.

She was rather expecting a visit from him this morning, for he had told her that he was going to set to work on a new chapter, and when he had settled what it was going to be he would usually come and tell her about it before he began to write. She thought it was he when the door opened; but it was Mrs. Brent, who

sometimes looked in and sat with her for a time in the morning.

Mrs. Brent was well dressed, in the summer attire of a country-woman, but with her fluffy hair, and face that had been pretty in her youth but was pretty no longer, she looked somehow as if she had dressed for the part; and the air of "commonness," not always apparent in her, was there this morning. The corners of her mouth drooped, and there was an appearance of discontent, and even sullenness about her.

She brightened up a little as she greeted Mrs. Grant, and sat down opposite to her on a low chair by the window. "Oh, I do like coming here," she said. "It's so peaceful. And it's such a quiet pretty room."

The room was rather barely furnished, but what there was in it was good, and there were a great many flowers. To buy old things for this and other rooms of the house was to be one of the first results of the expected increase of income, but it was doubtful whether the charm of this room would be much enhanced. For it was quiet, as Mrs. Brent said, and quietness is a valuable quality in a room.

Mrs. Grant looked round her with satisfaction. "It *is* nice," she said. "We are very happy here. I don't think I'd change Royd for any place in the world."

"I would," said Mrs. Brent. "I'm fed up with it."

Mrs. Grant threw a glance at her. She was looking down, and the sullenness had returned to her face.

"Fed up to the teeth," she said.

She looked up in her turn. Behind the discontent was an appeal. Mrs. Grant felt suddenly very sorry for her. If she was a little common, she was also rather pathetic—a middle-aged child, out of place and out of tune.

"I think it would do you good to have a change sometimes," Mrs. Grant said. "However beautiful a place is, one wants a change occasionally."

"*She* doesn't," said Mrs. Brent vindictively. "So she thinks nobody else ought to either."

It was coming at last, then. Mrs. Grant had formed her own opinion of Lady Brent long since, and it did not entirely coincide with the opinion that her husband had formed, though she had not told him so. Lady Brent had been all that could have been expected towards themselves—kind and hospitable, and within limits friendly. She had offered no real intimacy, and after a year's intercourse it was plain that she had none to offer; but it was also plain that the intercourse need never be otherwise than smooth and even pleasant, if the limitations were observed. Mrs. Brent, on the other hand, had shown that she wanted intimacy. Mrs. Grant could not give any deep measure of friendship to one in whom there seemed to be no depths, but she could talk to Mrs. Brent about many things, about Harry and about her own children in particular, and find a response that made for friendship. She could talk, too, about the events of her own life, but was

chary of doing so, because it would seem to be asking for confidences in return, and she was not sure that she wanted them. There was always in the background the feeling that Mrs. Brent and her mother-in-law were antagonistic, in spite of the apparent harmony between them; and of late that feeling had increased. Mrs. Brent was such that the gates of her lips once unlocked she would express her antagonism, and it would no longer be possible to treat it as if it did not exist. That time seemed to have come now.

"I hate that woman," said Mrs. Brent, "and I won't put up with it any longer."

There was the slightest little pause before Mrs. Grant replied. "Why do you hate her? I can understand your wanting to get away sometimes; but she always seems to me to treat you nicely; and of course she is extremely nice to us. I should be sorry to quarrel with her in any way."

"No doubt you would," said Mrs. Brent drily. "You'd get the rough side of her tongue pretty quick, and you wouldn't forget it in a hurry."

Mrs. Grant was a little shocked. This new plain-spoken Mrs. Brent was more of a personage than the carefully behaved lady always anxious to be making a good impression that she had hitherto appeared; but she seemed out of the Royd picture—and all the more so if Harry and not Lady Brent were regarded as its central figure. The suggestion of Lady Brent as a virago was also rather startling.

"Oh, I don't mean to say that she'd use bad language," said Mrs. Brent, in reply to some demur. "That's not her little way. I won't tell you what her little way is, but she's always the *lady*. I'm not, you see. That's what's the matter with me. I'm Lottie Lansdowne, who danced on the stage, and never allowed to forget it, though you can tell of yourself, since you've been here, that I've *tried* hard enough to play the game—for Harry's sake, I have—and been at it for the last seventeen years; and now I'm getting a bit sick of it."

She was in tears, and Mrs. Grant felt a strong emotion of pity towards her. She leant forward. "My dear," she said, "I think it's splendid the way you sink yourself for Harry's sake. You mustn't give up doing it, you know. It has paid—hasn't it?—to have him brought up here, out of the world, in the way that you and Lady Brent have done. He's the dearest boy. *I* consider that you have had more to do with the success of it than she has. He loves you more, for one thing; and if he sees you living here as if you belonged to it all——"

"Oh, I know," said Mrs. Brent, drying her eyes. "I made up my mind about that years ago, and I'm not going back on it. I suppose when he gets older and begins to see things for himself, he'll see that I *don't* really belong. I've got that before me, you know. *She* knows it too, and of course doesn't care. It'll suit her. *She'll* come out all right, but I shan't. The only thing is that he does love me, and he can't really love her. I don't see how anybody could. I'm glad you said

that. I love you for saying it. I can talk to you, and I'm sure it's a relief to talk to somebody. There's Wilbraham, but he's as much up against her now as I am; we only make each other worse. You do think it's all right so far, don't you? With Harry, I mean. He couldn't be nicer than he is, if his mother had been born a lady. Of course I wasn't, whatever I may pretend. I haven't got in the way, have I? She can't bring that up against me."

"Oh, no! Oh, no! You mustn't think that. You're part of it all to him. I said that and I meant it."

She settled herself back more easily in her chair. "Well, I believe I am," she said. "I've tried to make myself. I love him dearly, and I'd do anything for his sake. It's been right to bring him up quietly here. She's been right there. I'll say that for her, though I hate her."

"You don't really hate her," said Mrs. Grant; "and I don't think you've any reason to. What she has done has been for Harry's sake too."

"It has been for the sake of the Brent family. Her son married beneath him—so she says—though I'd have made him a good wife, and though I loved him I knew he wasn't all he might have been. She's going to see that Harry doesn't run any risk of doing the same. Well, I'm with her there. I don't want Harry to be mixed up with what I come from. But there's nothing nasty about it. It's only that we weren't up in the world. Do you know I haven't so much as set eyes on my own people since Harry was born? Why shouldn't I? I'm flesh and blood. My father died since I came here, and mother's getting on. She was nearly fifty when I was married."

"Do you mean that Lady Brent——?"

"Oh, it was me too. I said that I'd give them up when I came here. The fact is that I wasn't best pleased with them at that time. I'd promised Harry—my husband, I mean; they're all called Harry—not to say I was married till he came home. Poor boy, he never did come home, but before that—well, they said things—at least, mother did—that made me furious. I kept my promise to him till I heard he'd been killed, poor boy. Then I let them have it. Perhaps I hadn't learnt quite so many manners then as I have since, though I was always considered refined by the other girls in the company. Anyhow, it ended in my saying I never wanted to see them again, and we never even wrote till poor father died. Still, I've forgiven them now, it's so long ago, and I cried when father died, and wrote to mother. I was very fond of father. He used to take me on his knee when I was little and read stories out of the Bible to me. He was a religious man, and didn't like my going on the stage. Sometimes I wish I'd never gone. Emily, my next oldest sister, went into millinery and did well. She married long ago and has a boy nearly as old as Harry, though of course he'd be very different. Mother said she had a nice house out Hendon way, when she wrote, and three little girls,

as well as a boy. I dare say I should have been much happier like that, though I shouldn't have had Harry. But it couldn't do Harry any harm now if I just went up and saw them sometimes. I needn't even say I was going to see them or anything about them. Why shouldn't I go to London for a week, as other ladies do, to see their dressmaker or something? I think it's more London I want than mother, if you ask me. Oh, just to see the lights and the pavements, and the people jostling one another! I'm like famished for it."

She threw out her hands with a curious stagy gesture that was yet a natural one, and her nostrils seemed to dilate, as if she were actually sniffing the atmosphere she so much desired. "I'm going," she said. "I don't care what she says."

"I don't see why you shouldn't go," said Mrs. Grant. "But why should Lady Brent object? What can she say?"

Mrs. Brent leant forward. "Couldn't you ask her for me?" she said coaxingly. "Tell her you think I ought to have a change. I'm young, you know. At least I'm not old yet. It can't be right for me to be buried down here year after year. I shan't get into mischief. Just a week!"

Mrs. Grant felt intensely uncomfortable. Get into mischief! What *did* it all mean? Lady Brent must have some reason for keeping the frivolous pathetic little thing shut up like this? And yet she had seemed to disclose everything; she had dropped every trace of pretence, and had made her appeal for sympathy on the grounds of her very unsuitability to be where she was. If she no longer cared, before this friend, to keep up the fiction of having sprung from a superior station in life, which from such as she was a great concession to candour, how could she wish to keep anything back?

"You know I'm your friend," Mrs. Grant said. "I'd do anything I could to help you, but you see how it is with us here. We shall never be close friends with Lady Brent; I don't think she wants it. But she's kind and well-disposed towards us. I couldn't run the risk of setting her against us, unless I were *quite* certain that—I mean quite certain of my ground. It wouldn't be fair to my husband. It would make all the difference to us here if we were not on good terms with her. Have you told me everything? *Why* should she think you might get into mischief?"

She put this aside lightly. "Oh, there's nothing in that. It's only what she'd say. She'd say anything. But I see I ought not to ask you. No, it wouldn't be fair to bring you into it. She'd have it up against you; you're quite right. I tell you this, Mrs. Grant; when Harry comes of age—or before that, when he goes to Sandhurst—I'm off. No more of this for me. I shall snap my fingers at her. But of course you've got to stay here. No, I'll tackle her myself, and see if I can't get my own way for once."

She sprang up. "I'll go and do it now," she said. "No time like the present."

She laughed, and kissed Mrs. Grant. "Good-bye, dear," she said. "It does me good to talk to you; you're so understanding. And it does me good to have you here—you and your nice kind clever husband and your *sweet* children. Ah, if I'd had a bit of real family life with *my* poor boy!—it might have been here or anywhere; I shouldn't have cared where it was—it would all have been very different. Now I'll go and tackle the old dragon while I'm fresh for it. Good-bye, dear; I'll go out through the garden."

She went out by the window, and stopped to look at the sleeping baby as she crossed the lawn, smiling and making a little motion of the hand towards Mrs. Grant as she did so. Then she disappeared behind the shrubbery.

Mrs. Grant laid down her work and went to refresh herself with a look at the baby. As she turned back, her husband came out of his room, which was next to the drawing-room and also opened on to the garden.

His face was serious. "I didn't know you had Mrs. Brent with you," he said. "I've had Wilbraham. They're all at loggerheads up at the Castle, Ethel. I don't quite know what to do about it. I don't want to get up against Lady Brent; but——"

She told him of Mrs. Brent's prospective revolt. "She asked *me* to talk to her," she said. "But I said the same as you do. We don't want to get up against her. What is the trouble with Mr. Wilbraham?"

"Much the same as with Mrs. Brent apparently. He's fed up with it too. He wants to get away."

"What, for always?"

"Oh, no. He's too fond of Harry for that. Besides, he's very comfortable here—has everything he wants. I told him that, and he didn't deny it. But he seems to have developed a furious hatred of Lady Brent. I really can't tell you why. He couldn't tell me, when I pressed him. He's morose and gloomy. He says he must get away from her for a time, or he'll go off his head."

"But surely he can take a holiday sometimes if he wants to!"

"It almost looks as if she wouldn't let him go off by himself. He asked me to go with him, for a month. He offered to pay all expenses and go where I liked. In the old days I might have been tempted—if you'd thought it would be a good thing to do. But I don't want to go away from here just now—at this lovely time of year, with the work and everything going so well. Of course I could write, but—— Anyhow I don't know who I should get to do my duty. If I thought it would really put things right! What do you think? Ought I to do it?"

"I don't know, dear. I don't understand what's going on. It looks to me as if there must be something behind it all that we don't know of."

He laughed at her and pinched her chin. "You take the novelist's point of

view," he said. "I don't, which is perhaps rather odd. They're all on each other's nerves. Why don't he and Mrs. Brent go off together?" He laughed again. "He didn't really press it," he said. "He wanted me to go this week. I couldn't do that, anyhow, and when I said so he seemed to drop the idea. He had wanted me to suggest it to Lady Brent just as Mrs. Brent wanted you. They're a queer couple."

"I suppose it's only to be expected that it should be like that sometimes," she said thoughtfully. "I think I could talk to Lady Brent, if she'd only give me the chance."

"I don't think she will, and it wouldn't do to begin it."

"Oh no, I shouldn't do that. But there's Harry. It all comes back to him, you see. If she's mistaken in what she's doing, it's for his sake she's doing it. She might give me an opening there."

"I don't think so. It all passes over Harry's head. It's rather remarkable how normal he is. One might not have expected it under such circumstances. Well, I must get back, dear. Wilbraham has taken a big slice out of my morning. I'm sorry for him and wish I could help him. But I don't see how I can, except by continuing my friendship. I was rather flattered that he should have come and talked to me. He professes to think very little of my knowledge of human nature, you know. But most of that's a pose, and I like him. He went off to tackle Lady Brent himself. Mrs. Brent too, you say. She'll have a happy day of it, I should think."

At this moment the peaceful seclusion of the scene was destroyed by the incursion of Jane and Pobbles, who, released from their studies, came tumultuously round the corner of the house, Jane leading. They woke up the baby, or, as her time for waking up was past, perhaps they only completed the process, and they escaped rebuke for it. Their cry was for Harry. Where was Harry? He had promised to come not a moment later than twelve o'clock, and it was already two minutes past.

Jane was a straight, somewhat leggy child, with the promise of beauty when the time should come for her to accept her dower of femininity. At present she was more like a boy than a girl, except for her long thick plait of fair hair, which she would have given almost anything to be allowed to sacrifice in the interests of freedom. She was aboundingly full of life and the most amazing physical energy. She affected an extreme virility of speech, and exercised a severe discipline over Pobbles, who occasionally raged against it as an offence to his manhood, but as a rule accepted the yoke and prospered under it. He was a handsome child, strong and vigorous too, but without his sister's determined initiative. They were a pair to be proud of, and their parents were proud of them, but found them a handful. Miss Minster could manage them by the exercise of a good-humoured authority which never allowed itself to be rattled. But it was only Harry whose lightest

word they obeyed without question. He was their hero and their most adored playmate. Perhaps Jane showed more femininity in submitting to his direction than was apparent in her attitude towards him, in which there was none to be seen.

Harry came into the garden as they were clamouring their questions, with his retriever wagging its tail at his heels. He was seventeen now, grown almost to his full height, but his face was still that of a boy. There was a radiant look of health and happiness in it. He was extraordinarily good to look at, not only because of his beauty, of form and feature and colouring, which was undeniable, but because of this sort of inward light, which suffused it with a sense of perfection that went right through him. Mrs. Grant caught her breath as she looked at him. She saw him as some wonderful work of God, without flaw, untroubled in his happiness. Whatever disturbances there might be among the figures of coarser clay by whom he was surrounded, there must be some breath of finer spirit in each and all of them, since he stood on the threshold of manhood as he was, here before her eyes.

The matter in hand was the building of a log cabin in a bit of forest that reached down from the wooded hill behind the Vicarage garden. Harry and the children had been working at it for a month or more, and it was to be a very perfect specimen of a log cabin.

"Why haven't you brought the saw?" said Jane, turning upon Pobbles. "Go and fetch it."

"It's your turn," said Pobbles. "Can't always be fetching things for you."

"Be quick," said Jane. "We're wasting time. Come on, Harry, we'll start. He can run after us."

"Don't know where to find the saw," said Pobbles, untruthfully.

"Jane will go and help you," said Harry. "Hurry up, both of you."

Jane put her long legs in rapid motion without a word, Pobbles pounding along after her on his shorter ones. Harry laughed. "That's the way to talk to them," he said.

Jane returned bearing the saw, Pobbles following. They set off immediately for the wood, and the voices of all three of them were heard for a long time in animated conversation through the hot drowsy air.

CHAPTER VI

REVOLT

Lady Brent sat in her business room, engaged in affairs, or apparently so. Business room it was called, but it was little like one except for the large writing-table in the window at which she sat, and as a matter of fact she transacted most of the actual business of house and estate which fell to her share in a room downstairs called the Steward's room, which was far more severely furnished. This large upstairs room, with its deep embrasured window looking on to the park, was her fastness, and she did not often withdraw herself into its seclusion. It was next to her bedroom, and might have been better called her boudoir, but that the ancient and severe splendour of its furnishing would have seemed to rebuke such a name. It was richly carved and panelled, the furniture was heavy and sombre, and lightened by none of the modern touches which made the long drawing-room downstairs, which was mostly used, bright and even gay. This room was as characteristic of the old romantic Castle as any in it. It spoke of a time long gone by, and of a life more austere than modern life is apt to be. There were few comforts in it but a great deal of rich massive dignity. When Lady Brent ensconced herself in it she was the chatelaine of the Castle, seated in state, and as formidable as it was in her power to make herself.

Mrs. Brent, coming in from the Vicarage, wrought up to her purpose, looked for her in the long drawing-room, and not finding her there had the intuition that she was in her business room. She hesitated a little before going upstairs to verify it, making a further draught upon her determination. Of course! She had known that it was coming to a row. She was as sharp as a cartload of monkeys, and had seen that the row was likely to occur just at this very time. That was why she had taken to her business room, when by all usual habits she would have been sitting downstairs or in the garden, during the hour before luncheon.

So thought Mrs. Brent, mounting the oak staircase, and summoning all her resolution. She wouldn't be awed by the stately lady in the stately room. After all, it was only a piece of play-acting. She knew something about play-acting herself. She would be cold and stately too, announce her determination and then go away. She'd show that she wasn't to be put upon. Perhaps it would be easier like that. There would be no leading up to the subject and no discussion after it, as there must have been if she had joined her mother-in-law downstairs, and felt compelled to sit on with her.

But she knew, as she opened the door, that it would not be easier.

"Oh, I wondered where you were. I just wanted to say something to you, if you're not too busy."

The tone did not seem right, somehow, even to herself. Lady Brent turned round from the table at which she was sitting, and took off the tortoise-shell rimmed glasses which she wore for reading and writing. She did not look in the

least degree formidable—a well-preserved, well-dressed, middle-aged lady, not really obliged to wear glasses, even for reading and writing, and not wanting them at all for anything else. "Yes, certainly, Charlotte," she said, "I have nearly finished what I came here to do, and you are not interrupting me at all."

Mrs. Brent had an impulse to make up some trivial message and go away, but conquered it. Her voice shook a little as she said, still standing: "I wish to go up to London, for a few days—say a week—as soon as possible."

Again she had not satisfied herself. She had used the prim reserved tone of a maid giving notice—"I wish to leave at the end of my month." It seemed to her that she had only just prevented herself adding, "my lady."

Lady Brent received it much as she might have received notice from a servant, whose temporary dissatisfaction with her place must not be taken too seriously. "Why do you want to do that?" she asked, in a level, even a kindly voice.

It touched some chord in Mrs. Brent. She had, perhaps, prepared herself for a peremptory refusal, and if it had come she would have been ready to combat it, and obstinate to push her determination through. But supposing her request should, after all, be granted! That would put everything right and save a lot of trouble.

All the irritation she had been piling up against Lady Brent would be dissolved. She did not want to quarrel with her, if it could be avoided. She would have to go on living with her, whether she had a short respite now or not. And it had not always been so very disagreeable to live with her.

"Oh, I must, I really must," she said. "I can't stand it any longer. Just a week! I'll go and see my mother, and be as quiet as possible. Harry needn't know I'm going to her, if you don't want him to, though I don't see what difference it would make."

"I think I do," said Lady Brent quietly. "But perhaps you'd better sit down, and talk it over. What is it you can't stand any longer? If there's anything wrong here we ought to be able to put it right. Only I must first know what it is."

Mrs. Brent sat down. She saw that her appeal had been a mistake. She could not now coldly state her intention and support it against opposition, behaving as one stately lady towards another, as she had pictured it to herself, coming up the staircase. And of course Lady Brent did not mean to let her go, if she could help it.

She sat down in a high-backed Carolean chair. "I don't want to go into all that," she said stiffly. "I shall be able to stand it all right when I come back. A little holiday is what I really want, and what I mean to have. It's not much to ask, after nearly eighteen years. Well, I say ask—but I'm not asking. I'm just telling you that I'm going away on Thursday, or perhaps Friday, and I shall come back in a week—or ten days."

It was not quite the address of one stately lady to another, but it seemed to have served its turn. Lady Brent turned back to her writing-table and took up her rimmed spectacles.

"Very well," she said.

Mrs. Brent sat in her high-backed chair, looking at her. She placed her spectacles upon her well-shaped nose, and took up her pen. Then she said, as calmly as before: "If you tell me you are going there is no more to be said. I'll finish what I'm doing now, before luncheon."

"Then you're ready for me to go; you don't mind," said Mrs. Brent.

"It doesn't much matter whether I mind or not, does it? You tell me you are going. You refuse to discuss it with me?"

"Well, I don't want to make trouble. It's no good talking over things. There's nothing much wrong, really. If I go away now for a bit I shall be all right when I come back. I expect, really, I shall be rather glad to get back."

Lady Brent put down her pen and took off her spectacles. "Oh, but if you go away you won't come back," she said, turning towards her again. "Surely you understand that!"

Mrs. Brent felt that she had been entrapped into an opening unfavourable to herself. Now was the time, if she had it in her, to exercise the restraint and reserve shown by Lady Brent. But it was not in her; she became angry at once, and showed her anger.

"Of course I might have known that you were leading me on," she said bitterly. "I dare say it seems very clever to you, and it's what you're always doing. But I'm not going to give in to it any more. I'm going away—only just for a little holiday—and I'm coming back. You can't prevent me. This is my home. I've lived here getting on for eighteen years—me and my child. I dare say you'd like to keep him and get rid of me. But you can't do it."

"If I wanted to do that I could do it," returned Lady Brent; and, as the statement brought no immediate response, she repeated it, in the same level tone but with slightly increased emphasis. "If I wanted to do that I could do it."

"Perhaps you could do it, by law," said Mrs. Brent. "I don't know anything about the law, except what you've told me. Perhaps you could and perhaps you couldn't. But there's one thing you can't do, and that's take away my child's love for me, though I dare say you'd like to do that too. You don't suppose that if I went away and came back here and you had me turned away from the door, you wouldn't hear something about it from him. You don't suppose that, do you? He's pretty near a man now. You're his guardian till he comes of age; I know that you had yourself made so by the law, and I didn't make any objection; you told me it was best for him, and I believed you. But you'd find it wasn't all a question of law if you tried any game of that sort. I don't know what Harry would do, but

I do know that whatever he did it wouldn't suit your book."

Lady Brent had listened to this speech without showing the smallest sign of discomposure, but her light blue eyes were hard and cold as she said: "There is a good deal of truth in what you say. Your going away would completely upset everything that has been done during the last eighteen years for Harry's benefit. Both you and I have made sacrifices on his behalf. We agreed to do so when you came here before he was born. I have kept strictly to the bargain. I should not, for my own pleasure, live the retired life that I do here, all the year round, with you as my constant companion. For my own sake I should be immensely relieved to say good-bye to you for a time, if it were possible."

"Yes, that's the sort of nasty thing you say."

"Isn't it exactly what you say to me? Why should you suppose your society is any more gratification to me than mine is to you?"

"I wish to goodness you would say good-bye to me, then, for a time. Why isn't it possible? It is possible. I tell you I'm going, and I'm coming back."

"Do you remember anything at all about the bargain we struck when you first came here, or have you forgotten it entirely, after nearly eighteen years, as you say?"

"Of course I remember it. You didn't mince your words then any more than you do now. You made me feel that I was dirt beneath your feet, but you'd put up with me for the sake of preventing my boy—if it was to be a boy—doing what his father had done, and marrying somebody he loved, if you didn't think she was good enough for him."

"You can put it like that if it pleases you. You consented to everything. You yourself wanted the child brought up with nothing to remind him that on one side his birth wasn't suited to his long ancestry on the other. I warned you what the sacrifice would be. It meant giving up your own people, for one thing, and you gladly consented to do that. It meant your doing your utmost to fill the position that I freely offered you here."

"So I have done my utmost."

"And now, when what we agreed to do together has turned out better than either of us could have hoped for, when we are very nearly at the end of it, and can send Harry out into the world what we have made of him here, you want to break the bargain. And why? Not for any good it can possibly do him, but just because you want to go back to what you were before you came here—for your own petty selfish pleasure."

"It isn't that," she said vehemently. "I say it isn't natural that anybody should cut themselves off from their own flesh and blood. I loved my father and he died without me setting eyes on him. You let me write to mother then. I didn't do it without asking you, and——"

"Didn't we strike the bargain afresh then? Didn't I say I was sorry that it should have been required of you to cut yourself off from your family, but that it had already then proved to be the right course? And didn't you agree with me, though it was harder for you to bear then than at any time?"

The tears came. "Of course it was hard, then," she said. "But you were kind to me. So you were when I first came. If I was giving up something, I was going to get something too. All that I'd been was to be forgotten, though it isn't true that I'd been anything that I ought not to have been. Harry was to grow up knowing me as belonging here. You were to be his legal guardian, but he was to be my child."

"Yes, and I might have struck a much harder bargain with you than that. You would have consented. I might have taken the child and paid you off. That's often done, you know, in cases like yours."

She was sobbing now. "You're cruel," she said. "Yes, you are cruel, even when you're pretending to be nice. You like hurting me. Pay me off! Anybody'd think, to hear you talk, I'd been a loose woman."

"I've never said that, or implied it."

"No, you've never said it. You wouldn't dare. But you've made me feel that's how you look at me. Why didn't you pay me off, then, and get rid of me?"

"Exactly. Why didn't I?"

"Well? I'm asking you."

"I was willing to give you your chance. Whatever I may have thought of you, I didn't want to deprive you of your child, or him of his mother, so long as you were ready to make yourself the kind of mother he ought to have had. You said you'd do it. You were grateful to me. You consented to every stipulation I laid down. The chief of them all was that you should break absolutely with your past until he came of age. Then you could do what you liked; it would be between you and him. Now you want to break that stipulation. I say that if you break it on one side you break it on the other; I also say that it would be a very wicked thing to break it, now at this time."

"It wouldn't be if you'd just let me go away for a bit and come back."

"That I won't do. Why do you want to go away? It isn't just to see your mother. I know that well enough. You want the life of London, the life you led there before Harry was born—theatres, and suppers and gaiety, with the sort of people that you ought to be ashamed of mixing yourself up with, when you think about Harry, and what he is. You've done without it for nearly eighteen years. For goodness' sake do without it for a little time longer. Don't knock down what we've been building up for all these years, just for a selfish whim. Think of Harry, not of yourself."

"I do think of him. I love him better than anything in the world. I'd go

barefoot if it was to do something for him."

"You're not asked to go barefoot. All you're asked to do is to go on living the quiet but very comfortable life that you've lived here for years past, and make the best of it. It's what I'm doing myself."

She dried her eyes and rose from her chair. "I see I'm not going to get any kindness from you," she said. "But I'll think about it. Perhaps I shan't go. I've stood it so long that perhaps I can stand it a bit longer. If I was *sure* it was for Harry's good I'd never move out of the place till I was carried out. I'll think about it and let you know."

"You needn't let me know anything," said Lady Brent. "If you go you go, and if you stay you stay."

With that Mrs. Brent left her. She did not immediately return to whatever she had been doing, but sat looking out through the open casement across the open spaces of the park to the woods beyond. Her face was still hard and still watchful. By and by she looked at her watch, and almost immediately a knock came at the door. She answered as if she had been expecting it, and Wilbraham came into the room.

There was a sullen discontented expression on his face, which was unusual with him. He had kind lazy eyes and a whimsical twist on his mobile lips; but all that was obliterated.

He took his seat without invitation in the chair recently vacated by Mrs. Brent. "I want to go away for two or three weeks' holiday," he said, scowling slightly, and handling his bunched fingers. "Now you're going to have that man over from Burport for Harry's mathematics he can do without me—say for a month. He's well up in my subjects. The more he works at his mathematics the better it will be for him."

"Why do you want to go away just now?" she asked, as she had asked of Mrs. Brent.

"Why does anybody ever want to go away?" he said. "I want a holiday, and if I'm to go on here I must have one."

"If you want a holiday from work, there ought to be no difficulty about that. You know what's best for Harry. If you think that Mr. Fletcher will be of more use to him now, by all means arrange it like that and leave yourself altogether free for a time."

"Thanks very much. Of course I shouldn't want to do anything that would keep Harry back. You know that."

"Oh yes, I know that. He was to come first in everything. That was agreed upon between us when you first came here. I saw very soon that I could leave questions of education entirely to you, and I have always done so."

"Well, now I want to go away for a month or so. I'm getting stale. I'm not

doing him justice."

"Perhaps not. I've been feeling that for some little time. But I don't think it would help you to do him justice if you went away so that you could drink, and undo everything that——"

"Lady Brent!" He was startled and outraged, and glared at her terrifically.

She was not moved. "That's what's the matter with you," she said, in the same even voice, "though you may not acknowledge it to yourself. I'm very sorry that this has happened. I had thought that after all these years the craving had left you. I don't think it can be as strong as it was. I ran the risk when I asked you to come here, and helped you over the difficult time. It is years since you told me last that the desire was strong in you, but it was easier to overcome it. What a pity to give way now!"

His deep frown had not altered while she was speaking. "Give way!" he echoed. "I've no intention of giving way. You've no right to speak of that at all. It was all over long ago."

"I helped you to get over it, didn't I?"

"Yes, you did. I'm not denying it. You can be a good friend to a man when it suits you; to a woman too, I dare say. But you're difficult to live with. I want to get away for a time. There's nothing to fear, of that old weakness. Perhaps I ought not to resent your bringing it up against me, but——"

"You wouldn't resent it if what I say wasn't true. You may not know it yourself, but you're playing with the idea of giving way. If you did give way you'd be very sorry for it afterwards, no doubt, but the mischief would have been done. You'd no longer be a fit companion for Harry. It's him I'm thinking about. You can do what you like, but if you go away you don't come back. It's what I've just said to Charlotte, who wants the same as you do. I'm not going to have everything spoilt when our task is coming near its end. If she's a foolish woman, you're an intelligent man. You can see it all as well as I can if you clear your mind of its vapours. You know it wouldn't do. You must stay here until you have finished with Harry. Then you can do what you like—stay here or go away."

"It won't matter what becomes of me then, I suppose."

"I said that you could stay here if you liked. This has been your home for ten years. It can go on being your home as long as you value it; or at least as long as I have anything to do with it."

He sat looking down, still frowning; but his frown had more of thought, and less of anger in it now.

He threw a glance at her sitting there self-possessed and at ease, and a wry smile came to his lips. "Why can't you always behave like that?" he asked. "I suppose the fact is you've worked off all your temper on that poor little creature who's been telling you just the same as I have. I met her crying on the stairs just

now, and she wouldn't tell me what it was about. But I could guess."

She showed some surprise, but no resentment. "My temper!" she exclaimed. "Well, I suppose I must pass that over in the state to which you've reduced yourself."

His face became moody again. "I won't ask you what you mean by that," he said. "But you're quite wrong in what you said just now. Would you consent to my going away with Grant, if I could get him to come with me? He's rather a fool, but I'd rather have his company than—than——"

"Than mine, I suppose. No, I wouldn't consent to that. You came here on certain conditions, and you must keep to them. It won't be for very much longer now. I'm not altogether without sympathy with you. I've felt the strain myself."

He broke into a loud laugh, and went on laughing, while she waited patiently for him to finish, as if no vagary on his part could surprise or upset her.

"Oh, that's too rich," he said, "in that tone! Yes, you've been feeling the strain, and you've made us feel it. That's all the trouble. Well now, look here, Lady Brent, I accept what you say about its being too late to alter things now—or too early—whichever you please. We're all three of us in the bargain, I take it. It was your idea to keep the boy shut up here, and it has paid. I don't believe it would have paid nine times out of ten, and we've yet to see how it will turn out when the test comes. But Harry being what he is, it has been a brilliant success—so far. You've been justified in keeping me and his mother shut up here too."

"And myself, you must remember. I've shut myself up too, so as to make it seem all the most natural thing in the world to him."

"Quite so. And you've suffered for it, just as we have. Suffered in your temper. If we stick to it, as we must, you ought to make it as easy for us as possible. You haven't lately."

"So Charlotte seemed to imply. But I should like to know how."

"Oh, you know how, well enough. You said I was a man of intelligence just now. Well, you're a woman of intelligence. Just think it over."

He nodded his head, knowingly. He looked rather ridiculous, and Lady Brent laughed.

"I wish you'd go away," she said. "I want to finish what I'm doing before luncheon. You may tell Charlotte, if you like, that I'm sorry if I spoke harshly to her just now. She annoyed me and I did not pick my words. When three people live together year in and year out they are apt to get annoyed with one another

occasionally, for no particular reason."

CHAPTER VII
THE LOG CABIN

The log cabin had reached the interesting stage at which its framework was complete, and the immediate task was to nail thin bark-covered boards upon it. After that it was to be thatched. Then it was to be lined with match-boarding.

Harry had built every bit of the framework himself, with such help as Jane and Pobbles could give him in lifting and holding the timbers in place, not without some risk to limb if not to life. He had drawn out his constructional plan, from careful study of a book. Then he had had the timbers prepared at the sawmills four miles away, and he and the children had fetched them in a farm cart. It had taken them weeks to get the framework finished, but they had made a very good job of it between them. As they hurried up through the wood to the clearing upon the edge of which the cabin stood, Jane and Pobbles were full of excitement at the thought of work to come which they could really do themselves. So far, it had been helping Harry, which was pleasurable enough, but not to be compared with the pleasure that was to come.

Harry let them chatter without much response, but made the pace towards the clearing so fast that they had to run to keep up with him. He was excited too. He was doing something real, from the beginning. He had invented something and had already carried out the most difficult part of it, meeting the difficulties as they came, and surmounting them. All the rest would be easy enough until it came to the thatching. He proposed to do that himself too. Watching a thatcher at work on a barn had first put the idea of building a log cabin into his head. He thought he knew how it was done, and he could always ask the old thatcher questions; but he was not going to let him lay a finger on the roof of the cabin, nor even stand by and direct. Jane and Pobbles might do whatever lay within their power; it would have been he who had taught them and directed them in everything.

They came to the clearing—a space of bright green turf nibbled short by rabbits, surrounded mostly by oaks interspersed with glistening hollies and here and there a graceful deliciously green beech. The cabin stood back among the trees, its squared timbers showing white and new against the background of green and

russet. Harry paused and put his head on one side to contemplate it, and a grin of pure pleasure lit up his face. "A very workmanlike job so far," he said. "Come on, we'll get the whole of the front covered in this morning."

They worked at a rate unknown to members of Trades Unions, measuring and sawing up the boards, and nailing them fast to the posts. Harry did all the sawing, Jane and Pobbles took it in turns to nail one end of a board while he nailed the other. They quarrelled a little over this until Harry stopped them. Jane was of the opinion that Pobbles did not drive in a nail as well as she did. Pobbles was of the contrary opinion. There were only two hammers between the three of them, but Harry was to provide a third for the afternoon. They were to have a picnic tea at the cabin, after lessons, and hoped to see the walls roughly finished before dusk fell.

The brooding summer noon did not daunt these eager labourers. It was more like real work to sweat under the hot sun. Harry took off his coat at the start and turned up his shirt sleeves. Pobbles did the same in imitation of him. Jane, having nothing that she could reasonably take off, contented herself with rolling up her sleeves and warning Pobbles that he would catch cold, which gave him an opening that he was not slow to take advantage of. "Men don't catch cold when they're working," he said, and took off his waistcoat. Jane had to admit inferiority, for once.

They worked till the last possible minute, and met again at the first possible minute in the afternoon. The game which they made of their work was more entrancing now than it had been in the morning. The tasks of the day were done, and the long summer evening stretched infinitely before them. Moreover, the cabin, with its front all boarded in, was now beginning to look like a cabin and not the skeleton of one; and a picnic is always a picnic to happy youth, however inadequate the viands. They were not inadequate on this occasion. All three labourers had brought baskets. A fire was to be lit and tea made—billy tea, of which Harry had learnt the recipe from a book. The meal was to be an adequate substitute for what they would have eaten indoors. Harry was to be excused dinner for it. The children had their freedom until half-past eight.

Jane had changed her clothes, and wore, instead of the cotton frock of the morning, an outgrown coat and skirt, already laid aside "to be given away." The reason for this apparent feminine vagary became manifest when, arrived on the scene of action, she took off the coat, which was uncomfortably tight, and rolled up the sleeves of the shirt she wore beneath it. She was now at least as much like a pioneer as Pobbles.

In their imaginative adaptable brains they were pioneers in very truth. Harry was as serious about it as the children, though he was too old for any childish game of make-believe. "Now we'll knock off for an hour," he said, when

one of the end walls had been boarded in, and the desire for bodily sustenance became urgent. "We must get the roof on before the rains begin, but we're well ahead, and it's better to keep at it steadily than to work ourselves out."

He was in some imagined country of the new world, where the first duty was to provide shelter before attacking the primeval woods and bringing the soil into cultivation. The soft English glade, upon which the shadows of English oaks and beeches were beginning to lengthen under the westering sun, was transformed in his imagination to a clearing in some tropical forest, or in the backwoods of Australia or Canada. The Castle, the Vicarage, the village, were wiped out. They were very far away from all such signs of ancient civilization, very far too from all possibility of replenishing their stores, if these should be wastefully used. He asked Jane to count the eggs carefully. "If there's one over, Tom had better have it," he said.

Tom was Pobbles, so called only on such occasions as this. Jane understood perfectly. She was the woman of the party, and it lay with her to adjust and husband the stores, also to support the head of it in his designs. On such terms she was willing to shoulder her burden of womanhood, and rather regretted having approximated her attire to that of the men. "You'd better put your jacket on now you've left off working," said Harry, throwing a glance not altogether of approval at her shirt, which she wore open at the neck, as he and the virile Tom wore theirs. She obeyed meekly, and went into the cabin to put on her tie as well, also the hat which she had discarded. "We ought to nail up a bit of looking-glass inside," she said, as she came out, and before she joined in picking up sticks for the fire she went into the wood where some late hyacinths were still to be found, and fastened a bunch of them on her breast.

Thus far they might make believe, acting as if they were a backwoods party, but not bringing the pretence to the point of utterance. They both laughed at Pobbles when he said: "We'd better stick together when we're picking up sticks, or one of us may get scalped in the wood," and Jane said: "We're helping Harry; he's not playing a silly game with us." Pobbles thought it would have been more amusing if they had boldly played the game which seemed to be in their thoughts no less than in his, but accepted the correction, and half understood it. Harry, who was so wonderful at making things, would belittle himself by playing children's games about them.

But there was no diminution in his dignity when he showed that his mind was full of the reality of what they were playing at. They sat on the chips and sawdust outside the cabin, when they had devoured everything in their baskets, and talked. Harry leant against the new built wall of the cabin with his legs stretched out in front of him, his dog at his feet, and Pobbles leant against the wall beside him, in as near an imitation of his attitude as he could contrive without

making himself too uncomfortable. Jane reclined gracefully on her elbow, and occasionally pulled her too-short skirt over her knees. The shadows of the trees had perceptibly lengthened. There were two hours of daylight yet, but the heat had declined, and the evening freshness was mingled with the evening peace. The cuckoo was calling, now here now there, and its grey form could be seen sometimes flitting from tree to tree across the glade. The rabbits were out at the far end of it, and the wood pigeons were swinging home to the high woods behind them. But of human occupation, besides their own, the world seemed empty. They were secure in their retreat.

"It must be a grand thing, you know," Harry said, "to find a new place in the world which you can make what you like of. Supposing this were really right away from everywhere, in a new country, we should begin just like this, with a cabin a bit bigger but much the same in plan. Then we should make our garden round about it. After that we should prepare our fields. We should cut down trees, for more building when we wanted it, and for logs for burning in the winter. We should have our animals; we should have everything that we wanted round us, and what we hadn't got we should have to do without until we could go and bring it from the nearest town, which might be hundreds of miles away. There'd be a tremendous lot to do every day, but you'd like doing it, and you'd see the whole thing grow and grow till you had a splendid place which you had made out of nothing, and hundreds of people working on it."

"Shall you do that, when you're quite grown up, Harry?" asked Pobbles. "I think I shall. I know a good deal about it already, and I can easily learn some more."

Jane forbore to rebuke his assumption of knowledge, having one to make on her own account. "I used to think I should hate having to sew and learn to cook," she said. "But I shouldn't mind it if I was living in a log cabin. I can cook some things already. I suppose it would be more fun to be a man, but a woman would have to ride and all that, if she lived in a new country; and she could ride astride."

"It's only when things begin to get a little settled that women go at all," said Harry, dashing these dreams. "The real pioneers go alone, and carry everything they want with them on horseback. It must be glorious to ride for day after day in a country where no white man has ever been before, and at last to come to some lovely place where he can make a settlement."

"There's no reason why a woman shouldn't do that too," said Jane. "She could go alone herself, if the man didn't want her. She could dress like a man."

Pobbles exploded with mirth, at some cryptic joke of his own. "A pretty fool she'd look if the Redskins caught her!" he said.

"Shut up," said Jane sharply, relinquishing her dreams of a woman's empire,

"or I'll punch your head."

"Shut up both of you," said Harry, "and don't spoil things by quarrelling. You'd never do for that sort of life if you couldn't spend five minutes without flying at one another. You'd have to spend weeks and months together without seeing another living soul."

"But you'd be there," said Pobbles. "You'd keep her in order."

"Shall you ever do it, Harry, do you think?" asked Jane. "I should like to come too, if you do. I could wait behind till you'd found the right place, and then Tom and I could come on together."

"Perhaps I shall some day," said Harry, for whom time and youth seemed to stretch ahead illimitably. "But not until after I've been in the army for some years. And I couldn't be away long from Royd. I might just go pioneering, and leave somebody else to work up the place I've found."

"Oh, you could leave Jane and me," said Pobbles. "And you could come there and see us sometimes. You would find we had worked it up better each time you came."

"I shouldn't care about it unless Harry was there all the time," said Jane. "Besides, I am going into the army too. I read about a girl in Russia who fought all through the wars, and nobody found her out. I shall be in Harry's regiment, but he won't tell anybody. You can too, Pobbles, when you're old enough."

Harry looked at her, and laughed with great enjoyment. He had just seen the woman coming out in her, and been mildly entertained by it through his seriousness. Now she was a sexless child again. "You're one in a thousand, Jane," he said. "Of course you shall join my regiment, and Pobbles too. We'll have some jolly times, and when it comes to fighting we three will stick together."

Jane did not mind being laughed at by Harry, and was pleased at the prospect held out to her. She took off her jacket, when they set to work again at the cabin, and threw away the bluebells, wondering why she had picked them.

Dusk was falling as Harry made his way up through the wood and across the park homewards. The air was very still, and the sweet scents of the earth, dissolved in dew, rose like incense. Usually his impressionable untroubled mind would have leapt to the message of his senses, and he would have exulted in the beauty that lay all around him, sublimated by the spell of oncoming night. But as his feet brushed the moisture from the grass, and stirred the cool scents to greet his nostrils, he looked down and not up as his way was. A vague discontent was upon his spirit, which was not quite unhappiness though near akin to it.

The vision of a free life in a free untouched land had come to him. For the first time in his happy boyhood he felt himself bound by his lot. The great world, with its endless varieties of adventure and invitation to be doing and living, lay beyond his horizons and he had never crossed them.

Melancholy touched him so seldom that it was a discomfort to be resisted. He wondered what made him sad at the thought of being tied to Royd, which had hitherto been a paradise of enjoyment to him. He stood still as he came out from among the trees and looked across the park to the dark mass of the Castle, in which lights were glimmering here and there, making it more romantic and beautiful even than when seen in the day-time. And as he looked, the momentary sadness fell from him, and he smiled with pleasure at the scene so familiar yet always showing itself in some new emanation of beauty. He was coming to the age at which he could no longer be satisfied with it as holding everything in life. The shadow of unrest had just fallen upon him, but it would not be yet that he would walk in it.

As he neared the Castle a white figure, dimly seen in the dusk, detached itself from the gloom that lay about the massive walls and came towards him along the trodden path by which he was hastening. He recognized it as that of his mother, who not infrequently came out to meet him like this when he had begged off dinner and came back after it. It usually gave him pleasure to find her waiting for him in this way. There was not, perhaps, very much in common between them, but he knew how much he was to her, and his chivalry went out towards her, in love and a sense of protection.

To-night he was conscious of the least little sense of discomfort in meeting her. His time was so fully taken up, with his work indoors and his innumerable pursuits out of doors, that neither his mother nor his grandmother saw very much of him except at meal-times, and less than ever in the summer-time. It was part of the wisdom of Lady Brent that he was left as free as he was. But he was sensitive to the atmosphere around him, and of late when the inmates of the Castle had been together it had been uncomfortable. Wilbraham, while they had done their work together, had been much as usual, but at table he had been morose and snappy. The two women had obviously put constraint upon themselves to be easy and natural before him, but the coldness and irritation between them had peeped through. There had been nothing to cause him to reflect upon something wrong, and the cause of it; he had been full of his own devices and forgotten all about the discomfort at home the moment he was away from it. But the discomfort was there. Perhaps it had had to do with the vague discontent that had just come upon him and passed away. But the sight of his mother coming to meet him brought it back ever so little. Whatever his dreams for the future, whether at home or abroad, the whims and vagaries of his elders if indulged in must shut them off. Going away from Royd meant going away from them; Royd itself must lose some of its glamour if life there was to be troubled by their jars.

But he remembered now, as he called to his mother and hurried his steps

to meet her, that the cloud had seemed to have lifted itself somewhat at luncheon that day. Wilbraham, at any rate, had recovered his equanimity entirely, and had been good-humoured and talkative; and Lady Brent had been suave, when for some days she had seemed covered with prickles. Only his mother had been subdued, with traces of past tears about her eyes.

He reproached himself that he had not taken much notice of these signs of disturbance in her. He had been too busy with his schemes for the afternoon, about which he had talked freely, as he was encouraged to talk about everything that interested him. He had felt instinctively that any sort of chatter from him would be welcomed. But he had escaped as soon as possible after luncheon and forgotten all about the tension until now.

"Well, little mother!" he said as he came up to her. "Ought you to be out at this time of night without a wrap or anything?"

He had a clear, rather high-pitched voice that was music in her ears. She loved him anew for the kindness in it, and for the question which showed that he was careful of her. He put his arm round her shoulder and kissed her, and his hand went down to her waist and remained there as she turned to walk with him. All this thrilled her with pleasure, and her voice shook a little as she answered him, though she tried to keep it level.

"Oh, I'm all right, dear," she said. "It's very warm. Shall we go into the garden for a little? It's lovely there now."

"Yes; let's," he said at once, though he had intended to go in and forage for food, for he was hungry again.

They went into the garden through a tall iron gate in the wall, and walked up and down the long bowling green, which was hidden from the house by a high yew hedge. A fountain plashed in a pool at the far end of it; there were no flowers to be seen just here, but the air was full of their scent. The light had not yet faded out of the sky, but stars were beginning to twinkle in it. The grass was close cut, but wet with dew. He bent down to see whether she was fitly shod, and found she had put on goloshes. She laughed at him. "Nobody can see them," she said, "but you like taking care of your old mother, don't you, darling?"

"You're not old," said Harry; "and of course you must be taken care of. Isn't it lovely out here? I don't think there can be any place so lovely as Royd in the whole world, though I haven't seen much of the world, so far."

"I think it's lovely too," she said. "But I shouldn't want to stay here always if you weren't here. You've never *wanted* to go away, have you, Harry?"

He laughed at his remembrances. "Just for a little this afternoon, I thought I should like to go somewhere else," he said. "The children and I have been building our log cabin, and I rather wished it was a real one, quite away from everything, in some far-off country. But I suppose I shouldn't like to be away from Royd for

very long."

"It won't be very long before you do go away now," she said. "Oh, I do hope it won't change you, Harry dear. It's so different, out in the world. Sometimes I long for it, but I believe this is best, after all. If you told me I could go to-morrow I don't think I would now. I wouldn't go as long as you were here, and I knew you were happy being here."

"I haven't looked forward very much to going to Sandhurst," he said, thoughtfully. "I shan't be nearly so free there as I am here, and I'm not sure I shall get on very well with the others. I've never had much to do with other people of my own age."

"No, you're different," she said. "But you're much nicer. I don't think you'd have been so nice if you had been brought up like other boys; or so happy, either. But you'll have to be careful when you go away. There are lots of temptations which other boys of your age know about, and you don't."

He turned a smiling face on her. "Then hadn't you better tell me about them?" he said. "Do you mean drinking and gambling? I was reading a book the other day about all that. It didn't seem to me much of a temptation. I suppose I shall have as much money as I want without gambling for it, shan't I? And why should I want to drink if I'm not thirsty?"

She had not paid much attention to this. She was wondering whether she dared talk to him of the life, as it appeared to her, from which he had been kept secluded. It had been tacitly accepted, all through his boyhood, that no mystery was to be made of it, and any questions he might ask should be answered, but that his being kept at Royd was to be taken as a natural thing. After her late revolt she had swung round to a complete acceptance of the understanding by which those who were responsible for Harry should share in the seclusion which had been laid down as the best thing for him during his boyhood. Only so could it be accepted without question by him. Lady Brent had triumphed, and had shown, this evening, that she bore no malice on account of what had lately happened. Mrs. Brent was at peace with her, and once more a loyal supporter of her views. But there was a little jealousy and a little egotism left. She was Harry's mother. If any enlightenment was to be brought to him as to what lay before him, surely she might be considered the right person to give it! It was only because she knew that Lady Brent would not think so that she hesitated.

"Oh, drinking and gambling," she said, catching him up. "No, I don't think those would be temptations to you, brought up as you have been, though one never knows, with young men. It's women *I* should be afraid of. They'll try to get hold of you. You see you'll be a great catch, Harry. And of course you're very handsome. You'll have to be careful about designing women."

No, decidedly, Lady Brent would not have approved of this kind of warning.

It seemed to be distasteful to Harry too. "All right, mother, I'll take care," he said, shortly.

"It would never do for you to marry beneath you," she went on, rather surprisingly, and would have gone on to amplify her statement, but that Harry suddenly cut her short.

"I'm most frightfully hungry, mother," he said. "Let's go in and see if we can get hold of anything. Then I think it will be about time for me to go to bed."

CHAPTER VIII
AUGUST

Harry stood at a window of his room in the tower, looking out on to the trees, which tossed and struggled against the gale. Heavy clouds were racing across the sky and at no long intervals gusts of rain rattled against the westward window.

Harry had asked for this room as his own a year or two before. It filled the whole space of the tower on its top story, except for the corner in which was the spiral stone stairway, and had windows on all four sides. In front was the park, and from this height could be caught a glimpse of the sea across the tops of the trees beyond it, but this afternoon it was blotted out by the grey mist which seemed to take the colour from everything, though the month was August and the deep rich tones of the woods would ordinarily have stood out boldly. Below the three other windows lay the long irregular roofs of the ancient house, with the courtyards enclosed, and the outbuildings, the gardens, the orchard,—a fascinating bird's-eye view containing all sorts of curious surprises. Harry had never been tired of it as a child, and found it interesting now, though it had ceased to hold any new discovery. The room had not been used until he had taken to it, though it had contained some old pieces of furniture. He had added to them whatever had taken his fancy from the many unoccupied rooms of the house, and brought whatever he wanted for his own pursuits here. He was never disturbed in this room, and never entered it except when he wanted to be alone. He did his work downstairs in the room that was still called the schoolroom; he read in the library, where Wilbraham usually kept him company; he sat and talked with his mother and grandmother in the rooms they occupied. It was of the essence of this room that he could be alone in it when he wanted to be alone, which was not very often, for he was no recluse. If the elders had made themselves free of

entrance to it, its charms for him would have gone; but Lady Brent had said that it was to be his only, without his having asked more than that he should be allowed to have what he wanted in it. "It's right that he should be able to get away from us sometimes, indoors as well as out," she had said to Mrs. Brent. "He's not to feel himself chained to our society."

Harry stood at the window, looking out not upon the courts and gardens, laid out beneath him, but across the trees to where the sea was, if he could have seen it for the mist. It was holiday time with him. He had come up here after luncheon thinking to make out the treasure island map that he had promised to Jane and Pobbles before they had gone away to the seaside. This was part of a game they had invented, sitting in their log cabin one wet afternoon. Harry was by no means above games that were no more than games, though he was too old to turn reality into a game, and this was a fascinating one that they had hit upon together—the designing of the ideal island upon which the vicissitudes of life might one day cause them all to be wrecked. They had contributed its features, one by one—sandy beaches, and coral pools to bathe in; bread-fruit and grapes and oranges; a great hollow tree halfway up a mountain that they could make into a house, as was done by that didactic but resourceful Swiss of the name of Robinson; a hidden hoard of treasure which would include gold cups and plates and dishes for domestic use; a spring of miraculously clear water, discovered just when they were dying of thirst, and slightly flavoured with pineapple (this was Pobbles's idea); a hut in which a marooned sailor had left behind him every sort of tool that could come in handy, he himself having been taken off the island, on Jane's suggestion, so as to avoid the nuisance of a skeleton: these were a few of the amenities that were to be found on this accommodating island, and they were increased every time the subject came up for discussion. Harry had promised to draw a map for them, including the already settled geographical features, and adding any others that might occur to him in the meantime. He had drawn the outline of the island on a handsome scale, and inked it in carefully. Then he had got tired of it. The eager pleasure of the children was wanted to give salt to this game. He could not employ himself for a whole afternoon over it.

He missed those little friends of his, especially Jane, with her quick ways and eager loyalty, which made her so companionable, though never tiresomely clinging, as is the way with admiring children. He had not known how much they had come to mean to him during this last year in which they had been his constant companions, until they had gone away and he had been left to the society of his elders. Between him and Wilbraham, especially, there was some community of taste. He owed a good deal of his love of fine literature to Wilbraham, and there was much that he could share with him that was beyond the understanding of the children. They were only children, and he had told them none of

his secret thoughts. Jane was very quick of understanding, and had developed considerably during the year he had known her; perhaps he might have come to confide some of them to her if they had ever been alone together. But Pobbles was her inseparable shadow, and he had never wanted it otherwise. With all their immaturity, they appealed to the spirit of youth in him, and their companionship gave him something that he could not get from his elders. That was why he missed them so much on this wild wet afternoon, when he was debarred from his usual pursuits out of doors, and there seemed to be nothing worth doing indoors. And yet it was not them so much that he missed—though he did not know it—as the companionship and inspiration of answering youth. Perhaps they had had something to do with arousing the need of it in him, but they were too young to satisfy it. He had been supremely happy in his childhood and youth—far more consistently happy than most boys of his age, and happier than he consciously knew. But the time for that life was coming to an end; unless some change came to him he would gain less and less contentment from it as he grew older.

He had not yet grasped the magnitude of the change that was even then all around him, and would soon draw him, as an atom in the whole sensitive world, into its vortex.

For the great war had begun. As Harry stood at the window, the German hordes were over-running Belgium and France, England was hurrying feverishly into the breach, throughout the length and breadth of the country nothing else was talked of but the war; only here and there in some remote place the menace of the great conflagration was unheeded as yet; but very soon there would be no place where its weight did not fall.

It was talked of at the Castle. Wilbraham already had his maps up in the library, and his little flags to stick into them. He and Lady Brent disputed about it over the table. Wilbraham thought it would all be over, and the Germans taught their sharp lesson, in a few weeks. Lady Brent, remembering similar prophecies about an immeasurably less formidable enemy fifteen years before, thought it would be longer. It might take a whole year to bring it to an end. Longer it could not take, because all Europe would be bankrupt if it did. They argued quite impersonally. They would not be touched by it themselves.

Harry had not caught fire over it yet. His life had been quite divorced from anything that went on in the world outside Royd, except in what he had learnt from books. Neither home nor foreign politics meant anything to him, and he never looked at a newspaper, except in idle moments. His one regret was that the war would be over before he should gain his commission, in two or three years' time. That seemed to be agreed upon. At present there were no individual deeds to excite his imagination. He took but a languid interest in it as yet, though every day there seemed to be some increase in its importance. This afternoon it

weighed a little on him, with all the rest, but a break in the clouds would have set his mind free of it, and for the moment of every other vaguely felt dissatisfaction.

There was no sign of any break in the heavy clouds, but some weather sense which he had acquired in his open-air life gave him the feeling that the storm was nearing its end. At any rate, he must go out, whether it cleared or not. He was getting mopy, shut up in the house. He knew by experience that that rare feeling never persisted when he was once out of doors.

A furious gust drove the rain against the windows and blotted out all the landscape as he turned to leave the room; but he felt better already for his decision. He would go for a gallop towards the sea. It would be invigorating to have the rain and the wind in his face, and perhaps the storm would be over by the time he reached the shore. It would be grand to see the sun break over the waves, and watch them dashing themselves against the rocks.

He put on his oldest breeches and gaiters and a riding raincoat and went out to the stables. He told no one that he was going out, wanting to escape dissuasion from his mother and grandmother in the drawing-room, and Wilbraham in the library. They let him take his way in these matters, but it was not to be expected from middle-aged human nature that he would be allowed to go out in this weather without some remonstrance.

He had two horses of his own, Clive, a bay, and Circe, a black blood mare, and his own groom, Fred Armour, the head coachman's son, who was only a year older than himself, and a friend of his lifetime. Ben, his big black retriever, who followed him everywhere, had already expressed his delighted agreement with the sensible course he had shown himself about to take. He knew he was admitted to the house on condition that he did not raise his voice in it, and beyond a few subdued yaps of appreciation he had followed Harry downstairs with no more than ecstatic wrigglings and sweeps of his feathered tail. But, once outside, his enthusiasm broke loose and brought on the scene other members of his race at a loose end for something to do. There was a terrific canine commotion as Harry called for Fred, and the first thing to be done was to bring disappointment to all but Siren, a deer hound, and Rollo, a Great Dane, by shutting them up again. The three bigger dogs could keep up with Circe, galloping freely; the others must reserve themselves for expeditions when the blood was less insistent on rapid motion.

Fred Armour, a cheerful brown-faced red-headed young man, neat and active in his stable kit, seemed also to have been affected by the dismal weather, for he did what was required of him without his usual grin or ready flow of words. It was not until he had saddled and bridled Circe and brought her out that he said: "I'm off to-morrow, Sir Harry. Father's said yes, and her ladyship has given her consent, though she don't like it."

Harry stared at him, holding the mare, who was dancing with impatience. He understood nothing until Fred told him that he was joining up with the County Yeomanry—the first man on the Royd estate to go, or, as it seemed afterwards, to think of going. The time had not yet come when the call for recruits penetrated the out-of-the-way corners of England. Harry was surprised, as his grandmother had apparently been, that Fred should have thought of going. But his impulse was one of envy when he was told about it, not of dissuasion. "I'm nearly as old as you," he said, "but it will take me a couple of years to get my commission. It will all be over by then."

"Yes, I suppose so," said Fred. "But there's a lot to be trained, in case they want them. I shall come back when they've done with me. Her ladyship says I can, though she's upset like at my wanting to go."

Harry had something to think about as he rode out into the park, and after a sharp canter over the drenched grass, with the rain and the wind fretting the mare so that it was all he could do to hold her, slowed to a trot as he entered a ride through the woods. It was not so much of the war. Fred would have a few months of training as a trooper, and then he would probably come back; he was not, after all, greatly to be envied there, and Harry had no particular wish to hurry on his own longer training, since the time was so far distant when he could expect to get his commission. But Fred had told him of others who were likely to follow his example now that the ice had once been broken—another lad from the stables, two from the gardens, some from the village. A cousin of his, from some distance off, who had already served in the Yeomanry, had joined a regular cavalry regiment, and was already in France, fighting. It was from him that the impulsion had first come.

It was a fine thing to respond like that to your country's call, almost before it was sounded. It was what Harry's own forefathers would have done, and had done in many an instance that he had read about in old books in which he had pored to find out what he could about the knightly stock from which he had sprung. They would have collected their servants and tenants around them and ridden off at their head to offer themselves—a small band, perhaps, but a sturdy one, well horsed and equipped and well versed in the man's business of giving and receiving blows. It could not be quite like that in this war, when boys of his age, even if capable of raising their followers, would have to go through the mill of learning and training before they could be of any use. But the readiness with which Fred's cousin had been accepted and sent out to fight disturbed him somewhat, both on his own account and on that of the men and youths who owed him allegiance. There was nobody in the village of Royd or on all the wide Castle lands, so far as he knew, who had done any of the soldiering that is open to young men in times of peace. Supposing he himself had been of full age to fight,

he would still have had to wait until he had learnt his business, and he could have given a lead to nobody. Why hadn't it been suggested to him that he should join the County Yeomanry, or why had he not thought of it himself? The Sir Harry of the time of the Napoleonic wars had been in command of it; almost every man of his tenantry had belonged to it. Now it drew its recruits from other parts of the county; no one from Royd had served in it for a generation or more. It had never occurred to him that it would be a good thing for him in his position to do so.

Royd was ruled by a woman. That was the explanation of this lapse in its ancient duties and responsibilities, now for the first time apparent. And he was ruled by a woman, though the yoke had hitherto been but lightly felt. Fred Armour could go off, though not without having some opposition to encounter; others could talk of doing so. He must stay where he was until the appointed time.

Well, the time was not far distant now. In January he would go up for his examination, and after that the new life would begin for him—the man's life, in which, though still under tutelage, he would be free at times to go where he would. He had rather dreaded exchanging his life at Royd for it, for that had been a life full of the satisfaction of all the desires he had felt, and it had never seemed to him either narrow or confined. But this sense of a woman's domination was beginning to prick him. He thought that at least he would put it to his grandmother that Royd ought to have been represented in the Yeomanry. It might have been a small matter, in times of peace, but it was one that would not have escaped a male head of Royd. And he must see to it himself that any man who wanted to join up with the troops in training should have no difficulty put in his way. As for himself, there seemed to be nothing to be done but to wait until his time came. Fred might, perhaps, see some fighting, if Lady Brent were right and Wilbraham were wrong about the war lasting on into the next year; that was the advantage of belonging to the ranks. For officers, the training must be much longer, and his would not be finished if the war lasted for two years, which it seemed to be agreed was an impossibility.

He shook his thoughts from him as he came out of the wood and galloped again on the crisp turf of the hilltop, between the gorse and the heather and the outcropping rocks.

He was on high ground here. The rain had ceased, though the wind was buffeting him so furiously that he had to keep his head down as he rode, and even the mare was soon submissive to being pulled down to a trot and then to a walk. The light was stronger now and the clouds driven along by the wind seemed to be higher; there was no sign of a break in them, but there was the feeling that at any time they might be rent asunder and let through a shaft of sunlight. The

mist had all gone, and the sea lay, a grey, turbulent expanse, apparently near at hand, though at its nearest point it was still some two miles distant.

The sight of the sea always had a calming effect upon Harry, whether it lay blue and calm or was lashed to angry motion. It was his outlook into the world beyond the bounds of his home. When he had least felt himself circumscribed something had yet urged him now and then to ride to the shore and to let his spirit go out across the boundless waters. And now, as he saw the great spaces of sea and sky in front of him his thoughts lightened. As his physical world had this wide outlet into the greater world beyond it, so his life, bound hitherto within limits that he was outgrowing, would soon open into something wider and freer. And just as he would return to the sheltered haunts of his home, loving it all the more for his glimpse of the unsheltered sea, so with the life which had been so happy there. It was coming to an end for him, but was all the more to be treasured on that account as long as it lasted.

He came to a break in the rocky cliff which led down to a little sandy bay, on the edge of which was what had once been a fisherman's cottage. The cliff had broken away in front of it and it had been abandoned as dangerous some years before. Only its walls were standing, but there was a place among the ruins in which he could tie up his horse if he wanted to walk by the sea. He did so now, and went down to the sands, followed by the dogs. The sun came out as he did so, and great masses of clouds were torn asunder and piled up to be rolled away before the wind, instead of forming a thick curtain between him and the sky.

He shouted for joy at the lifting of the grey oppression, and became a boy again as by a sudden impulse he stripped to bathe and ran over the sands to meet the shock of the great waves that were rolling up them.

CHAPTER IX
ON THE MOOR

As he rode towards home an hour or two later, Harry felt as if all the stains upon life had been washed away, just as the wind and rain had scoured the heavens of their dark load of cloud. The sun, now declining towards the west, shone in a sky of clean blue; the wind was dropping every minute, but was still fresh as he cantered across the moor. He rode with his head up, singing blithely, and drinking in through all his senses the sparkling glory of a world set free from the

tyranny of storm and gloom.

He had thought out nothing to a definite conclusion, and yet the perplexities which had surrounded him as he started out on his ride seemed to have disappeared. The war, which had affected him so little, now lay in the background of his mind as a real and a very big thing, and it seemed to him fixed and certain that somehow and at some time it would profoundly affect his life; but at present he had nothing to do but to await what should be coming to him. His place at Royd must also undergo a change, and that, too, would come, in its time, as it would come. Whatever should happen, he was ready for it, and his mind was free and happy, but also strangely expectant. He was in the current of some power outside himself, but in complete harmony with it, and at the same time in free possession of himself, just as he had lately exulted in his youth and strength as his body had been borne on the motion of the mighty waters. Ever since that night of still and unearthly beauty, when the vision had come to him of a living power in nature for a sign of which he had yearned, he had thought of himself as controlled by strong yet gentle and beneficent forces, which, if he yielded himself to them, would lead him along paths that he would best fulfil himself in treading. The feeling was stronger at some times than others. It had never been so obscured as it had been a few hours earlier, but now, in the sun and the wind, it was very strong. He felt himself calmed and uplifted in spirit, as if by a tangible communion with the guiding influences. They seemed to be telling him, or to have told him, that his shadowed mood need never have been; that they had something in store for him, some experience, some happening, which would give him renewed faith in their guidance. There was a sense almost of being indulged, by an assurance out of the common run.

But his mood was as far as possible from being analytical, as he rode on singing and calling to his dogs, which sprang round him rejoicing as he did in the exhilaration of quick motion and the strength and poise of muscle and sinew. His mind had cleared, and he was free to give himself up to the joy of living, all the more keenly for the whisper that had come to him of something new and exciting in preparation for him.

The boy, the horse and the dogs—they had had the fine, fresh world to themselves throughout the afternoon, except for the strong birds of the sea and the little birds of the gorsy common. No buildings lay upon the path that Harry had taken to the shore, nor very near it, for he had ridden through the wood by a narrow ride, little used, and across the open ground had kept out of the way of trodden paths. There were sheep on this wide stretch of upland, and a shepherd might occasionally have been seen there. Otherwise it was little frequented; a human figure on it would arouse curiosity.

A human figure came into view as Harry had traversed the greater part of

the open space, and the woods of Royd were a mile or so in front of him. It was the figure of a woman, and was immediately between him and the point towards which he was riding. He knew all the people who lived in the scattered cottages and farms between Royd and the sea; there were not many of them, and none just here. He wondered who it could be going in that direction, and what she was doing so far away from human habitation.

As he rode on, he saw that it was a girl, and a stranger, which was somewhat surprising, as the nearest place to which strangers came was miles away. He had left off singing, but one of the dogs barked, and the girl turned round, evidently startled and perhaps a little alarmed. He was near enough now to see her face. She was very young, hardly more than a child, for her hair was not knotted up under her hat, but tied behind with a big bow. She was tall and slim. The wind took her skirts as she stood there, and revealed the supple grace of her young figure, firmly but lightly poised against it. She was dressed in a coat and skirt of brown tweed, with a hat of soft straw firmly pinned on to her graceful head. So much Harry took in before he came near enough to see her face.

Her features were fine and true, and she had a delicate skin, its colour freshened by the wind. Her eyes were dark, with a starry radiance in them; her lips were slightly parted as she looked at him approaching. She was beautiful, with the beauty half of a child, half of a woman.

Harry reined in his horse as he came up to her, and for an appreciable instant they looked into one another's eyes without speaking. Then the girl said: "I have lost my way. I don't know where I'm going to," and laughed and blushed at the same time.

Harry laughed, too, and slipped down off his horse. "Where do you want to go?" he asked. "I'll show you the way, if you tell me."

She was staying with her father, she said, at a cottage on the edge of the woods; she had come out when the rain had ceased to walk towards the sea, but it was farther than she had thought, and when she had turned back to see the unbroken line of the woods before her there was nothing to tell her which point to make for.

The woman with whom she was lodging was the widow of a man who had worked in the Royd woods; he had died the year before and she had been given a pension and allowed to remain on in her cottage. It was in a group of three or four, about a mile from the Castle and a mile and a half from the village, which formed the nearest approach to an outlying hamlet that was to be found on the Royd lands. It was rather surprising that anybody should take lodgings there, though with the deep woods behind it and the moor in front, and the sea within view, many people might have chosen it to make holiday in, if it had come within their knowledge.

"Oh, Mrs. Ivimey," said Harry, pointing. "That's a mile and more away over there. I'm afraid you can't have much sense of direction."

They both laughed at that. It seemed the most natural thing for them to talk and laugh together. The secluded life that Harry had lived had brought some shyness into the way he addressed himself to strangers, though his natural manner was free and open. But this girl, walking freely over the windy moor, seemed to be in some way allied to those living influences of nature with which his contact was so real. And the spirit of youth informed all her looks and her ways and met the answering youth in him. There was no room for shyness in speaking to her, and as he neither felt nor showed it, her response was frank, too. "I'm a Londoner," she said. "You couldn't expect me to find my way about here, where the paths wind about anyhow, and everything is the same."

He was walking beside her now in the direction he had pointed out. He had made no offer to accompany her and she made no comment upon his doing so. It seemed that they must have a great deal to say to one another and that the best way was to walk together until some of it at least should have been said.

"Everything the same!" exclaimed Harry. "Why, every inch of it is different! I have never been to London, but the streets of a town must be much more alike than this is."

They laughed again at that, and the girl threw a glance at him, walking by her side, while Circe, held by his strong brown hand, curveted on the close turf and the dogs ranged here and there, a little subdued from their bounding energy, but still keenly interested in all that lay about them. The raindrops sparkled still upon gorse and grass and bramble, larks sang in the clear spaces of the sky, and the dying wind brought a salty thymy fragrance with it. The blood in the veins thrilled to the sweet glad freshness of it all, and youth called to youth as they trod the springy turf together.

There was such a lot to be explained. Everything that was said opened up endless more things to be said. He told her that he had lived all his life at Royd; she told him that she had seldom been away from London. But, whereas he showed himself quite content with the unusual limitations of his life, she spoke of hers with regret. "I've always wanted the country," she said; "I've never been so happy as I have been here, for the last two days. Even the storm this morning, I didn't mind. It was something big and grand, and I knew the sun would shine and it would all be lovely again."

They talked on and on. They had made friends, as children make friends, liking each other, and pouring themselves out in endless little confidences.

"My name is Harry Brent. I live at Royd Castle with my mother and grandmother."

"Oh yes, of course; you're Sir Harry Brent. Mrs. Ivimey has talked about

you.

"My name is Viola Bastian. My father called me that out of a beautiful poem. He is an artist, but nobody buys his pictures, so he paints scenery at a theatre. We are very poor."

It didn't seem odd to Harry that this beautiful girl, whose speech was refined and whose clothes were such as a sister or cousin of his own might have worn, should be the daughter of a scene painter, who was also very poor. Nor did he blench in the least at a further statement, which explained, at least, the clothes. "I have to work and help father. He didn't want me to go on the stage, and I should have hated it, too. I am with a dressmaker in Dover Street—Nadine. She makes things chiefly for quite young girls. I have to show them off. It is hard work in the season, but I get a good long holiday, and if father can get away too, and we have enough money, we go into the country for part of it. That is why we are here now."

It was all very interesting, as anything she might have told him about herself would have been interesting. He knew nothing of states of life other than those which were immediately around him; he accepted everything she told him as quite natural to her, though he thought it a pity that she should have to work so hard and could not live in the country, as he did, since she loved it. She was what he saw and heard her to be, and what she did and where she lived was quite unimportant, except as she might feel them to be important.

But how did she come to be what she was under such conditions of parentage and environment? If it did not occur to Harry in his all-embracing ignorance to ask himself that question, it might very well have been asked by others with more experience of life than his. She was as frank in her address as he was, showed no sense of the social difference between them in any *mauvaise honte* or explanatory questions. It must have made itself plain to a listener that she was indeed a rare flower of unsullied girlhood, as innocent in essence as Harry himself, who had been kept from contact with the world outside his castle of romance, since she had lived at its crowded centre and remained unspotted by it.

They had not half finished their confidences by the time they came within sight of the cottage at which she was staying—or, rather, of the smoke from its chimney, which rose from behind a corner of the wood jutting out into the moor. Perhaps it was some acquired sophistication that caused her to stop there and to prepare to say good-bye, out of sight of the cottage itself and whoever might see them from it. But, whatever it was, Harry felt the same disinclination to being looked upon by eyes that might have been questioning or curious. She was for him alone—one of his cherished innocent secrets—all the more to be kept to himself because it was like no other secret that he had ever had before. A secret must be shared by some one, or it is no secret, but only a deception. Harry's secret

had been between him and nature, or between him and an imaginary Harry who owed all initiative to the real Harry. But this was his and hers, and hers as much as his. She could keep it a warm nestling secret, or destroy it by a word. Which would she do?

"Good-bye," she said, holding out her slender girl's hand, and looking him straight in the eyes, as she had looked at him when first they had met. He took her hand, and the touch of it thrilled him. It was soft and firm and cool, like no hand that he had ever had in his, though he had taken the hands of other girls not noticeably different in shape or size from this one.

There was the hint of a question in her look. Was it to be good-bye?

Harry had no such thought. "There is a lot I want to talk to you about," he said. "Tomorrow afternoon—no, I don't want to wait till the afternoon—tomorrow morning I will come; quite early."

Her eyes softened, and she smiled. "Very well," she said, and waited for him to tell her where and when he would come.

They were to meet on the outskirts of the wood. He would show her a ferny pool in the very heart of it, which he thought nobody but himself knew of. "It will be very hot to-morrow," he said, throwing a weatherwise eye at the heavens. "We shall be cool and quiet there."

Suddenly he felt shy of her, mounted his horse, and cantered away, his dogs following him. Then he felt uneasy at the thought that she might have found him rudely abrupt, and when he had gone a few hundred yards he turned to look back. She was still standing where he had left her, and waved her hand to him.

He had the impulse to turn and ride back to her, but cantered on, with a flame of joy shooting up in his heart. When he looked back again, she had gone.

CHAPTER X
VIOLA

That evening at dinner all the talk was about the war. General Leman's heroic stand at Liège had ended in surrender. King Albert's government had retired to Antwerp; the way was open for the enemy to Brussels, and it was not yet certain whether Brussels would deliver itself up or defend itself.

But the great news, now allowed to be known, was that the British Expeditionary Force was all on French soil.

There was plenty to talk about. Lady Brent was pessimistic, and already saw the Germans over-running Belgium. Wilbraham thought that when the English and French once moved in concert the Germans would be rolled up and rolled back like a carpet, and the end of the whole mad business would come very soon afterwards. Mrs. Brent was inclined to agree with him. She alone of the three had her eye anxiously upon Harry as she spoke, with the fear working in her that, after all, he might be drawn into the vortex. "It can't go on for two years," she said. "It couldn't go on for three years, could it?"

They laughed at her. "You may make yourself quite easy on that score," said Lady Brent.

To Harry it all seemed extremely unimportant. The conviction that, whether it lasted one year or two years, or three, or ended before Christmas, he would certainly be involved in it somehow had been registered in his mind and could be laid aside until it should fulfil itself. He did not want to think about it, still less to talk about it. His personal connection with what was going on now, brought to his mind that afternoon by his talk with Fred Armour, had faded from his mind; and the tale of the war as it was being unfolded from day to day and as it was being discussed by those about him, had little more interest for him than the tale of a war centuries old which he might have studied with Wilbraham.

Yet he joined in the talk from time to time, and if he said nothing that had much effect upon the discussion he said whatever he did say in such a way as to arouse no suspicion in the minds of his elders that his thoughts were almost completely divorced from his speech.

The old dim hall in which they sat had its windows open to the night, which was now quite still, with a sky of spangled velvet, broken into by the dark spires of the cypresses in the garden. Harry could see them through the window opposite to which he sat, and in the intervals of talk he could hear the plash of the fountains. The thought came to him that he would like to walk with Viola in the starlit garden. He would like to show her this beautiful house of his; it would be a tribute to her, and his own love of it would be enhanced by her praise. He looked round at the hall and saw its carved and dusky splendour with new eyes.

They were dining at a table set in the oriel window facing on the garden. The table was lit by candles in branched silver candlesticks. On a heavy buffet by the door from the kitchens and buttery, under the gallery and on serving tables, were other candles. There were perhaps a dozen in all, and they gave what light was necessary, but left the high-pitched, raftered roof just a-glimmer, and parts of the hall in shadow. The portraits that hung above the dark wainscoting were dimly seen, the gilded carving of the gallery and the screen beneath it glowed softly where the candles shone upon it, and faded into rich dimness beyond the circle of light.

Viola! She would love this old hall, and all the other stately rooms of the ancient house. He had never thought of it, except very vaguely, as belonging to him, but he thought of himself now as belonging to it. He would like her to admire anything that had to do with him, and he would like her to share his admiration.

But such thoughts as these were a very small part of what was rioting through his mind. His chief feeling about his immediate surroundings was one of strangeness that he should be sitting there quietly dining and talking upon unimportant matters which had nothing to do with Viola. It was to connect her with them that he took notice of them at all, and he looked out more often into the still starlit garden, because it was under the sky that he had met her and talked to her, and her alliance with the things of nature that he loved was already fixed and established. All beautiful aspects of the world, and of the fair places in his own world, connected themselves naturally with her. She filled every corner of his mind, and to whatever source of familiar delight he turned she seemed to be there before him.

After dinner, on summer nights, Harry often walked in the garden with his mother. Lady Brent never went out, but sat with her book in the drawing-room. Wilbraham spent half an hour in the library, smoking and reading, and then came into the drawing-room to play the piano or to talk until they went to bed at ten o'clock. When they heard the first notes of the piano, Harry and his mother would go indoors. If they lingered, Lady Brent would send Wilbraham out for them, on the plea of the night air being dangerous, or, if the night was so warm that that seemed too absurd, of its being time for Harry to go to bed. She did not like these garden confabulations between mother and son, but never showed it except by confining them thus to the half-hour after dinner.

To-night Harry half hoped that his mother would not come out with him. He wanted to be alone, but reproached himself for the desire as she asked him to fetch her shawl and smiled at him with the pleasure manifest in her face. He knew how much it meant to her to have him for this quiet half-hour to herself. It was the only one in the long day that she could call her own. He was left free to his own duties and devices, except for the times when all of them were together. With his youthful sense of fairness he knew that both his mother and grandmother left him free in this way for his sake and not for theirs. He must not grudge them the short time that he was expected to be with them. And he had taken a pleasure himself in these little garden wanderings with his mother that arose not only from the satisfaction of giving her pleasure. He loved her—more than he loved anybody—and had a man's sense of protection towards her. He did not know yet that he loved Viola. The idea of love had not yet occurred to him in connection with her. As he ran upstairs to get his mother's shawl, the thought

crossed his mind that he had never yet wanted to get away from his mother for the time he was accustomed to devote himself to her, and puzzled him a little.

He was more than usually kind to her as they walked up and down the long bowling green together between the close-clipped yew hedges. He made an effort to dispossess his mind of what was filling it, and to be to her what he would have been but for the thrilling adventure that had befallen him. The only sign of all that was hidden from her—and she had no clue to its meaning—was when he said that the garden made him feel shut in, and asked her to walk in the park with him.

She felt his tenderness and palpitated with happiness over it. If she had but known that the time had come when she was less to him than she had ever been, and that his kindness and gentleness were but vicarious tributes meant, though all unconsciously, to take the place of the love that must soon be withdrawn from spending itself only on her, and given to another! But these wounds to a mother's love were spared her for to-night. She thought he was nearer than ever to her, and all thoughts of losing him were far from her.

She ventured to talk of her fear of the war taking him from her, and he soothed her, laughing at her fears. He did not tell her of his conviction that it would do so, nor feel any desire to tell her. What he did feel a half-shrinking desire to do was to tell her about Viola. But an instinct which he did not understand prevented him, and the moment they had parted he was glad that he had resisted the impulse. The secret was not his alone. It gave him joy to think that it was a secret, and that it was not his alone.

Wilbraham called out for them. They went in, and Harry said good-night at once and went upstairs. He was no longer sent to bed before the rest, but no objection was ever made if he went.

When he was alone in his room he breathed relief. His mother, perhaps, would come in on her way to bed, but otherwise he would be alone for the hours of the night, and yet so much not alone. He thought that to-night his mother would certainly come, and he undressed quickly so that when he should hear her he could get into bed and pretend to be asleep. This small piece of deception did not trouble him, since it would not trouble her. He had never given her what he owed her. Now he wanted to think uninterruptedly of Viola.

He leaned out of the window with his chin on his hands and gazed at the dark masses of trees in front of him and at the starry roof of the sky above them, which was above her, too. His window was on the same side of the house as that of the room in which Grant had slept the year before, but the trees were nearer to it. He gazed more at the sky than at the trees. Yes, in that direction, almost directly in front of him, lay the cottage in which she was—now at this very minute. It was a moving thought. Perhaps she was asleep, perhaps she was

looking at the same stars as he was. Perhaps she was thinking of him, as he was thinking of her. That was a very stirring thought, and led him to shift his position. He wanted to be in motion as he thought of her. Later on, when the house was all asleep, he would dress and go out. For the present he could only walk about his room, when the waves of emotion that came to him stirred him from his place at the window.

But he could not think like that. He did not know what to think about. His impatience grew for the time to come when he should be alone and undisturbed. Then he would be able to think, out there under the stars. The trees oppressed him, as they had never done before. He got into bed. He would lie and think there until his mother had come and gone. But the moment he got into bed he fell asleep, and did not awake when she came in softly, shielding the light of her candle from his eyes.

How beautiful he looked as he lay there, his head slightly turned on the pillow and one arm and hand along his side on the counterpane—and how innocent! How she loved him for that beauty and innocence! She felt it as uplifting her from the lower plane of unrest and petulance upon which she was apt to move. She blessed him for the calming, purifying thoughts which he brought to her, and took comfort to herself in the thoughts that there must be something good in herself since it was partly owing to her influence that he was so free from evil. Yes, he was hers; her own dear child whom she loved, and who loved her. She had set herself aside and allowed another to direct his life and hers. Soon he would be free from that tutelage, but not from the bonds that her love had woven around him. She would reap her reward. Oh, it was a blessed thing to bear children, and after long years to have them as a prop and stay, as well as a solace. Not for many years would he leave her, in spirit, though in body they would sometimes be parted. She must be more to him now than she had ever been, and when the time came to give him up to another she would not complain, since she would have had him so perfectly for a time.

It was nearly two o'clock when Harry awoke, suddenly, and in complete possession of himself. He might have thought that he had not slept at all, but that the moon shining in at his window told him the hour as plainly as if it had been called in his ear.

He sprang out of bed and began to put on his clothes, but paused for a moment, asking himself why he was in such a hurry to do so.

As happens so often in sleep, the perplexities with which he had lain down seemed to have resolved themselves without conscious process. He had wanted to ask himself what had happened to him, but it seemed now as if some romantic mist had cleared away from his brain and nothing in particular had happened to him—nothing, at least, that needed any careful process of self-examination. He

had met a very charming and friendly girl, and he was going to meet her again in the day that was already moving towards dawn. That would be very agreeable, but what was there in it to have put him into the state in which he had lived through the evening?

But, as the thought of meeting her again with half the hours of darkness already gone—presented itself to him, he felt again the glow of pleasure and anticipation. Yes, he wanted to think about her, and he could think best about her out in the open.

He dressed quickly and dropped from his window onto the grass, which was not more than ten feet or so below him. And now he seemed to be more master of himself, as he passed across a strip of moonlit green and into the dimness of the wood. He was reminded of the night in which the vision of the fairies dancing had come to him. Now it was full summer and then spring had only been on its way; his long-trained sense marked the difference in a thousand little signs. But that had been a night of silver moonshine, as this was. The contact with nature was clear on such quiet, illumined nights as this.

Viola!

She grew slowly upon him as he trod the soft grass or the dry crackling beech-mast. Her face, somewhat to his surprise, he could not call up before him, though he tried to see it with his inward eye. But he dwelt upon the slight supple figure that had moved beside him so freely and so gracefully. It gave him pleasure to recall her slender hand, which had lain in his, and he remembered her feet and ankles in their neat brown shoes and stockings, and the fall of her skirt over them, and the little hat of soft white straw with its twisted ribbon.

Again he was a little puzzled at the effect these memories had upon him. He had an eye for beauty of animate form. He loved the grace of certain animals; he and Wilbraham together had taken delight in pictures of Greek statuary and vase painting, with special reference to that beauty; he had admired the quick, clean limbs of the two children with whom he had been so much, and of other children of the village, older or younger. But it had been purely an æsthetic pleasure, and had brought with it none of the emotion with which the thought of Viola moved him.

He was a little frightened of this emotion and inclined to resist it; but something out of the soft night whispered to him that its current was one with all the emotions upon which he had fed, and grown in feeding. It was part of the secret which he had only half divined at the end of that vigil which seemed to have marked a stage in his life.

His joy in the thought of her increased. He recalled the tones of her voice, and the ring of her happy laughter, and dwelt upon things that she had said. They were nothing; they might have been said by anybody; none of them at which he

smiled to himself were so worth remembering as the things that little Jane often said and he had remembered afterwards, smiling at them too, but not with that tenderness of feeling towards them.

He came to the park wall, where there was a door to which he kept the key. He seldom went outside the park on his night roamings. The woods continued here for some distance before the open ground was reached, though by the ride he had taken in the afternoon they ended with the wall, in which there was another locked gate. If he wanted to go on to the moor at night, and stand beneath the open sky, with nothing about him but space, it was by that path that he reached it. But he seemed to have had a purpose, unknown to him, in making for this door, and when he reached it he had no thought but for passing beyond the bounds of the park. It was by that path that the cottage in which Viola was could be reached most directly. He knew when he came to the door, but not before, that he meant to go to it.

He had left the key behind, but scaled the wall, not without some difficulty, and went on through the wood. By and by he came to a garden fence, and there beyond it, across the fruit bushes and the untidy tangle of late summer, was the cottage, low and thatched and whitewashed, in which she was sleeping.

He stood still and drew his breath.

Viola!

There was a little dormer window in the thatch, open. It might be that of the room in which she was sleeping. A cottager would not sleep in a room with the window open. He tried to remember what the cottage was like inside, and what rooms would be most likely to be given up to visitors. It seemed to him of the utmost importance to have it settled which was Viola's room.

He moved round to the front of the cottage, treading softly on the turf lest a sound should reveal his presence. Perhaps she was awake. It was not part of their secret that he should come out at night to gaze at her window. He must not reveal himself.

The wood extended a little way on to the moor by the side of the cottage. It was the point that had hidden it from them in the afternoon. But it faced open ground across a narrow fenced-in strip of garden. The whole of its front could be seen obliquely from the wood.

He stood in the shadow of a giant holly—and saw her.

She was sitting at a window, her chin resting on her hand, looking out across the moor to where the sea lay gleaming in the radiance of the moon. She was in white; her dusky hair lay about her shoulders and framed her young face, in which the dark eyes were set.

It was only a glimpse that he had of her, for he stole silently away, abashed at having surprised a revelation not meant for his eyes.

But it was like the glimpse that he had had of the fairies dancing. It thrilled and calmed him at the same time. He knew now that the fairies had not revealed all the secret to him. Viola was the secret, towards which all his life and all that he had learned of nature had been leading him. Viola lay at the warm, sweet heart of it all. Everything was changed by that vision he had had of her, and soon he would see her and tell her so.

CHAPTER XI
THE WOODLAND POOL

They met in the woodland path which Harry had taken in the night. He was there before the time appointed and threw himself down on the grass to await her coming. He could see some distance along the path from where he had stationed himself. It was narrow just here and the thick overhanging branches of the trees made a green shady tunnel flecked with quivering points of light.

He waited in a state of patient expectation, not greatly moved or stirred, but happy and contented. The time did not seem very long, though he waited for half an hour.

At last she came. She was dressed all in white. It seemed that it must have been so as she appeared, in the glooming green, which had been like an empty frame waiting for just that picture of maiden whiteness.

He sprang up to meet her, and she waved her hand when she saw him and hurried her steps a little. That frank greeting took them back to the point at which they had parted the day before. An ocean of feeling and experience had washed over Harry in the intervening hours, but it was lifted from him as they met and smiled their greetings. His was as frank and untroubled as hers.

They chattered gaily together like happy children as they turned aside from the path and went up through the wood. Harry felt an immeasurable content at being with her, laughed at nothing, and sometimes broke into snatches of song, which interrupted the conversation and made her laugh in turn. He had a fresh, clear voice, which Wilbraham had done something to train. It was a happy little song about June that was running in his head. She knew it, too, and after a time she took it up with him. "That's the way of June." Once when they had come to a place a little more open, they stood and sang it together in unison, and then laughed and went on again.

Her father had gone out painting on the common, she told him. He had asked her to go with him, but she had said it was too hot in the sun. She would wander in the woods. "I didn't say I should wander in the woods alone," she said.

"They never want to know where I'm going," said Harry. "I go out after breakfast and come back to lunch, and sometimes I tell them where I've been and sometimes I don't."

It seemed natural that their elders should go their way, and they should go theirs, in which elders had no concern. It was their secret, to which no one had a right but themselves. But it gave Harry great pleasure to hear from her in that way that it was to be their secret. "That's the way of June," he caroled again, in no very obvious connection.

They came to the still waters of the hidden pool. It would not have been surprising if no eye but Harry's had seen it since the trees had grown up around it. They had to make their way to it through thick bushes, which even in winter time could have concealed it. He had been careful in his visits not to go in and out of the thicket by the same way, and so leave a break. It was as if he had kept it secret for himself and her.

When they had pushed their way through they were in a little grassy fern-fringed space open to the sky, though it was flanked by big trees. There were one or two more of these tiny lawns sloping to the edge of the water, but that on to which they came was the largest. An age-old oak stood sentinel in the middle of it and it was flanked on one side by a yew that must have been older still, so vast was its dark circumference and so thick its red ravelled trunk.

Viola exclaimed with delight. The pool stretched in front of them, its surface unruffled, mirroring the blue sky and the green depths of the trees and the tall ferns that grew round it. There was no vegetation on it anywhere. Harry told her that it must be very deep, with a spring somewhere, or it would have been covered with weed. "It's much nicer like this," she said, laughing at him. When he asked her why she laughed, she said: "You're so proud of it." It did not seem much of a reason, but he liked her to laugh at him like that, looking at him and showing her pleasure in everything that he said that revealed a little of him.

For one moment as they stood by the edge of the water he had a slight sense of anti-climax. He had brought her, not without difficulty, to the pool, as if in some way it was to be the end of things, and in some way also the beginning. But without some lead on her part there was nothing much to stay there for. It must be either the accepted scene, or nothing but a point of interest from which they would presently move on, with nothing more that he had yet thought of in front of them.

The feeling disappeared as she turned towards the mossed roots of the oak, which made a seat for her. He threw himself among the fern at her feet with a

sensation of desire accomplished. She had accepted it. The little lawn by the still water, hidden from all human eyes but theirs, was now consecrated by the simple fact of her taking her seat under the oak. She was queen of the pool and the deep summer woods.

So far in their intercourse little points had arisen in which it had been for one or the other of them to take a step further, if it were to continue. She had stood waiting as Harry rode up to her, he had stopped, and she had spoken; he had walked with her; he had asked her to meet him again; he had brought her to the pool, and she had seated herself there to await what should come. The initiative had been more his than hers, and now it was his again. The fact of her taking her seat there, under the tree, was an invitation, though she may not have meant it as such. They might talk there through the long morning hours, but their talk could not be only of externals. It must be on a more intimate note, or they might just as well roam the woods together lightly. This green nook by the water, hidden and secret, was a shrine in which they would worship together, as yet they knew not what, but it would be something sacred and beautiful that was calling to both of them.

There was silence between them for a moment—the silence of recollection which comes before an act of devotion. Then Harry looked up at her and said, with his voice trembling a little: "I've never told any one of this place before. I think I kept it for you."

She smiled down at him, with the light soft in her eyes. "I'm glad you did that," she said. "I shall never forget it. It is so quiet and green and beautiful," she added, a little hurriedly, as if the meaning of her words might be mistaken.

"I might have shown it to the children," he said, reflectively. "I don't quite know why I didn't. But I'm glad I didn't, too."

She asked him who the children were, and he told her about Jane and Pobbles, and the things that they had done together. She asked him a good many questions and was a little particular in fixing the exact date of Jane's birth, and of her arrival at Royd.

Harry answered all her questions and told her of the map that he had begun to draw for them the afternoon before. "It seems such ages ago," he said. "I was missing them both, but I don't think I've given them a thought since, until just now."

She allowed herself to soften towards Jane; for at one point she had suggested that she seemed rather precocious for so young a child. "Poor little things!" she said. "I'm sure they must miss you, too. You have been so good to them. And they are the only young friends you have had, aren't they?"

Talking of the children had a little lowered the note of intimacy. Her last words restored it. "Until I knew you," he answered.

"And that's such a very short time."

"No; it's a very long time. It's all the time that matters."

She smiled at him, and he went on. "Think of it, that only yesterday—yesterday, much later than this—I was feeling dull and unhappy. Then I rode out to the sea, and felt much better, but I didn't know anything about you. Fancy—only yesterday I had never seen you."

She listened with her eyes fixed upon him and her lips a little apart. "What did you think when you first saw me?" she asked, softly.

He hesitated, and then laughed. "I don't think I thought anything in particular," he said. "That's what is so extraordinary. What did you think when you saw me?"

It was the children's pretty game. "I like you. When did you begin to like me?" But she was not ready to tell him that yet. Or perhaps she might have told him, if he had acknowledged to some emotion at the first sight of her. "I was very glad to see somebody who could tell me where I was," she said. "I had heard of you, you know, from Mrs. Ivimey; but somehow I didn't think of you as you till you told me your name."

What had she heard of him? She wouldn't tell him that, either, or at least not all that she had heard about him; but he was so unaware of the estimation in which he was held by the people about him that he did not divine that she was keeping something back.

What Mrs. Ivimey had said of "the folks at the Castle," generally gave them something to talk about. She wanted to hear all about his life and those among whom he spent it; and he talked about himself as he had never talked to anybody before. His desire was to bring her into it all. He told her a great deal about his happy childhood, and some of the secrets that he had cherished. He told her about the stories he had made up for himself, and, with a little hesitation, the one about the garden and the flowers, and the end of it. "I was terribly ashamed," he said, "oh, for years afterwards. I'm not sure I haven't been ashamed of it right up till now. Now I've made a clean breast of it—to you—I don't mind so much. I must have been a horribly vain little boy. It used to distress me that my hair wasn't very black and very smooth. I used to pray that it might be made so."

Her eyes rested upon his fair close-cropped head. He was looking down and did not see the look in them. "I'm glad your prayer wasn't answered," she said. "But I think you must have been a very dear little boy. I wish I had known you then. What were the violas like in your story about the flowers? Or didn't they come in?"

"Yes, they did," he said, looking up at her. "They were different from the pansies—gentler and rather shy. They were never naughty."

"How old were they? Grownup?"

"No; children—with dark eyes and a lot of dark hair all about their faces."

"Were they like any little girls you had seen?"

"I don't think so. I think they must have been rather like you were then."

"My eyes were dark, and my hair was loose on my shoulders. Perhaps something put it into your head that you would know a Viola some day."

"Scoop, young Jesus, for her eyes
Wood-brown pools of Paradise."

He said it gently, looking into her eyes. She was startled for a moment. "You know it, then?" she said.

"Yes, I thought of it when you told me you had been named from a beautiful poem. But I couldn't say it then. I didn't know you well enough."

"Have you said it since? Do you know it all?"

"I read it when I got home yesterday. I know it all now."

"Say it to me."

He said it right through, slowly, and softly, dwelling on the name Viola—Viola—with many gradations of his flexible voice, and she thought she had never heard anything more beautiful than the way he uttered it. Sometimes her eyes rested on the waters of the pool, but more often on him, but his were on her all the time:

THE MAKING OF VIOLA

I

The Father of Heaven

Spin, daughter Mary, spin,
Twirl your wheel with silver din;
Spin, daughter Mary, spin,
Spin a tress for Viola.

Angels

Spin, Queen Mary, a
Brown tress for Viola!

II

The Father of Heaven

Weave, hands angelical,
Weave a woof of flesh to pall—
Weave, hands angelical—
Flesh to pall our Viola.

Angels

Weave, singing brothers, a
Velvet flesh for Viola!

III
The Father of Heaven

Scoop, young Jesus, for her eyes,
Wood-brown pools of Paradise—
Young Jesus, for the eyes,
For the eyes of Viola.

Angels

Tint, Prince Jesus, a
Dusked eye for Viola!

IV
The Father of Heaven

Cast a star therein to drown,
Like a torch in cavern brown,
Sink a burning star to drown
Whelmed in eyes of Viola.

Angels

Lave, Prince Jesus, a
Star in eyes of Viola!

V
The Father of Heaven

Breathe, Lord Paraclete,

To a bubbled crystal meet—
Breathe, Lord Paraclete—
Crystal soul for Viola.

Angels

Breathe, Regal Spirit, a
Flashing soul for Viola!

VI

The Father of Heaven

Child-angels, from your wings
Fall the roseal hoverings,
Child-angels, from your wings
On the cheeks of Viola.

Angels

Linger, rosy reflex, a
Quenchless stain, on Viola!

VII

All things being accomplished, saith the Father of Heaven:

Bear her down, and bearing, sing,
Bear her down on spyless wing,
Bear her down, and bearing, sing,
With a sound of Viola.

Angels

Music as her name is, a
Sweet sound of Viola!

VIII

Wheeling angels, past espial,
Danced her down with sound of viol;
Wheeling angels, past espial,

Descanting on "Viola."

Angels

Sing, in our footing, a
Lovely lilt of "Viola."

IX

Baby smiled, mother wailed,
Eastward while the sweetling sailed;
Mother smiled, baby wailed,
When to earth came Viola.

And her elders shall say:

So soon have we taught you a
Way to weep, poor Viola!

X

Smile, sweet baby, smile,
For you will have weeping-while;
Native in your Heaven is smile,—
But your weeping, Viola?

Whence your smiles, we know, but ah!
When your weeping, Viola?
Our first gift to you is a
Gift of tears, my Viola!

When the musical flow of his voice had ended, they had advanced many paces further on the path they were treading together, but its end was not yet known to either of them. Viola's cheeks were rose-flushed and her eyes were shining. There was silence for a time as they looked at one another, and love flew to and fro between them unhampered in his flight but hidden from them.

Viola breathed a deep sigh, as she drew her eyes away from his, half unwillingly. "It's lovely," she said. "I didn't know how lovely it was till you said it. I'm glad I've got the most beautiful name in the world."

"And the most beautiful eyes in the world," he said. "I never knew that there was anything half so beautiful as you, though I have always loved the beautiful things in the world. I used to wonder what they meant, and a year ago I thought I had found out. But now I know that I only knew half of it."

"Tell me," she said. "What did you find out a year ago?"

He told her of his moonlight vigil, which he had never thought to tell any one, and the vision that had come to him at the end of it.

Again she listened to him, fascinated, with her eyes on his and her lips apart. But as he drew to the end of his story her face grew a little troubled.

"I should never have seen that," she said when he had finished.

"We might have seen it together if you had been there," he said. "There is no secret I could see that you couldn't see."

"No," she said, rather sadly. "You have always lived in this beautiful place, and you have seen nothing that isn't beautiful—all your life. Of course you could see that, because there was nothing to get in the way. But it isn't at all beautiful where I live. I have seen so many ugly things all round me."

"It must always be beautiful where you live—Viola."

He spoke her name caressingly. It was the first time he had uttered it, except impersonally, and it made a new sweet contact between them.

She smiled at him. "Perhaps if you love beautiful things, and think about them," she said, "it doesn't so much matter if you can't always have them about you. Do you think I could really see the fairies, if I were with you?"

He thought for a moment, with a slight frown on his face, which made the words that should come out of his thought of great importance to her. It was not in him to say something just to please her. The lightest thing that he might say to her would come from the depths of the unspoilt spirit that was in him.

His face cleared, and he looked up at her again. "I think that when you are very young you may see something like that," he said, "—or, by chance, when you are older. It means something very important, or else it doesn't mean much. It meant something very important to me to see them, but now it's not so important. If I had never seen it I should have seen you, and it would have been just the same."

"Why would it have been just the same?"

She was fascinated anew. Did ever a girl have such incense as this burned before her? And it was incense lit from a flame in the heart, not from a spark on the tongue. Her nostrils were eager for the fume of it.

Again the little considering frown. "It would," he said, "I know it would. It all meant you, somehow, though I have never seen you until now. There was something wanting in it all the time; and it was you. I should never look at anything now, and think how beautiful it was, without thinking of you."

Lover's words, spoken by an unconscious lover. They pleased and pained

her at the same time.

"I'm afraid you make too much of me," she said, with a sigh. "If I had lived here always, as I am living now——!"

She did not complete her sentence. The memory of things she had seen and known and of which he had known nothing, rose up between them. But she put them aside, and smiled at him again. "After all," she said, "I am here now, and I have never been so happy anywhere else. Perhaps I have been keeping myself for it, without knowing that it was this I was meant for. I think I was meant for it, because all the rest seems like nothing at all. When I go back, it will be less than ever to me."

Her talk of going back stabbed him. Life would be an incredible thing when they were parted. They stirred each the other's fears and shrinkings as they talked of it, but behind all the pain was the thought that they would be with one another for a long time yet. They were so young that time in front of them was not measured by the same rule as time that had passed. More than two whole weeks and most of a third Viola had still to spend in Paradise. They would meet every day. Surely, nothing could prevent their meeting every day! Twice a day they would meet, in this secret place, and be undisturbed for long summer hours in their happiness. No need to spoil it by thinking of the end.

They parted for a time. The last Harry saw of her was the white figure framed in its arch of green. Before she passed out of it she turned and stood there for a moment, motionless. She was too far for him to see her face clearly, but the message passed to and fro between them again. It was all there, though they had not yet spoken it in words, and eyes were too far off to be read.

CHAPTER XII
AT THE THRESHOLD

Harry went home to luncheon and hurried to the wood again immediately afterwards. He had much farther to go to the trysting-place than she. She might even be waiting for him when he got there.

She was not there, and after half an hour she had not come.

Oh cruel! And yet he knew, as his longing grew and his hopes fell, that she would have come if she could. Her father had claimed her; something out of her power to prevent or foresee had kept her away. She would not stay away from

him for ever.

Yet he was increasingly unhappy as the time passed and the green frame remained empty of its sweet picture. The heat of a summer afternoon lay brooding on the silent wood, and was like lead upon his heart. He paced up and down the path, to the corner from which the garden of the cottage could be seen. He thought of going to it, and talking to Mrs. Ivimey, who would know what had become of Viola, and would certainly talk to him about her. But no, he could not do that. It would be sweet to hear her name on other lips, but he would have to pretend that he was hearing of her for the first time, and he shrank from that, and from all that it would imply. He never went farther than the corner, and by and by his hope of seeing her that afternoon died away completely.

He had come out prepared to stay away until dinnertime, but now he thought he would go home to tea, and come back immediately afterwards. His absence would not then be questioned until he came back at night. They did not like him to stay away from dinner too often, but he had not done so for some time, and if he said that he was going out into the woods they would not seek to prevent him.

He was all at sea with himself as at last he dragged himself away from the empty place, which might still be brightened by her coming, with many backward looks and much lingering. He knew that something that could easily be explained had kept her, and yet he was desperately unhappy because she had failed him. Did she want him as much as he wanted her? Would anything in the world have kept him away if he had promised to come to her? Supposing she should not come at all that day! He shrank from the thought of the long night that would divide him from her, if he had not seen her before it fell. But his spirit was tired with suspense. The world seemed full of trouble and disappointment as he made his way homewards.

The one thing he never thought of was that, somehow, their meeting of the morning might have been discovered, and she had been forbidden to meet him again. They had met, and promised to meet again, in all the innocence of their youth. If their elders had known of it, it would have spoilt their happy secret, but that was all. It had not occurred to Harry that it would spoil anything else.

They had tea on the terrace outside the drawing-room. It was always the same at home. Day after day, all the year round, it was always the same. In winter the tea tables were placed near one of the two fires that warmed the long room, at other times near one of the windows, or in the summer on the terrace outside. The four of them would sit round and talk, Lady Brent dispensing the tea, over which she was very particular. Occasionally some one from the Vicarage would be there, but scarcely ever anybody else. The friendships that had formerly been between the Castle and other big houses within reach had fallen off, and it was

the rarest thing for visitors to appear there.

It might have been expected that, meeting like that, day after day, at formal meals as well as at this informal one, and with no intrusion from the outer world to break the monotony of their lives, they would have had nothing to say to one another. But there was always a great deal to say. Wilbraham read voluminously, Lady Brent read, and even Mrs. Brent read. They talked of what they had read in the papers and what they had read in books; but Mrs. Brent did not take part in the conversation over what they had read in books.

And there was the life immediately around them to talk about. If Royd Castle was cut off from the ordinary social intercourse that gathers about a large country house, it was by no means divided from the interests that depend upon ownership. There were a few hundred people living around it in direct relationship, and the personal contact with them was the closer because it represented nearly all the human interest there was in the life that was led there. It supplied the gossip which in some form or other is congenial to the most exalted minds, and without which little Mrs. Brent at least would have found the conversation unbearably arid.

Lady Brent visited among the tenantry assiduously. She was inclined to exercise authority, but could not fairly be said to be dictatorial. They were on their best behaviour before her, but there were few among them who had not some kindness to remember from her. Mrs. Brent also visited them and avoided doing so in the company of her mother-in-law if she possibly could. Her intercourse with them was on a more intimate plane. Her position as a great lady had to be implicitly accepted, but if this was done she would sit and talk with more than mere affability. Harry was her chief subject of conversation, and all the people of Royd loved Harry and expected great things of him. It might have surprised Lady Brent if she had known how clearly it was in the minds of those whom she treated as her dependents that she was only exercising temporary authority, and how much they looked forward to the time when her rule would be over. This was not because they found it irksome, for she ruled justly and considerately. But she had ruled for a long time and change is pleasant to most of us. Besides, the Castle provided very little variety of interest to those who lived within its shadow. It had not always been so, and it was expected that it would not be so when Harry came into his own.

Mrs. Brent could sometimes be induced to talk about the time that was coming, if she was flattered into a state of intimacy and skilfully drawn out. She was always careful not to create an impression that she and Lady Brent were at all antagonistic, but it was understood by everybody that this was so, the extent of the antagonism was gauged to a nicety, and the causes for it were frequently discussed and generally agreed upon.

The fact that Mrs. Brent derived from the stage was not actually known, but it would have surprised nobody to hear it; nor did her claims to belonging of right to the class into which she had married carry the smallest weight, however much they might be indulged. It was generally agreed that Lady Brent had done the right thing in absorbing her into the atmosphere of the Castle, and in keeping her closely under its influence. Poor little lady! She'd have liked to get away from it sometimes, and small blame to her! But 'twouldn't ha' done. She was all right where she was, and a nice little thing too, if you took her the right way; but there! she wasn't what you'd expect for Sir Harry's mother, and her ladyship's was the only way to keep him from knowing it.

So these remote but clear-sighted and kindly people judged of the situation at the Castle, and on the whole approved of it. As for Harry himself they one and all adored him. They were the only friends he had had outside his home from his childhood, and they were real friends. There was not one of them, man, woman or child, who had not some special feeling for him different from that of the rest. He knew them all, and was interested in them all, with a purely human sympathy. When the time came for him to take the reins, he would be dealing not with an impersonal aggregate, but with those whose interests were also his; and he would be regarded with a loyalty and affection which is enjoyed by few landowners.

Wilbraham kept himself more to himself, as was said of him, but had his friends too at Royd. It was he who brought Harry's heart to his mouth this afternoon by the announcement, made in a casual voice: "There is an artist come to stay at Mrs. Ivimey's. He rejoices in the name of Michael Angelo Bastian, which ought to mean that he is a very fine artist; but I've never heard of him. Have you?"

"No," said Lady Brent, who had been addressed. "But I did not know that Mrs. Ivimey let rooms. I think she should have asked me first. Nobody at Royd has done it hitherto."

"I wonder how she could get any one to take rooms in such an out-of-the-way place as hers," said Mrs. Brent.

"I can tell you that," said Wilbraham. "I had it all from Prout." Prout combined the occupations of shoemaker and postman at Royd. "Mrs. Ivimey has a sister who lives in London and lets lodgings. Michael Angelo Bastian lodges with her. The rest is plain to the meanest intelligence."

Harry was faced with the immediate alternative of acknowledging that he was aware of the fact stated or of affecting ignorance of it. If he kept silence now it would be deliberate and purposeful silence, and he might later on be called upon to explain it. He had not faced this; he had not faced anything in connection with Viola that had to do with the future.

Perhaps he would have spoken, if his mind had not been so full of his late

disappointment, and of his reviving hopes of still meeting Viola that evening. He could not bring himself immediately to the point of making a decision, and when Lady Brent had next spoken, and Wilbraham had answered her, the time had gone by for him to speak. His not having done so directly Bastian's name had been mentioned would need explanation now. With a mental shrug of the shoulders he kept silence, and felt a warm delicious glow as he took the further step towards a fenced and guarded intimacy with Viola which no one outside must penetrate. The pleasure of hugging his secret afresh swamped the half-guilty feeling which had preceded it in his mind. He did not even ask himself why it should have come to him, but his attitude towards his elders underwent a slight change from that moment. His youth was to be defended from them; it had its rights, which could brook no interference.

As he hurried off again to the trysting-place, he was glad once more that he had refrained from betraying his secret, as he had been glad that he had resisted the impulse to confide in his mother the night before. He knew now that they would have disapproved. Some breath from the outside world, which divides people up into categories in a way he had never had to take into account, had come to him from the discussion he had just listened to. His grandmother had shown persistent concern at Mrs. Ivimey's having let her rooms without consultation with her. Such a thing had never happened before in Royd. You didn't know what sort of people you might get, if it became a practice. An artist—there was no great harm perhaps in an artist; but— The postman had evidently not known, or if he had he had not told Wilbraham, that this particular artist had invaded the sanctities of Royd accompanied by a daughter, but Harry had felt instinctively that her presence would have increased the objections expressed by Lady Brent to Mrs. Ivimey's taking in anybody at all. It had come to him somehow that Viola's delicious charm would have done nothing to recommend her, had she been known, and that his mother would by no means have taken the confidence that it had been in his mind to make to her the night before in the spirit in which it would have been offered.

The reasons for all this were not clear to him. He had of course no idea that he was to be preserved at all costs from falling into unauthorized love; he had no more than a purely academic knowledge of what falling in love meant, and no idea as yet that he was already very deep in it himself. There were many things in which his inclinations had clashed with the rules formulated by his elders—as, for instance, in the matter of visits to the stables, during his early childhood. This was one of them, but he was not to be bound now by the views of his elders, and it was not necessary to examine their origin. There was a vague discomfort in the idea that he was setting himself against them, but no admission in his mind that he was in any way wrong in doing so. And even the slight discomfort was

more than balanced by the feeling that his secret must certainly now be guarded, which had the effect of somehow bringing him and Viola more closely together.

It had been decided chat Wilbraham was to seek out the artist, and if he found him to be the sort of person who could be asked to Royd, he was to ask him there. Harry smiled to himself, as he thought of the possibilities ahead. He must tell Viola, and he and she must decide what was to be done about it. It gave him a thrill to think of their deciding anything together. He quickened his steps. There were such oceans to talk to her about. He had no doubts now about her coming to meet him; he had almost persuaded himself that she would be there waiting for him.

But the green frame was still empty of its picture, as he had left it an hour before. The evening light was slanting on it now, giving warning that the time they would have to spend together was diminishing. But there were nearly two hours of daylight still. Surely she would come before the dusk fell!

He stretched himself under a tree, from where he could watch the place where she would appear. His mood was not yet impatient. She would surely come, and in the meantime he could think about her.

He did not think of her as a lover thinks of the mistress enthroned in his heart, to worship her there. He had not consciously enthroned her as yet. He thought of her as a wonderful revelation of something he must surely have been looking for all his life, since it was impossible now to think of life without her. She had come into his life, in some way to translate its meaning for him—for both of them. She was a revelation from the good influences all around him, as the vision of the fairies had been. He had got as far as that, and had told her so. It had been very sweet to tell her that; it would be sweet to tell her everything that came into his head. There was nothing that he would not want to tell her, at once and first of all. In his innocence of the world and the way of the world, he had reached that point in love's pilgrimage where the loved one shines out as the sweet vessel into which all confidences may be poured, and the desire is strong for a common aim and a common vision. But he had not reached the point, which usually precedes it, of an ardent desire for some sort of surrender. Perhaps it is not true to say that he had not yet enthroned Viola in his heart, for she sat there the centre of everything. But she sat there apart, as if she had mounted the steps of the throne without his hand to raise her. She must descend again and stand with him on the level ground of mutual desire before her seat should be secure and acknowledged.

But as he waited for her, and the desire for her sheer presence became stronger and stronger, he was being led towards that desire for surrender. The sweetest thing now would be, not to pour himself out in confidences to her, which

would still be very sweet, but to obtain from her that look or that word which would move him to the depths.

He went over in his mind the looks and words he had received from her, and thirsted for more. The very first time their eyes had met, before a word had been spoken between them, she had looked at him, with something behind the look with which his memory blissfully played. Once or twice that morning, by the pool, and again when she had turned towards him and stood gazing, far off, there had been something that thrilled him with happiness to remember. And there had been tones in her voice, little things she had said—he dwelt upon them all, and longed to draw more of them from her. He would say this to her; greatly daring, he would say that. And she would reply; or if she spoke no answer he would watch her face, and gain courage from it for speeches still more daring.

But an hour passed, and she had not come to him.

The sun was sinking now. Outside the wood, under the open sky, its rays would be drawing the shadow of the rocks and the gorse across the close turf; there would be a soft golden radiance in all the air, and on the bright distant pavement of the sea. But here under the trees it was already dusk, and a gloom descended on his heart, as he thought of the sunset, from the sight of which he was shut off.

It was like a parable to him. He had never before missed the glory of a sunset, if he was out of doors. The woods had never kept him from that enlarging sight. They were for other times; not less loved then, but now seeming to hold him enchained in a menacing gloom. And so, just out of his reach was the solace for which he craved, but in place of it darkness was settling down over his heart, and trouble clutching at it.

But he would not go out of the wood. She might come still. The thought brought him no relief; his long watch had emptied his mind of the springs of hope. But still he waited for her. If she did come, she must find him there.

The darkness had settled down now. There was a fading light in the sky that could be seen here and there through the thick canopy of leaves, but beneath them only eyes that had grown used to the darkness could have descried anything.

The boy lay stretched at length on the grass, his face to the ground, utterly weary and utterly miserable. He had no strength to tear himself from this unhappy spot and go home; he only wanted to lie there in his pain, which still had a little of sweetness in it as long as he lingered in the place where he had last seen

her.

He never moved. His body was as still as on that night in which he had kept his eager vigil, and at last been rewarded. But it was the stillness of exhaustion. No hope was left to him now.

But his ears, trained since his childhood to catch the lightest whispers of nature, and to interpret them, alert in spite of himself, heard something that was not of the life sinking to rest around him. He raised himself suddenly, almost violently, and peered into the darkness, all his senses once more on edge.

And out of the darkness she came, no more than a moth-glimmer flitting towards him. A wild joy filled him, down to the very depths of his being. He sprang up and ran towards her.

She gave a little cry that was half a sob, and flew to his embrace. His arms were around her, and his lips on hers. In all the long hours through which he had yearned for her, and played with the thought of her sweetness, no such blissful end to his waiting had entered his mind as this.

CHAPTER XIII
THE TEMPLE

Her face was wet with her tears, but he could just see her smile glimmering through the darkness. His eyes were as hungry as his lips. That sweet flower-like face, with the tender eyes and the mouth a-quiver—would he ever be able to gaze his fill of it?

She made no effort to draw herself from him, but nestled to him, and poured out a broken sobbing explanation of her absence to which he hardly listened. What did it matter how she had been prevented from coming to him, since she had longed for him as he had longed for her, and was with him now?

He kissed away her tears; she had not returned his kisses since her first unconsidered impelled surrender, but was still sweetly receptive of them. "Oh, I ought not to," she said, smiling at him. "But I do love you, and I have wanted you so."

Yes, this was love, of which he had never consciously, thought. She had spoken the word first, but he knew before she had spoken it that all his joy and

all his pain had sprung from that source, and exulted in his new knowledge.

"I love you too—Viola," he said, lingering caressingly on her name. "Oh, how I love you!"

He drew a long breath, and they gazed silently into one another's eyes, to find in them what no speech could utter. The melting sweetness of her gaze filled him with trembling rapture. The secret of life and all its beauty which he thought he had divined, now seemed to have depths beneath depths of meaning, beyond mental capacity to grasp, in their almost intolerable rapture. With a sigh they released each other, and speech flowed to their relief, broken and melodious, bearing them again to the surface of their bliss.

They withdrew a little from the path where they had met, and told over the tale of their love. By and by they moved along it again, in a common impulse to escape from the thick darkness of the wood, and gain the freedom of the starry night.

They passed the cottage where Viola dwelt and never gave it a thought. At a later time they confessed to one another that they had no recollection of passing it at all. They were so wrapped up in one another that nothing and nobody else in the wide world mattered to them at that moment. But when they had emerged from the wood they turned aside, instinctively perhaps, to escape prying eyes, and passed slowly along the path which they had taken the afternoon before.

After the darkness of the wood, the sky, moonless, but lit by the innumerable lanterns of the stars, had the effect of brightness. Their young faces could be plainly seen in this soft radiance, and they stood to worship one another afresh.

"You're so beautiful, Viola! How beautiful you are! I must have been blind not to see it before."

"I saw that you were from the very first."

Here were two statements of surpassing interest. They had to be enlarged upon and explained, with new and immeasurable content gained from the disclosures that were made. Nothing had ever happened like it before. They were pioneers in the uncharted country of love, and the springs at which they refreshed themselves, and the flowers brushed by their feet as they wandered through it, had been waiting for them unseen and unguessed at since the world began. The wonder of it increased.

They sat down on a low rock, jutting through the fern, and gave themselves up to the miracle of their discoveries. Harry held her hands in his, and his eyes were never off her face, except when he looked out into space as if trying to fathom something that passed his comprehension. Sometimes they drew together by an irresistible mutual impulse, but every kiss he gave her was a consecration. She was too beautiful and too sacred a thing not to be treated with high reverence. Instinctively he held himself back, though without cessation he

thirsted for her sweetness, and her lips assuaged his thirst only so long as his were upon them.

For more than an hour they sat there, and the time seemed as nothing. Then she sprang up suddenly and said she must go in. She had only meant just to run out and tell him why she had not been able to come in the afternoon. As she said it, a voice was heard calling: "Viola! Viola!" out of the darkness. She raised herself hurriedly to kiss him, of her own accord, and tearing her hands from his ran off without a word.

Harry stood for a long time where she had left him, while the unhurrying stars marched on to their celestial music and looked down upon him, a creature of the moment, who had yet found his way into the courts of eternity. He looked up at them, and in the rapture of the revelation that had come to him worshipped anew in the temple whose gates he had besieged all his life. It was for this that he had been born; it was for this that the heavens were lit, and the earth put forth its beauty. At last he had been admitted into the innermost sanctuary of the temple, and the secret of life was his.

He moved slowly towards the cottage which enshrined his love, unable to leave its hallowed precincts.

There were lights in the lower windows, and presently in that upper one which he knew to be Viola's. Perhaps she knew that he would linger out there under the stars, for she came to the window and stood there for a long time, and before she left it she kissed the tips of her fingers and threw her message out into the darkness.

Presently her light went out. Harry laid himself down on the warm turf. He would sleep there that night, as he had sometimes slept out in the open on warm summer nights before, but not with that sense of bliss enfolding him. He would keep guard over her, and perhaps, when the stars had paced onwards in their western march, and the moon had arisen, she would come to the window again, as she had come the night before. He had told her that he had seen her there. He thought she would come. And surely her presence would make itself felt through his dreams, and he would awake to see her! It was not possible that he should sleep while she was awake near him.

He pillowed his head on the fern and slept, and for a long time there was silence, on the moor and in the cottage, while the stars watched over them and waited for their waking.

It happened just as Harry had thought when he laid himself down to sleep. He

awoke to find the moor flooded by the bright radiance of the moon, which shone also upon the front of the cottage and the window of Viola's room. And she was there, with her dusky hair about her face and on her shoulders, and with some dark wrap round her, so that her face alone, and her hands, were softly illumined.

He arose and went towards her. She saw him coming, for she gave a little start, and then sat motionless again until he stood just beyond the garden fence, where he could see her face, though his was in shadow.

He stood there; neither of them spoke and neither of them moved, but drank their fill of one another's presence. They made no motion of farewell when at last Harry moved away and his form was lost in the shadows of the wood.

He could go home now and sleep, with his great happiness to bear him company. On the morrow he would see her again, and new happiness would be his lot.

CHAPTER XIV
BASTIAN

Wilbraham picked his way along the woodland path, humming a tune. His only preoccupation for the moment was to preserve his shoes from getting wet, for much rain had fallen, and there were spongy patches to be avoided.

Wilbraham disliked exercise of almost every sort. His bad times, in the winter, were when he felt impelled to go for a walk, which was for at least an hour every afternoon unless the weather absolutely forbade. In the summer he did not mind it so much, except when the heat tried him; but he would always have preferred to spend his leisure with a book in the library, or in the garden.

He had long ceased to accompany Harry in any out of door expedition. They saw quite enough of one another indoors, and their respective preferences in the matter of pace were so in opposition that it was a pleasure to neither of them to take the air together. Mrs. Brent sometimes accompanied him in his constitutionals, but he seldom invited her to do so. They also saw enough of one another indoors, or at least he saw enough of her. He liked her, but she did not interest him in conversation, while she did expect him to interest her. He was quite capable of doing so, but the effort spoilt the mild refreshment that came from leaving his brain to wander where it would while his body was being gently exercised. He found abundant interest in the thoughts of his well-stored

mind, and sometimes stayed out for longer than he had intended because he had fallen into such an absorbing train of speculation.

Yet this man, who lived his monotonous life with books as his chief recreation and his intercourse with his fellows narrowed to the few with whom he lived, was very fond of company. His walk this afternoon, longer than he usually imposed upon himself in the heat of summer, was cheered by having an object other than that of keeping his liver from troubling him. He was going to make a new acquaintance. This artist, with the rather absurd name, who was lodging with Mrs. Ivimey, might possibly be a man of intelligence, with views upon the art he practised; or he might be a mere commercial dauber. If he proved to be a man of intelligence, it would be agreeable to exchange views with him, for after books Wilbraham liked pictures, better even than he liked music. Or rather, his taste for music had become a little atrophied, since he was cut off from enjoyment of it, while art could always be read about, and there were always pictures or reproductions of pictures to be seen.

He reached the cottage on the outskirts of the wood, and looked about him with pleasure before he entered it. The great open space upon which it faced was a refreshment after the wooded environment of the Castle, and the few buildings that enlivened this point relieved it of the impression of loneliness which was unpleasing to a man of Wilbraham's fibre. It was half a mile further by the path he had taken than by the one he usually took if his humour led him towards the common, but he thought as he stood there with his hat off, so that the breeze could cool his brow, that he would come there more often, even if Mr. Bastian should not turn out to be the sort of person that he might want to come for.

A well-satisfied gentleman he looked as he stood there leaning on his stick, his brow rather bald, his presence on the verge of portliness, though he was not otherwise of the habit of body that runs to flesh. The look of discontent that Grant had remarked about him on a first acquaintance was absent now. In his suit of dark grey flannel, with his black-ribboned straw hat, he had something of a clerical air, and as he turned towards the cottage his unusually sharp ears heard the sound of hurried movement through the open window of a downstairs room, and a voice uttering the words: "The parson come to call! Good Lord, I'm lost; I can't get out."

He stood chuckling to himself as he waited for an answer to his knock. The door stood open. The artist could not have escaped him if his fears had been justified. This pleased his humour, especially as he anticipated the pleasure of bringing relief to him.

Mrs. Ivimey did not respond to his summons, and as he was preparing to knock again, a door on the left of the little passage opened and the artist came out to him.

"I'm afraid Mrs. Ivimey is out at the back somewhere," he said. "Shall I go and call her for you?"

"Thanks, it's you I've come to see, if you're Mr. Bastian," said Mr. Wilbraham. "I'm tutor to young Sir Harry Brent at the Castle. We heard you were here, and as we don't get many visitors at Royd I came to look you up."

Bastian's face changed. "That's very kind of you," he said. "Do come in."

He led the way into the little sitting-room, and Wilbraham followed him with the feeling that his visit had justified itself.

Bastian was a tall thin man with a shock of untidy grey hair, but a curiously young face. His eyes were very light blue. He had a half-whimsical, half-appealing look, as if he was in a constant state of amusement at himself and was begging not to be taken too seriously. The upper part of his face was firmly and delicately modelled, but his mouth was indeterminate and his chin weak. He was atrociously dressed, in an old discoloured suit of light grey flannel, and a pair of stained canvas shoes, and he wore no collar; but he did not apologize for his appearance. Wilbraham judged him to be about forty-five, but discovered later that he was three or four years younger.

Mrs. Ivimey's parlour was furnished with the customary mixture of old good things and bad new ones. A few canvases stood with their faces against the wall, and a half-finished picture of a flaming sunset over the moor and the sea was propped on the mantelpiece. Wilbraham threw a glance at it as he entered, but could not make up his mind whether it was going to be a good picture or an exceptionally bad one. There were some books on the round table in the middle of the room, as well as some of the untidy paraphernalia of an artist. On a smaller table in the window was a bottle of whisky, a glass and a jug of water, and by the side of the table was a shabby but comfortable looking easy chair, upon which was a book face downwards. The room was full of the odour of strong tobacco.

"I'm afraid it's rather like a bar-parlour," said Bastian. "I have a horrible habit of smoking shag, which some people object to strongly. Will you have some whisky?"

He looked sideways at Wilbraham as he spoke, with an engaging smile. There was something attractive and appealing about him; he was rather like a naughty child, caught in the act—indoors on a summer afternoon with his shag tobacco and his whisky and his advanced dishabille. Wilbraham was one of those who hated the reek of shag, but he forgave him for it readily and took out his own cigarette case. He did not reply to the offer of whisky.

"I'll go and get you a glass," said Bastian. "I'm afraid there's no soda-water, but it's good whisky and better with water."

He went out of the room, and Wilbraham stood with his eyes fixed upon the whisky bottle, and a queer look in them, half of eagerness, half of repulsion.

Bastian was away longer than it would have taken him to get a glass, and when he returned he had on a collar and a flowing brightly coloured tie. He now looked like an artist, and not so much like a broken-down gentleman-loafer.

"Say when!" he said, pouring out the whisky, and Wilbraham said when, but not immediately.

"I get tired of painting," said Bastian. "It's very hot out there on the moor, and I didn't bring a sketching umbrella with me. I thought I'd have a lazy time with a book. 'David Copperfield.' One of the best books, I consider." He held his head aside as he looked at Wilbraham.

Wilbraham had taken his first sip of whisky. It was only a sip, but his face seemed to expand under it. His heart also expanded towards a Dickens enthusiast, and for a time they talked about Dickens, and found themselves always in encouraging agreement.

"It's a pleasure to have somebody to talk to," said Bastian. "I love being in the country and I hate being in London. I came down here to be as far away from London as possible, but there's no doubt one does want human intercourse. I'm devoted to my little girl, who's here with me; but one wants men to talk to."

"Oh, you've got a daughter with you," said Wilbraham. He had been considering all the time, underneath the conversation, whether or not Bastian could be introduced to Royd. He was a gentleman: that was obvious. But it was equally obvious that he had shed some of the customs usually followed by gentlemen. Would his innate breeding carry him through, with women—with Lady Brent? With a man, or at least with one who prided himself on being able to see beneath the surface, the shocking old clothes and the shag tobacco would make no difference. Then there was the whisky. Wilbraham had rather more than a suspicion that Bastian's case was not so very different from his own: that whisky meant a good deal to Bastian. There were signs of it on his smooth child-like face—a lack of clearness in a skin that was meant to be unusually clear, a slackness of muscle, a look in the eye and in the droop of the mouth; and the second—or possibly the third—allowance that Bastian had poured into his glass had exceeded by a good half inch the not meagre allowance that Wilbraham had accepted in his own. Perhaps it might lead to complications to invite him to Royd. If Wilbraham should decide not to, the daughter might be made an excuse.

"She's a dear child," said Bastian. "Her mother's dead. She was one in a thousand." He sighed. "Viola and I are everything to one another. We're scarcely ever parted, except when we're at work. She has to earn money, poor child, and neither of us manages to earn very much. Still, we're happy together, and happiest of all when we leave the streets behind us and get out into the country."

He was revealing himself as one of those people who like to pour themselves out about their own affairs, not so much out of egotism as from an impulse

to show confidence towards their hearers, to establish relations which shall rest upon no misunderstanding, in which nothing shall be kept back.

Wilbraham was without that impulse, but he was also without any large share of egotism. He was interested in other people, and usually preferred that they should talk about themselves, since few people are interesting upon any other subject. He had some curiosity about Bastian's history, which seemed to have had contradictions in it, when his refinement of speech and manner was compared with his confessed and apparent indigence, which was rather below that to which men of birth and breeding sink, even if they are without the earning capacity.

"How old is your daughter?" he asked, a little confused between the mention of her as a child and that of her work.

"Sixteen or seventeen," said Bastian. "I can't quite remember which, and I don't particularly want to. I don't suppose I shall keep her with me for many years. She's a very beautiful girl. So was her mother. And gentle and sweet and good too—both of them. Ah, whatever I've missed in life—whatever mistakes I've made—I've had that. There's nothing in this world like a good and beautiful woman,—'A lovely apparition, sent to be a moment's ornament'—how does it go on? I can't keep these things in my head."

Wilbraham threw a look at Bastian's glass, of which the contents were now reduced by half. His speech showed no sign of deterioration—he was evidently one of those people who could "carry their liquor"—but Wilbraham recognized his state as one in which the ordinary dictates of reticence would be considerably relaxed.

His own glass was nearly as full as before. He could quite easily have gone away and left it there. He felt that the small amount he had already drunk had done him a vast amount of good, enlightened his brain and stimulated his body. He had an impulse of pity towards Bastian, who was under the influence of the desire from which he had emancipated himself, and of self-congratulation at his own freedom. Thank God that he could drink what was good for him, and stop there. He was inclined to like Bastian exceedingly. It might be possible, if he got to know him better, to help him out of the morass into which he had fallen. It seemed probable that the state of poverty to which he had come was owing to habits of intemperance. A man who had had the same inclinations and might have been brought under by them, but had overcome them instead, would be the right man to help another, if he could gain his confidence. And Bastian seemed to be in the mood to give confidence.

"I'm afraid I don't know your name as an artist," said Wilbraham with a glance at the picture on the mantelpiece. "But it's years since I went to an exhibition. I'm interested in art, though, and have read a good deal about the modern

movements."

"Art!" echoed Bastian. "There's nothing like it, is there? The older I get the more I love it. Poetry, music, painting—everything. To tell you the truth, art has been my downfall."

Wilbraham felt some surprise. He had thought that if Bastian had been through any experience that might be described as a downfall, it had been from other causes. "Well, if you've followed it when you might have been doing something else that would have brought you more money," he said, "I don't know that you're so much to be pitied. If I had the gift for painting, which I haven't at all, I'd rather do what you're doing now, than get rich."

Bastian laughed. "I'm afraid I haven't much gift either," he said. "I'm a rotten artist, and I'm a rotten musician, and I'm a rotten poet. I've tried to make my living out of all three; but perhaps you might say that I haven't tried very hard. I love 'em all too much. It's rotten to have to make your living out of what you love. You want to enjoy it, not to practise it, unless you've got a turn that way. You don't have to be a singer yourself to enjoy other people's singing; it doesn't follow that you can paint good pictures because you know a bad one when you see it. There ought to be scholarships at the Universities for people with a genius for contemplation, and life fellowships to follow them up."

"The holders of life fellowships have sometimes been known to practise contemplation to an excessive extent," said Wilbraham.

Bastian laughed heartily. "That's rather good," he said. "But what a pleasant life, eh? These jolly places—and plenty of good company, and good wine! Why should that happy lot be reserved for people who happened to interest themselves in one or two subjects, out of all that there are to interest one, in their extreme youth? I suppose you were at Oxford or Cambridge in those happy days of long ago?"

"Cambridge," said Wilbraham. "I was at Christ's."

"We must have been there about the same time. I was at Magdalene—a nice snug little college, and becoming quite an intelligent one, from what I've heard. But I haven't been there since I came down. They wouldn't be very proud of me now, I'm afraid. One or two touts or stablemen might recognize me perhaps. They had plenty of money out of me when I had it. I don't belong to that life any more."

He had a sudden mournful droop, and drank what was left in his glass. Wilbraham had lost the impression that he was much affected by what he had drunk, but it returned now. That drop into self-pitying depression immediately after smiling excitement told its tale. His own sobriety was indicated by his glass, still two-thirds full. He had half a mind to remark upon Bastian's helping himself to another stiff peg, which he did with a perfectly steady hand. But he did not

know him well enough yet; the time for that sort of sympathy had not yet come.

But he was more than ever interested in him. His fall must have been from a higher social plane than he had suspected. Undergraduates whose money had been spent in connection with horse-flesh usually had more than the average to begin with, and Magdalene had been a super-sporting college in his day and Bastian's day.

"I was the son of a poor parson," he said. "I got my scholarship, and if I had worked I should probably have got my fellowship too. I did work at what interested me, but the devil of it was that it didn't interest the dons. Those prizes are reserved for the people who have the sense to stick at one thing till they've got them. Then they can do what they like. They're not necessarily the people who are best at their subjects. I've got a real love for the classics, and I probably know a good deal more about them than a lot of the people who got Firsts when I only got a Second. It's the concentration of those few years that counts."

Bastian laughed again. "Firsts and Seconds!" he said. "I didn't take a degree at all. The smash had come before then, and I was tied up for life."

Wilbraham was rather taken aback. It looked as if confidences were coming, and he had the gentleman's dislike to receiving them unless they are given with full intention. "Don't tell me anything you'll be sorry for afterwards," he said, with another look at Bastian's glass.

"Oh, my dear fellow, I'm not drunk," said Bastian. "I drink a lot, and no doubt it has had a good deal to do with keeping me where I am; but I don't get drunk. I don't often meet anybody like you, who belongs to the world I used to inhabit. It's a relief sometimes to unburden oneself. Besides, there's Viola. Viola doesn't often get the chance of talking to a gentleman. I think you'll open your eyes when you see Viola. I haven't been able to raise myself out of the muck, but it hasn't touched her. She's the flower that has grown out of it."

Wilbraham still felt some discomfort. If it were true that Bastian never got drunk, he was none the less under the influence of drink now, or he wouldn't have talked about himself with quite that absence of control. He must have been referring to his wife when he had said that he had been tied up for life, and men don't talk to one another in that way about their wives on a first acquaintance when they are in full possession of themselves.

"I shouldn't let anything you told me go any further," Wilbraham said.

Bastian did not seem to have heard this. He was looking down with a frown of concentrated purpose. To unburden himself was evidently imperative on him for the moment, and he was collecting his faculties to that end.

"I don't want to give you a false impression," he said. "My wife was a woman in a thousand. Never did I have one moment's regret that I had married her. I think, if she'd lived, she might have made a man of me still. Perhaps

it was a fluke—I don't want to make myself out better than I was, and I was a rotten young fool in those days—perhaps it was a fluke that she was what she was, because it was only her beauty that I fell in love with, and I hadn't the sense then to see what there was behind it. But what I do say is that my people ought to have seen. I'll never forgive them for that, and I'll never let Viola have anything to do with them. She doesn't even know their name, and——"

"I don't quite understand," said Wilbraham, as he seemed to be off on another gallop. "Why did your people object to your marrying?"

"Oh, well of course it was a fool's trick. I wasn't even of age, and she was a girl off the stage, but one of the sweetest, kindest girls that ever stepped. I only had her for a few years, but I tell you I'm in love with her memory still. She's been dead seventeen years and I miss her as much as ever. Life's nothing to me, though I'm not old yet; I buried it all in her grave."

It was curious, thought Wilbraham, that there should be a story here not dissimilar from the one that he had lived with for about the same length of time. But the girl whose father had made the same mistake as Harry's had not been shielded from its consequences as he had. She was hardly likely to have escaped the contamination of the rougher, harder world to which her father had descended. Wilbraham attributed Bastian's praise of his wife largely to the diffuse sentiment of the moment. He had not otherwise created the impression of a man living upon a life-long regret. His daughter, if she was the close companion of his poverty and the witness of his habits, could hardly be the rare and delicate flower that he painted her, though she was probably beautiful. At any rate it would be just as well to preserve Harry from contact with her. It would be an ironic stroke of fate if in this remote corner in which he had been brought up the glamour of the stage should obtrude itself once more.

"Is your daughter on the stage?" he asked outright, at this point in his reflections.

Bastian roused himself, and seemed to shake off completely his mood of hopeless regret. "God forbid!" he said. "I wouldn't have risked that, though if I had I believe she'd have come through it. You must see Viola. I don't know where she is now. She's like a sweet young creature of the woods—roams about in them all day. That'll tell you what she is—a London girl, who can throw London off her altogether when she gets away from it. She's less bound to it even than I am. Come up to-morrow, will you? I'll tell her to be in to tea. She sometimes takes it out with her. Can you come about half-past four?"

Wilbraham had been thinking rapidly. If this girl was in the habit of roaming the woods all day she might come across Harry, who was also in the habit of roaming the woods. All the ideas with which Wilbraham had lived for years past gathered themselves into the instinct to watch and guard. He must see this girl

of Bastian's, and he must be prepared for what should come, so that he could deal with it without surprise and without hurry. Fortunately, he had not announced his intention of calling upon the artist that afternoon. He would say nothing about his visit at the Castle, but would announce one for the next day.

"Yes, I should like to come," he said, as he rose from his seat. "I must be getting back now."

About a third of the whisky remained in his glass. He stood looking at it, as Bastian expressed his pleasure in having seen him, and then drained it off before he left the room.

CHAPTER XV
WILBRAHAM

Harry and Viola were in the log cabin. They had varied their meeting-places. Best of them all they loved the secret pool, but that was only for very hot still weather. Rain was falling intermittently this afternoon, but every now and then the sun shone. The weather made little difference to their happiness, and the cabin, Harry's handiwork, provided them with a shelter when they needed it, which brought them also a grateful sense of seclusion and joint possession. The Rectory was empty; Sunday duty was performed by a visiting clergyman; nobody was in the least likely to disturb them in their retreat. Viola had got rid of her slight suspicion of Jane, which she had already confessed to Harry, with happy laughter. "She may not know it," she had said, "but of course she's in love with you, poor child! She couldn't help being, if she was only nine instead of thirteen. I was a little jealous of her being so much with you. But I love her for loving you, and of course I'm not jealous of anybody now."

The log cabin was roughly furnished. Not much more would have been required if it had really been the home of a pioneer. Harry and Viola had played with the idea of living together in such a cabin, with a new beautiful world to be tamed all around them, and this as the nest of their love and companionship. So he had played with the children, but Viola's presence had given their cabin a wonderful romantic charm which it had never had and which it would never lose. Her presence would illumine every place in which she might rest. Harry's old castle was still in shadow because she had not yet visited it.

It was the morning of the day upon which Wilbraham was to take tea with

Bastian, and Viola was to be there to be exhibited to him. Harry had been concerned at hearing that he had already been to the cottage.

"He has said nothing about it at home," he said. "This morning at breakfast he did say that he had thought of going to see your father this afternoon, but that it looked like raining all day. What does it mean?"

"Nothing very dreadful," said Viola. "He and father seem to have got on very well together yesterday, but perhaps he wasn't quite sure enough of him to ask him to the Castle. Perhaps he wants to see what I'm like first."

Harry threw her a quick loving look. They were sitting together on a bench underneath the eaves of the hut. They might not have been taken for lovers by anyone who had seen them; their caresses were rarer than might have been expected, fathoms deep in love with one another as they were; but looks and smiles flashed between them like summer lightning, and scarcely the lightest word was spoken without emotion.

"When he sees you," Harry began; but she interrupted him. "Father doesn't want to go if he does ask us," she said. "And I couldn't go, Harry dear. I love you so much that I couldn't keep it back. I'm afraid I shan't be able to keep it back this afternoon from Mr. Wilbraham, if he says anything about you."

"I've asked myself sometimes," Harry said, thoughtfully, "whether it's right to keep it back. You're so much above everybody else in the world, Viola, that——"

Again she interrupted him. "Harry darling," she said, "I've thought about it too. There are lots of things that I know about in the world that you don't. I only want to forget them while I'm here with you; and I can't if other people know how much I love you, and that you love me. They wouldn't let us forget them."

"What sort of things, Viola dear? I'm not a child, though perhaps they have tried to keep me one for too long, at home. I'm going to take care of you, for all our lives. I ought to know as much as you do."

"I hope you never will, darling," she said, a little sadly. "I know that the things I have learnt haven't spoilt me, or else I shouldn't feel so happy as I do in your loving me. But other people might not believe that. We're very young, both of us. We love as deeply as people who are older love, and we know we shall go on loving each other all our lives. But others wouldn't believe that. They would try to part us. They would part us, as long as I stayed here; and there's such a little time left. Oh, let us be happy together while it lasts, and keep our lovely secret."

"Why should they try to part us, Viola? Who is there? My grandmother and my mother. If they only saw you!"

She smiled at him. "It wouldn't be enough," she said, "whatever I was. And they wouldn't look at me with your eyes. Perhaps nobody else would. What was

it made you love me so much, Harry?"

He had told her a hundred times, and now told her again; and she told him that she had loved him the very first moment she had set eyes on him, riding up on his gallant horse with his dogs around him. "You were like a splendid young knight," she said. "No girl could have helped loving you. But I love you a thousand times more now than I did then, and I suppose I shall go on loving you more and more all my life."

It was like the old stories of his childhood, which had to be told over and over again, and were better every time they were told. But now it was not as it had been then, when no variation must be admitted in the telling. There was always something new—some little discovery that deepened the sense of perfection and wonderment, some answering thought that showed them to have been close to one another, even in the hours in which they were parted and were pasturing on their sweet memories of one another.

It was with a kind of solemnity of sweetness that Harry dwelt upon Viola's trust in him and his manhood. By a thousand little signs it had been made plain that she knew more of the world than he, but she put all that knowledge aside and looked up to him and submitted to him as if infinite wisdom and experience were his. And in truth he had grown greatly in mental stature since her love had come into his life to change it so completely. They must have remarked upon it at home if he had not taken such advantage of the freedom that was granted him and been so little at home at this time. His mother actually had told him that he was altered, after he had expressed himself with more than usual self-confidence when they had talked about the war over the dinner-table. She was always on the look-out for signs of something that might take him from her, and she feared the war and what might come of it with an unreasoning fear, considering the information at her command. Harry was thinking a great deal about the war now, which does not mean that there were any times at which he was not thinking about Viola. With the coming of love his sense of the deeper values of life had become strengthened. If he had felt himself borne along on a strong current that would carry him to whatever of action or duty or mere state of being that was laid down for him, then whatever happened to him was part of the whole, and nothing in his life would be dissociated from anything else. It was this sense of unity that lifted his fresh boy's adoration of a girl as young and as pure as himself into something bigger and more rooted than that, beautiful as it is. His love gave the divine note of joy to all his purpose, sweetened and solemnized it at the same time. It was not like a great happiness in which he could forget himself, and which he must also forget for a time if something more serious had to be faced.

This morning, for the first time, influenced perhaps by the breath from

outside which had come through Wilbraham's advent upon the scene, which, however, they put aside from them, they talked about the time when Viola should have gone away.

Their extreme youth moved them to sadness, which was not wholly painful because the time was not near yet, and present bliss was only heightened by the thought of parting. They were so far unlike most young lovers that no mention was made of writing, or even of meeting again. It was as if the contact between them was so close and so sure that however far apart they might be in space, and for whatever time, they would still be together.

Harry was serious about the future. "I don't know exactly what is going to happen," he said. "I'm supposed to be going to Sandhurst in January, but that's a long time ahead. I seem to see the war swallowing up everything. There's something to be done here about it, and perhaps it will be for me to do it. But there's nothing to show yet. I think there won't be till you go away, my darling. I think there's nothing that will come in the way of my being with you, and thinking about nothing but you."

"Do you think you will have to go and fight, Harry? Oh, surely you're too young for that, darling!"

"I'm not too young to love you."

She thought over this. It was one of the things he sometimes said that meant more than it seemed to. She loved those speeches of his, springing from something in him to which she could give all her faith and all her devotion. They helped her to plumb the depths in him, and she had never found anything there that did not make her glad and proud of loving him.

This time her pride brought the tears close to her eyes. There was more than the sweetness of young love in this—to be loved as something in full alliance with all the biggest things that a man might be called upon to do in the world, and to which he must bring all that he was and all that he had, even his life itself if it should be required of him.

"I shouldn't want you not to, Harry," she said.

He did not tell her of his conviction that the war would claim him. She was his to be protected, and some things she must be spared. When the time came, she would somehow be concerned in it, because she would be concerned in everything that he did, and whatever he should want of her then she would give him. He had as much confidence in her as she in him.

"The war is like a great shadow over everything," he said. "We're in the sunshine just now, you and I—the most glorious sunshine. I don't think that we need fear the shadow for ourselves. But for others—for some it's very deep."

The shadow seemed to creep closer and touch her heart as he spoke. They were silent for a time, her hand resting in his. The contact strengthened them

both, and the shadow passed away from her. For the rest of their time together that morning they made love and built their airy rainbow castles, almost as unsubstantial as those of children. In fact they played with the idea of having Jane and Pobbles to live with them. It hardly seemed fair to be using the cabin in which they had a proprietary share and leave them out of it. They would pass suddenly from grave to gay in this way, and there were many times when the children could have taken a full part in their conversation without being at all in the way.

At about six o'clock that evening Wilbraham was walking along the woodland path that led from the cottage to the Castle. He walked slowly with his eyes on the ground all the time, and his face was very thoughtful. He started violently as he looked up to see Harry standing in the path in front of him.

For a moment they stood there looking at one another.

"Well?" said Harry.

Wilbraham's eyes dropped, and he walked on, Harry with him. "You've been meeting here," he said.

"Yes."

Another pause. Then from Wilbraham: "You've been making love."

"Making love? I don't like the expression. We love each other—yes."

Wilbraham said nothing, and they walked on together. Presently they came to a fallen tree by the side of the path. "Let's sit down here and have it out," said Wilbraham.

Harry spoke first. "I'm glad you know," he said. "I'd like all the world to know; you can tell why, now you've seen her. But I suppose it wouldn't do for mother and Granny to know—not just yet."

Wilbraham seemed to pull his determination together. "My dear boy," he said, "you mustn't take it for granted that they're not to know. It has come as a complete surprise to me; I don't know what to do about it yet."

Harry laughed. The situation seemed to contain no awkwardness for him, whatever doubts it might have brought to Wilbraham. "Before you settle that," he said, "tell me what you think of her."

"She's a very beautiful child," said Wilbraham, thoughtfully. He laid no stress on the word "child," to belittle Harry's confession of love. It was as she had struck him.

He had gone into the little parlour to find Bastian there, dressed more in accordance with what he had seemed to be than on the day before. A faint smell of his strong tobacco hung about the room, but it had been tidied, and freshened up with flowers, and tea was laid on the table, with signs of ceremony and care.

Then Viola came in, and he had the impression of Bastian triumphantly watching him as he introduced her.

He did indeed open his eyes at first sight of her, as her father had foretold. He would not have been so surprised at the vision of her, fresh and delicate, very simply dressed in her white frock, with all the air about her of breeding and refinement, if it had not been for the memory of Bastian the day before, with his deteriorated tastes, and his talk of downfall. A flower, he had said of her, growing out of the mire; but who had tended her growing?

Mrs. Ivimey came in with the tea, and was voluble with Wilbraham about her ladyship and Sir Harry. Wilbraham's eyes were on Viola the whole time, and he saw the colour rise on her soft cheeks as Harry's name was mentioned, but made nothing of it at the time.

Nothing more was said about the Castle when Mrs. Ivimey had left the room. Wilbraham had not given the invitation that might have been expected of him. He recognized with a sense of gratitude that no hints towards it need be feared. Bastian showed up much more as a gentleman than on the afternoon before; his clothes were old enough but no longer disreputable, and he was obviously entirely free from the influence of drink. The difference in his speech and bearing seemed to exaggerate his state of the afternoon before into one of actual drunkenness.

They talked chiefly about books, and more particularly about poetry. Viola talked very little, but her father sometimes referred to her, as if to show with pride what she was. Her enthusiasms showed here and there. Wilbraham's wonder grew at her.

Harry came to his mind again. He brought his name in deliberately. "Harry, my pupil, used to shout that out when he first read it. He loves poetry, and it takes him like that."

Viola made no reply, but the flush dyed the rose-petal of her cheeks again. "It's the youth in him," her father said. "Poetry brings you real joy when you're young, doesn't it, Viola?"

She had to look up at last, and Wilbraham saw her eyes. She made a brave effort to speak evenly, but her voice trembled a little as she said, "Yes, all the beautiful things in the world make you glad."

Then Wilbraham knew, and a wave of sympathy and tenderness flowed over him, but was brought up short against the wall that all the aims of the past years had built up around Harry, and dashed back on him to overwhelm him. He emerged gasping, but with the instinct strong in him to keep his knowledge from being seen. In the rest of the time he stayed at the cottage nothing was said to cause Viola to betray herself further, but he was observing her all the time, and his bewilderment grew.

She seemed to have divined that the danger was over, and came out of her shell and smiled and prattled delightfully. Her happiness was too strong in her to be kept under, and she would not have been human, or feminine, if she had not wished to make a pleasant impression upon Wilbraham, who was so near to Harry. It was the impression of delicious sparkling youth that came to him most strongly. It was as if the confession was drawn out of him reluctantly when in his answer to Harry's question he said slowly: "She's a very beautiful child."

"Why didn't you teach me what a beautiful thing love is?" asked Harry. "We've read a lot about it together, but I never had an idea of it until now. I don't think anybody in the world has ever been so happy as I am."

Wilbraham was torn in two again. His appreciations were not all bookish, and he loved Harry. He saw that in a nature such as his love would come as a very beautiful thing, and his searching observation of Viola had revealed nothing in her that could make it less so. And yet—!

"How long have you known her?" he asked.

"What does it matter?" said Harry. "I've known her all my life. If I look back to any time in it, she was there, though I'd never seen her. We've been meeting every day, if that's what you mean."

It was what Wilbraham had meant, and he felt discomfort at having asked the question. It was the discomfort that must come from probing into this situation, with the fear before him of saying something that would smirch the bright purity of Harry's mind. Anything that brought his actions to the test must do that, if he came to understand what tests were applicable to his meetings with Viola.

"Why didn't you tell us?" seemed to be the safest thing to say, and he said it with a half hope that the answer would give him some handle, though without mental acknowledgment of the hope.

"Well, I felt somehow that you'd try to stop me," said the boy. "At least mother and Granny would. I did nearly tell mother, the first time I'd seen Viola, but something warned me not to. I've been glad since that I didn't. It has just been she and I—Viola and I. Oh, how I love her! I'm glad *you've* seen her. But you must keep it to yourself. We haven't much longer together. I can't have our time spoilt."

He spoke almost with authority. With every moment Wilbraham felt some new little emotion of change and development too quick for him to master. Harry had been the most docile of pupils. Never once since his first dealings with him as a young child had he had to exercise authority against desires or inclinations of his. True, he had held the reins lightly, and never given him a rebuke or a direction that had mood instead of reason behind it; but it had sometimes crossed his mind that the boy was too docile, and that his sense of responsibility and self-

mastery might be sapped if he was brought up to give unquestioning obedience to the directions of his elders. He had mentioned this fear to Lady Brent, and her answer to it had been of the kind that he had received once or twice before in his consultations with her, from which his confidence in her ultimate wisdom had been so firmly fixed. The same doubt, it seemed, had crossed her own mind. It was to be met by allowing Harry the fullest possible trust and freedom. If at any time he overstepped the freedom it was not to be treated as a fault. He was to be told why it was not advisable for him to do this or that, and the decision left to him. Once or twice this had happened, and once he had stuck out for his own will. It was when his nocturnal rambles had been discovered by chance, shortly after that night upon which Grant had seen him out in the park. Lady Brent, with calm and admirable self-restraint, had said: "Very well, Harry. After all, I don't know that there's any harm in it. If I had known of it a year ago I might have stopped it; but now you're old enough to do as you like in that sort of way."

No one observing the boy, Wilbraham had thought, could say that he was molly-coddled into submission. Few boys of his age had such freedom granted to them, or carried a more gallant air before the world; and the Grants, of whom he had taken counsel, as representing the views of the world more closely than he in his retirement could do, had supported him.

And yet, there had been the feeling that Harry was extraordinarily easy to manage—too amiably submissive, almost, to the guidance of his elders, and Wilbraham himself particularly.

But now—! Wilbraham mentally shook himself. Was he receiving instructions from Harry—and almost inclined to accept them submissively?

The little spurt to his pride took him a trifle farther than he had wished to go. "I don't think it's a matter for me to decide on, apart from your grandmother," he said.

Harry turned a surprised face on him. "No, it's for me to decide on," he said. "By and by I shall tell Granny—of course. But I don't in the least know when it will be. There's nothing to show yet."

The phrase struck Wilbraham oddly. Harry had used it once or twice to him before. "One has to decide upon things with one's brain," he said, "and out of one's experience—important things that may affect one's life. They can't be left to impulse."

"The two go together, I suppose," said Harry, almost with indifference.

It was one of those little speeches upon which Viola would hang as containing the quintessence of wisdom. She might not have understood this speech, but Wilbraham did, and it affected him profoundly. Here was that rarest of characters—one who had never played with his impulses, to give them scope beyond the guidance of his reason. He could trust his impulses because their

springs were controlled.

"Shall we go on?" said Harry, rising.

Wilbraham rose too, slowly, after a pause of reflection, and they walked on. Viola's name was not mentioned again between them.

CHAPTER XVI
DILEMMA

Wilbraham walked up and down in a retired part of the garden where no one was likely to disturb him. Sometimes, because he had walked rather farther that afternoon already than was his custom, he sat down on a garden seat at the end of the alley where he was. But only his body was at rest; his mind was eagerly searching for the right course. If only it were as straight and as easy to tread as this soft turfed walk between the uncompromising green walls, with the evening sun flooding the narrow space and warming even the sombre tones of the yew to some leniency!

He did not know where Harry was. He had left him when they had reached the house. For all he could tell, he might have gone straight back to Viola; there was an hour yet before dinner. But he would hardly have come right back to the Castle with him, to talk chiefly about the war, if he had meant to do that, and he had let drop something which showed that he had no intention of staying out during the dinner hour. Perhaps he would go to her afterwards, as he must have done on occasions before. It did not much matter. He had claimed the right to go to her when he pleased, and Wilbraham had not controverted it. His authority seemed to have come to a very sudden end, he thought with a wry smile.

There remained Lady Brent's authority. Should he invoke it? That was what he had to decide for himself before he left this garden alley, the retired scene of his cogitations.

Harry had extracted no promise from him. That pleased him, as it had pleased Grant when he had acted in the same way over his secret midnight roaming. They had been justified in their treatment of him to that extent. He would be ashamed of nothing that he had done, not even to the extent of asking that it should be kept secret where he had shown that secrecy was what he wanted—and expected.

That made it all the more difficult for Wilbraham. He would seem to be

breaking a promise if he told Lady Brent, though he had given no promise. He would at least be setting himself against Harry in a matter which Harry had claimed the right to decide for himself. He wanted to be very sure that the boy was wrong in his decision before he did that.

He loved and admired Harry at that moment more than he had ever done. He had a clearer vision than ever before of the boy's clean finely-tempered nature. He felt himself rebuked by it, and what thoughts he spared for himself, as apart from his duty towards Harry and towards Lady Brent, worked rather sadly upon the conviction of his own weakness.

He had kept silent about his previous visit to Bastian only partly because of his wish to judge further for himself before he gave or withheld the suggested invitation to the Castle. He remembered now the pleasure with which he had set out that afternoon to go to the cottage, and knew that its chief source was the anticipation of drinking with Bastian—drinking just the amount and no more to give him the slight exhilaration that he had gained the day before. Bastian had offered him nothing to drink except tea. Viola's presence in the little parlour had made the scene of the previous afternoon look ugly in the memory of it. He was very glad now that it had been so. It would have been too painful to have the burden of that secret upon him while deciding what he should do with Harry's secret. Lady Brent would certainly have looked upon it as a fall, whatever view he might encourage himself to take of it.

But surely, weak as he was, he had had something to do with making Harry, who was of so much finer clay, what he had grown into. He had pointed him to noble things, fed his mind upon fine utterance of fine thoughts, opened the door for him to all the rich stores of wisdom laid up from the past. Yes, he had done that, though he had had small profit of it for himself. He was consoled by the thought that Harry could not be what he was if any breath of his own unworthiness had touched him.

He threw off the discomfort. He would act now for Harry's good, as he had always acted. There had been nothing wrong in him there.

He threw off, also, not without some impatience, the influence of Harry's assuredness. If it was to be accepted that the boy could do no wrong according to his lights—which really seemed to be what it was coming to—it was not the less necessary to judge the situation by lights which did not shine upon him, the glimmer of which, indeed, had been deliberately curtained from him.

The love of a boy and a girl! Oh, it was a touching thing, when they were a boy and a girl like Harry and Viola. Wilbraham rejected then and there any suggestion that might have come from his dinted experience that Viola was not Harry's mate in innocence and purity. He had seen her for himself. All that he knew of her father, all that he did not know of her origin and upbringing, could

go by the board. His heart spoke for her, his sentiment went out to her. He was a poor, weak, self-indulgent creature, he told himself, but he did recognize goodness and purity when he saw it. Besides, what else could have attracted Harry? He was doubly armed there.

But Lady Brent wouldn't see it like that. The outside resemblances between what had happened to Harry's father and what was now happening to Harry would be too strong for her. She would think that all for which she had worked and sacrificed herself through long years would be destroyed if Harry was caught in the snares of love at this early age. She would put her spoke in. She would use all the wisdom of which she was capable—and she had shown great wisdom in the past—in putting a stop to it; but at least she would try to put a stop to it.

And then what would happen? Wilbraham saw a sharp contest between her and Harry, and, with the deeper vision that had come to him of the boy's character, he felt it to be extremely doubtful whether Lady Brent would win. There would be a state of open conflict, and Harry would be more firmly fixed in his courses than before.

Boy and girl attachments—they faded out. It was absurd to suppose that at seventeen Harry could have any idea of marriage, however much he and Viola might have played with the overwhelming bliss of some day being always together. He was not as his father had been; he would marry, when the time came for him to do so, with a full sense of his responsibility. And Viola was not like Harry's mother. No, the danger of a hasty secret marriage could be ruled out; it was an affront to both of them to think of it.

Harry would go his way, and Viola would go hers. Their ways lay naturally very far apart. They might write to each other for a time, and they might see one another occasionally; but what would it matter? At the end of four years, when Harry would be twenty-one, it was most probable that this almost childish love passage would be forgotten, or exist only as a fragrant memory.

Wilbraham divined in himself at this point a faint regret at the thought of this beautiful boy and girl ceasing to love one another. Viola had made a deep impression upon him.

At any rate, there was no harm in it. Probably there was even good in it. Harry would soon be leaving home, to plunge straight into a world for which Wilbraham had sometimes thought that his training had been a dangerous preparation. With this innocent early love of his to accompany him, he would be armed against many of the temptations to which sheltered youth does succumb when the shelter has at last been withdrawn.

Wilbraham felt a sense of relief at having come to these conclusions. He was sure they were right. Harry had conquered. He should be left free to sun himself in the glamour of his boy's courtship. How pretty it was to think of

them billing and cooing like two young turtle-doves in their leafy fastnesses! Wilbraham's lettered thoughts flew to Theocritus, and he murmured soft Greek words to himself, but decided that there would be a delicacy about the wooing of these children that could not be matched in Sicilian idylls. He rose from his seat and made his way towards the house. He had decided. He would leave them alone.

But as he dressed for dinner in a leisurely way, lingering often at his window to enjoy the scents and sounds of the garden dusk, the thought of Lady Brent once more occurred to him and his face grew thoughtful again.

Hadn't he rather left her out of account? If the decision had been so easy to come to, and seemed so right now it was made, wouldn't she be quite as capable of making it as he had been?

Well, perhaps! And whether she arrived at the same conclusion or not, one thing was quite certain—that she would be vastly annoyed with Wilbraham if she knew that he had taken it upon himself to decide without consultation with her.

But his doubts were soon dissipated. He had decided for Harry, and was with him now. It might be rather painful at some future time to face her offended surprise, but, after all, he was a man and she was a woman. And Harry had proved himself a man already. They would only be in the same boat. Wilbraham smiled to himself, put on his coat and went down to dinner.

He had had some idea of giving Harry a word to indicate that his secret was safe, but there was no opportunity before they went in to dinner, and afterwards he was glad that he had not done so. For Harry did not even give him a look of inquiry. He chatted and laughed and seemed to be in a mood of quite unburdened high spirits. So had Viola been, but Viola had not known that Wilbraham had discovered their secret, and Harry did. Wilbraham was pleased to think that Harry's evident absence of anxiety was the result of his trust in him. He had surprised his secret and he would respect it. What could he do otherwise? Wilbraham was confirmed in his decision to leave Lady Brent out of knowledge of it, but could not forbear an exercise of imagination as he glanced at her and wondered what she would do if the truth were suddenly blurted out to her.

A remarkable woman, certainly! She provided another little surprise that evening when for the first time she seemed to contemplate the continuance of the war for such a time as would involve Harry in it. It might be that it would take a year or even more to bring it to a conclusion. Lord Kitchener was said to have prophesied three years, which was impossible to believe; but the South African War had lasted for two, when everybody thought it would be over in a few weeks. It might be that officers would be wanted more quickly than they could be turned out in normal times, and that Harry's Sandhurst training would be speeded up. They must bear that in mind.

The prospect did not seem to cause her any dismay, or if it did she concealed it. But poor Mrs. Brent raised a wail of protest. Surely they couldn't take boys of eighteen, as Harry would only be in a year's time. It would be wicked—unheard of.

"Not unheard of," said Lady Brent. "And not wicked either. For our own sakes we should wish Harry kept out of it; but if he were of an age when others went we should wish him to go. However, let us hope that there will be no necessity."

"I don't think I hope that," said Harry. "I don't want the war to last, because I think war is a horrible thing. All the same, I wish I were fighting in this one."

Wilbraham controverted the opinion that war was a horrible thing. Nations were apt to get lazy and selfish over long periods of peace, and wanted rousing out of themselves, just as sluggish human bodies did. War was a tonic and a cleanser.

"Perhaps it is, for those who can fight, with a great idea behind them," said Harry. "For all the rest I think it's beastly. At any rate, an Englishman could fight in this war and know he was doing the right thing. I wish I were a year older now."

Mrs. Brent breathed a deep sigh and looked at him hungrily. It was of no use her saying anything. If Harry's fighting or not fighting should come to be decided on, she would have no voice in the decision. She looked anxiously at Lady Brent, who only said: "Fortunately, the matter isn't in our hands."

"People of my age are enlisting," said Harry, shortly.

Lady Brent took this up at once. Perhaps she had already thought of it. "It is a fine thing for a young man to do," she said. "But for those who have shown their willingness to fight through generations there is an even higher duty, which is to lead. And you cannot lead without the proper training."

Harry did not reply, and the subject was dropped. But to Wilbraham, with his senses more acute from what he had learned of him, came a glimpse into still other chambers of his mind. His silence was not that of one who had received an answer which settled a doubtful point. In this, as in other matters, he would take his own way, but the way was not yet clear to him, and he would not talk about it beforehand.

It had come of late to be Harry's habit to stay with Wilbraham after the women had left the table, while he drank his coffee and smoked a cigarette. He had done it at first on occasions, but now seldom went away with his mother and grandmother. It was a habit that marked his growing manhood, but he could still have left him without remark if he had wished to do so. If he should leave him to-night, Wilbraham thought it would be a sign that he did not wish to talk to him again on the subject of which both their minds were full.

But he came back again after opening the door for his mother and grandmother.

How young and fair and slender he was, thought Wilbraham, and he moved lightly across the great hall and took his seat, as of right, in his chair of dignity. Nothing but a beautiful boy, after all, too young as yet by years to take upon himself any large responsibilities, and yet the much older man waited instinctively on him for an indication of the new relationship that was to exist between them.

The servants came in with the coffee, and until they had left the room again nothing was said. Harry looked thoughtful, and graver than usual.

When they were once more alone he said: "I want you to do something for me, and I don't want Granny to know—nor, of course, mother. It's for you to say whether you'll do it or not, but I want you to promise in any case not to let them know that I've asked you."

Wilbraham was slightly huffed. "I don't know why you should want to extract a promise of secrecy beforehand," he said. "You didn't this evening, but I've thought it over and decided to keep to myself what I found out."

Harry looked puzzled for a moment, and then smiled. "I hoped you would," he said, "for now I shall be able to talk to you about her."

"Thanks," said Wilbraham, drily. "I'm glad I'm going to get some reward."

Harry laughed. "A young man in love is supposed to be rather a bore, isn't he?" he said. "I seem to remember having read so, but people in love haven't interested me much so far. Well, but of course that was for you to decide—whether you'd keep it to yourself or not. You might not have thought it right to do so; I couldn't tell. But this is something quite different—not about Viola, you know. I want you to find out something for me, and I don't want Granny to know yet that I'm thinking about it. You may think she ought to know."

"I suppose it's something about the war," said Wilbraham, with the memory before him of Harry's silence after that speech of Lady Brent's at dinner.

"I shan't tell you what it is unless it's only between you and me," said Harry. "I've a right to my own thoughts."

"Very well, then, I promise."

"I want you to find out for me exactly what chances there are of my being able to get a commission without going through the regular Sandhurst training. I don't think I want to wait for that if there are other ways."

Wilbraham considered this. "You're only seventeen," he said.

"Nearly eighteen," said Harry, "and a fine-grown boy for my age."

"Why shouldn't you want your grandmother to know? You heard what she said just now. If things are going to be altered so that training is cut short, she's quite ready for you to take advantage of that."

"Ah, yes. She couldn't help it, you see. But I think she'd do what she

could to stop me doing anything that could be helped. I want to know if there is any other way before I say anything to her at all. I know so little about it. But supposing I could get my commission quicker by enlisting, for instance."

"Oh, my dear boy, you wouldn't want to do that. You heard what she said. She was quite right there. I believe the men of your family have been soldiers for as long as the men of any family."

"That's just why I want to be one, now there's some sense in soldiering, and as quickly as possible."

"Yes, but as an officer. We're not so hard pressed yet that we want to cut grindstones with razors. It would be waste of material for you to enlist."

"Not if it led more quickly to being an officer. That's what I should do it for. I know it has been done. People did it in the South African War."

"Well, yes. But that was in order to go and fight—at once. You're not ready for that yet. You won't be eighteen till December. They wouldn't take you anyhow, unless you concealed your age, which, of course, you wouldn't do—couldn't do, either, because you're known. Besides, your grandmother, who is your legal guardian, could stop you. Why hurry things? You'll be at Sandhurst in a few months' time. Then if there's any way to hurry things up you can find it out for yourself. I don't want to act against your grandmother in this, Harry. I don't think it's fair to her."

"Well, perhaps it wouldn't be quite fair to you to ask you to do it," said Harry, with his engaging smile; "at least, not if nothing could come out of it. I suppose you're quite sure that they wouldn't take me till I was eighteen."

"Oh, yes. The proclamations say so. You can see it for yourself."

"Oh, well, then," said the boy, rising from his seat, "I suppose there's nothing to be done just yet. I only wanted to be quite sure that I wasn't leaving anything undone that I could do. I don't think Granny takes quite the same view, you know. Anyhow, there's nothing to bother her or mother for some months to come. I think mother will be waiting for me."

He passed Wilbraham, still sitting at the table, and put his hand on his shoulder. "I shall see her to-morrow," he said, in a low voice. He laughed a boyish laugh of sheer happiness and ran out of the hall.

CHAPTER XVII
THE END OF THE SUMMER

It was a golden day in September, which is perhaps the most beautiful of all English months, though touched with a gentle melancholy that may be either soothing or saddening, according to circumstances. Regarded as the time for taking up a new spell of work or duty after the relaxation of summer holiday, it is a delightful month, especially when the surroundings in which the work is to be done are such as existed at Royd. The Grant family had returned from the seaside and the Vicar-novelist was positively revelling in his enjoyment of home, and declaring that the best day of a holiday was its last. He had acquired a splendid idea for a novel which should excel all previous novels of his by many degrees, and put into the shade a large number of novels by other writers who had hitherto enjoyed a success in advance of his own. He had sat down to write the first chapter on the morning after their arrival at the Vicarage, and felt to the full the restful charm of his clean, comfortable room, with all his books and conveniences around him, and the garden outside in the full coloured glow of its autumn profusion.

Jane and Pobbles had resumed their studies under the guidance of Miss Minster, and if they were without the experience of satisfaction on that account which their father enjoyed, there was yet satisfaction to be gained from returning to the society of Harry, to whom they had an enormous amount of information to impart.

Harry had also begun work again. The next three months were to be strenuous ones for him, with many hours to be spent with Wilbraham and many more with an army coach who had been called in to supplement Wilbraham's deficiencies. This was Mr. Hamerton, an obscure man of middle age, who hated coaching embryo subalterns, hated the society of women, and enjoyed life only when in the embrace of the purest of pure mathematics. He was probably the most serenely happy of all the inhabitants of Royd Castle at this time. His hours with Harry were strictly defined, and his pupil, though not an enthusiast in mathematics as he would have liked him to be, showed intelligence and application. The house was not always full of fresh people with whom he had to begin all over again, and he was not expected to spend valuable hours in desultory and desolating conversation with the ladies of the house itself, whom he met only at meal-times. He had most of his time to himself in the large quiet house, which he seldom quitted, and Harry had given up to him his room in the tower, from the top of which he could observe the stars through a telescope of more respectable dimensions than it was customary to find in a country house. Mr. Hamerton, retiring to the absolute seclusion of his room, and the hours of undisturbed study or astronomical contemplation so happily accorded him, would rub his hands with furtive glee over his good fortune in having obtained such employment as this; and the relief to all other members of the household in having him out of the way was

unspeakable.

Harry was with the children in the log cabin. They had been home a fortnight, but this was the first time that they had succeeded in drawing Harry there, though they had raced up to it themselves at the first possible moment after their return.

It was Saturday afternoon. They had had a picnic tea, with the "billy" boiled on a fire made of sticks outside, and everything in orthodox backwoods fashion. Jane and Pobbles had looked forward to it enormously, but somehow it had not been quite the success that they had anticipated, though Harry had made himself very busy with the preparations, and on the outside everything had seemed to be as it had been before they went away. Now he and Jane were sitting on the bench outside the cabin, while Pobbles had reluctantly retired to fulfil a half-hour's engagement with Miss Minster, consequent upon some scholastic failure on his part earlier in the week.

The two of them had been talking, as they had been wont to talk, playing with the idea of such a life as this as a real life and not a make-believe. But the virtue had gone out of such play for Harry. Even now, as he did his best to respond to Jane and not to let her see that his heart was no longer in any game, he was thinking of the last time he had sat where he was sitting now, with Viola, and talked in something of the same way, but with how different a meaning behind the talk!

The talk died down. In Jane's sensitive little soul was the knowledge that Harry's heart was not in it. She looked up at him and saw his eyes fixed on something beyond the green and russet of the trees in front of them, and caught the look of yearning in his face.

"Aren't you happy, Harry?" she asked. "I'll go away and not bother you, if you'd like me to."

He turned quickly to her, full of compunction that he should have failed her after all. He had been so determined that the children should see no difference in him. Why, indeed, should there be any towards them? He had looked forward to their return after Viola had gone away. His affection for them, because of their childhood, was in some ways nearer to his love for Viola than other affections of his life; they would console him for the loss of her. And they had done so; but his longing for her was so great, and no consolation was of much avail to ease it.

"Of course I don't want you to go away, dear," he said. "I'd rather have you with me than anybody. No, I'm not unhappy—perhaps a little sad sometimes. Lots of things have happened since you went away, you know. I shall be going away myself before long, and as long as the war lasts nothing will be quite like what it was before."

"Is it only the war that makes you sad?" she asked. "If there's anything else,

I wish you'd tell me, now we're alone together. Of course, with Pobbles I suppose I'm rather like a boy, and with you, too, when we're all three together. But I'm not always like that—inside, I mean. I'm really more grown up than you'd think."

Harry put his arm around her thin shoulders and gave her a fraternal hug. "You're a dear," he said. "I don't really think of you as like a boy. There's something comforting about your being a girl, though I don't think about you as being grown up, either."

"Well then, tell me, Harry," she said, coaxingly. "We're real friends, aren't we? I'd tell you if there was anything that was making me unhappy. I suppose I should tell mother first, but after her I'd tell you—because we're friends."

The inclination came to him to pour out his burdened heart to her, but he put it aside. She was a dear loyal little soul, and it would assuage his longing to talk to her about Viola; but he could not burden her with a secret, to relieve his own burden. "I'm not really unhappy," he said, "only rather sad. There is something—perhaps I'd tell you if you were older, because we're friends. Anyhow, being friends with you makes me less sad. I didn't mean you to know anything."

"Of course I should know," she said. "But I won't ask you any more if you don't want to tell me."

He smiled at her affectionately. "You'll be the first person I shall tell when I tell anybody," he said. He thought for a moment, with a frown of concentration. "I don't think there's any harm in our having a little secret together—one of our play secrets. If I ever have anything rather important to tell you—something that I shouldn't want other people not to know, but I should like to tell you first—I shall come here very early in the morning and put a little note just under the window sill, in the crack, do you see?"

"Oh, yes," said Jane, her face alight. "That'll be lovely. I don't mind your not telling me now, Harry, if you'll do it like that, so that I shall know before anybody else. Thanks ever so much."

The return of Pobbles at this moment, with his soul as emancipated as his body, changed the current of their conversation. For the rest of their time together Harry was all that he had been as a companion, and Jane exercised a more rigid control over Pobbles than the women of a family usually bring to bear upon the men. But every now and then she looked at Harry with a glance that belied the extreme masculinity of her deportment. How much did she guess, with her budding woman's mind and her wholly woman's sympathies? Nothing of the truth, it may be supposed; but her instincts told her that there was a change in him that would not pass away through the solution of any difficulty that might be troubling him, and that he would never be quite the same as he had been before.

Others had noted it besides Jane. The Grants and Miss Minster talked it

over that evening as they sat in their pretty drawing-room after dinner, to the adornment of which had been added an old walnut wood bureau and a pair of Sheffield plate candlesticks, brought home as spoil from the seaside town where they had been staying. Grant's eyes rested on them with satisfaction many times during their conversation. The war might be entering upon a stage which promised a far longer and harder struggle than any one had hitherto anticipated, and royalties as well as other payments might be affected by it; but Grant's royalties had come in lately to an encouraging extent and there was still good old furniture to be picked up at bargain prices if you kept your eyes open, and plenty of room in the Vicarage for more.

Not to appear to be criticizing our clerico-novelist too severely for a detachment that was shared by thousands who were afterwards personally drawn into the turmoil, it may be said that nobody at this time, unless it was those at the very heart of it, gauged the immensity of the disaster that was settling down upon Europe and would presently involve the whole civilized world. In future years, with the knowledge of the more than four years of war that were then still to come in retrospect, it will be difficult for the student to understand just how life was altered and how it remained unaffected, and the slow stages that England passed through until there was nobody anywhere whose life remained what it had been before the war.

In those early days there was immense interest in the incidents of warfare, more, indeed, than was taken at a later date, when the lock of vast armies on a line that remained very nearly the same until the end had reduced the expectation of surprise; the papers were eagerly read every morning for the hoped for news of decisive success, but unless there was a personal interest in it, as there was not at this time at Royd, the war did not obscure other interests, or even affect them.

The advent of Mr. Hamerton had brought the approaching change in Harry's life more into evidence. "I think he's taking it all very seriously," Mrs. Grant said. "Thank goodness he is too young to go and fight, but, of course, it will bring it nearer to him, going to Sandhurst; and, anyhow, it will be a great change in his life."

"I think he is worrying a bit that he's not old enough to go and fight," said Grant. "Most boys of his age—nearly old enough, but not quite—would feel like that about it."

"He has changed a good deal since we went away," said Mrs. Grant. "He seems to me older altogether. I think the children feel it too. He's just as sweet to them as ever, but Pobbles said this evening that he wasn't nearly so much fun to play with."

"Pobbles brings everything to that test," said Miss Minster. "If he does not mend his ways, I anticipate an evil future for him."

"You've always been hard on Pobbles," said Mrs. Grant. "There's very little that's really wrong with Pobbles."

"Thanks chiefly to me," said Miss Minster. "I'm inclined to think that there's friction again at the Castle. Poor Mrs. Brent was as lugubrious as possible when she came yesterday, and Mr. Wilbraham has the same disagreeable air as he used to go about with earlier in the summer."

"That's true about Wilbraham," said Grant. "He has been seeing a great deal of a London artist who was lodging at Mrs. Ivimey's on the common. Perhaps it has made him discontented with his lot here once more."

"Has he said anything to you about it?" asked Mrs. Grant.

"No. Curiously enough, he didn't seem to want to talk much about the artist. He just said that he was an interesting fellow to talk to, but they'd decided not to ask him to the Castle. He had his daughter with him, and I suppose they'd have had to ask her too, though Wilbraham didn't give that as a reason, and only just mentioned her. But he seems to have gone up to talk to the father most afternoons."

"You know the village gossip about the artist, don't you?" said Mrs. Grant.

"I don't encourage village gossip," said the Vicar.

"How very superior you are!" said Miss Minster. "I love it."

"Perhaps you would rather I didn't tell you what they say, dear," suggested Mrs. Grant.

"I think it's my duty to hear it," said the Vicar with a grin.

"Well, they say he was a hard drinker, and the number of empty bottles he left behind him was past belief."

"Perhaps Mr. Wilbraham went there to drink with him," said Miss Minster, "and that accounts for his moroseness."

"You oughtn't to say a thing like that," said Grant. "Wilbraham is a teetotaler. None of them drink anything at the Castle."

"Perhaps that's why he liked going to see the artist," said Miss Minster, impenitently.

"And he doesn't even drink a glass of claret when he lunches or dines here. No, you ought not to say that, even in fun. I think what's the matter with him is that his teaching of Harry is coming to an end. Of course he has been here for many years, and I suppose he'll have to look about for something else to do. I don't suppose he really likes handing Harry over to Hamerton for a lot of his work. In fact, he said as much. He's devoted to the boy."

"Everybody is," said Mrs. Grant, "and at the Castle everything centres round him. Poor Lady Brent seems more stiff and stand-offish than ever. I suppose she feels it too, that everything she has lived for, for years past, is coming to an end, and now it will be tested whether she has been right in bringing a boy

up as she has Harry, shut away from the world."

"I shouldn't call Lady Brent stiff and stand-offish," said Grant.

"I only meant in everything that has to do with Harry. One would like to talk to her about him, but——"

"Surely she's always ready for that!" interrupted Miss Minster.

"Only on the surface. She wouldn't think of telling one anything that she must be feeling about the future. Oh, I do hope everything will turn out right. It is dangerous to keep a boy shut up as Harry has been, but I think it will pay with him. He's good right through, and he's a splendid boy too—physically, I mean."

"A good man on a horse," said Grant, in a voice indicative of quotation marks. "Yes, he's not been mollycoddled. I'm afraid he'll have some rude shocks when he gets among other young fellows of his age, but he'll be just as good as they are in the things that young men admire, and he has a fine character to carry him through. I hope she'll be justified in the course she has taken. I think she will."

September wore itself out, to the sadness of October, but in days now and then the boon of summer seemed to linger. Early one sunny morning, when the grass was drenched with dew and sparkling gossamer curtains hung upon all the bushes, little Jane ran through the garden and up to the wood where the log cabin was.

The day before Harry had come to tea with the children in the school-room. They had had an uproarious game together afterwards, and Pobbles had said that it was more fun to play with him now than it had been before the holidays. Jane, too, had felt that there was a difference in him, and had been not the least uproarious of the three. There was a weight removed; perhaps Harry would tell her what his secret was now.

Harry had kissed both her and Pobbles, who was just not too old to take the attention as anything but a compliment on saying good-bye. He had said nothing to Jane, but had given her a quick look which she interpreted at once.

That was why she had got up as early as possible that dewy, sparkling morning and was running to the cabin as fast as her long thin legs would take her.

Between the board which formed the sill of the window and the vertical half-logs beneath it was a space which she had often examined before, but with no result. Now she drew from it a piece of folded paper. It was Harry's promised message to her—first of anybody:

"Dear little Jane—I'm off to be a soldier. Good-bye, dear, and love from

HARRY."

CHAPTER XVIII
AFTERWARDS

Lady Brent and Wilbraham sat by the fire in the hour before dinner. The summer had quite gone now. The rain, driven by a gale of wind, was lashing the window panes. There was an impression of luxury and shelter in the handsome closely curtained room with the wood fire on the hearth and the soft light of lamps and candles. But there was little sense of comfort in the hearts of its occupants. Lady Brent knitted as she talked, and to outside view there was no sign of the sadness and emptiness which lay upon her and over the whole house. Wilbraham was in frowning, sombre mood. They talked in low voices. It was a week since Harry had left them, but they had not yet begun to get used to his absence. Their life went on, but it seemed now to be devoid of all meaning. It was almost as if death had come to the house and its shadow still lay on it.

"I hope you won't go," Lady Brent was saying. "After all, your tutorship of Harry was only part of your life here. You have been one of our little family for over ten years. I should feel Harry's going more if you went, too; and so, of course, would Charlotte."

Wilbraham stirred uneasily. "It is very kind of you to put it like that," he said. But her words had not removed the frown from his face, and he did not say that he would stay.

There was silence for a time. Then Wilbraham said, suddenly: "Do you remember that evening at dinner when Harry asked about hurrying up his training, and you told him that enlistment wouldn't be the course for him to follow, whatever it might be for others?"

"Oh, yes, perfectly. Why do you ask?"

"Because afterwards, when we were alone together, he came back to it."

"Ah!" she said. "Why didn't you tell me?"

He gave a short laugh. "I thought you'd ask that," he said. "I wish I had, sometimes, though I doubt if it would have made any difference."

"What did he say?"

"He began by saying that he was going to ask me to do something for him. I could do it or not, as I thought right, but I wasn't to tell you about it in either

case."

She was silent, and her needles clicked steadily. But there had been the slightest pause in the regular sound of them.

"It was only to save you and his mother anxiety," Wilbraham hurried to say. "I had to give the promise, or he wouldn't have told me what was in his mind. It was to find out for him whether it was possible to get his commission sooner by enlisting. Well, I said at once that I couldn't do that behind your back, and I told him that it was impossible in any case for him to enlist before he was eighteen. He seemed to be satisfied. In fact, he said that he had only wanted to be quite sure that he was leaving nothing undone that he could do. I thought it was off his mind. He never said anything more to me about it."

"Well, I think you acted rightly," she said, after a pause. "I had thought it all out. It had seemed to me possible that he might come to think it was his duty to enlist, as the war went on. I had asked myself whether it would be right to keep him back, if that happened, and had come to the conclusion that there was nothing to be gained by his enlisting—from his point of view, I mean. It seemed to me as I said then, on the first opportunity for saying anything, that—well, you heard what I said. I thought he had accepted it."

"So did I. I'm glad I've told you, but I'm not sure that you could have done anything. I believe he was satisfied to leave it alone then. It came to him afterwards—not that he could hurry up his training as an officer, but that it was his duty to go off and get into the lines as quickly as possible. He knew you wouldn't sanction that, and I'd already told him that you'd have the power to stop his enlisting. So he thought it all out for himself, and kept his own counsel."

"That is what happened," she said, calmly. "I have thought that out, too. I think he was right, you know—dear Harry."

He looked up in surprise at this.

"I couldn't have sanctioned it," she said. "And yet I should have sympathized with him—much more than he had any idea of. I'm proud of him. But, oh, how I wish he could have trusted me a little more."

She laid down her work on her lap and gazed into the fire. Wilbraham was stirred by her utterance, so unlike her, with her calm self-control and entire command over all her emotions, to which even now, after years of knowing her, and the springs of her conduct, he had small clue.

She took up her work again, and spoke with as much calmness as before. "I've sometimes asked myself," she said, "whether I wasn't getting so much interested in carrying out a great experiment as to forget what it all tended to. But I don't think I can fairly lay that to my charge. I have loved the boy too much to treat him just as the object of an experiment. If at any time I had thought that I—that we—were not doing rightly by him in keeping him here away from every-

thing that might have prepared him for the future, in the way that other boys are prepared for it—I should have given up the idea, and let the world in on us—and on him. At the beginning I don't think I had any thought of carrying the seclusion as far as I have done. That was only to have been for his childhood. But it has been so fascinating to see him grow up here and only become stronger and finer as he got older. I don't think he has missed anything that would have been for his good. Anything that he has missed has been made up to him in other ways. His intense love of nature—none of us have been able to share that with him to increase his love for it, but I have watched it with a glad heart. It has seemed as if my plan had been helped by it, in a way I couldn't have expected—or at least not to that extent. And the way the people all love him here! He had got right down into their hearts as he couldn't have done unless he had lived with them day after day, all the year round, and for year after year, so that they have been his friends outside his home, and not people away from here or coming here from time to time with whom they could have no concern. Everything has encouraged me to go on. Even the extra freedom that he has taken to himself of late has pleased me. He hasn't felt himself fettered. He has had the life he wanted, and surely it must have been the best life one could have given him, if it has made him so happy."

"Yes," said Wilbraham. "He has made himself happy, and he can be trusted."

The unhappy look on his face had not lightened during her long speech, and he spoke now as if to reassure himself that what she had said was true. Ever since Harry had gone off before dawn on that morning a week ago, leaving messages of love and farewell for his mother and grandmother, he had been asking himself the meaning of it, and whether it was right for him any longer to keep back from Lady Brent what he knew about Harry and she didn't.

How much had Viola had to do with it? Nothing, he was sure, in persuasion of Harry. But Wilbraham knew that his love for her had changed the whole current of his life. Perhaps he wouldn't have gone off like that if he had never seen her.

If Wilbraham could have made up his mind to tell Lady Brent everything, he would have been able to gain from her some consolation in return. He needed it at this time. She was the only person who knew of his temptation, and she had been good to him about it in the past.

The poor man was going through a bad time on his own account. Perhaps he was just emerging from it, but its effects were still heavy on him. After seeing Viola and her father together, in an atmosphere so different from that in which he had first seen Bastian alone, he had had a vivid sense of shame, which had increased after he had seen Harry. The idealism of their fresh youth had made his own lapse look very ugly to him, and still more the knowledge which he

had not admitted to himself until later that he was still playing with the idea of drinking with Bastian, though rejecting the possibility of being caught once more in the toils.

But the toils had caught him, though that first glass of whisky that he had drunk with Bastian had also been the last. Village gossip, if it connected his name with that of Bastian as a big drinker, had done him an injustice. He had gone to see Bastian two or three times, and had told him straight out the first time the truth about himself. Bastian had treated the confidence with ready sympathy, and Wilbraham had never seen the whisky bottle while he was with him. He had said that he didn't really care about it himself, which Wilbraham took as a speech of politeness. If there was foundation for village gossip, he must have given cause for it at other times of the day.

Bastian might be able to drink or refrain from drinking at pleasure, but for poor Wilbraham the mischief had been done with that one glass. He had had periods of longing of late years, always at rarer intervals, but none of them had been so strong as this. He was tortured; sometimes he was on the point of asking Bastian for God's sake to give him something. He was drawn there in a way he could not explain; his irritated brain rejected reasoning, and he would not keep away. It was certainly the fact that he had drunk spirits at the cottage that attracted him, and yet he was fighting the desire all the time. But once again he talked to Viola there, and he had thoughts of Harry always before him. When for the last time he saw Bastian and said good-bye to him he knew that the danger of a fall was over.

But the craving had continued. Bastian had been gone nearly a month, and he still felt it, though now it was at last getting weaker. There was no danger of falling at Royd. There was no public house there, no wine or spirits were drunk at the Castle, and he had attained enough mastery of himself to have no temptation to go further where he could get drink.

His own troubles had prevented his mind from being filled with thoughts of Harry, and he was now blaming himself for a possible carelessness towards signs which might have shown him what the boy must have been making up his mind to during the last month. He had seen him sad, after Viola's departure, and he had never mentioned her name to Wilbraham, as he had done once or twice before. So far as Wilbraham knew, no letters passed between them. The post-bag came to the Castle once a day and was unlocked by Lady Brent. It would have been unlike Harry to arrange for letters to be sent to him through a secret source; Wilbraham was pretty sure that he had not done so.

In his effort to distract his mind from the urgency that was riding it, Wilbraham had gone about among the tenantry more than usual. He had kept his ears open for signs that Harry's meetings with Viola had become known, and could

find none. He had gone to see Mrs. Ivimey once since Bastian's departure, and she had been loud in her praises of "the young lady." She had even said that if things hadn't been as they were, by which he imagined her to be alluding chiefly to Bastian's drinking habits, she and Sir Harry would have made "a pretty pair." Wilbraham was sure, from her way of saying it, that she had no idea, or suspicion, of their having met. The woods were of great extent, and, apart from a few rarely frequented paths and rides, almost as little known as when they had been primeval forest. A few woodmen were employed in them, but at this time they were at work felling at the other end of the manor. It seemed almost certain that no one had ever seen the two together.

Harry's sadness would pass. He was still a boy, in years hardly more than a child, and Viola was no older. If they were thrown together over years, their young love might ripen into the love of a life-time; as it was, it would probably die down to a fragrant memory—a love-idyll of summer woods, happy and innocent, but no more than the budding of love in the tender hearts of two pretty children. Wilbraham even thought that Harry might have put it aside from him, at least for a time. His poise of mind was so in advance of his years that it would not be surprising if that were so. He had thrown himself ardently into the three months' work asked of him, and if he was no longer merry and light-hearted, as he had been, he seemed to be in full possession of himself and concentrated in purpose. By and by, when Wilbraham had passed through his own troubles, he might talk to him about Viola, and find out how it lay with them. At present there seemed to be nothing to do but to follow Harry's example and concentrate his mind upon the important business in hand, which was Harry's preparation for his coming examination.

So Wilbraham had thought and so he had acted, with a troubled longing for the time when he should once more be free of his own burden. But now he doubted. One thing was fairly clear. By going away Harry would be in touch again with Viola as he could not be at Royd. Wilbraham did not suppose that to be the sole or even the chief reason for his going away, but it had probably counted in his decision.

Harry had ridden off on his horse, before dawn, probably some hours before dawn, for nothing had been seen of him in the country in which he was known. He had worn his oldest riding suit, and as far as could be said had taken scarcely anything with him. His short note to his grandmother, and longer letter to his mother had said that he was going to enlist, and it was supposed that he intended to offer himself and his horse to a cavalry regiment. He begged that no attempt should be made to follow or to stop him doing what he had fully made up his mind to. He would write in a few days, when affairs had been settled for him, but after that he would not write at all until he had won his commission in the field.

He made no apology for taking the decision into his own hands, and offered no explanation of it. But it was plain that he meant to run no risk of being prevented from following out the course he had laid down for himself.

Mrs. Brent had been full of lamentations. Lady Brent had taken it very calmly, though the shock it was to her had been apparent in the seriousness and sadness of her manner. A few inquiries were made as to whether Harry had been seen riding away, and then they had waited for his promised letter.

It came on the fourth day, with a London postmark. He had been accepted for enlistment. He was in barracks, well and happy. His letter—to his mother—was of the shortest, but contained expressions of affection which did something to soothe her trouble.

On the outside his action was that of a spirited boy who had made up his mind to go off and fight and was not to be hampered by the fears and objections of his elders. But to Wilbraham there was more in it than that. He thought that Harry might have made up his mind to the course he had taken if he had not met Viola, but that he would not have carried it out in quite the same way. Then, his mother and grandmother would have been the only people whom he had to consider. Now they hardly counted. He had acted, if not with want of kindness, still with something of the insensibility of youth towards the claims of its elders. They would not hear from him again for months, perhaps for years—though a lapse of years seemed unlikely at that time. But Viola would hear from him. It was hard on the older people who loved him. Wilbraham knew that it was bearing hardly upon Lady Brent.

"I might find out something about him if I went to London," Wilbraham said, after neither of them had spoken for a time.

She looked up at him quickly, and laid down her work. "I should be so glad to know where he is," she said. "I should like him to know—if it were only possible to get it to him—that I should make no effort now to go against him. I could, you know. It would not be difficult to find him; at least, it would not be impossible. But I shall take no steps to override his will. If he knew that, surely he would not want to keep himself cut off from us! He could write, and before he was sent abroad he could come here for a few days. Oh, if only you could find out where he is, and let him know that!"

"I'll go up and try, if you like," said Wilbraham.

It had surprised him a little that she had not asked how or where he would try. He would go straight to Bastian, whose address he knew, and see Viola. In making the offer he had half intended, if she pressed him, to unburden himself to her about Viola. He did not know whether he was relieved or disappointed that she asked him no questions. She seemed to be too excited to think about it, though she did say, later on, that he could go to Mr. Gulliver, the Brent solicitor,

but that if he did so Mr. Gulliver was to be told not to interfere with Harry's actions.

"The sooner the better," said Wilbraham. "I'd better go up to-morrow."

She made no demur, and was silent for a time. Then she looked at him kindly, and said: "There's no danger for you now, is there?"

He was overcome with a wave of self-pity, brought out by the sympathy of her tone. "I've been through a bad time," he said. "I think it's coming to an end. I don't think there's any danger now."

"I've seen it, of course," she said, "and have been very sorry for you."

He had not thought that she had noticed. Some explanation seemed due to her. "I did drink some spirits," he said, with a gulp. "Just once. I thought I was safe, but it brought on the craving. I've had my lesson. I know that I'm different from other men now. It's not in my power to be temperate. It has to be nothing at all from now onwards."

"I think it's the only way," she said. "And for years together here you haven't missed it, have you?"

"No," he said. "It was very wrong to do it at all. I'm ashamed of myself—after you've done what you have for me."

One thing she had done was to go without wine at table, except on the rare occasions on which there had been guests at the Castle. That had been for his sake, and he knew it well enough, though she had never mentioned it. She deserved his confidence.

"It was when I went to see Bastian—the artist," he said. "After the first time I told him how it was with me, and he never drank anything himself while I was with him."

"In the village they say he was a heavy drinker."

It surprised him to hear that she had heard about Bastian. When he had told her that there was no necessity to ask him to the Castle, she had seemed to lose all interest in him, and had never mentioned his name since.

"I should think he drinks a lot," he said. "He did when I was with him. But he seems to be one of those men who don't get caught by it. To say he is a heavy drinker would be rather unfair. He has his young daughter to look after, and I think he'd be careful what he did for her sake. He's a gentleman, though he seems to have come down in the world, and a man of refinement."

He was feeling his way towards a confession. She had been so kind to him, and so wonderful in her understanding of what had impelled Harry to the course he had taken, though it had hit her hard, that his inclination was to tell her, and trust her to take the view of it that he had taken himself. But there was a fence to take before he could make a clean breast of it. He had given no promise to Harry, but Harry had trusted him to keep his secret. It might be right to tell Lady Brent

of what had happened, but Harry would not think so. It wanted just the slight pressure, unconscious on her part, of what it would bring forth, to overcome his reluctance to give away Harry's secret.

So he gave her an opening to ask him about Bastian, and about Viola. But she did not take it. She seemed to be thinking of something else. "It would be sad," she said, half indifferently, "if his drinking were to affect a young daughter. I think I should like you to go to London to-morrow. It would be a great comfort to poor Charlotte to know where Harry is; and to me, too. And to be able to get messages to him."

CHAPTER XIX
WILBRAHAM IN LONDON

In the region that lies to the north of Regent's Park there are quiet little streets, aside from the ugly crowded main thoroughfares, which date back from the time, not so very long since, when there were pleasant suburbs here, and the open country lay within a walk of the centre of London. Wilbraham found himself unexpectedly in one of them in his search for the address that Bastian had given him, and, as he waited for admission at the door upon which he had knocked, looked about him with a sense of relief. He had expected something almost approaching squalor, and at least noise and unrest. But it was not painful to think of the girl whom Harry loved living in one of these quiet little houses.

They were all alike, built at a time when some of the quality of eighteenth century architecture, which hung about the simplest building, had disappeared, but had not yet given way to the deadness and ugliness that followed it. Nothing could have been simpler than this regular street of small houses, each with one window and a door on the ground floor, two windows on the first, two windows on the second, and a basement with a narrow area; but their very monotony was restful, and they indicated a respectability that was almost aggressive. The paint was nowhere shabby, the brass door handles shone, and here and there the dirty brick of one of the houses had been cleaned and the mortar pointed. They were not beneath the occupation of people who took a pride in the appearance of their dwellings, and might even have money enough to have the faces of them washed and their interiors modernized before they made their homes in them.

As Wilbraham stood at the top of the few steps that led to the entrance, a

door to the area beneath him opened and a woman looked up at him, and then immediately disappeared. Mrs. Ivimey's sister, evidently, by the likeness. Somehow the fact of this relationship had been forgotten. Here was a link with Royd. If Harry had been to the house, or should come there—! He had no time to formulate his thoughts before she opened the door to him.

He introduced himself to her at once, before asking for Bastian. She was a clean neat woman and gave him smiling respectful welcome when he told her who he was. "It's many years since I was down in those parts, sir," she said. "But I hear sometimes from my sister, and Mr. Bastian, the gentleman who lodges with me, has been there lately and told me a good deal about it."

"It's him I've come to see," said Wilbraham. "Is he in?"

"Miss Viola is in, sir," she said. "I dare say you saw her when she was at Royd."

"Yes," said Wilbraham. "I should like to see her now, if you'll tell her who I am."

Here was a lucky chance. It was Viola he wanted to see, and apart from her father, if possible. Mrs. Clark led him at once upstairs, talking volubly as she did so. But she did not mention Harry. Wilbraham thought she would have done so if he had been to the house.

She showed him into a room on the first floor, after knocking at the door and receiving no answer. "I expect Miss Viola is upstairs," she said, opening the door. "I don't think she's gone out again. If you'll kindly step in, sir, I'll go and tell her you're here."

Wilbraham entered the room with some curiosity. It was larger than he had anticipated, extending to the whole width of the house and lit by the two windows. Its main furniture was good and solid, of about the date of the house, when furniture had lost its simplicity of line and ornament, but still showed some pride of craftsmanship. Except for an upright piano with a front of faded fluted red silk, which might or might not have belonged to the tenants, it was all probably the property of the landlady, and the nondescript wall paper and dark green curtains were also probably her taste and not theirs. But the books in shelves on either side of the fireplace, the pictures on the walls and the clutter of photographs and little objects for use or ornament on the mantelpiece and elsewhere about the room struck a different note. No attempt had been made to make it other than it was by nature, but it had the air of a permanent home, occupied by people of some refinement.

Viola's work-basket was on a small table by the wall, and there were other signs of feminine occupancy in the room. It looked cozy enough, with a bright fire burning, the curtains drawn and the gas lit; for it was getting dark outside. Bastian evidently made use of the large shabby easy chair by the fire, for there

was a tobacco jar and an array of pipes on the table by its side, and a book or two. With his daughter sitting opposite to him, on a winter evening, it was possible to imagine him taking pleasure in his home life. It would be quieter and less marked by poverty than Wilbraham had pictured it. A faint odour of the tobacco that Bastian used hung about, but there were flowers in a vase on Viola's table, and fruit in a plaited basket on the sideboard. The sideboard, apt to be so much in evidence in furnished lodgings, had none of the paraphernalia of meals on it in the way of cruets or bottles. In fact, there were no bottles to be seen anywhere. Wilbraham noticed that at once, for his own trouble had made him acutely sensitive; he had no fears now of succumbing to a temptation to drink, but the signs of drinking by Bastian would have affected him unhappily. He was inclined to believe that he had to some extent misread Bastian, on his first acquaintance with him. It could not be his habitual custom to drink as much as he had done on that afternoon, or Viola would be more affected by it than she was. She had none of the air of a girl whose life had been saddened by a father's gross intemperance; and if Bastian had been kept down in the world by this failing of his, as he had said he had, his poverty was shown by this room to be more relative than actual.

Wilbraham dismissed the unpleasant question of intemperance, in relief at the signs of comfort and refinement that he saw about him. The table in the middle of the room was laid for tea, as if that was the chief evening meal here. Wilbraham hoped that Bastian would not come in for it until he had talked to Viola.

He made his way to the mantelpiece, upon which were a good many photographs. The photographs in a room tell you more than anything about its occupants.

Something was told in this instance by the fact that they were all a good many years old. It meant, for one thing, that Viola and her father must have lived here for some time, and for another that they could have made few friends of late years.

Wilbraham's eye was caught by one of Bastian as a very young man in a group with three others, taken by a Cambridge photographer. His first thought as he looked at it, was to wonder whether he himself had changed so much in twenty years. Bastian appeared as a young man fashionably dressed and judging by his smile pleased with the world in general and with his own lot in it in particular. He had been more than usually good-looking in those days. There was another one of him on a horse, taken at about the same time, but not at Cambridge. Wilbraham wished afterwards that he had noticed the name and habitation of the photographer. Bastian had never told him from what part of the country he came, or anything about his early home and upbringing. But it was evident that he came from what it is customary to call "good people." It was

hardly fair to keep Viola in ignorance of her parentage, which might possibly prove to be of some importance to her.

There was a photograph of Viola herself at the age of about ten—a pretty child, but without the exceptional beauty into which she had grown. In a large frame was one of her mother, and there were others of her at different stages. Wilbraham examined them with some attention. She was certainly beautiful, with the same sort of beauty as Viola's, though Wilbraham thought that if he had not known the facts about her he would yet have detected an absence of race, which seemed to him to be apparent in Viola, and perhaps also in her father. He tried to find in her support for Bastian's praise of her character and temperament, but all he could have said was that there was nothing to show that she had not deserved it. She smiled sweetly in these photographs, some of which were in theatrical costume; she was young and beautiful and happy, and her early death added pathos to these presentments of her.

There were other photographs of girls and young women carelessly propped up on the mantelpiece, some of them hidden. They were probably mostly theatrical friends of Mrs. Bastian's, and it seemed likely that she had lived in these rooms, or they would not have been left there. Wilbraham's eyes roamed over them without interest, but just as he was about to turn away were caught by the signature of one of them. "With love from Lottie" in a sprawling hand. It was of Mrs. Brent, taken in that youth of which she was still proud but which she had left behind her.

Wilbraham looked at it fascinated. For some reason or other Mrs. Brent had never shown him a photograph of herself taken during her stage career. For the moment he was more interested in seeing her as she had been than in the fact of finding her photograph here—Harry's mother, in Viola's room.

The photograph made her almost as pretty as Mrs. Bastian. She was a gay light-hearted girl too. Harry's father might be excused for having fallen in love with her. And there was a look of Harry in her young face, which Wilbraham had never noticed in the flesh. He wondered whether Viola had noticed the likeness, which seemed to him quite plain. But probably she did not look at these old photographs to notice anything about them at all once in six months, though she saw them every day.

Viola came in as he was standing looking at them. He thought she looked more beautiful than ever, as she greeted him with a smile and a blush. Her entrance into the room seemed to bring light with it, and softness and charm. Its commonplace features sank into the background; the flowers became of more importance than anything, and the books and the music.

Wilbraham had seen Viola in a pretty simple frock suitable for the country, but although her clothes now had the same air of simplicity to his unsophisti-

cated eyes, they were even to him something exceptional. One would not have expected a girl who lived in that room to enter it dressed as she was. The calling in which she earned her living stood her in good stead. Wilbraham had not been told what it was, and had the idea of her doing something or other with a typewriter. He thought that the figure she presented was owing to her taste, and did not know that it would also have meant a good deal of money if there had been nothing more than her taste to account for it. What he did feel was that she might have entered any rich room in London as she was and been taken for granted as belonging to it. She was worthy of Harry even in this respect, which would probably weigh more with the world even than it weighed with him.

"Father will be in in about half an hour," she said. "You will stay and have some tea with us, won't you? I'm sure he will be glad to see you."

He had been looking at her searchingly. She gave him the impression of being older than when he had seen her at Royd, a woman full grown and no longer half a child, though the delicacy and freshness of youth still marked her. She had, in fact, ceased to arrange her hair as still growing girls wear it, and there was some to him indefinable difference in her clothes.

He said he would stay until her father came in, and she motioned him to her father's chair, and sat down in her own on the other side of the fire, facing him.

She seemed to wait for him to speak first. He could tell nothing by her manner, which was smiling and self-possessed, though her self-possession was not more than is becoming to a young girl, secure in her youth and charm.

"I suppose you know that Harry has left home to enlist in the army," he said.

Her colour deepened a little upon the mention of her lover's name, but she did not shrink from his gaze, and the faint smile was still on her lips as she said: "I thought that he might, although he didn't say he would." So of course she knew, and had been prepared for the question.

"Probably he had not quite made up his mind by the time you left Royd," he said.

She did not reply to this, and he thought he could see that she had decided not to admit anything, probably under Harry's directions. Again there came to him the sense of dislike at interfering with what Harry had decided. He could not fence with her to make her say what Harry didn't want her to say, or force her to say that she could not answer his questions. She was frank and innocent. It would seem an impertinence to put her into the position of defending a reticence.

"We have been very anxious about him at home," he said. "We are anxious still—not to get him to come back, but that he should not cut himself off from us. I've come up to London on purpose to get a message to him if I can. I didn't

tell Lady Brent I should come here, or say anything about you. She thinks I have only come to see Mr. Gulliver, the family solicitor, and ask him to find out, if he can, where Harry is. His mother can hardly bear the thought of not hearing from him for months, and not knowing where he is. Lady Brent was not altogether unprepared for his enlisting. She couldn't have been a party to it, as he's not even of an age to enlist yet, and I suppose he's had to represent himself as older than he is in order to get taken. But she told me herself that she was proud of him for doing it, and she certainly wouldn't do anything to interfere with him, now he's taken the matter into his own hands. If he knew that——"

He did not finish his sentence, which was on the note of appeal to her. Nor did he look at her.

There was a pause. Then she said, "I haven't seen Harry, you know, Mr. Wilbraham."

He looked at her then, and saw that there were tears in her eyes. So his appeal had not been without its effect.

"I think his mother ought to know," she said, "and that he ought to write to her."

In a flash of understanding, he saw that he had got all that he had come for, and that he would get no more. Or at least that he must not exercise pressure to get more, or put her in the position of refusing to give it. She would tell Harry what he had told her, and she would tell him that she thought he ought to write to his mother. Of Lady Brent she had said nothing. It was probable that Lady Brent appeared in her eyes in a different light from that in which Wilbraham saw her.

As for everything else—it was their secret, to be treated by him with respect. He would probe into it no further; and indeed it was better that he should not know more than he knew already of how it was between them. There was quite enough on his mind that he had kept from Lady Brent.

"Yes, I think he should write," he said. "I shall see Mr. Gulliver to-morrow."

The two statements had no apparent bearing upon one another, but Viola seemed to accept them with relief, and was beginning to talk to him pleasantly, but with no reference to Harry, when Bastian came in.

He was nearly half an hour earlier than his usual time, it appeared, and Wilbraham was inclined to be disappointed at having his talk with Viola cut short. Whenever he was with her he felt himself almost violently in sympathy with Harry in his love for her. He was observing her all the time, and there was nothing that she said or did that did not deepen his first impression of her. He wanted to feel like that about her, for Harry's sake; championship of her as one who was in all essentials fit to mate with him, might stand Harry in good stead later on.

But she would show herself, perhaps with less need for carefulness in what

she said, with her father there as without him. Bastian gave him a cordial welcome. He was again, in appearance, a gentleman, merely indifferent to the shabbiness of his attire, but the younger healthier look he had had during the latter part of his stay at Royd no longer marked him. Wilbraham thought he had been drinking, but he was not drunk, or anything near it, and it seemed probable that he kept his habits in check in the home that he must have valued. He drank tea, rather copiously, at the meal which soon followed his entrance, and there was no preparation apparent for anything stronger to be drunk later on.

It was not long before Wilbraham became as anxious to be alone with Bastian as he had before wished to be alone with Viola. Bastian knew, and Viola was distressed at the signs he showed of wishing to talk about what he knew.

It became plain to Wilbraham now that the poor child was not unaffected by her father's intemperance. If the worst of it was kept from her, and he had the self-command not to soil the home in which she lived with it, still there were times when she saw him not quite himself.

This was one of them. Wilbraham saw the suspicion and then the certainty dawn upon her, with a droop, and a shadow on her brightness, and a stiffening of manner that was not quite displeasure, but yet something near it. She had enough influence over him, apparently, to be able to prevent his saying what she did not want said, but his hints and smiles made Wilbraham as uncomfortable as they evidently made her. Immediately the meal was over she said good-bye to Wilbraham and went out of the room. Perhaps this was her usual way of dealing with these lapses. Her father expostulated, but she took no notice, except by saying as she went out: "I'll tell Mrs. Clark not to clear away just yet."

"She's a dear child, Viola—but she's difficult sometimes," said Bastian. "I hope she hasn't taken a dislike to you."

"I don't think so," said Wilbraham, shortly. "What she obviously does dislike is having her secrets talked about before a comparative stranger. I should have thought you might have seen that."

Bastian threw a look at him as he went to the side table to take up a pipe. Wilbraham's tone seemed to surprise him, but it did not subdue the agreeable humour in which he found himself. "We don't look on you as a stranger," he said, "and if there's a secret, you're in it. I think you want mellowing, my dear Wilbraham. I don't keep anything to drink here, but if you'd like something I can send out for it."

"You seem to forget what I told you about myself," said Wilbraham. "I can't drink without losing control of myself. You seem to be in much the same case. I think it's a damned shame to show it before that child."

This brought Bastian up short. He frowned in offence, but apparently he was one of those people whom a rebuke moves more to sorrow than to anger, for

he said: "That's a hard thing to say to a man, Wilbraham. I do drink more than's good for me sometimes, I know; but if there's one thing I've always been careful about all my life it is not to let it affect Viola."

"Well, it does affect her," said Wilbraham. "You'd have seen how it affected her just now, if you hadn't been drinking. It's not for me to preach, God knows. But if you're able to control it at all, you've got something to be very thankful for, and you ought to control it absolutely as far as she's concerned."

"I've had very little to drink to-day, as a matter of fact," said Bastian, rather sulkily, "and I don't want to be lectured about it, Wilbraham. Sit down and have a talk. You won't find my powers of expression affected by the little I have had."

He ended on a smile. He was an attractive creature, Wilbraham thought, in spite of his culpable weakness. Most men would have quarrelled with him for what he had said, if they had been in Bastian's state. But the extent to which he was affected by drink was a puzzle. As he talked Wilbraham could mark no signs of it, though they had seemed so evident up to this time. There was an absence of cautiousness in what he said, but that was native to him. It may have been slightly enhanced now, but Wilbraham would not have put it down to the loosening of tongue brought about by liquor if they had started with this conversation. His own irritation subsided. He had said his say. He sat down in Viola's chair, opposite to Bastian, and lit his cigarette, taking rather a long time to do so, in order to leave the opening with Bastian, who was not slow to take it.

"It wouldn't do for my little failing to become known, would it?" he said with a smile. "If I can't do without alcohol altogether—and I don't see why I should—I shall have to keep in the background."

Wilbraham was conscious of a return of irritation. He disliked this half-jocular allusion to a subject of such serious importance. "Oh, don't talk of it like that," he said, impatiently. "I suppose you know that Harry Brent and Viola have met and have fallen in love with one another. Nobody else knows it but me, and perhaps it's important that nobody else should. At any rate you can talk quite straight about it to me."

Bastian received this with a change of manner. "All right," he said, "I will talk straight. Viola's a girl in a thousand—in a million. I'd trust her anywhere. But for a young man to be meeting her again and again, and keeping it secret—! Well, you see my point, I suppose."

It was quite a new point to Wilbraham, as far as he did see it. But his brain, edged by his long struggle with himself, and now again working with its normal quickness, seized upon its essential insincerity at once. There was a barely perceptible pause before he said: "If you mean that Harry has done anything that you can take exception to why have you been smiling and hinting about it up till now?"

Perhaps Bastian did not quite take this in. "Oh, I don't mean to say that there has been anything wrong," he said. "As I say, I trust Viola—absolutely. If *she's* satisfied with herself, as she is, that's enough for me."

"Very well," said Wilbraham, keeping command. "Then that applies to Harry too. You don't know him. I do. I found it out by chance, and he made no attempt to persuade me to keep it secret. He left it to me, and I decided to do so. If he wanted it kept secret, so did she; and they both wanted it for the same reasons, whatever they were. If she was right, he was right, and——"

"Yes, that's all very well——," said Bastian, but Wilbraham over-rode his interruption. "I suppose you didn't know of it till after you'd come to London. How did you know of it?"

Bastian allowed himself to be diverted. "I found it out on the last night," he said. "I went out to look for her, and she came in crying, poor child! Something suddenly struck me. She had been out such a lot alone, and she hadn't done that before when we'd been away together—at least not so much. And she'd been different somehow. I hadn't thought about it before, but it came to me suddenly all together. And she wouldn't have been crying like that just because we were going home. There was something—somebody. I dare say I should have got at it by thinking it over; but she told me. I love her, and she loves me, and knows that she can tell me anything. That's how it was, Wilbraham. You're not a father, but you can imagine, perhaps, what a father feels about these things, when his daughter is the chief thing in the world to him."

"I suppose I can," said Wilbraham. "But all the same you're not treating her in the way you boast of if you're not prepared to look upon Harry in the same light. You'll agree that on the outside of things they're not equal—those two."

"I don't agree to that," said Bastian, dogmatically.

"I said on the outside of things," Wilbraham persisted. "You've been where he belongs, and you know what sort of position he's in. You may have belonged to the same sort of thing once. I don't know. You've never told me who your people were. But you say yourself that you've come down in the world, and it's pretty obvious that you're not in anything like the position the Brents are now. So you can see how it would have been likely to strike me when I first found it out. But Harry is what he is. I trusted him, just as you trusted Viola. And afterwards I saw Viola. If I can think of her as I do, you ought to be able to think of Harry in the same way, though you haven't seen him."

"Very well, then," said Bastian. "Let's take it that, leaving out things that don't matter, they're to be looked at in the same way. Of course I know, really, that he's something quite out of the common. I've heard the people there talk about him. If I hadn't thought there was no harm in it—for Viola—I shouldn't have treated it as I have. But you see, Wilbraham, as a father I've got to look a

little farther ahead than you do. I suppose to you it's just a boy and girl falling in love with one another in all their innocence, and if nothing comes of it no harm will be done. Well, it wouldn't to him. But it's rather different with her, isn't it?"

Wilbraham was silent. That was exactly as he had looked at it, on Harry's behalf. And it would be different for Viola.

"If he's what you say he is," said Bastian, pursuing his advantage, "he won't want to throw her off when he gets older. But his people will want him to, and when they know they'll try to bring it about. Harry and Viola! Yes. But it's me and Lady Brent, you see, as well—as she seems to be the one that counts most. I don't know anything about the boy's mother; they don't talk about her much down there. It's his grandmother who seems to count for everything. Who was his mother, by the by?"

Wilbraham had forgotten until that moment the photograph on the mantelpiece. He awoke to its realization with a mental start. If Bastian had not shown himself ignorant of Mrs. Brent's origin he might have succumbed to the instinct for the dramatic and surprised him by pointing her out in reply to his question. But when the question came he had just received the impression of loyalty on the part of Mrs. Ivimey, or anybody else to whom Bastian may have talked about "the family." They had not given Mrs. Brent away. He wouldn't either, at least at this stage.

"Nobody in particular," he said with a half truth. "They were only married for a few weeks. Lady Brent is Harry's guardian, and of course she's had most to do with bringing him up more or less in seclusion at Royd. I suppose you know that he has gone off to enlist."

"Yes, and I suppose you've come here to find out from Viola where he is, and haul him back again."

Wilbraham told him why he had come up. "I shall go and see Gulliver tomorrow," he said, "and get him to make inquiries. Then I hope in a few days Harry will write. She'll be satisfied with that, and whether Gulliver finds him or not she won't make any attempt to get him back."

"Well, you're a funny crew altogether," said Bastian, after they had talked a little longer. "As far as I'm concerned, Wilbraham, I'm going to keep my eyes open. You needn't look to me to back up your ideas, if it doesn't suit me to do so. Better have all your cards on the table. They're both much too young yet to think about anything further, and I suppose he'll be too young for another few

years. You can hug your secret for the present."

CHAPTER XX
WAITING

Autumn gave place to winter and winter to spring. Another summer came, and people began to resign themselves to the hitherto almost incredible idea of the war lasting over another winter. That winter passed away and the interminable struggle went on.

But even after two years the texture of life had not very greatly altered in England. Conscription had not yet come in; there was no food control; motor cars could be used for purposes of pleasure or convenience; the chief opportunities for the work of women in connection with the war were in nursing, and for girls in government clerkships. It was not for another full year that country life in England seemed quite a different thing from what it had been before the war. The change had come by degrees and its last stages were passed through much more quickly than the first. In the summer of 1916 it was still possible to live in a country house without being much affected by the war.

Lady Brent lived on at Royd Castle to all outward appearances in much the same way as she had lived there since her widowhood. There came to be fewer servants, and her work in connection with the estate increased, for her bailiff had joined up, and she had not tried to replace him. She did much of his work herself, with the help of the estate staff, and perhaps welcomed the increased responsibility, for her life during those two first years was sad enough, with all that she had lived for taken from her just at the time when the hopes of years were to have been put to the test.

Harry had written to his mother within a few days of Wilbraham's return from London, and again from time to time to her and to his grandmother and to Wilbraham; also to the children. But his letters contained very little news about himself. They were posted in London and gave no address to which answers could be sent. After some months there was a long silence, and then he wrote from Egypt, where his regiment had been sent. After that he wrote mostly to his mother. He told her more about his life, but never anything that would identify him.

The letters sent from Egypt were subject to censorship, but they arrived

at Royd in envelopes bearing a London postmark and with no label or stamp on them. Yet they were addressed in Harry's writing. He must have left a supply of them behind him.

The clue to all this was no doubt a strong and considered determination to carry out his plan without risk of interference. The message carried to him by Viola had brought letters from him, but that was as far as he would go; and perhaps he would have written in any case. After the first one had been received Lady Brent wrote to Mr. Gulliver and told him not to pursue his inquiries. Harry must have his own way. As he had written, after it had seemed that he had made up his mind not even to do that, so perhaps he would some day relent and let them write to him. But nearly two years went by and he had not done so.

In the long sad conversations they had about him at Royd during the early months, they arrived at some sort of conclusions, helped by an occasional expression in his letters. He had gone out of his own world, and as long as his time of probation lasted he would keep out of it. He was not likely to think himself degraded by serving in the ranks, but they came to understand that he was keeping his actual condition hidden. There was nothing in his letters, which would be read by his superior officers, to indicate it, and before he left England they were more about Royd than about himself. There was never very much about himself. Every time he wrote he said he was well and happy; but it peeped through that the change in his life was not without its effect upon him. How could it be otherwise, brought up as he had been? He was learning in a hard school; but he was learning, and flashes of his old boyish brightness broke through the reticence which he seemed to have imposed upon himself. They came to look upon it as a time of probation for him, and to believe that so he looked upon it himself. Sometimes they thought they saw signs of expectation. He was working for and looking forward to something. Viola, said Wilbraham to himself. His commission to be won in the field, said Lady Brent. He wanted no help towards it, as might have been given by finding him out, which should not have been difficult after he had left England, and pulling strings. When he had gained his commission, by his own unaided effort, and by no reliance upon his place in the world outside the army, then he would come back to them. It was hard on Lady Brent to wait, and to lift no finger, and harder still on his mother. But he must be trusted. They had directed him through his childhood, and youth, and now he would brook no direction. The only consolation they had was that his upbringing had not taken from him a man's initiative and determination. The experiment seemed to have been justified; but with a greater knowledge of the world beforehand he might not have thought it necessary so to cut his life in two. They were paying a heavy price.

Wilbraham, who had more of a clue to Harry's actions than the others, was

not without irritation against what at times he set down as mere hard undutifulness. He had great sympathy with Lady Brent, who had so wonderfully sunk her own feelings in acquiescing in the boy's unreasonable determination. She could almost certainly have traced him had she wished to do so. And Wilbraham, at least, knew that he must have been told at the very beginning that he would not be interfered with. Why could he not then have softened the hardship to those who loved him? Granted that the new love that had come into his life was so much more to him than the old; but it was not like him to throw over the old altogether, and indeed his letters showed that he had not done so.

After a time his irritation died away. It could not be so distressing to Harry to be cut off from Royd as it was to them to be cut off from him, but his letters showed that he felt it, and especially the few letters that he wrote to little Jane, in which he seemed to be reaching out after the untroubled innocent happiness of his youth, and the beauty and freedom that had lain all about it. It was the old Harry that appeared in those letters, and here and there in others; the new Harry became more and more evident otherwise—a man doing a man's hard work in hard and uncongenial surroundings, much older than his years, where in some ways he had been so much younger.

He was hard on himself as well as hard upon them. They had given him happiness in his sheltered youth, but the plunge he had taken into a life different from any that could have been anticipated for him can have been none the easier on that account. The ugliness and crudity that other boys might in some measure have been prepared for would bear very hardly upon him, and he would have to fight through it alone. Wilbraham came to see that he might shrink from mixing it up with his home life. Perhaps he was afraid that he might weaken in it if he was subject to any pressure. It would surely have been open to him to have had at least a few days at home before he went abroad; but he had not taken the opportunity.

Had he blamed them for bringing him up in that seclusion? There was nothing in his letters to show it. But it must have been very soon revealed to him how exceptional his life had been, and how much he had missed of what other boys had had. He would not always be capable of gauging the value of what he had missed, when face to face with some situation with which his inexperience had unfitted him to cope lightly. It might take him a long time to acknowledge that what he had gained had been more than what he had missed, and partly arose from it. He would know, too, before long that the immovable seclusion in which his grandmother and mother and Wilbraham himself lived was anything but the normal state of affairs that it had been implicitly represented to him. He would ask himself why they had never left Royd from one year's end to another, and why so few people had ever come there; and he would see that it had all

been with reference to him. He would hardly be able to understand it. If he acknowledged the freedom he had enjoyed, the limits of it would still strike him, with his new knowledge of the world's ways. If he had not, since his childhood, been dominated by women, he had certainly been managed, without knowing it. Whether, in the strangeness and disagreeableness and difficulty of much of his new life he was inclined to resent this unduly, or whether he saw behind it enough to admit that there had been wisdom as well as apparent eccentricity, and certainly love, in the steps his youth had been made to tread, it would not be surprising if he made up his mind at an early date that the managing should come to an end. It was for him to direct his own life now. He would run no further risk of influence brought to bear upon it, the clue to which was not in his hands.

In the first spring Wilbraham left Royd to take up work in a Government office in London, for which Lady Brent had asked for him. A few months later Mrs. Brent broke loose from the now insupportable stagnation of Royd, and went to London with the avowed object of nursing. She had had no training and was quite ignorant of the steps to be taken, but Lady Brent arranged an income for her, and made no attempt to direct her movements in any way. She was left alone in the Castle, and stayed there alone for another year. To all outward appearance she was exactly what she had always been, always occupied, always unemotional, though sometimes more unapproachable than at others. The months dragged on.

CHAPTER XXI
SIDNEY

One morning in May Lady Brent unlocked the letter bag, which she never did without anticipations of some news of Harry. It was at least a month since there had been a letter from him, but there at last it was, searched for among all the rest and making them of no value at all.

It was directed to Mrs. Brent, and the envelope bore the stamps and marks of the field from which it had been written. All Harry's previous letters had been redirected from London.

She sat looking at it and turning it over. Once or twice she seemed to be on the point of opening it, and she must have been under the strongest temptation to do so. What could it mean but that he had reached his goal, and the long time of half estrangement was over? Perhaps it was to say that he was coming home.

She laid it down, and took up her other letters with a sigh, but before she opened any of them, she went to her writing-table and enclosed it in a note to Mrs. Brent. Then she rang the bell and gave orders that some one was to ride over to Burport with it, and arrange for its immediate transmission to London by train. By that means she might get the telegram she had asked for from her daughter-in-law that evening. Then she went calmly about her duties.

These included one that was quite unusual at Royd Castle. It was to see that preparations were made for visitors. Her old friend Lady Avalon had written to ask if she might come for a few days. After twelve or thirteen years Poldaven Castle was to be occupied again for the summer. Lady Avalon wanted to see what was necessary to be done there, but it had been empty so long that she didn't want to trust herself in it for a night if Lady Brent could do with her at Royd and let her go over from there..

Later on that morning she went again to her writing-table and wrote to Lady Avalon, who was expected in a couple of days' time. Would she care to bring her daughter Sidney with her? It was no doubt very dull at Royd, but there was just a chance of Harry coming home from Egypt. She sat considering for a moment when she had written this, but closed her letter without adding any more. Harry was extremely unlikely to be at Royd in a few days' time, but if Sidney had already been there when he did come home it would be easier to ask her there again.

After this she went down to the village, taking Ben, Harry's retriever, with her.

She called at the Vicarage. The Grants were to be asked to dine when Lady Avalon came. The maid who opened the door looked at her rather curiously, but she did not notice it. Mrs. Grant was in the drawing-room and sprang up to meet her. "Oh, I'm so glad!" she said, and came forward, her hand held out and her face all alight with pleasure.

Lady Brent was taken aback by the warmth of the greeting. She liked Mrs. Grant and supposed that Mrs. Grant liked her, but she was not accustomed to this kind of welcome.

"Thank you," she said, a shade drily. "I came to ask if you and your husband would dine with me on Thursday. Lady Avalon will be staying with me, and possibly her daughter, Lady Sidney Pawle."

"Oh, thank you, yes, we shall be very pleased," said Mrs. Grant. "Will Harry be home by then? He might, mightn't he? Oh, I am so glad he's coming at last."

Lady Brent understood now, but it took her a little time to recover herself. "He has written to Jane, I suppose," she said, speaking in as natural a tone as possible. "There was a letter from him this morning, but it was to his mother, and I was not expecting to get the news in it until this evening."

"Oh, I'll go and get the letter at once," said Mrs. Grant, and ran out of the room, leaving Lady Brent alone. She sat quite still, and the colour that had left her face returned to it again. When Mrs. Grant came back, accompanied by Jane, with the precious letter in her hand, she had quite recovered herself.

Jane was rather a favourite of Lady Brent's. She was not in the least afraid of her, as her elders were apt to be, and talked to her about Harry in a way that nobody else did. She was often invited to the Castle by herself, and was always ready to go, though it might have been thought that her inclinations towards bodily activity would have made it a doubtful pleasure to have to sit and talk to an elderly woman. Probably she was the only person in the world of whom Lady Brent would not feel jealous because she had received this news first.

"I thought I'd like to bring you the letter myself," said Jane, and stood by her side as she read it.

Jane was fourteen now. Probably no two years in her life could bring as great a change as the last two had brought to her. She had grown tall for her age, but was still slim and very upright. There was a good deal of the child in her still, and even a little of the boy, for her figure was not so rounded as with most girls of her age, and her taste for boyish activities was still strong. But there was more of the budding woman. She was gentler in speech and manner than of old, and her face, if not yet her figure, was wholly feminine. Her early promise of beauty was in course of being fulfilled. She was very pretty, with her fair hair and wide grey eyes, and it was no longer an effort to make her tidy in her dress. Her skirts were well below her knees, and in her more active moments she took some pains to keep them there.

"My dear Jane,

"I shall be home almost as soon as you get this. I suppose you know I've been serving as a trooper all this time, but now I've got a commission. I shall be in London for a day or two to get my kit, and then I shall come down to Royd with a month's leave in front of me. Hurrah! You and I and Pobbles will have lots of fun together. I hope you've kept the cabin in good repair.

"**Love from** "HARRY."

Lady Brent took a long time to read it, while Jane stood and looked at her. When she looked up at last, Jane said: "I wish I'd known that his other letter hadn't been written to you. I would have brought this up at once.

"Thank you, dear," said Lady Brent. "Of course he doesn't know that his mother is not at Royd. He would have thought that we should all get the news at the same time. Perhaps he will have told her more exact dates, if he knows them. At any rate it cannot be long now before we see him again."

She was completely herself now, and no one who had not known her would have guessed that the news she had received meant very much to her. She rose almost immediately and took her leave. She kissed Jane as she said good-bye, which was an unusual attention, and perhaps meant that she bore her no grudge for having received the news first.

"I think it's rather horrid of Mrs. Brent to be away," said Jane, when she had gone. "Of course he would expect to find her waiting here for him."

Mrs. Grant was sometimes puzzled in her dealings with this growing daughter of hers. She was becoming more of a companion to her, and now Pobbles had gone to school could be treated less as a child. But it was not always easy to decide how far she should be let into the confidences of her elders. She seemed to have acquired a prejudice against Mrs. Brent, which had hitherto been treated as something not to be encouraged.

"It has made it difficult not to be able to tell Harry anything of what has happened here," Mrs. Grant said. "She went away to try to get some nursing, and——"

"A fat lot of nursing she's done!" interrupted Jane. "I don't believe she's tried at all. She's just enjoying herself in London. I don't suppose Lady Brent cares for her much, but it's rather hard lines to leave her all by herself."

Mrs. Grant was much of the same opinion, since Mrs. Brent had taken no steps, as far as was known, to embark upon the nursing career which she had announced as her intention; but she was not quite ready to agree with Jane's criticism of her. "It isn't only she that has left Lady Brent," she said.

"Mr. Wilbraham is doing some work," said Jane, "and Harry had to go. If he hadn't gone when he did, he would have gone by this time."

"I don't want to criticize him," said her mother. "It will be all over now, but I think it has been hard lines, as you say, on Lady Brent that she hasn't been able to write to him."

"She understands that," said Jane. "We've talked about it."

Mrs. Grant knew that Lady Brent had, surprisingly, made something of a confidante of Jane. She was pleased that it was so, but did not like to ask questions about her confidences.

Jane, however, seemed ready to give them. "We think," she said, "that until he was made an officer he wouldn't want anybody to know that he was Sir Harry Brent, or different from any other soldier. It would make it difficult if he had letters from home. She's proud of him for it. So am I."

Mrs. Grant was touched by the "we." Evidently Jane was of some comfort to the lonely self-contained lady, if they discussed matters in that way. She kissed her. "I expect it's something like that, darling," she said. "Anyhow, it's all over now, and he'll be just like any other young man. You must go back to lessons now."

"I don't think he's like other young men," said Jane, as she reluctantly prepared to leave. "I think it's much finer to go through all the hardships. It's like pioneering. I expect what we used to talk about in the log cabin had something to do with it."

"Did you tell Lady Brent about that, darling?"

"Oh, yes. And she quite agreed with me. Lady Brent understands things. I think Mrs. Brent is a rotter. Good-bye, mother dear."

Mrs. Brent's telegram came that evening, and she herself the next day. According to his letter, Harry might be in England almost as soon as it reached her. He would come down to Royd as soon as possible, but he must be in London for a few days to get his kit. He would wire from there. But he did not tell her where she could communicate with him.

She was all on edge, and Lady Brent must have exercised the strongest control over herself to act with her accustomed calmness and suavity. Suavity had not always been the note of her intercourse with her daughter-in-law, but it was clear that this was not the time when friction between them could be allowed to appear. If she did not exercise restraint it was quite certain that Mrs. Brent wouldn't. She seemed to be anxious to show that she had thrown off anything like submission. She was noticeably less well-mannered than she had been, though she bore herself as if she had acquired more importance. She brought with her a great many expensive clothes, and talked about them a good deal. She dressed elaborately, and in a style to which no objection could be made if elaborate clothes were accepted as suitable for wear in the country and at this time; but they did not improve her. Lady Brent ventured upon a hint that Harry might like better to see her as she had been before, but she flared up in offence, and let it be known that she had learnt a lot since she had been in London. Harry also would have learnt something; the old days at Royd were over.

Underneath all her new independence, and almost aggressive spirit, her longing for Harry was plain. She seemed to have resigned herself to his absence, and to have gained some satisfaction out of her life in London, of which she had remarkably little to tell. But now that he was coming home again her maternal instinct arose to swamp everything else. At the end of the twenty-four hours Lady Brent spent alone with her she was far nearer to being what she had been before she had left Royd. She had to have some sympathetic ear into which to pour her doubts and complaints and disappointments. If only Harry had told her

where he was to be in London, she could have met him there. Oh, it was hard to think that he might be there now and she could not go to him. When did Lady Brent think they might expect him? She asked her this again and again, and made innumerable confused calculations, based upon this or that idea that came into her head. She was very trying, but she had to be put up with. She was Harry's mother, whatever she might have made of herself.

On the day after her arrival Lady Avalon came, with her daughter, but still there was no word from Harry.

They came in time for tea, and the two older ladies retired to talk together afterwards. Mrs. Brent was left to entertain the girl. In the few minutes' conversation Sidney had with her mother before dinner she told her that unless she gained some relief from that companionship she really couldn't stay at Royd. "She's a perfectly appalling woman, mother," she said. "How on earth she can have had a son like Harry, if he's anything like he used to be as a child, I can't understand."

"I don't think she's so bad as all that, dear," said Lady Avalon. "From what Lady Brent tells me, she's been running with the people she comes from, and of course they can't be much. That's admitted, though I don't know anything about them. She seemed a quiet enough little thing when I was here last. She'll settle down again."

"I hope she will. But it's a poor lookout for me if I've got to make a bosom friend of her, while you and Lady Brent are putting your heads together. Really, darling, I don't think I can stand it."

"Harry may be home any day, and until he does come we can spend most of our time at Poldaven, though of course we mustn't just make a convenience of being here. The Vicarage people are dining to-night, so you won't have her on your hands entirely. The Vicar is David Grant, the novelist. I haven't read any of his novels, but I believe a lot of people do. I expect he's a clever man, and will cheer us up a bit."

"I should think we shall have quite an hilarious evening—you and Lady Brent talking together, and me and Mrs. Brent and the Vicarage people."

"I thought you rather liked Vicarage people. Don't make yourself superior to your company, there's a good girl. It's the worst sort of form—especially in the country."

Whatever the allusion to Vicarage people may have meant, it sent Sidney out of the room with a blush on her cheeks, and Lady Avalon rang for her maid with a look on her face as of one who had been rather clever.

Sidney had grown into a pretty girl, though she was considered the ugly duckling of the handsome family to which she belonged. She was tall, and had not yet quite grown out of the youthful awkwardness of her stature. But there

was more character in her well-shaped features than her sisters could boast of, though their widely known beauty had descended upon them in early childhood and suffered no relapse through the years of their growth. They inherited their good looks from both sides of the family, but Sidney was the only one of the girls who derived more from her father. Perhaps on that account she was his favourite, and he was accustomed to prophesy that she would beat them all in looks when she really grew up. She had kind eyes and a smiling mouth, to which her decisively jutting chin gave character. Her skin was very fair and clear, and her abundant brown hair had just a touch of auburn in it. There were some to whom the hint of gaucherie in her carriage gave her an added charm. It spoke of health and youth and vigour, and went well with her free unafraid speech and her frequent smile.

Grant, always on the lookout for new types of female beauty, but a little inclined to make all his heroines alike, studied her closely that evening at dinner and was enchanted with her. If he had known that she had been looked upon as an ugly duckling in her family it would almost have given him a novel ready made. Mrs. Grant liked her too, and as they walked home across the park, cheered by the unaccustomed pleasures of society, they made a match between her and Harry there and then, as the Pawle and Brent nurses had done in their early childhood.

"I shouldn't be surprised," said Grant, "if Lady Brent had asked her here with that idea in her mind. It's the first time in the three years we've been here that any young person has stayed at the Castle. I dare say Lady Avalon is in it too. They're old friends, and they seem to have their heads together a good deal."

"Lady Brent didn't know Harry was coming home when she told us they were coming," said Mrs. Grant. "It's a coincidence, but perhaps a fortunate one. They played together as children—Harry and Lady Sidney. It would be rather a pretty match—except that Harry is so young—not twenty yet."

"You think he ought to wait a few years and marry somebody much younger, eh? Somebody about the age of Jane."

Mrs. Grant sighed. "I shouldn't be a mother if I hadn't thought of that," she said. "And Jane will be quite as pretty as Lady Sidney when she grows up. But Harry is so sweet and natural with the children that it would be a pity to spoil it by thinking of something that would make it all quite different. He wouldn't be what he is if he were to think of Jane as anything but a child, for some years yet."

"I think you're right," said her husband. "Of course I've built a few castles in the air. I shouldn't be a father if I hadn't. But I expect he'll marry young; he seems to me that sort of boy, somehow. I don't think he could do better than marry Lady Sidney. She's very interested in the idea of him. She talked to me a lot about the time they used to play together as children."

"She said she'd come down to-morrow morning. I think she wants to get away from Mrs. Brent, though I shouldn't wonder if Mrs. Brent came with her. I think she wants to show me as many of her new clothes as possible. She hasn't improved up in London. I don't like her nearly as much as I did."

"I never cared for her much," said Grant. "She's a common little thing, however she may dress herself up to disguise it. I've sometimes wondered what Harry will think about her when he does come home."

Lady Sidney came down to the Vicarage the next morning, and Mrs. Brent came with her, as Mrs. Grant had anticipated. But apparently they each wanted to get rid of the other, for directly Mrs. Brent had greeted Mrs. Grant she said: "I want to have a long talk alone with you. I wonder if you'd spare Jane from her lessons to show Lady Sidney the log cabin that Harry built with the children. I've been telling her about it and she said she'd like to see it."

Sidney laughed. "I don't want to be in the way," she said, "and I'd like to have a walk with Jane, if she can be spared."

Jane was fetched. She received Mrs. Brent's effusive greeting with unsmiling coolness and looked Sidney over very critically when she was introduced to her. The inspection was apparently satisfactory, for she went off with some alacrity to change her shoes; but that may have been because she was relieved at getting off the rest of the morning's lessons.

The two girls set out across the garden, where the Vicarage baby, now getting on for three, was asleep under a tree, as before. They stopped to look at it, and Sidney behaved in such a way as to give Jane a good opinion of her. "She's a darling," she said, as they went on. "I do hope she'll be awake when we come back. I love to hear them talk at that age, don't you?"

Jane said she did, and recounted specimens of the Vicarage baby's wit, over which they both laughed freely. They were good friends by the time they reached the log cabin.

Jane unlocked the door and waited for admiration, which was given. "I've kept it very tidy and clean ever since Harry went away," she said, looking solemnly at Sidney. "I hope he won't have got too old to like it. He wrote to me, you know, to say he was coming back, and he mentioned the log cabin. I expect he'll be pleased to see it again."

There was half an appeal in her voice. Sidney looked at her quickly. "I'm quite sure he will," she said. "He's not so very old, after all—just as old as I am, in fact, and I'm not a bit too old to appreciate it."

"Ah, but the war may have made a great difference in him."

"It doesn't make as much as you'd think." She hesitated for a moment, and

said: "I know a man who has been through it all from the beginning. He enlisted as Harry did, and had a rough time of it at first. He's been wounded too—rather badly. But he's much the same as he was before."

Jane looked at her. "You knew Harry when he was little, didn't you?" she asked. "We only knew him first three years ago. He seemed old then to me and my brother, but he was only sixteen."

"Let's sit down somewhere and I'll tell you all about it," said Sidney. "I don't think I want to walk any more, unless you do."

They sat down on the bench under the eaves, and Sidney told her about that summer when she and Harry had played together as children. Jane kept her large eyes fixed upon her all the time, and they seemed to be searching her and adding her up. By and by her solemnity relaxed and she smiled when Sidney did, and asked her questions here and there. When the story came to an end it was plain that she had made up her mind about her, and that her opinion was favourable.

This was made more evident still when she said calmly: "I expect Harry will fall in love with you, if you're here when he comes home."

Sidney looked at her in surprise, and then laughed. "What an extraordinary girl you are!" she said. "You think of everything."

Jane laughed too. She was feeling more and more at home with Sidney, who did not treat her as a child. "Would you like him to?" she asked.

Sidney was unexpectedly silent and serious, and when she did speak, she did not answer Jane's question. "Would you like to be friends?" she asked. "Real friends, I mean, so that we could tell each other things."

"Of course I should," said Jane. "But I expect you've got lots of friends older than me, that you know much better. I've got hardly anybody, because there aren't many people about here, and we don't go away very often."

"I always know at once if I'm going to like a person," said Sidney, "and I knew I should like you when I first saw you. We might see a good deal of one another when we come down to Poldaven; and I shall want a friend. I think it's going to be rather difficult."

Jane was enchanted at the offer of friendship. She admired Sidney tremendously, and to be on equal terms with her gave her a most gratifying sense of having left her childhood behind her. "Why do you think it is going to be difficult?" she asked, concealing her gratification.

"Oh, because, because! Well, because of what you said just now. If you haven't seen it already you will very soon. It's what I've been brought down here for. They don't say so, of course, but it's plain enough to see. Of course I shall like Harry awfully, if he's anything like he used to be. But you see I'm in love with somebody else. That's the trouble."

This was a confession worth having as an introduction to the proffered friendship. Jane didn't know whether to be glad or sorry to hear it. She had accepted Sidney as a suitable person for Harry to fall in love with, but perhaps it would be of some advantage if she didn't fall in love with him. There remained, however, the question of his falling in love with her.

"Perhaps Harry ought to know that," she said after a pause.

Sidney looked at her and laughed again. "You know Harry better than I do now," she said. "Do you think he's likely to fall in love with me?"

Jane considered this carefully. "I don't know; I think I should if I was him," she said.

"It's very sweet of you to say that," said Sidney, becoming serious again. "Perhaps I will tell him; or perhaps you shall. Then we shall all be happy and comfortable together. I should like to have Harry as a friend, and I don't in the least see why one shouldn't have a man as a friend when you're in love with another man. Do you?"

Jane had not considered the subject, but was pleased to have her opinion asked. It drew her to Sidney more than anything—this treatment of her as if her opinion on a grown-up subject was worth having. "Not if it's quite understood," she said, decisively. "I'm really rather glad that you are in love with somebody else, because Harry is already my friend, and if you are going to be, then I shall be very well off—much better than I should be if you and Harry wanted to be together and to leave me out of it. I don't mind telling Harry, if you like. It might be rather awkward for you to do it, as it would look as if you were giving him a warning. Who shall I say you're in love with?"

Sidney laughed merrily and gave her a sudden embrace. "I can't help it," she said, "you're such a darling. Well, he's a Captain in the Grenadier Guards, and his name is Noel Chancellor."

"That's the regiment that Harry was to have gone into," said Jane. "His father and grandfather belonged to it."

"Did they?" said Sidney. "Some of Noel's people were in it too. It sounds all right, but as a matter of fact Noel was a schoolmaster when the war broke out. He's the son of our vicar at home. When the war is over he is going to be a schoolmaster again. So you see how it is."

In her general ignorance of the world outside the immediate parish of Royd, Jane didn't quite see how it was. She asked kindly after Noel Chancellor and was given a pleasing impression of a handsome athletic young man, who had played cricket for Marlborough and Oxford and Notts, and had been happily engaged at a health resort on the East Coast of Kent, when the war broke out, in teaching thirty or so delightful boys under the age of fourteen to play cricket as it ought to be played, and to wrestle with the elements of Greek and Latin in their spare

time.

"Considering that all the people who think themselves somebody send their children to be educated in schools like Noel was in," said Sidney. "I should have thought a person like me would have been just the touch that was wanted to make it still more of a success. But of course mother doesn't see it in that light. It's all very trying."

Jane's affectionate heart went out to this tale of crossed love, the first that had ever come within her ken outside the pages of her father's novels, which she read dutifully but without much interest. She thought it quite natural that Lady Avalon should want Sidney to marry Harry, as both of them had titles, but did not say this for fear of being laughed at. She wanted to be a real help and comfort to her new friend.

"I am sure it will come all right in the end," she said. "Perhaps when we tell Harry he will be able to do something."

CHAPTER XXII
THE RETURN

Harry came home a few days after Lady Avalon and Sidney had come to Royd, and two days before they had been going away. But they were persuaded, without much difficulty, to stay a little longer. At least, Lady Avalon accepted Lady Brent's invitation to prolong their visit, and informed Sidney that she had done so. "You see how it is," said Sidney to Jane, with whom she was now fast friends, much to the maturing of Jane's behaviour, but not to the spoiling of her, as her parents gratefully remarked.

"She's a thoroughly nice unaffected girl," said Grant, "and she'll be a nice friend for Jane, especially if what we think is going to happen does happen."

"I'm not sure she's not putting ideas into Jane's head," said Miss Minster. "I know they have secrets together, and I've a sort of notion that they're on the eternal subject of love."

"Well," said Grant, "girls will talk about love, I suppose, and if they talk nicely I don't know that there's much harm done."

"Jane ought to have learnt how to talk nicely about love by this time," said Miss Minster, with obvious reference. "I think Lady Sidney is all right really, or I should perhaps advise you both differently. Whether she's going to set her cap

at Harry or not I don't know, and I don't suppose Jane would tell me if I asked her. But I'm pretty sure that they have discussed it."

Mrs. Grant listened to this without remark, but was a little disturbed at the idea of Jane having secrets which she would not impart to Miss Minster. Would she impart them to her? It would mark a stage if Jane were not ready to tell her everything.

She was considering the advisability of approaching Jane on the matter when Jane approached her. "I've got a secret with Sidney, mother," she said, in her abrupt but open way. "It's something she's told me about herself. She says she'd rather I didn't tell you just yet, if you don't mind, but she doesn't mind my telling you that there is a secret. You don't mind, do you?"

"What a lot of 'minds'!" said Mrs. Grant. "No, darling, I don't mind at all, unless it's something that you think you ought to tell me."

"Oh, no, it's nothing of that sort," said Jane. "It's something about herself which she doesn't want people to know yet. I'm going to tell it to Harry when he comes home, so that we can all three enjoy ourselves together."

Mrs. Grant, with the idea in her head that Sidney had confided to Jane that she retained a tender memory of Harry which might become more tender still, was a little surprised at this way of putting it; but it did not take her long to understand the truth when Jane had left her. She smiled and kept her own counsel, and liked Sidney all the better; for she must have known that if Jane told her that there was a secret she would guess what the secret was, little as Jane might suspect it.

Harry sent a wire in the morning to say that he was coming by a train that would arrive in the late afternoon. Only Mrs. Brent drove to the station to meet him, but they were all waiting for him in front of the Castle, the Grants inclusive, and there was scarcely a villager who was not somewhere on the road, or in the more public parts of the park to see him drive by.

His smiling excitement at this greeting from old friends—the only friends he had had up till two years before—made him seem at first exactly what he had been. But there was none of the little group at the Castle, except Lady Avalon and Sidney, who had not the impression, after the first greeting, of his having become much older. His fair boy's beauty had developed into the sunburnt hardness of a man. He was extraordinarily handsome in his smart khaki kit, but he looked years older than his age, which was not much over nineteen; and his speech and manner had altered. It would be another eighteen months before he would be legally his own master and the master of his ancient Castle, and all that went with it; but he seemed to have come into the house as its master, and to give it a meaning that it had never had while it had been ruled by a woman.

It was not too late for tea, which provided an opportunity for everybody

of getting used to the new Harry, as they sat on the terrace and made play with their cups and conversation. There were adjustments to be made, and the necessity for them to be covered up. Harry talked freely to everybody. His manner was perfect with his grandmother, to whom he showed deference, while she, of course, behaved with her usual calm and let nothing appear of all that she was thinking. Mrs. Brent kept her eyes on him all the time, and had an air almost of bewilderment. She did not try to assert herself, but accepted gratefully the notice he gave her from time to time. Lady Avalon was the only person present who asked him questions about his experiences, but it soon became evident that he had nothing to tell that was personal to himself. He answered the questions, but with a slight change in the frank manner of his speech when they touched upon his own experiences apart from the operations in which he had taken part. His mother told Mrs. Grant afterwards that he had said to her during the drive that he wanted to forget everything that had happened since he had left home—at least he didn't want to talk about it. They had yet to learn how far his experiences had changed him, and to gather whether or no they were such as to have left a painful mark upon his life; but he would give them no help in coming to their conclusions. His life in the ranks was to remain as it had been, a sealed book to them.

With Sidney Harry was friendly, but no more. They talked a little of their childhood, and laughed over some of their memories, but it was not, apparently, to be the basis of any special degree of intimacy between them. Sidney retired a little into her shell after a time, and watched.

Harry was more like his old self with Jane than with anybody. Beyond a single remark about her growth he had not shown himself aware of any change in her. He seemed to want to take up their friendship at exactly the place where it had stopped. He asked her many questions about Pobbles, and said he would write to him. His manner towards her was that of a grown man to a child whom he loves. Even Lady Avalon did not mistake it for anything else, for she told Lady Brent afterwards that it was rather extraordinary that he should not see that Jane was already growing into a very pretty girl, with the implication that the fact might dawn upon him as time went on.

Jane herself showed a high but modest pride in the value he put upon her. "Now you see what he's like," she told Sidney. "When we three can be together and enjoy ourselves—well, we shall enjoy ourselves. I consider that Harry is about the nicest friend that anybody can have. He doesn't forget you when he's away."

"He hasn't forgotten *you*," said Sidney. "I'm beginning to wonder whether I shan't be a little in the way."

Jane showed surprise at this, and Sidney laughed and said: "Darling old

thing you are! You don't know what you're worth; but you will in a year or two. Anyhow, I'm not jealous of you, and I like Harry for remembering his old friends and not wanting to drop them for new ones. Of course I knew him before you did, but not as he is now. He's older than I should have thought, and I think he looks rather sad. You've got to cheer him up, and if I'm wanted to help I shall be quite ready."

"Of course you'll be wanted to help," said Jane. "You'll be seeing more of him, for one thing, as you will be staying in the house. I suppose you won't mind my being his *chief* friend though, if you like somebody else better."

"I should be a horrid sort of creature if I did," said Sidney. "You won't suffer from me when you're not here."

Harry and Sidney strolled together in the garden after dinner, with the full concurrence of their elders, except possibly of Mrs. Brent, who had not yet recovered from her air of slight bewilderment, and was quieter than she had been for the last few days.

They talked about Jane, and for the first time Harry seemed to regard Sidney with interest. Hitherto he had been merely friendly with her on the surface, as with one who was there but didn't matter much. "Oh, yes, we're real friends," she said, with her free and pleasant smile. "I suppose you can only see that she's a child, but I've never treated her like one. I began like that because girls of that age love being talked to as if they were grown up, but I very soon found out what a lot there was in her. If she's a child in some ways still, as of course she is, it makes her all the more fascinating. She's one in a thousand. She'll make all the difference to me down here, if I can get hold of her sometimes."

"She's a real person," Harry said. "If you and she have made friends it will be jolly for all three of us. We can all be friends together."

"That's what Jane wants," said Sidney. "She's devoted to you, and I believe she's also devoted to me, though not so much so. We can go and get hold of her to-morrow morning, can't we? She has a holiday on Saturday."

"Oh yes. I'm very glad you want to. I was half afraid you might think she was too young for you."

"I suppose you mean that you were half afraid you'd have to dance attendance on me, when you'd rather have been with Jane; but you see you need fear nothing of that sort."

They looked at one another. There was just light enough to catch an expression of face. Then they both laughed, and became friends from that moment.

"We'd settled that Jane was to tell you," said Sidney, "but I think I might as well do it myself. I'm engaged to somebody, but the engagement is not smiled upon. In fact it isn't recognized at all, and can't be spoken of. But Jane and I thought that if you knew of it it would make things more comfortable all round

for us three."

Harry asked her questions and showed a friendly sympathy towards her love affair. But the idea of it seemed to make him rather sad too, and Sidney did not make the mistake of thinking that his sadness was due to any disappointment created by what she had told him. Indeed her information had cleared the air, which held more of friendliness and companionship in it than before, as if he were relieved at having it quite understood that he would not be expected to make love to her, but short of that would give her all the friendship that she wanted, and be glad to take in return all that she had to give to him.

She had a good deal to give him. That baby's friendship which seemed to have meant nothing to him had kept him alive in her heart. He was not quite like other men to her. Something of his childhood lingered about him, though he had advanced so far on the hard road of manhood, and but for her memories of him would have seemed to her much older than his years. She felt the desire to encourage in him those gleams of boyish laughter and irresponsibility which had once or twice shone out through the half-weary indifference of his attitude. She thought that he must have been through a harsh disillusioning experience, and was too tired in spirit to accept all at once the freedom of his release. Her own lover, who was some years older than Harry, had told her that it needed a good deal of resolution and self-hardening to go through the ranks, and that sometimes only the remembrance of her had kept him up to it. She thought she knew more than other girls were likely to know what it must have meant to Harry, who did not seem even to want to speak of it. The maternal instinct which is in all women drew her to sympathy with him. She and Jane between them would get rid of that sadness and tiredness that lay over him. If Jane was too young, and she too occupied with somebody else to give him the consolation that would quickly heal such wounds as he was suffering from, he would still, surely, respond to their affection, and forget his troubles. She must not talk too much about her own happiness. That seemed to depress him, kind as he was about it. Of course it was love he wanted, though he might not know it. It was a pity that Jane was not a few years older, or that she herself was the only unmarried one of all her sisters. She did not suppose that there was anybody else in these parts, from what she remembered of them, who would be good enough for Harry. But perhaps it was just as well. She and he and Jane would enjoy themselves together, and show the world, if the world happened to take notice and be interested, that a man and two girls could be the best of friends with no question of love affecting their intercourse.

Perhaps that evening they might have got further into intimacy, but Harry had still something to do before he could feel himself free to take his enjoyment in the youthful companionship that had been so fortunately provided for him.

"I'm very glad you're to be here for a bit," he said. "There aren't many young people about and it would have been a bit dull for me, though I should have tried my best to keep it from my mother and grandmother. I think I must go in and have a talk with Granny now, if you don't mind. I haven't seen her alone since I came back."

But apparently Mrs. Brent had decided that there was to be no talk between those two alone, as long as she could prevent it. Lady Avalon and Sidney said good night soon after ten o'clock, and when they had gone Mrs. Brent said: "Come out for a little with me, Harry dear. It's quite warm, and I don't even want a wrap. If you're tired, as I expect you are, you can go straight to bed when we've just had a little stroll."

Lady Brent sat like a sphinx. Harry said: "All right, mother. But I'm not tired. We'll go out for ten minutes and then I'll have a little talk with Granny."

Directly they were in the garden, Mrs. Brent said in a querulous tone: "Why should you want to have a talk with her? She took you away from me a lot when you were a child, but now it's different. She ought not to have any more authority over you than I have."

Harry laughed at her. "Authority!" he echoed. "I don't feel like anybody having much authority over me now, little mother." He spoke tenderly, but there was a hint of impatience in his tone, which she detected.

"I'm sure I don't want to direct you in any way," she said. "I only want to feel that you're mine now that you've grown up, and not hers. Nobody in the world loves you as much as I do. I suppose you'll marry some day, and I shan't grumble at that when the time comes. But until then I want to feel that you and I are all in all to one another."

He answered only her reference to his grandmother. "You're my mother," he said. "In one way you've always been more to me than Granny. But I owe her a good deal, and I mustn't forget it. I haven't done much for her since I went away. Now that I've got what I wanted, and have come back again, I want to make up for that—to both of you."

"It was very cruel of you to cut yourself off from us as you did, Harry," she said. "You needn't have done it. Even she wouldn't have prevented you doing what you wanted to do, when once you'd done it."

"We needn't talk about that," he said, decisively. "It's all over now. It's what I want to tell her. You must let me have a little talk with her when we go in, please, mother."

"You mean you want me to go to bed while you sit and talk to her alone. Why should you want that? Why shouldn't I be there too?"

"Well, because you're not friendly to her, and I want to be—poor old Granny! I suppose you've never got on well together. I used to feel it, though I

didn't think about it much. I think you both tried to keep it from me. I'd much rather you tried to get rid of that feeling, mother dear. It makes me unhappy, and you can't hide it from me any longer. After all, Royd is her home. I'm rather sorry you left it. I liked to think of it with you and her here, just as it used to be."

"Oh, I couldn't stay here when you had gone. It was too much to ask of anybody. I suppose she'll always be here—at least till you come of age and are master instead of her. Couldn't we go away together—I don't mean now, but after you've been here a little, to London or somewhere—just you and I together? I've had so little of you, Harry, all to myself. All the dull years here, while she has been everything and I have been nothing, I've looked forward to it—to having you to myself for a little, when you were grown up."

She peered into his face, and saw a frown on it; but when he spoke it had cleared, and he spoke very kindly. "I may have to go to London before my leave is up," he said. "But I should want to go alone. And I don't want to be away from Royd more than I can help. You've always belonged to Royd, mother, ever since I can remember. When I'm with you I'd rather be here than anywhere. Please don't spoil it for me by making things difficult with Granny. I think I'll go in to her now. I mustn't keep her up late."

She expostulated, plaintively, as they went towards the house together. She felt that he was slipping from her, and that nothing would be as she had pictured it, but she had not the self-control to spare him her complaints and appeals. He was always kind, but he was firm too, with a man's firmness towards a weak and foolish woman. He had grown immeasurably in mental stature, and his determination impressed itself upon her increasingly. That mention of authority over him with which she had begun now seemed foolish even to her. As they went into the house she said: "Of course I don't want to treat you like a boy any more. I only want to be sure that you don't love anybody better than me. You do love me best, don't you, Harry?"

He bent down and kissed her. "You know I love you, mother," he said. "Now I'll go and talk to Granny. Come and see me when I go to bed—say in half an hour—as you used to."

That comforted her a little, and she went upstairs, while he went into the drawing-room where Lady Brent was still sitting where they had left her.

"Well, Granny dear," he said. "I thought we'd have a little talk. I've got things to tell you."

She laid down her work, and looked at him fondly, sitting in a low chair opposite to her, so young in appearance, as he sat there with his long legs stretched out, but, as she felt, so old in experience, and so different from the boy he had been.

"Please don't think, dear Harry," she said, "that you owe me any explanation

of anything. I've had a long time to think it all out, you know. I think I understand most things. Don't you want it treated as if it was all over now, and begin again, much as it was before? If so, I want that too. We've got you at home now, and we want to be all happy together."

His face cleared as he spoke. "It's very good of you to put it like that," he said. "Yes, of course I want it to be as much as possible what it used to be as long as I can be here with you. There's a good deal I want to forget."

"I'm afraid you've been through a very hard time, Harry."

"Not harder than others, Granny. It's not a bad thing to learn what you have to learn in a hard school. Perhaps you learn it all the quicker."

There was a pause before she said: "It has troubled me a good deal—the thought of your going straight from the life you lived here into the ranks. It wasn't that that we'd tried to prepare you for."

"Oh, the ranks!" he said. "You needn't let that worry you, Granny. I'm glad I went into the ranks. I'd rather do it that way than any."

She showed some surprise at this. "I've thought it over and over," she said. "But I've never thought of it in that way. It was the roughness and coarseness I hated for you. Isn't that what you want to forget?"

He was silent for a time, looking down. Then he burst out: "It's learning what the beastliness of life is that I want to forget. That's what I'd never known. I never minded hard work—doing what others do. And I doubt whether I should have been let down so easily with people like myself—on the outside, I mean. No, I was nearer to the men who had lived simpler lives. I understood them better than I should have done the others. And they were good to me too. I don't think I should have wanted to get a commission if I hadn't felt I ought to. I should have been content to go on till the end of it. But now it's all got to begin again. Oh, don't let's talk of it. I've got a month here, where it's quiet and clean and beautiful. Let's forget what's past and what's coming. I never meant to talk of it. I only wanted to tell you what I was going to do, and to thank you for letting me go my own way."

Poor Lady Brent went to bed that night with something new to think about. She could not sleep, and wrote a long letter to Wilbraham in London. "We might have thought of that," she wrote in the course of it. "It wouldn't have been the little hardships that would trouble him. He had prepared himself for all that, with the life out of doors that he had led here. And he would understand the men he was with, because he was friends with everybody about here. I'm sure they must have loved him too, and all the more because he wasn't like them. The others would have expected him to be like them. I am full of trouble about him. It looks to me now as if we had prepared him for nothing, so as to save him pain. Life has come as a shock to him, and he has not got over it yet. But one thing I'm sure

of—he must work it out for himself. I shall meddle with him no more. I am not sure that I have not made a great mistake."

CHAPTER XXIII
CONFIDENCES

Whatever it was that Lady Brent and Lady Avalon had plotted between them, it needed no adjustment of Lady Brent's statement to Wilbraham—that henceforth she should meddle no more in Harry's life—to help or hinder it. They had only to stand aside and perhaps to congratulate one another upon the way their desires were being fulfilled. Only Mrs. Brent went about with a downcast face and air, and but for the kindness Harry showed her might as well have been back in London. She also wrote to Wilbraham, and told him that Harry and Sidney seemed to be falling more and more in love with one another every day.

"Of course it's hard on me," she wrote. "But it's what mothers are made for, I suppose. You do everything for your children and sink yourself entirely, and then some girl steps in and takes it all from you. However, I'm not going to show her that I feel it. She's got the better of me once more. The girl doesn't take the slightest trouble about me—doesn't think I'm worth it, I suppose—and for myself I don't care about her. But she is the right sort of girl for Harry to marry, or at any rate to fall in love with. Whatever I am, I'm fair, and I can see that. I should hate anybody who would take him away from me, so it might just as well be her as anybody. They're happy together, and Harry is more like his old self. I'm sure they've not said anything to one another yet. They take Jane Grant with them whenever they can get hold of her, and they wouldn't want to do that if it had gone very far with them. The moment they want to go off by themselves I shall know what to expect, and I'll let you know, but I hope you'll be down here before then. We are very glad you are coming. Harry often talks about you. How I wish it was all like it used to be! But it never will be again."

Harry and Sidney rode together, and Harry found a horse for Jane and taught her to ride. Lady Avalon had a car at Royd and sometimes they motored over to Poldaven, where everything was now ready for the reception of a family of distinction. But Lady Avalon had gone back to London, and Sidney stayed on at Royd. There was no talk of her going away.

Jane could not be always with them. She had been let off afternoon lessons,

by special request, but had to occupy herself with them in the mornings.

One hot morning Harry and Sidney motored over to Poldaven Castle. It was an old stone house, not very big, which stood on a boldly jutting cliff with the sea on three sides of it. There was generally some wind hereabouts, and there was a strong fresh wind this morning, though among the woods of Royd it was close and still.

They went down to a little sheltered garden below the house. It had been partly hollowed out of the rock, and was partly rock-strewn grass and gorse and fern tamed into some semblance of ordered ground, but not too much to take from the charm of its wildness. Steps cut in the rock led down to it from above, and steps had been made from it to the sea, which lay fifty or sixty feet below. They sat on a stone bench overlooking the heaving emerald mass of the sea, and the waves breaking in a high tide against the cliffs and the huge scattered rocks that littered the shore.

They were very good friends now, these two. It was Jane who had brought them together, for she greatly admired both of them, and would not be content until they admired one another. So they laughed at her and affected a wondering awe at each other's perfections when they were in her presence; and when they were alone together they sometimes kept up the game, to prevent themselves falling into sadness over their private troubles.

They were both a little sad now, as they sat on the sun-warmed rock and looked out on the surge of the waves. Nature was so bright and fresh and happy, and seemed to be inviting a mood to respond to her own. She could put on this air of perpetual laughing youthfulness, though age-old and subject to moods very different. It seemed ungracious not to laugh and be happy with her.

"It's lovely here," Sidney said. "If only things would go right! You're the most perfect person in the world, Harry. I ought to be quite happy being here with you, but I want somebody else. I'm wanting him rather badly just at present."

"Well, you're everything you ought to be, but I want somebody else too," he said.

He rose impulsively and leant against the wall of the little terrace with one arm resting on it, and looked down at her. "I've thought I'd tell you for some time," he said. "I want to tell somebody. I can't tell Jane; she's too young. But you're in the same boat as I am; you'll understand. And we're friends too, aren't we?—always have been."

She had appeared startled at his announcement, but her face was soft as he finished. "Oh, yes, we're friends," she said. "I'm so glad you've told me, Harry. Do you know I've wondered sometimes whether there was somebody. You so often look—well, you look like I feel. You're enjoying yourself, but there's somebody you're thinking of all the time who isn't there. Do tell me about it."

He told her about his meeting with Viola on the moor, and how they had seen one another constantly afterwards and loved one another. Sidney's eyes were kind as she listened, but there was a little frown of puzzlement on her face. It was to be supposed that she wanted to "place" this lovely girl who had come to Harry as a revelation when he had been only a boy, and whom he adored still. He had told her nothing about her so far, except that her father was an artist and they had been holiday-making at Royd. There were many questions she wanted to ask.

"Have you got a photograph of her, Harry?" was the first that she asked. She wanted to satisfy herself that he was not idealizing somebody not worthy of him.

Half unwillingly he took his case out of his pocket, and Viola's photograph out of it. "It isn't as beautiful as she is," he said, "but it's like her in some ways."

Sidney took the card and looked at it for a long time. It was of Viola as Harry had first known her, young and sweet and untroubled.

"She's very lovely," she said, slowly. Then she looked up at him with a smile. "I'm so glad, Harry. I shouldn't like to think of you in love with somebody who wasn't like that. But I think she'd have to be, for you to fall in love with her. Have you seen her since?"

Yes, he had seen her two or three times before he had been sent abroad, and he had been with her since he had come back, before he had come to Royd. She was in London, working in a government office. He was going to London for a few days before his leave was up, and would see her again after that before he went to France.

He spoke as if he was troubled about it, and she knew why. But there was a lot to learn about it yet. And there was something about the beginnings of this love affair that she could not quite reconcile with her knowledge of Harry.

"Of course you're both frightfully young," she said. "Noel and I are of an age to get married if they'd let us, but I suppose you could hardly expect them to think that you were. But mightn't they accept your engagement, and let her be here with you?"

He came and sat on the seat beside her again. "Of course we shall be married some day," he said. "But we never thought about that, or about what you call an engagement—I mean we didn't think of it in the way that older people would. We were just happy loving each other."

"Oh, I know," she said. "It's a lovely time that—perhaps the best of all. But afterwards you come down to the earth a little. I suppose it has been like that with you, hasn't it? There are one's people to be considered, and what they are likely to think about it. I suppose nobody knows—at Royd."

"Wilbraham does—my tutor, you know. Nobody else does."

She showed surprise at this. "Did he find out you were seeing her?" she asked.

He stirred uneasily. He did not answer her question directly. "I don't suppose you'd realize quite how it was with me here, before I went away," he said. "They'd kept me shut up. I was happy enough, but I knew absolutely nothing about the world. From what I've learnt since, I know it must look as if we had met surreptitiously. Perhaps we did, and yet it wasn't like that either. It was the most natural thing in the world for us to be together as we were. At first I even thought of telling my mother about it. I don't know now when it first dawned upon me that they wouldn't have approved—or why. I shouldn't have cared much if they had known. But it was such a beautiful secret between Viola and me; I didn't want it to be spoiled by other—older people—coming in."

"Mr. Wilbraham knew," she said.

"He'd seen her. He knew what she was like. He's a dear old thing—full of understanding and sympathy. I don't know why he didn't tell Granny. I didn't ask him not to. I wouldn't have done that; that would have looked as if I had done something I was ashamed of. I've had an idea since that he had some sort of feeling that we were two men together, and it wasn't for us to be directed in our affairs by a woman. Something like that. Granny has always been very much at the head of things here."

"Yes, I see," she said. "But now you're older, Harry; and it has lasted? That sort of love, when you're *very* young, doesn't *always* last, you know. Wouldn't Lady Brent accept it now? It would be so lovely if she could come here, and you could be happy with her as long as you're in England. You wouldn't have to go away to London to see her then."

There was silence for a time, except for the noise of the waves on the rocks, and the plaintive cry of the gulls wheeling above them. Harry sat looking on the rocky floor, Sidney out to sea.

"I've had to decide such a lot of things for myself lately," he said. "I'd decided not to do that."

She thought his tone sounded as if he were wavering about his decision. She did not look at him, but said: "With Noel and me it's a very ordinary sort of difficulty. He's not what they'd call a good match. But I suppose they won't hold out if we show that we mean to have our own way. If they do, well, I shall wait till I'm twenty-one and marry him—just like that. But, of course, it would make a lot of difference if they smiled on us now, instead of keeping us apart. The real reason why we've come down here is because if he comes home on leave I should see him, and they don't want me to; and partly, I suppose, because they think you and I might get to like each other, now we're both grown up. Why can't they let us be happy in our own way—the older people? They've done what they wanted,

or if they haven't they're probably rather sorry for it now. I should be very glad if Noel were in the sort of position that my sisters' husbands are. But I shouldn't love him any better for it. It's love that counts."

"Yes, of course," said Harry. "Well, both you and I are going to get what we want by and by. I suppose we shall have to wait about the same time for it. But you never know what's going to happen to you in these days. If I were to get killed, I should have missed something I ought to have had. You'd say it wouldn't make much difference to me, but I don't look at it like that; and anyhow it would make a difference to Viola, all her life."

Her eyes had filled with tears. "It just doesn't do to think about that," she said, "or to talk about it."

He looked at her quickly, and put his hand on hers as it lay on the stone between them. "I'm sorry," he said. "I didn't mean to be a brute. We take it like that, you know; it doesn't make any difference to us. Nobody worries about it. But, of course it's different for you."

She dried her eyes. "It won't happen to Noel or you," she said. "We shall all four of us be happy by and by. But why shouldn't you be happy now, Harry? Is it necessary that you should keep it a secret still?"

The troubled look returned to his face. "I'm different from other men," he said. "Everything was spared me when I was young. I've had to learn everything since I grew up, and it isn't a pleasant world to learn in now. But whatever I have to do I must do now on my own responsibility. I should have to ask for Viola to come here. I couldn't do that. When she comes here, she'll come of her own right—the right that I shall give her."

"But if you were to tell them about her, Harry——"

"Yes, that's what I've thought of doing. But I can't do that either. They might accept her, but if they didn't—it's like it is with you. They want something else."

She sighed. "I'm glad you've told me, at any rate," she said. "It puts *everything* right now. You know about me and I know about you. I suppose Jane doesn't know?"

"No. And we mustn't tell her. I wish I could, but it wouldn't be fair on her. She'll be the first person I shall tell on that happy day when I can tell everybody."

CHAPTER XXIV
HOLIDAY

Wilbraham came down to Royd for a week-end visit. It was all he could spare from his arduous duties. He was thinner than he had been, but seemed to have flourished under the severe course of work to which he had submitted himself. He seemed harder and more self-reliant. Lady Brent saw at the first glance that his old temptation had not troubled him, or if it had troubled him that he had got the better of it.

Harry drove a dogcart to the station to meet him. The greeting was warm between them. Wilbraham looked him up and down. "I can't say they've smartened you up," he said, "because you didn't want it. But they've turned you into a soldier. I hope you haven't forgotten all your classics."

Harry laughed, but made no reply. When they had driven out of the little town and were on the long lonely country road, he said: "I wanted to see you first. Of course you'll be talking me over with Granny. There are some things I don't want said."

"If you mean about Viola," said Wilbraham after a pause. "I've kept my own counsel—and yours—for nearly two years. I've never been quite sure that I was right to do it. I believe it might have been better for you if Lady Brent had known. But at any rate, I have kept silence, and it isn't my affair now. It's yours. I quite recognize that."

"Have you seen her?"

"Viola? Since you came home, you mean. You know that I saw her occasionally before. Yes, I've seen her. Of course she wants you. You're going up next week, aren't you? Have you arranged that here?"

"Not yet. I told mother that I should be going to London, but I haven't said when yet."

"They won't like it, I suppose. You won't give them any reason for going. They'll think you just want to get away from here to amuse yourself as other young men do who are home on leave."

"I'm afraid they must think what they like. I hate all this secrecy—and deception. I won't deceive them more than I can help. They must let me go my own way, and not ask questions. But it's deception all the same. Why did you let me in for it?"

"Let you in for it? *I* let you in for it! What on earth do you mean, Harry?"

"Not you chiefly. But you were in it. You kept me knowing nothing. Supposing it hadn't been Viola I fell in love with! Oh, I've learnt a lot since you and I met last. I know what men are, and I'm not different from others at bottom, though there's miles between me and them in some ways. It's Viola I owe everything to—not Granny or mother or you. I don't know how I should have lived through it if it hadn't been for her. I should have lost everything that I was." He spoke more slowly. "Viola is everything in the world to me," he said, "everything

in this world or the next. I want you to understand that. I loved her before, but I love her a thousand times more, now that I know. All this—Royd, and Granny and mother—everything that it all meant to me, is nothing to me now, apart from her. Whatever there is that's real in it—I can't explain it, but it's as if she'd have to give it back to me before I can make it anything again. If you can see that, then you may be able to help a little. Viola is to come first in everything, but until it's all straightened out I want Granny—and mother—to be as little troubled about me as possible. Make it look natural to them, my going to London; don't let them think that I'm tired of them, or of Royd. I'm not, only it's all very little to me beside Viola."

"I think you're unjust to us," said Wilbraham. "Say we hadn't prepared you for what you've been through—what nobody could have foreseen."

"Oh, it would have been just the same if I'd gone straight to Sandhurst—perhaps worse—if I hadn't known Viola."

"Well, that's where you're unjust. It was only Viola—or somebody like her—that you could have fallen in love with, as you did. We'd done that for you."

Harry thought this over. Wilbraham breathed more freely the longer his silence lasted. He recognized with gratitude that old sense of fairness and reasonableness which had never been absent in his dealings with Harry. "It's what you have to think of when you feel inclined to blame your grandmother," he said.

"I don't think I'm inclined to blame her," Harry answered to this. "I'm very sorry for her. That's why I want to let her down as easily as I can. Afterwards everything will be right for her, and she'll see—she's quite wise enough—that it was right that I should take my life into my own hands. That's what I'm going to do. I had to do it once before."

"She accepted that, you know."

"Yes, in a wonderful way, I think. And she'll accept Viola. But not now. I should have to ask her for Viola, and I'm not going to do that. Besides, she's got other ideas in her head for me."

"Lady Sidney, I suppose you mean. From what your mother has written, you seem to want her to think that her wishes are being carried out."

"Sidney and I understand one another. She knows about Viola. I'm very glad she's here. I couldn't have stayed here without her and little Jane. I suppose the beastly world would say that I'm just amusing myself with a pretty girl, as I can't be with the girl I love. They might even think there's some danger in it. But the world doesn't know love as I know it." He turned to Wilbraham with a smile. "What you did, my friend, you and Granny between you, was to unfit me for the society of men. After being with nobody but men for all this time, I'm glad enough to have two girls as my friends before I go back to it. As for Granny, she's arranged all that for me, as she's used to arrange everything, and if she's

disappointed with the outcome of it, I'm afraid it can't be helped. It's just that arranging that I have to make my stand against, with as little bother about it as possible."

"I've said already, and I'll say it again, that you're hard on Lady Brent. I fully believe that if you were to tell her about Viola—now—she'd accept it. Then all the secrecy you say you hate would be over."

"I think it's quite possible that she might. I don't think my mother would. In any case, there'd be questions and difficulties. Viola would be discussed and reckoned up in a way I can't bear to think of. When the time comes I shall bring Viola here and say: 'This is the girl I love, and she loves me, though I'm not worth anything beside her.' Then there'll be no questions and no difficulties, and Viola will take her place here, and we shall be happy for the rest of our lives."

"You mean that she'll take Lady Brent's place here, I suppose. It's no good blinking matters."

Harry laughed at him. "You always were a persistent old thing," he said, "but I'm very glad to see you again. Tell me about Viola, and what she said to you."

Wilbraham found himself, somewhat to his surprise in spite of the preparation he had had, in an atmosphere of serenity, and almost of gaiety. There had been nothing like it in all the years he had lived at Royd Castle. He told himself that unless he had known how it was with Harry he would certainly have thought that the pleasure he obviously took in Sidney's society was leading to something else. The Grants were there when he arrived. It was a little intimate friendly happy party of which no single member seemed to have a care upon his or her shoulders. Only Mrs. Brent seemed rather out of the stream. Wilbraham saw that he would be invited on the first opportunity to listen to the tale of Mrs. Brent's dissatisfaction.

It was Grant, however, to whom he first talked alone, walking in the garden. Grant could see nothing on the horizon but a prospective marriage between Sir Harry Brent and Lady Sidney Pawle, which appeared to him eminently as one that should give satisfaction to all parties concerned.

"Of course they won't want to be married yet awhile," he said, "but we're expecting an engagement any day. I must say that it has all turned out in a most extraordinarily satisfactory way. Supposing the boy had done what his father did! He'd seen nobody here; he might very well have got taken in by somebody who wouldn't have been the right sort of person for him to marry when he cut himself loose. And there was just the chance of this one girl being here when he came home. One is inclined to think of Lady Brent managing everything, but she didn't actually manage that. It just came about."

Wilbraham listened to all this, his own thoughts running all the time. Sid-

ney and Jane and Harry were in another part of the garden, out of sight, but not out of hearing. A burst of laughter punctuated the close of the Vicar's speech. "Wouldn't they want to get away by themselves if it's as you think?" Wilbraham asked.

"Ah, my boy, you don't recognize the march of the great passion," said Grant. "I've loved watching those three together, because it is all going as I should have expected."

"Copy in it," suggested Wilbraham.

"Well, that's your way of putting it. But of course one takes in everything that passes before one's eyes, and if it doesn't come out exactly like it, it's——"

"Near enough to look like it. Well, I suppose you've made a study of it, and all the old women who read your immortal works will shiver down their spines and say, 'It was just like that with me.' But I'd rather take Jane's opinion about it than yours."

"Would you? Well, Jane's having the time of her life. They're awfully nice to her. Of course they're just in the state when it's gratifying to have somebody like Jane with them, who thinks there never was anybody like either of them. They flatter each other through her."

"Oh, that's how it's going to be worked out, is it? The old women will love that. It's a new touch, and they'll wish they'd thought of it for themselves, in time. Did Jane tell you it was like that, or was it your own mighty brain?"

"You're jealous of my success, Wilbraham. But I don't mind your jibes. I don't write for the highbrows like you, and I do touch the hearts of thousands. Jane talks to her mother. I shouldn't expect her to talk to me about it."

"Well, what does Mrs. Grant say? She's got some sense."

"She keeps rather quiet about it. I think she's just thankful that Harry has somebody to keep him bright and cheerful while he's at home. You made a mistake, you know, before, in not letting him have young people to play with."

"He had your two."

"As it happened, yes. But they were only children. Jane is older now, but not old enough, fortunately, to have the danger of complications. Apart altogether from the question of a love affair with Lady Sidney, I believe it's the best thing that could happen for him to have those two with him while he's here. It's an awful welter of blood and horror out there, you know, Wilbraham. None of the young fellows who come home talk much about it, but it doesn't need much imagination to see what a healing process it is for anybody like Harry to spend a few weeks with people like those two girls as his chief companions, in a quiet lovely place like this."

"Now you're talking sense yourself for a change. Here's Mrs. Brent coming. Don't leave me alone with her. It's an awful welter of red tape and incompetence

where I've just come from, but I don't want her as a healing process till I feel a little stronger."

But the Grants had to be going very shortly, and Mrs. Brent was not to be denied.

Her first address to Wilbraham, however, was not on the subject of her grievances. "Oh, I forgot to tell you when I wrote," she said. "You know that artist—Bastian—who came down here two summers ago?"

"Yes," said Wilbraham, with his heart in his mouth.

"Well, I've found out that he married a great friend of mine—oh, years ago, but I hadn't forgotten her. She died, poor girl, but of course the daughter who was with Mr. Bastian here was hers. I wish I'd known. I'd have gone to see them."

"You wouldn't have wanted to bring that time up, would you?" said Wilbraham, scarcely knowing what to say.

She was all bristles at once. "I think I was very badly treated about all that," she said. "I'd nothing whatever to be ashamed of in what I came from, and all the time it was made to look as if I had. I half believed it myself, but now I know better. Every one of my family is doing well. They're not in the position I'm in, of course, but there's no need to be ashamed of any of them. In fact, I've made up my mind to introduce Harry to his relations on my side of the family. I'm going to ask him to take me up to London before he goes back. Then he'll see for himself."

"Do you think you're wise?" said Wilbraham, relieved at having got away from the subject of the Bastians.

"What do you mean?" she asked. "What's the objection?"

"Well, you say they're not equal to you. They may be very good sort of people; I dare say they are; but what's the sense of dragging them in at this time of the day—after twenty years—to mark the difference?"

"What difference?"

"Well, the difference between them and Lady Brent."

"Lady Brent! How can you talk like that? It's just that I'm so mad with Lady Brent that I——"

"I know it is. All you can think of is to score off her. You're not thinking of Harry; you're not even thinking of yourself. What are you going to get, out of going back on everything you've stood for for the last twenty years? Harry thinks of you as belonging to Royd, in the same sort of way as Lady Brent does. Why should he have ever thought of you as anything different? Now you're proposing to show him the difference. You say yourself they *are* different. You're going to show him the difference between Lady Brent and them. Which is likely to come out of it best? I don't know; I'm asking you."

"Oh, you're just trying to aggravate me," she said. "You always were like

that. I don't know why I talk to you at all."

"Well, if you've finished, I think I'll go in. I want a peaceful time as long as I'm here. You're the only person who doesn't seem to be comfortable and happy. I'd rather be with those of them who are."

"I'm not at all happy. I'm just miserable. Harry doesn't love me any more, and I don't know what to do about it."

They had come to the bowling alley where Wilbraham had thought out his difficulties two summers before. She sank down on to the seat and cried.

Wilbraham felt very sorry for her, but determined to prevent her from making mischief if he could. "Look here," he said, "I don't think it really much matters whether you introduce Harry to your people or not. He's grown up now, and all that idea of keeping things from him is over. Do what you like about it. Lady Brent won't try to stop you; I'm pretty certain of that. She has given up trying to direct his life. Why can't you?"

Her sobs increased. "I'm his mother," she said. "I've had so little of him. I can't give him up now."

"You had him during the whole of his childhood, more than most mothers have their sons. Lady Brent may have been a bit jealous of you; I dare say she was; she's got her weaknesses like all the rest of us. But she didn't try to get him away from you. I was here most of the time, and I could see that plainly enough. You know it too. You'll be much happier about things if you try to be fair to her, as she's tried to be fair to you."

"Oh, of course it's her you're thinking of all the time. I don't come in at all."

"Yes, you do come in. I'm trying to help you to get things straight. The fact is your nose has been put out of joint by this girl who's here. It isn't Lady Brent at all, though you heap it all back on her. You can't expect a boy of Harry's age to go about tied to his mother's apron strings, when there's somebody young for him to play with. You like the girl all right, don't you?"

She had dried her eyes and sat leaning forward in an attitude of picturesque misery. "It doesn't seem to matter whether I like her or not," she said. "Harry won't talk to me about her. If he told me he was in love with her I should do my best to sympathize with him. I want to be everything to my son."

"Of course you do; and of course you can't be. If he hasn't told you he's in love with her, it's because he isn't. For goodness' sake let him be happy while he's here, and in his own way. He'll be going back soon enough, and you won't want him to think of his holiday spoiled by your complaints. You're selfish, you know. It's yourself you're thinking of all the time, not him. You used not to be like that."

"Oh, well," she said, rising, "I suppose I must put up with it. It's the common

lot of mothers. I shan't talk about it any more, to you or anybody."

"That's right," said Wilbraham, as they strolled towards the house. "And don't make complaints to Harry, either. It's not the way to get what you want from him. Of course you know that really, as well as I do. Only it's difficult, isn't it?"

"Oh, I don't know," she said. With the end of her emotion she seemed to have entered a mood almost of indifference. "If I've stood what I have all these years, and kept myself under as I have, I suppose I can go on doing it. It's coming down here that has upset me. I've been happy enough in London. Of course I've wanted to hear about Harry, but he's promised me now that he'll write to me regularly. I shall be better off, in a way, than I've ever been. I'm *somebody* there, you see. Here I'm nobody. I shan't stay here a moment longer than Harry does. I hate the place now. Why have you never been to see me in London?"

"I don't know that you've ever asked me. Where do you live?"

She told him. She was sharing a flat with an old friend, a woman who had been on the stage with her, had had an unhappy married life, but had got on in her profession.

"Margaret Creedy?" said Wilbraham. "I've seen her act. She's very good."

"Yes, you wouldn't have thought she began in the chorus, would you? She never had much voice, which was perhaps just as well for her, or she'd have been in musical comedy still. She doesn't like it remembered, and of course I don't want it known either; but we often talk over old times. It was from her, by the by, that I heard about Mrs. Bastian. She married a gentleman, like I did; but he'd come down in the world. Bastian isn't his real name, you know.".

"What is his real name?"

"I don't know. I meant to find out about him, and go and see what the girl is like. You never told me much about her, but if she's like her mother she ought to be very pretty."

"She is very pretty, but——"

"Oh, you mean I ought not to let them know who I was, as they've been here. Perhaps I shan't. I don't want to give *her* any handles against me."

"By *her* I suppose you mean Lady Brent. Everything comes back to her. You'll think better of all that some day. I wish you'd think better of it now. Royd would be a less prickly house to live in."

"Oh, I shall behave myself, never you fear," she said as she left him.

He thought it probable that she would. He had made an impression on her, though she was not of the sort that would acknowledge it. She was evidently making her own life, and even if she had dropped all pretence of war work, for which she had gone to London, it was not a life that would let the name of Brent down, as he had rather feared. Margaret Creedy was an actress of some distinc-

tion, and would be very careful not to jeopardize the social position she had won for herself. And Mrs. Brent, for all her independent talk, was guided by a sense of her own importance in the world. Probably the joint establishment was as rigidly respectable as any in London.

As for possible complications with the Bastians, Wilbraham could do nothing. If the revelation came in that way, it must come, and for himself he didn't care when it came. He was tired of all the secrecy, and thought too that Harry was wrong in keeping his secret; or, at any rate, right or wrong in being unwilling to disclose it himself, that it would be better for him if it were known.

He was inclined to dread the talk that he saw coming with Lady Brent. He badly wanted a recreative rest himself, and hated the idea of exercising his brain in steering clear of admissions to her, hated also the idea of deceiving her by doing so, when all the time he was in sympathy with her in her doubts and disappointments. What was done was done. Harry was what he was, and if she had made any mistake in his upbringing, which he did not admit, it would do no good now to dwell on it with regret. Harry was working it all out for himself, and as far as Wilbraham could see, was not making such a bad job of it. He would tell her that, when she began to discuss him, and cut the conversation as short as he conveniently could. Then he would be free to enjoy himself, in the company of the people he liked best in the world, and in the place which seemed to him, coming back to it, a haven of peace and beauty.

But apparently that was all that Lady Brent wanted of him. She told him that Harry seemed much more his old self now that he had been home a week or more, and that she was glad that there was young companionship for him, and beyond that she did not discuss him at all.

So Wilbraham enjoyed his two days at Royd, and went back to his work greatly refreshed, and with most of his doubts about Harry set at rest. He might be longing for Viola all the time, as he had said he was, but he managed to hide it effectually and seemed to be enjoying his holiday as much as anybody.

CHAPTER XXV
MRS. BRENT KNOWS

Royd Castle was empty, except for the servants, for the first time for twenty years. Everybody had gone away, including Lady Brent, who, however, was not

very far off, for she was only visiting Lady Avalon for a few days at Poldaven.

To the Grants, left to themselves, after the unusual amount of society they had lately enjoyed, there was a sense of emptiness, though their own summer life was in full swing, and the Vicar had a bright new idea for a novel, which was keeping his thoughts happily employed. There were to be a young man and two girls, and nobody was to know which of the girls the young man was really in love with until the last chapter.

"Of course I got the idea from those three," he told his wife, "although it couldn't be exactly like them. Harry and Sidney might be, but the second girl would have to be older than Jane, but still rather young. She would be a sort of confidante of the other two, who would be inclined to fall in love with one another. Then she would gradually find that she was in love with the young man herself. I should make it rather pathetic, but not overdo it, of course. She would keep her feelings to herself, out of loyalty to her friend. I haven't quite worked it out yet, but the reality would come in a flash. The young man would find that it was she he was in love with. I shouldn't be able to leave the other girl in the air. There might be somebody else for her. It will come all right, now my brain has begun to work on it. I should have to make her very charming, so that it would seem as if the man *must* be in love with her."

"You mustn't make it too like Harry and Sidney," said Mrs. Grant.

"Oh, I should be careful about that, though their way with each other has been very attractive to watch. They're so frank, and so completely friendly—a very delightful pair of young people I call them. It would be much more effective to have young lovers behaving like that to one another than the usual sort of love affair that one meets with in fiction. The odd thing about it, though, is that they have parted now and nothing has come of it all."

Mrs. Grant laughed. "Perhaps it's because they weren't lovers after all," she said, "and were so frank and friendly with each other because they weren't. You must be careful about that, David."

But he would not admit that Harry and Sidney weren't in love with one another. It was clear for everybody to see. Of course Harry was rather an exceptional young man. That was plain from the way he had come back to Royd as if he were master there already. There was tremendous strength of character in him, and even Lady Brent recognized it, and did not seek to direct him in any way. It was very likely that he had made up his mind that it would not be right to engage himself to Sidney until the war was over. But it was also likely that they had an understanding between themselves. It could hardly be otherwise.

"He has certainly altered," said Mrs. Grant. "He goes his own way as one would hardly have expected of him in some respects. I don't know why he should have wanted to be with Mr. Wilbraham for a week before he went to France. Poor

Mrs. Brent was rather sad about it, especially when he wrote to say that he was not coming down again."

"And now she's gone posting up to London to get hold of him. I've no patience with Mrs. Brent. She has greatly deteriorated. Well, I must be getting on with my work. I shall very soon be ready to make a start on the first chapter."

Jane had been very subdued in demeanour since Sidney and Harry had both departed, and frequently sought her mother's company. She came to her this morning, when her lessons were done, and sat with her in the garden as she worked.

"Did father say that there was going to be a great attack on the Germans soon?" she asked, after a little desultory conversation.

"It has been expected for some time. I suppose it can't be long before it comes now."

"I suppose that's why Harry's leave has been cut short. Will there be a great many of our people killed, mother?"

"I'm afraid so, dear."

"Harry might be," said Jane. "He's very brave."

"You mustn't let yourself dwell on that, darling. He has been spared so far."

"Did you know he had been wounded?"

Mrs. Grant looked at her in surprise. "Not seriously," she said.

"Sidney and I both think he was, though he wouldn't tell us, and said we weren't to talk about it. Have you noticed he always keeps his sleeve buttoned when he's playing tennis?"

Mrs. Grant hadn't noticed particularly, but said that she remembered now that he did.

"Well, he's got an awful great scar in his arm. We saw it once by accident. A Turk did it with a bayonet. When we found out, he did tell us a little, and about the time he was in hospital. He told us about an orderly who had been frightfully good to him, and said he saved his life when he was very ill, by nursing him all the time. He liked to talk about him; his name was Tom Weller. Sidney thought he couldn't have been so ill just from a wound in the arm, and then he said he'd had a little shell wound in the body, but he wouldn't tell us any more. We think it must have been a serious one. We found out afterwards that he didn't go to hospital for his bayonet wound at all."

Mrs. Grant was conscious of a feeling of surprise and some discomfort. She knew that Harry was not likely to fail in any of a young man's courageous work, and yet she had thought of him as having got off lightly, except in the hardships of a trooper's life. And that he had never mentioned even the actions in which he had been wounded seemed so to accentuate the division that he had made between himself and those who loved him. He might have died and they would

have known nothing. Apparently he had been very near to death. She wondered whether Jane had any theory to account for his unusual reticence about himself.

"I'm very glad Lady Brent will hear about him now," she said. "It's dreadful to think what might have happened when they couldn't have got to him."

"Well, they couldn't, anyhow, when he was in Egypt. He says it was much better that they shouldn't have been anxious about him, and as it turned out there was no need to have been anxious. I must say I'm rather glad we didn't know, though it's horrid to think of our enjoying ourselves at home when Harry was nearly dying. Sidney and I both told him that we wanted to know everything about him now, and he promised to."

"To write to you?"

"Yes; or to let us have a message. You see we're real friends, mother dear. We've had a lovely time together and enjoyed ourselves frightfully; but it hasn't been quite all enjoying ourselves. Sidney and I both know that Harry dreads things. I don't mean being wounded, or anything like that. But everything is so different for him. What we both got to know was that he wanted it to be like it used to be here as much as ever it could be. That's why he won't talk about the war. We could make him forget it; so we were sometimes more lively than we really felt. I'm sure I don't feel at all lively now."

Her mother stole a glance at her, as she sat with a calm face looking out in front of her.

"Well, darling," she said, "you'll have Harry home on leave again. I'm sure both you and Sidney have done a lot for him since he's been home this time. There was a sort of strain on him at first which wasn't there afterwards."

"Did you notice that? I'm very glad. Of course Sidney did more than I did. She was with him more, and she's older. But they were both very sweet to me. I think I did help. I love them both. I love Sidney. I wish——"

She broke off abruptly. "I think I can guess what Sidney's secret is," said her mother, after a pause. "I think she meant me to, you know, when she told you you could tell me that there was a secret."

Jane looked at her eagerly. "I don't suppose she really meant me not to tell you," she said.

"If I've found it out for myself, she wouldn't mind you talking about it. I shouldn't mention it to anybody else. I thought, when you told me, that perhaps she was in love with somebody, and that was why you and she and Harry could all be friends together so happily."

Jane breathed a sigh of relief. "Yes, that's it exactly," she said. "How clever you are, mother! I'm glad you knew. His name is Noel Chancellor. I've seen his photograph. He is very good-looking, but of course not so good-looking as Harry. I can't help thinking that if she'd never seen him she would be in love

with Harry."

"Perhaps. But it doesn't always come like that. And he's not in love with her, you see, though there's nobody else, for him."

"No, he isn't." Jane spoke very decisively. "She's such a dear that I did think once that he might have been a little, although he knew about Noel, without being able to help it. But he's not the least little bit. I don't know how I know that, but I do."

"I suppose you know that they think he is, at the Castle."

"Oh, yes. And Lady Avalon will be annoyed when she finds out. But we can't help that."

Mrs. Grant smiled. She loved that "we" that came into Jane's speech. "What about Lady Brent?" she said. "You were such friends with Lady Brent before Harry came home."

"I am still. Of course she wouldn't say anything to me about that. I'm not quite sure that she does expect it. At any rate, I know she was glad for me to be with them. She knew all right that we were helping Harry. Lady Brent sees a lot, though she doesn't talk much."

Mrs. Grant found food for thought in this, and shared it later with Miss Minster. Neither of them had ever been able to make up their minds finally about Lady Brent.

"Supposing she doesn't really expect anything to come of it!" she said. "I'm inclined to trust Jane when she thinks that she doesn't."

"I've liked her much better since she took Jane into her confidence," said Miss Minster. "I'm sorry for her now. I think she lays her plans deeply and then has to sit and do nothing while she sees them fail. But it needs a lot of self-restraint to sit and do nothing. Yes, I'm sorry for her."

"You think Jane is right then?"

"I don't know. Lady Brent would look farther than most people. She wouldn't need to look much farther than I do in this. What I think is that Harry isn't ready for it yet, and won't be till the war is over. When that oppression is removed from him I think he's quite likely to fall in love with Lady Sidney. That's what I think, and I shouldn't wonder if Lady Brent thought the same. Then it wouldn't make her quite so superhuman as she appears. She'd just be waiting."

This view could not be combated without disclosures. As far as it affected Lady Brent it seemed to be the best explanation of her attitude. "Anyhow she's a wonderful woman," said Mrs. Grant, "and I also like her better than I did, although I never disliked her."

"The person I don't like so well," said Miss Minster, "is Mrs. Brent. I hope we've seen the last of her here for the present."

But they had not, for almost immediately she had spoken a telegram was

brought in from Mrs. Brent, announcing her arrival that afternoon, and asking Mrs. Grant to take her in, as there was nobody at the Castle. She also asked Mrs. Grant to meet her at Burport, which seemed to indicate that she had something of importance to disclose to her.

She looked scared and unhappy as she greeted her friend on the platform. "I hope you didn't mind my asking you to put me up," she said. "I believe she's coming back to-morrow, and I wanted to have a long talk with you first."

By "she" Mrs. Grant understood her to refer to Lady Brent, whom she seldom referred to in any other way. "I'm very glad to have you," she said. "I hope nothing is wrong. Have you seen Harry?"

"I'll tell you when we get into the carriage."

When they were settled and driving away, she said: "Have I seen Harry? I think you'll be surprised when I tell you how and where I've seen him. I've never had such a shock in my life. I don't know what to do about it. I had to come straight down to see her. She must deal with it. I can't; it's beyond me. I only hope it won't be beyond her. I must tell you all from the beginning."

She entered into a long explanation of how she had written to Harry at Wilbraham's flat where he was staying. He had come to see her, and had been kind but had seemed annoyed with her for coming up to London when he had not expected it. He had told her that he was very much engaged, and could not see much of her before he went abroad. He had not vouchsafed any account of how he was engaged, but had come to see her once again, in the morning, but had refused to stay to lunch or to make any engagement for the evening. She spoke with some resentment, and not as she had ever spoken about Harry before. It was as if she felt more annoyed at being neglected than sorry at not having him with her.

Mrs. Grant sat silent, and she entered on another long explanation about the Bastians, and her early friendship with Bastian's wife. Then Mrs. Grant began to be extremely interested.

"What possessed me to find out all about them just at this time, and go to see the girl, I can't think," she said. "I think it was Providence leading me. I'd forgotten all about Mrs. Clark, the woman they lodge with, being Mrs. Ivimey's sister, and fortunately—or unfortunately—she didn't open the door to me. The maid said she was in, but had a young gentleman with her. She looked rather knowing as she said it, and I thought it would be amusing to see what the young gentleman was like. You can imagine what I felt when she showed me into the room and I found Harry there."

She looked as if she expected an exclamation of surprise at this climax; but Mrs. Grant had already been prepared for it by her rigmarole. "That explains a great deal," she said. "I suppose they had met here."

"Yes, two years ago, when Harry was a boy—hardly more than a child. Could you believe it of him, and keeping it secret all that time, and ever since?"

"What happened?" asked Mrs. Grant, adjusting her thoughts to many things.

"They were sitting side by side on the sofa. I never had such a shock in my life. I could only stand there and stare. She jumped up, of course. I hadn't given my name, and she didn't even know who I was. Harry looked very black, and stood up too. It was as if a sword was piercing my heart to see my son look at me like that."

She paused for a moment. It occurred to Mrs. Grant that she had rehearsed her tale beforehand, and that phrase had come to her as an effective one. It did not seem to represent what she was actually feeling, though it may have represented what she thought she ought to feel.

"I could only gasp out, 'Harry! You here!' He said, 'Yes, mother!' Then he took hold of the girl's hand, and said, 'This is Viola. We have loved each other for a long time.' That was absolutely all he said, and she said nothing, but just looked at me, as if she was frightened, as I dare say she was."

"Oh, I hope you——"

She did not continue. Mrs. Brent would tell her what she had done.

She did not tell her at once, and Mrs. Grant's heart sank as she expatiated further on what she had felt. "The very thing," she said, "that we'd all sacrificed ourselves to prevent, during the whole of Harry's boyhood. I was absolutely *stunned*. There they stood hand in hand in front of me, and waited for me to say something. And what *could* I say? Harry—my boy! And a girl like that! Oh, I shall never get over it. And I can't think what *she'll* say, though there's one thing—she can't blame me for it."

Mrs. Grant had been thinking rapidly. She had heard about Viola from Mrs. Ivimey. Her impression of her had been of a very young and beautiful girl, of whom nice things were said naturally. It needed some little effort of imagination to connect her with Harry, and certainly it was rather surprising that Harry, of all people, should have cherished that kind of secret. But the picture of the pair of them standing there hand in hand waiting for the speech which she dreaded to be told had not come rose before her. "Oh, he couldn't have gone on loving her for two whole years unless she was sweet and good," she said.

Mrs. Brent bridled in offence. "That didn't come in when *I* was married," she said. "She's no better than I was. Her mother wasn't brought up as I had been, though there was nothing against her. It simply can't be allowed. *I* can't do anything. Harry won't listen to me. This girl has taken him away from me. Of course it's all explained now—why he was so different to me when he came home—oh, and why he didn't write, and everything. He wrote to her. He *is*

different. She's made him so. He isn't like my son any more. I'm only thankful that it didn't happen, or at least I didn't know about it, while I was living down here."

It seemed probable that she was congratulating herself that the whole of her interests in life were no longer bound up in Harry. This was no very comforting thought to Mrs. Grant. "I wish you'd tell me how it ended," she said.

"It ended in Harry being very unkind to me," she said, with the first signs of real emotion. "He said that if I had taken the girl as my daughter—as if I could have done that!—all the difficulties would have been ended. As it was he would not see me again before he went to France. Young people are very cruel. I'm his mother who have been everything to him, and now I'm nothing. I came away and left him there. It's all over for me. I've lost my son, and this girl who isn't fit for him has got him. But I don't think she'll be allowed to keep him. I shall see her to-morrow. She won't be pleased at the end of all her plotting and scheming. But I shall be surprised if she doesn't think of *something* that will put an end to it."

CHAPTER XXVI
LADY BRENT SPEAKS

"Yes," said Lady Brent, "I will certainly do something."

Mrs. Brent had told her story. Lady Brent had come home from Poldaven earlier than she had expected. She had gone up to the Castle and found her, somewhat to her surprise, in her business room. Surrounded by that ancient magnificence she had seemed even more aloof and forbidding than on the last time Mrs. Brent had interviewed her there. But this time she had felt herself supported by a sense of conciliation in herself. The fact that after all her struggles and resentments against her mother-in-law she was now, in the crisis of affairs, putting herself in her hands, appealing to her for help, and a decision where she could do nothing herself, would surely soften her. From this interview she at least had nothing to fear for herself.

But the stiff face and the silence with which she listened to the story brought a sense of discomfort. Mrs. Brent ended on a note more appealing than she had intended to use. "He won't listen to me," she said, "but I'm sure he would to you. Can't you do something?"

lady Brent moved in her chair for the first time. "Yes," she said, with a frown, and in a voice that did nothing to remove the discomfort. "I will certainly do something. I will go up to London this evening."

"By the night train," said Mrs. Brent. "Shall I come with you?"

"I think you had better stop here. You have done enough mischief already."

"Mischief! I? What do you mean?" She was surprised and greatly offended, but also a little frightened.

Lady Brent leant towards her accusingly. "He won't do anything for you, you say. Why should he, when you treat him as you do? A vain selfish fool, thinking of yourself all the time and your own mean little pleasures and dignities! Serve you right if you've lost his love for the rest of your life."

All Mrs. Brent's resentments flared up. Lady Brent had been conciliatory towards her of late, with an evident desire to avoid conflict, and she had taken advantage of it and lost some of her awe of her; she had thought of herself almost as having the upper hand, and had come to this interview prepared to treat with her amicably and be generous in making some admissions. But she wanted a row, did she? Very well then, she should have it. All her Cockney fighting spirit was aroused. She had years of oppression to resent and to revenge. She was not under her thumb now, to be browbeaten and kept in her place. She leapt to the opportunity of striking and wounding.

"That's what you'd like," she said, "for me to lose his love. You've tried to take him away from me all his life up till now, and you haven't been able to do it. Now you'll make use of this, somehow, to get your way. But you won't do it. If he won't listen to me, he won't listen to you. I'm a fool, you say. Yes, I was a fool to come to you and think you could do anything. You've worked and worked to have your own way, and now it's ended like this. You'll suffer for it. You'll suffer for it more than I shall."

Lady Brent listened to this, leaning back in her chair again. When she spoke her voice was even, but her face was white and her hands lying in her lap trembled ever so little. If Mrs. Brent's fury had not blinded her, she might have noticed these signs and taken warning from them, for they had never been shown before, even in the sharpest encounters between them.

"Whatever suffering there is to be," said the low decisive voice, "I shall no doubt feel more than you. You're a very poor creature, and as long as you have something in life to amuse you you won't suffer much through others. I've tried to make the best of you, for Harry's sake. You've had your chance with him—a better chance than you could ever have had but for me. Sometimes I've thought it had succeeded to have you here, when I've wished with all my heart that you could be away. But the test has come now, and you've failed. Yes, you've failed, much more than you know. You're upset in your foolish way now, but you think

I have only to step in and do something, and it will be put right for you again. It will never be put right."

Mrs. Brent had tried to break in once or twice in the course of this speech, but the level voice had gone on till the end, and the eyes fixed upon her had never wavered. She realized that nothing would be spared her, that whatever dislike and hostility she might choose to express in her anger would be met by a feeling at least as strong, which would find expression now, after being kept under for years, with a force in comparison with which her own powers of attack were as nothing. Already she was affected by it. She glimpsed hatred of her behind the steady utterance. She had talked freely of her own hatred, but it was a terrifying thing to feel it returned.

"I don't know what you're thinking about," she said, half sulkily. "I'd nothing to do with his meeting this girl. I did know her mother, as it happened, but hadn't any idea that it was her mother. It isn't through me any more than through you that he's got himself mixed up with people like that."

"That's all that you can see in it, is it? People like that! You think this girl is like you were, when my poor Harry came across you. I loved my son, far more than you have it in you to love yours, but I know he was weak and foolish; and he was fitly mated. This Harry isn't weak and foolish. Do you think he'd be likely to do what his father did? Is that all you know of him after all these years?"

She tried to control herself. "You may say what you like about me," she said, in a voice that trembled a little. "I know you hate me and always have, for marrying your son, and still more for being Harry's mother. But say what you like, Harry is doing exactly what his father did. Why should you take it for granted that this girl is any different to what I was? It's just your spite against me. You haven't seen her."

"No, but you have."

That hit her like a blow in the face. Always battering at the gates of her mind, to which she had never given it entrance, was the thought that Viola was surprisingly different from herself, surprisingly unlike what she would have expected her mother's daughter to be, though in feature she resembled her.

Still it was true that Lady Brent had not seen her, and could not know. "Her mother was an actress, no better than I was," she said, "—not so good in many ways. Her father is a scene-painter in a theatre, and drinks too. My father was a good man, though he may not have been what you'd call a gentleman. That's what all your wonderful bringing up of Harry has led to. If he'd been brought up more naturally, and not everything and everybody sacrificed to keep him shut up down here, it's very unlikely that this would have happened."

"You think that, do you, in your loving wisdom? You had the boy always before you, and saw what he was growing into. So did I, and I trusted him. You

couldn't."

"I don't mind your sneers. At any rate, on the first opportunity he does what any other boy might do. He meets a girl and falls in love with her, and keeps it from us all the time he's meeting her, and afterwards."

"Keeps it from you, I suppose you mean."

"Keeps it from all of us, I said. Did you know any more than I did that he had met this girl down here?"

"Of course I knew."

She could only sit and stare, with her mouth a little open. Whatever she may have thought of, it had never been this.

Lady Brent did not treat her disclosure as a triumph to be dwelt upon. "How could I help knowing?" she went on. "I loved Harry. Nothing could have happened in his life to alter it that I shouldn't have noticed. When I saw that something had happened I waited until it came to me what it was."

"You knew, and you let it go on!" The revelation had taken all the sting out of her. She was more interested than offended.

"Didn't I tell you that I trusted Harry? I knew what he was, if you didn't. I should have known if he had taken a wrong turning in life, and then I should have tried to influence him. When I did know what had happened I knew well enough that he hadn't taken a wrong turning, by the way he bore himself. You couldn't see that. You can't even see it now."

Mrs. Brent's surprise was still strong enough to swamp her resentment at wounding speeches. "Why didn't you do anything afterwards, when he went away?" she asked. "You did do something. You got Sidney Pawle down here. You hoped that she and Harry would fall in love with one another. I know that. You thought they had. I know that too. I think you're making yourself out cleverer than you are, though I don't deny you were clever, if you found out what nobody else did."

"It matters very little to me," said Lady Brent, "what you deny or what you accept. You've made yourself nothing and you are nothing. I believe that this girl Harry loves is worthy of him, or he wouldn't have gone on loving her. But they were both very young. It might have died out of itself. I didn't know whether it had or not. I might have found out, but I wouldn't take any steps to do that. And even if the girl is worthy of him, there are objections otherwise. You have named them yourself. There are no such objections to Sidney Pawle. I should have been glad if Harry's first attachment had worn itself out and he could have married her. Yes, I did hope that they might have fallen in love with one another. You are right there. You are quite wrong in saying that I thought they had. You may have thought so, who knew so little of Harry. I knew very soon that there was something in the way."

Mrs. Brent was beaten. Even resentment no longer moved her. She wanted to ward off further blows, and to propitiate. "When you go up to London, shall you tell Harry that we are ready to recognize his engagement to this Viola Bastian?" she asked.

Lady Brent seemed to take breath. She had given her explanation as to one with whom she might have been talking on equal terms. But there was still punishment to be dealt out, the smouldering fire of years of dislike and contempt, which had been banked up so as only now and then to show a flicker, but now could be allowed to burst into scorching flame.

"Why should I tell you what I mean to do?" she said, with fierce scorn. "Stay where you are till I've put right what you hadn't the sense or the heart to do; and don't meddle. Then you can go where you like and do what you like; only not here. For years I've had to live with you, and bear with your ignorance and vanity and folly, and keep you from going back on what you'd set your hand to of your own free will. I've defended you from your silly selfish self, so that your own son shouldn't see what a thing of naught you were. You've had your chance up to the last moment. Directly it depends upon yourself you can only strike the son you say you love in his tenderest place, and then come snivelling to me to mend the damage you've done. You want me to put myself on your side, and treat him as you did. Be very sure that I shall treat him in no way as you have done. I've stood aside all these years, so as not to take what was owing to you, as I might well have done if I'd lifted a little finger. Now I'll take whatever I've earned. Mend your own broken pieces if you can. I'll do nothing to help you. Live your own useless selfish life. You shall have money for it. But live it away from here. You told me once, in one of your foolish discontented fits, that this house was like a prison to you. You're free of your prison. Go; and do what you like with your liberty."

She rose suddenly, and went out. Mrs. Brent sat for a time where she was, with a white frightened face. Then she went out of the room too, and out of the house, weeping silently. She would not stay there another minute. She would not run the risk of meeting that terrible woman again, who had treated her so wickedly. She would never see her again, and as for taking money from her—she would work her fingers to the bone before she would touch a penny. She went down to the Vicarage, where she poured out her outraged feelings to Mrs. Grant, and gained some consolation from her. A strong cup of tea also did much to comfort her, and after that she went to bed with a headache. Exhausted by the emotions of the day she slept throughout the night, which Lady Brent spent sitting upright in a railway carriage, her endless thoughts running to the steady beat of the train.

Wilbraham met her in London very early in the morning and took her to

her hotel. "Harry went off yesterday," he told her. "I sent your telegram on to him, but there has been no answer yet. There may be one to my rooms this morning. But it doesn't very much matter, does it, as long as he knows that you are going to see Viola?"

"If he should be killed!" she said. It was the thought that the iron wheels had dinned into her brain all through the night. She could not help giving it utterance; but she said immediately, "Oh, we mustn't think of that. You have arranged that I am to see the girl this afternoon?"

"Yes, I will take you there. You'll rest during the day, won't you? You must be very tired."

He stole a look at her. She was looking as if the long journey had tried her severely. He had never thought of her as getting old, but now he did.

"Yes, I will rest," she said. "There is nothing else to do. Do you know I haven't been in London for twenty years?"

She was looking out of the window of the taxi-cab, at the London streets beginning to fill up with the day's traffic. She wanted a respite. The innumerable questions he had to ask of her must wait.

He breakfasted with her in her private sitting-room, where they could talk afterwards, if she was so minded, before he went off to his work. She came to it refreshed, and was ready for him when they were alone together.

"Tell me about the girl," she said. "I know she must be good and sweet, and I know that she has helped Harry through his difficult time."

"I can't tell you more than that," he said, "except that she's beautiful, and exactly what you'd want her to be, except perhaps in the matter of her birth. I don't say anything against her upbringing, as it has left her what she is. But you seem to know everything about her already. I've known you for a good many years, but you're always full of surprises. The greatest you've ever given me is when you wired that you'd always known. You must have thought of me as a pretty large size in fools during some of the conversations we used to have. How did you find out, and when?"

She smiled at him. "I think you might have guessed that I knew," she said, "when I let you come to London to find out about Harry, and to get a message to him. I didn't particularly want you to know then, because, to tell you the truth, I did rather hope that it wouldn't continue. I saw that it had done him no harm, but it still might have been nothing more than a pretty boy and girl love-making. Then I shouldn't have wanted him to know that I had surprised his secret."

"No," he said. "You showed infinite wisdom, as you always do. But tell me how you knew."

"Something had happened to Harry. I think I must have guessed it the very first time he met her, or at least when he found out he loved her, and I think that

must have been the first time he met her, or why shouldn't he have told us? I was always on the lookout for changes in him, and you see I knew the signs of this change. Harry is much more like my dear husband was, when he was young, than he is like his father. It was only that kind of love that could have made him so happy and so silent and so absorbed. Oh, I knew very soon, and of course I put two and two together, and knew who it was. Afterwards, little pieces of evidence came to me, but I didn't try to seek them, and I didn't need them. Nobody guessed they had met. Nobody knew at Royd, except me—and you."

He laughed ruefully, and told her how and when he had found out. "Perhaps you guessed even before I did," he said. "Were you annoyed with me for keeping it to myself?"

"I knew that you would have told me, if I had given you any encouragement. I didn't want you to tell me. I knew too that you had seen her and must have thought of her as I think now. If you hadn't I think you would have told me anyhow."

He breathed a sigh of relief. "That's off my mind then," he said. "I didn't like keeping anything from you. And I've told Harry more than once that he had nothing to fear from you."

"He couldn't believe that, I suppose. He might have thought that I would behave as Charlotte—that light fool—has behaved."

"You had Harry's letter before you saw her?"

"Yes, but the post is very late at Poldaven. I went home at once, and saw her. On my way to Royd I thought how I could bring some of the truth home to her. I think I made an impression."

Her voice was as quiet as before, but something in its tone caused him to look up. "You didn't spare her, I suppose," he said.

"No, I didn't spare her. I think I was cruel. I know I meant to be. But she's not worth troubling oneself about. Anger is a debasing passion, and I'm not sure that mine was altogether righteous anger. I wanted to make an end of her. I hope for the future I shall need to see very little of her."

He looked grave. "Can't you forgive her, if things go right now?" he asked.

"Oh, forgive her! If I know anything of her—and I ought to by this time—she'll never forgive me. She'll hate me to her dying day, and I care no more than if she loved me. What is the love of a poor thing like that worth? She loved Harry, and what does that amount to?"

"She did love him, though. She did give her life up to him, in the only way she could have done. It wasn't in her to make herself happy living as she did—as we all did—at Royd. But she stuck to it for nearly twenty years."

"Oh, yes. I kept her to that. I was fair to her; I gave her her chance. It would have been an immense relief if she had gone away. If I hadn't been fair

to her I could have got rid of her easily enough. She would have gone, and she would never have known that she hadn't gone of her own accord."

He laughed at that. "I think there were times when you nearly allowed yourself to drive her away," he said. "Of course I don't defend what she did. She had a great chance with Harry, and she lost it. But it is hard, I suppose, for mothers to lose their sons after they have been so much to them. There is some excuse for her."

"I don't think there's any," she replied at once. "And as for its being hard on mothers, it's only that kind of mother—foolish and sentimental and selfish—who puts herself into rivalry with the other kind of love, when the time comes for it. The love of a child is very sweet, but it can't last like that much beyond childhood. She'd had it all. She's had it to the full. Nobody tried to deprive her of it, though of course she accuses me of trying to do so. I might have done. I shouldn't have wearied Harry with my love as she has wearied him. I should have been less exigent, less selfish, controlled myself more. She doesn't know, even now, and I shan't take the trouble to tell her, that she doesn't love him nearly as much as she thinks she does. If it weren't for her jealousy she would be quite content to live her own life chiefly apart from him, now he is grown up, and no longer a child to be petted, and to return petting. She has lived her foolish shallow life apart for the last two years, and she has let it be known that she thinks herself raised in living it. Oh, you needn't worry yourself about Charlotte. She hasn't got the depth to feel anything for long."

CHAPTER XXVII
LADY BRENT AND VIOLA

Lady Brent wondered, when Mrs. Clark opened the door to her at Bastian's lodgings, how much was known at Royd of what had already happened in this house. If Mrs. Clark had not discovered who Harry was, which seemed unlikely, and had not seen Mrs. Brent, she knew well enough whom she was admitting now. It was not made plain that she expected the visit, but she expressed no surprise at it, and evidently expected to be recognized. Lady Brent said a few words to her about her sister at Royd, as she was being conducted up the stairs. Everything would come into the light now, and it was much better so.

Viola was alone in the sitting-room. It had been made very tidy, and was

filled with flowers. The great red roses might have been Harry's gift to her. The little row of vellum-bound books above the table in her corner certainly were, for Wilbraham had procured them to his order.

Viola stood by the middle table as they entered. She looked very young and very beautiful—all the more beautiful because of the colour that was flooding her delicate skin, and the half-alarmed look in her dark eyes.

Lady Brent waited until the door was shut behind her, searching her with her eyes, and then went forward and kissed her. Viola did not seem to have expected this. She was confused, and there was moisture in her eyes as she greeted Wilbraham, though she smiled at him.

Wilbraham spoke first. "You've had Lady Brent's telegram," he said. "And now she's come herself. Everything is all right, Viola."

Her tears fell. "If Harry loves you, my dear, that's enough for me," said Lady Brent, taking her hand.

"And you can hardly be blamed for loving him," said Wilbraham. "We all love him. I don't know why, but we do."

She laughed, as she was meant to do, and dried her tears. "I've had a telegram from him," she said. "He sent you his dear love."

Lady Brent showed her pleasure. "I wish he'd told me sooner," she said. "You might have been with him at Royd."

"We've all been making a mistake, Viola," said Wilbraham. "I suppose I'm most to blame, because I've had this lady under observation for a good many years, and might have known that nothing so important as you could have escaped her."

He wanted to keep the interview on a light key, at least until talk should flow between them. They had both been through a good deal during the last few days, but the trouble was ended now, and the sooner it could be forgotten the better.

Lady Brent and Viola were sitting side by side on the sofa. Lady Brent was not quite ready for the lighter note. "You know that Harry's bringing up was different from that of other boys," she said. "It was owing to me that it was so, and though I tried to avoid the appearance of dominating him, I could hardly escape being looked upon as a person who might take a decisive line either with him or against him. But I can say very truly that my guiding rule was love for him. I love Harry very much, and I have trusted him too. I wouldn't have stood out against him in anything that he had a right to decide for himself."

"I'm afraid it was I at first who wanted to keep our secret to ourselves," Viola said. "Or at least perhaps not quite at first, for then we didn't think about it; but when we first found out that we loved one another. I think he would have told you then, but I knew more about the world than he did, and I didn't think

that you would want us to go on loving one another. Afterwards I did what he wanted."

"We all do what Harry wants," said Wilbraham. "He has that sort of way with him. I've done it myself, when I ought to have stood out."

"Harry is very happy now," said Viola. "He sent me a long telegram. Would you like to see it?"

"No," said Lady Brent, marking the motion she made with her hand, which showed the warm nest in which Harry's telegram was reposing. "Keep it for yourself. I want to ask you if you'd like to come down to Royd now, or wait till Harry can bring you. You will have a warm welcome whichever you like to do. He might like to know you are there."

"I expect the claims of the government service will have to come first, unreasonable as it may appear," said Wilbraham, marking her slight hesitation. "I know they have to with me."

"I couldn't get away just now," she said. "And in August I was going away for a fortnight with father—if Harry is all right."

That was what lay like a shadow over the brightness brought by the recognition of her. The war was to be finished by that hoarded effort for which those who knew were breathlessly waiting. But the hoard was chiefly of men, and much of it must be scattered if success was to be gained by it.

Lady Brent made no pretence of taking it anything but seriously. "I have friends at the War Office," she said. "We should get news at Royd as soon as in London, perhaps sooner." She made no allusion to the other reason that Viola had given. How did Harry regard Bastian? She had talked that over with Wilbraham. They did not know even if he had met him. He was not to be asked to Royd until Harry gave the word.

Viola still seemed to be hesitating, and Lady Brent took her hesitation to mean that she would rather not come to Royd without Harry, and accepted it at once. She talked to her about Harry, and presently Viola was talking about him too, filling her hungry ears with news of the times at which she had missed him.

Viola knew that he had been wounded, though he had kept it from her at the time. "He was very ill after the second wound," she said. "A man who was with him wrote to me when he couldn't, and I got a telegram to say he was better before I got the letter, so I wasn't so unhappy as I might have been. I don't think he would have got through that if he hadn't been so splendidly strong and young, and hadn't been so devotedly nursed. All the men he was with loved him, and this one never left him."

Lady Brent would not let it be seen how much this news of his past danger moved her. Here was a thing for which none of her searching thoughts had prepared her. "He has told us scarcely anything of what has been happening to

him," she said. "It seemed to lie upon him heavily."

"It doesn't now," said Viola. "Being at Royd has brought him back. He has told me all about Jane and Sidney. Do you think I might write to Jane now, and tell her about us?"

Lady Brent was struck by her entire absence of jealousy. She might have felt sad that the healing process had not been all her own work. It showed how unselfishly she loved him, and how sure she was of him.

"Jane is a loyal little soul," she said. "She will be very pleased to hear from you, I know." She smiled at Viola. "The one thing I never quite gauged at its proper value was the companionship of young people. I think now that he ought to have had more of it. But he seemed so happy, with all his own pursuits."

"Oh, he was happy, I know," she said, eagerly. "It is wonderful to hear him talk of his life at Royd. Perhaps I'm not altogether sorry I was nearly the first, because I got it all. Harry isn't like anybody else that ever lived. He's wonderful. He couldn't have been quite the same if he hadn't been brought up always in that beautiful place, and left a great deal to himself and the woods and the hills and the sea."

"I am glad you think of it like that," said Lady Brent. "But I have been troubled by something he said to me when he first came home. His upbringing has made him what he is, but there are many things it didn't prepare him for. I think he was dreading going out again, as an officer. He doesn't know other young men of his class. He is so different from them, and they want everybody to be alike. With the men of simpler lives that he has lived with and fought with he would have made his way more easily."

"Yes," said Viola. "I was very sad at first to think of him thrown into that rough hard life, but I needn't have been. And I think now he is happier about the other."

She looked at Wilbraham, who said: "We've had it out, we three together. It's not as serious as you have been thinking. You must remember that he hasn't been with young men of his own sort at all; and in the ranks of course he'd look at them from another angle altogether; and perhaps he wouldn't like everything he saw about them—his officers, I mean. That's all it is, really—a diffidence about how he's going to fit in with them. But of course he'll make his way, with the other subalterns and people, just as he did with the men. There's so much character in him, as well as everything that young men do value in each other. I think we persuaded him that he'd be a good deal better off than he has been, didn't we, Viola?"

"Oh, he didn't want very much persuasion. He said he had been worrying himself about things that didn't really matter. But he was so much happier about everything when he came back from Royd. I don't think even I could have

done that—not alone. It would just have been we two, keeping out of the world together. And poor Harry is in the world now."

"Yes," said Wilbraham, "and well fitted to cope with it. Of course it came as a shock to him at first. It would have done that anyhow, and he would have had to square his accounts with it by himself, before he could have felt himself at his ease. We couldn't have helped him. If you're still troubling yourself about having made mistakes, dear lady, I don't think you need. You made very few. You forged the good steel in him, but it had to be tempered."

This view of it comforted her. "We shall all be very happy now," she said.

When they had talked a little longer, Bastian came in.

Lady Brent rose from the sofa, and they stood looking at one another for an instant before Bastian shook hands with her, with a laugh. "I wasn't prepared for this," he said. "Have you known who I was?"

"No," she said. "Your people thought you were on the other side of the world."

"I meant them to," he said. "I'd no use for my people, after the way they behaved to me. I took rather an absurd name, which was the last they would recognize me under if they ever came across it, which seemed unlikely."

Viola and Wilbraham were in bewilderment. "Lady Brent and I used to know one another in the old days," Bastian said to Viola. "It shows how I've cut myself off from that world that I didn't even know she was Lady Brent." He turned to Lady Brent. "It did once occur to me, after we'd been to Royd, to go to a Public Library and find out who you were, from a book. But I forgot all about it. I'm a thorough Bohemian you see, and more comfortable so."

His light tone did not please her. "If I had known who you were," she said, "when you came to Royd, we should have met, and I should have known Viola before."

His face changed as he looked quickly from her to Viola. "I'm glad you've made friends now," he said. "All the same, I doubt if you would have taken to her two years ago. I've got too far away from what I was when you knew me."

"Well, it wouldn't have been you so much that we should have thought about," said Wilbraham.

Bastian laughed. "You needn't worry about me now," he said to Lady Brent. "I'll own that I have had ideas of fighting you when the time came. I should rather have enjoyed it. I think quite as highly of Viola as you do of your grandson, and I was going to tell you so. But—well, I'm glad to know there's no necessity. I think you've behaved well; but I remember that you always had the reputation of behaving well. You'll get some reward for it in this instance, for you know without my having to take the trouble to prove it to you that Viola's birth is as good as her manners, and as for me I shall not intrude upon you with my debased

habits when I've once handed Viola over."

"I used to like you as a little boy," said Lady Brent, calmly. "You were mischievous and perverse, and afterwards gave a great deal of trouble to your parents, who had not deserved it; but I don't suppose your habits are so debased as you pretend they are. I shall be very glad if you will bring Viola down to Royd when you take your holiday, if she cares to come. I think Harry would like to know that she is there."

Then Viola accepted the invitation, and Bastian did not refuse it, though he said that it was many years since he had stayed in a country house, and he didn't think he should remember the rules.

Lady Brent told Wilbraham about him afterwards, what his family was and where they came from, which was near her own girlhood's home. "I must say that I am relieved," she said. "On her father's side her birth to all intents and purposes is as good as Harry's, and on her mother's it is no worse. It counts for something. I married before Michael—that is his real name, and I suppose suggested the Angelo to his freakish imagination—before he grew up, but I was always hearing stories of his wildness and extravagance afterwards. There was never much real harm in him, and there were some very good qualities to balance what harm there was. His parents were over-strict with him, but they were fond of him, and I think if he hadn't taken offence at their attitude towards his marriage, in which of course they were amply justified, they would have come round in time."

"It may have been better for him that they didn't," said Wilbraham. "He's had to make his own living, which has probably been salutary for him, and his responsibility to Viola has kept him fairly straight. I wish he didn't drink quite so much whisky or smoke such vile tobacco, but drink hasn't taken hold of him so much as I thought it had at one time. If he had been anything like what you'd call a drunkard it would have affected Viola more. What do you think of Viola?"

"I'm glad she came to Royd, and that Harry met her," she said.

CHAPTER XXVIII
IN THE BALANCE

So far Harry had been brought in his life's story.

The gods had showered their gifts upon him. They had given him strength

and beauty; a mind quick to receive their messages and eager to interpret them; a heart that went out to others and drew others to it; largesse of temporal favours, which they scatter here and there but are apt to withhold from those whom they endow with their choicest gifts. His manhood had been tried in a hard school, had been established and wrought to finer issues by it. He had known great happiness, and also suffering both of mind and body, without which happiness itself is but a monochrome. He had entered the high courts of love, and worshipped in them devoutly.

For what had they prepared him, on whom they had smiled, not so uniformly as to soften his fine fibre, but as if they would have cherished so rare an example of their handiwork, and led it towards still higher desert of their bounties? Would they not watch over him and preserve him from the ultimate dangers which youth was plunging to meet at this point in the world's long history? Or is the world's history itself a mere point in time, as it unrolls itself before their unwearying eyes, so that it matters not what destruction may be wrought in it, since there is infinity in which to forge new combinations of flesh and brain and fortune?

To the women on the edge of the vortex in which manhood was fiercely involved, but striving by prayers and tears to weigh down the balance of life and death in favour of the men they loved, the gods may well have appeared contemptuously indifferent. The very interests towards which they had seemed to be working, the values they had impressed upon those to whom they had given enlightenment to understand them, what were they in the balance? It was impossible for mothers to look upon a life of no more than twenty years as rounded and complete, however they might have laboured to perfect it; or for young wives to balance the bliss of early married love against a life-time of companionship and the sweet joint care of children, and cry quits on the bargain. To them the happiness of youth is an earnest of still still greater happiness to come; a youth cut short is a youth wasted, however it may have fulfilled itself.

To Lady Brent, watching the news from the battlefields of the Somme, day after day, week after weary week, it seemed as if all young life hung by the balance of a hair. She felt the weight of it far more than during the previous years, in which Harry had been far removed, and the details of the fighting had not been brought before her with this daily deadly insistence. To her, more than to most whose hopes were dependent upon the chances of battle, did youth appear as a period of preparation rather than of fruition. Her one steady object during the last twenty years had been to work with the high gods so as to fulfil their purpose; and she seemed to herself to have been blest in her strivings in such a way as to give her the right to believe that her object had also been theirs.

She had had her grave doubts, but now the weight of them had been re-

moved from her. Surely that had been because she had not tarried to accept the foiling of her own plans where they had not served the great purpose! The love that had come to Harry was, on the face of it, just the kind of love from which she had most desired to preserve him. Now she saw it as the crown of his happy youth, but still more as the gift that was to bless his manhood to come. The plunging of him into crude and unfamiliar life, which had still lain on his spirit at his first homecoming, and had brought her such trouble of mind on his behalf—he had come through that fire. It was, as Wilbraham had said, the tempering of the steel in him. He would not have been of the fine metal that he was if he had not felt its rigour; and, having gone through it, he would not be what it had made of him if his spirit were not now freed from it. Every letter that he wrote showed him free and untroubled in the life he was living and the work he was doing. He wrote happily and gaily, and as if there was not a care on his mind. They all seemed to take it like that—the boys who were out there, snapping their fingers in the face of Death, who was gibbering at them from every corner and trying to frighten them into respect for his menace. Harry had never feared death, and now he no longer feared life in any of its unfamiliar aspects, but embraced it with all the ardour of his youth, and with it the happiness it had in store for him when the great confusion should be smoothed out.

Surely he must be spared, for whom life held so much! It could not be squared with any theory of directing and guiding providence that one who had been dowered with the gifts of life so much above others, and was so much in accord with the higher purposes of life as they had been slowly and sometimes painfully revealed to her, should be denied his full inheritance of life.

But so much high promise had been cut down and gathered in to the dreadful harvest. Day after day those long lists came out. Names, names, columns and pages long, and each one of them to some, perhaps to many, so much more than a name. She could only wait and tremble for the tilt of the scales. He had been in the thick of it and was untouched so far, though so many of those who had been fighting around him had fallen. A charmed life? By all the theories to which she wrested her mind she ought to have believed so, as the weeks went by and his letters came. But the dread only increased.

She showed little of it. Jane was her frequent companion, and though they never spoke of the dread, each divined much of what the other was thinking.

Half child, half woman, Jane hovered strangely between fear and fatalism. She loved Harry, but if there had been any budding of a woman's love in her it had been nipped by the revelation of his love for Viola and flowed again only in the channels of her childish devotion. There was something of the woman in the way she regarded him in connection with Viola. One man for one woman to love and cherish. He was hers when he had fallen captive to her; others only had

that share in him which she might grant to them. Jane had accepted Sidney as a possible mate for Harry, and now she accepted Viola, whom she also loved since she had come to Royd. There was no jealousy in her. Harry loved her as he had always loved her; and Viola loved her. She felt almost as if she had brought them together.

But in Jane's childish view the recognition of this kind of love was the closing of youth's manuscript. She was uplifted by the idea of having a pair of intimate married friends; but it would be different. She did not ask herself in what way. It might be even more agreeable than having two separate friends, but it would be different. So her view of Harry was a backward one. She talked chiefly of him as he had been, and Lady Brent, somewhat to her comfort, learnt to look upon Harry's youth also as a chapter in some sense closed, and as a very perfect chapter. Whatever might happen, he had had that. And she had been instrumental in fashioning his youth—a jewel to hang upon the neck of memory, whole and flawless.

She would not disturb Jane with her fears, but the child divined them and was often struck by foreboding, which she resisted with all her might. In this also she gave comfort. Her optimism, fitting to her youth and inexperience, was insistent, and would not be denied. Nothing could happen to Harry worse than what had happened already. Nothing—she seemed to frame her creed—could happen to one who was so loved.

The gods held the scales—life whole or life disabled on the one side, death on the other. They dipped now this way, now that. What was it that they threw into them? Was there any weight in the strong urgings of those who thought they had learnt from them that they would incline their ears to such utterances? Was there anything that might incline them to spare one to whom they had shown their favours until now? Was he not nearer to them in the tested quality of his manhood than the generality of beings whom they sent to represent their godhead on earth? Had they not fashioned him to shine in years to come as an example of the kind of human stuff they could produce from their workshops? Had they no further use for him in a world so largely populated with their failures? Or were the tokens they threw into the scales nothing at all but just the chances of time and space, so that this man's righteousness and that man's worthlessness were of no account against the tick of a watch or the ruled immutable path of a shard of iron?

Did they even hesitate? Was it destined from the beginning of time that just at that moment in a sodden desolate winter's dawn, by just that naked riven tree, the life they had given and so richly endowed should be battered out of the

young eager body in which they had set it, with nothing in it left that could any more upon earth give or receive love?

So it happened. The day of blood dawned, and waxed and waned and ended. Many were killed in it, many lived to remember it as no more terrible than other days. But Harry died in it. The last boon they gave him was that he died very quickly.

CHAPTER XXIX
LOVE

On a February morning Viola walked through the woods of Royd, along the path by which Harry had hastened to meet her in those bright summer days that were now so far off. Jane was with her. They talked as they walked, and sometimes even smiled. No one would have guessed at the sorrow that lay like a numbing weight upon one of them, and had so saddened the other that she seemed in these days to have left most of her childhood behind her.

They talked of this and that, but at any moment they might fall into talk of Harry. They were never together for long without mention of him. Jane was the only person to whom Viola spoke of him freely. Lady Brent, who hid the ruin of her life and of her hopes as best she could, seemed to cling to her presence at Royd, but they could not talk together yet about Harry, though his name was not avoided between them. Mrs. Brent had been to Royd and had gone away again. Her visit had been painful enough; her sorrow was great and her laments had been ceaseless. But jealousy had prevented her trying to get a response from Viola. With Wilbraham, whom she had seen once since the fatal news had come, she had spoken of him, but then it had been as if she hardly understood what had happened. Her father had been very kind to her, but with no direct effort to console her for what was beyond consolation. She had come to Royd after a few days, and had been there ever since.

They were talking of Sidney Pawle as they walked together through the wood, to which the leafless trees admitted gleams of winter sunshine, so different from the splashes of vivid light that had quivered through the leaves on to the deep rich greenness of summer. Sidney had gone away from Poldaven, but Jane

had heard from her a few days before, with the news of her engagement, now permitted, though grudgingly. She had told Jane that she meant to be married whenever Noel could get his leave, but had not yet broken the intention to her parents.

"I am sure she is right," Viola said. "Even if he gets killed afterwards she will have had him all her very own."

Jane hesitated a moment before she said, rather brusquely: "She thinks of him as her very own now."

"Oh, yes," said Viola, almost indifferently.

Jane stuck to her point. "You had Harry all your very own," she said. "There wasn't anybody else. He liked me and Sidney, but there wasn't really anybody else but you." It was by that unafraid directness, which was part of her nature, that she had made her way with Viola, where nobody else had gained any access to her tortured bewildered mind. She could say anything to her, because there was only truth and love behind her words.

"I know," said Viola. "I'm very glad Sidney is going to be happy—as long as it lasts—but I don't believe they can possibly love each other as much as Harry and I did. That's what makes it so cruel that he was killed. There was never anybody like him. Why were we allowed to know each other and to love each other if it was just to be like that?"

"That's what I mean," said Jane. "You did love each other, and even if you're awfully miserable now you'd rather be that than never have known Harry."

"It doesn't seem to matter much whether I'm miserable or not," Viola said. "Everybody who has said anything to me about it has seemed to think that's the chief thing—that I shall get over it in time. What does it matter whether I get over it or not? It's Harry's being killed that matters."

"I know," said Jane. "Older people don't seem to understand, though they only mean to be kind. It's all so different to what I'd ever thought it would be, if anything like that happened with somebody you loved very much. There's part of you goes on doing the same things almost as if you'd forgotten, and even perhaps enjoying yourself sometimes; and there's part of you that never forgets. Of course it isn't the same for me as it is for you," she added on a note of humility, "but I know enough to understand."

"Oh, my dear, I know how much you loved Harry. It's what makes me love you. I think I love you better than anybody, just because of that. It all comes back to Harry, you see. Poor Lady Brent loved him, and I'm desperately sorry for her. Sometimes it seems as if I'm more sorry for her than I am for myself. It isn't like being sorry for oneself; I don't seem to count. But I'm sorry for her. She's old, but she isn't hard, as many old people are. And there are so many other things than just Harry that she has lost."

"What sort of things?"

"Oh, everything that he was, or was going to be—everything she had thought about and looked forward to all the time he was growing up. I suppose they were all part of Harry to her; but they weren't very much to me. I think I was even a little jealous of them. Once when we were at the log cabin, and talked about going away to a new country—you know, just as you used to talk, half in fun—I thought, oh, how I wish we could, and he would work for me and I would work for him. I wished he wasn't Sir Harry Brent at all, with all that belonged to him, but just Harry, who only belonged to me."

"Of course that would have been best of all. But he was Harry just the same, and that's what matters most to Lady Brent."

"Oh, yes, I know. But all the rest does matter to her, poor dear, and I don't wonder at it—for her. Everything that meant so much to her has come to an end. He was the last Brent, and even Royd itself is nothing to her now. I should think that was a great pity myself, if it were anybody else. I think she would have liked to talk about it to me, after the first. But I just couldn't. I couldn't now—only to you. You're the only person who really knows how little it matters—to me."

Jane was silent. She had heard that talk, and tried to adjust her mind to it. Her father, deeply shocked at Harry's death, and of some comfort to her in his exposition of the Christian faith in immortality, had yet let his mind run upon some aspects of the loss that had seemed to her, in the first outbreak of her grief, almost to belittle it. He had talked about the loss to Viola, not only of Harry, but of what she would have had as Harry's wife—even as his widow. He had taken it for granted that some day she would get over her grief at Harry's death. It was not to be expected that she would think of the material benefits that would have come to her, now; but afterwards she would.

Was this so? Jane had talked to her mother, who had told her, striving hard to be honest with her, that few people were altogether free from worldly desires when they grew older, and that the most bitter grief was assuaged by time. Jane had listened, but held to her opinion that Viola would never get over Harry's loss, and that nothing she had lost besides would ever matter to her. But she had been a little shaken. Now she felt that she was justified in her faith in Viola. Not even the loss of all that saddened others who also loved Harry, but not as she did, mattered to her; the loss of those things to herself she did not think about, nor ever would.

They had come a long way through the ride. "I'm going to take you to a place I haven't been to since Harry died," Viola said, as she turned to a faintly defined track through the wood. "I've wanted to go, but I couldn't by myself."

She spoke without more emotion than had marked her speech hitherto, and as they threaded their way through the trees, which grew closely here, she

told Jane how Harry had led her to the woodland pool on the morning after they had first met, and how they had spent long summer hours in that green retreat, happy in their love.

Jane felt that she was going to a holy place. Harry had never mentioned this secret pool to her, though he had shown her many secrets of the woods.

The hardly discernible path by which they had turned aside was soon lost in the tangle of undergrowth. Viola told her that they had never gone to the pool by the same way, so as not to leave a track; but she went on unhesitatingly, "I think I could find my way to it blindfold," she said.

Presently they came to the pool. Viola caught her breath and gave a little shiver as she stood on its brink. The sun had gone behind the clouds, and the waters were cold and steely, but there was no wind, and they reflected as in a mirror the bare trees, which had once been arrassed with their leafy tapestry, to close in this hidden temple. "It's not the same," she said. "It isn't secret any more. I wish I hadn't come."

She turned, and there was the great tree, with the jutting roots under its spreading canopy upon which she had sat as a queen crowned by Harry's adoring love. She seemed to recoil, and gave a cry which echoed forlornly through the naked woods. Then she sank on to the ground beside the mossed roots crying, "Oh, Harry! My darling! Oh, my darling!"

The suddenness of it had brought Jane's heart to her mouth. Viola was sobbing as if her heart would break. It was the first time Jane had seen her abandon herself to her despairing grief. Her own love and sorrow welled up in her. She knelt beside Viola, embracing her as she lay there, and mingling her tears with hers, but not speaking.

For a long time both of them wept together. Viola's sobs decreased in violence, but she cried piteously and forlornly. "Oh, Harry, I do want you so," she sobbed. "Why have you gone away from me?"

Jane rose to her knees. Viola, still lying against the roots, with her head buried on her arm, caught her hand and held it. The pressure thrilled Jane through and through. She could console, in this unconsolable grief. She felt as if it were a trust from Harry to do so. Viola was not quite alone in the world, if she could still cling to her in her bitter trouble. She bent down again and kissed her, and Viola's arms went round her neck. "Don't cry any more," she said through her own falling tears. "Harry hasn't left you. He's alive and happy. Perhaps he's looking at us now. He loves you as much as you love him."

Viola's sobs ceased for the moment. "He did," she said. "Oh, if I knew he loved me still I could bear never seeing him any more. But he's dead. They killed Harry, Jane. Can you believe it? My darling Harry! He kissed me here when he was alive and we talked and talked such a little time ago. I can hear him now

this very minute and feel him by me. But he is dead. I must keep on saying it or I can't believe it. Harry is dead."

Her sobs broke out afresh. Jane rose to her feet, "No," she said, with a solemn look on her child's face. "Harry isn't dead. He won't like to see you giving way like that. Just for a time you can't help it, I know; but you've cried enough. Get up now, Viola, and let's talk about Harry."

Viola arose obediently, and dried her eyes. "I've always tried to be brave," she said, "because I knew Harry would like it. He wouldn't have gone away from me if he could have helped it. I'm sorry I said what I did just now, but it was too much for me seeing this place. I shan't come here again. Let's go away."

Jane hesitated. "Wouldn't you rather stay, and talk about him here?" she said. "It brought him more back to you to come here. It was too much for you at first; but now you've got over that——"

Viola stood and looked about her. Her cheeks were wet with her tears, and at intervals a tremor passed through her body; but she was not weeping now, and the quieter look was returning to her face.

"It is the same place, after all," she said, as if slowly recognizing it. "But it's bare—like my heart is. I used to think it welcomed us when we came here, it was so quiet and beautiful. It's beautiful now, though. Harry would have loved it like this. Yes, we'll stay here a little, Jane dear. Look, this is just where I used to sit, and Harry would always lie on the grass. In other places he used to sit by me, but here he said I was a queen, and he must be at my feet. Come and sit by me on my poor throne, Jane, and we'll talk about him."

They sat side by side. Jane nestled to her with her arm around her waist, and for a time they said nothing. The sunlight fell upon them, filtering through the interlaced branches, as they sat still in a contact which was a solace to both of them. Grief does not set abiding marks upon the young. But for the traces of her tears Viola was as fresh and fair as when she had sat there for Harry to worship her. It was only in her tender reliant heart that the wound was quivering and throbbing. She was widowed of her love, though she had never been wed. There was no one who could comfort her, except the still younger girl who shared her love and her grief, and was nestling to her.

The silence of the woods lay all about them, but it was not the iron silence of deep winter. There was a sense of reviving life in the February sunshine, and the hazy purple of the already swelling leaf-buds.

Viola bent over Jane and kissed her. "You do comfort me, dear," she said. "I thought nothing could ever comfort me again, but you do. You loved my darling Harry."

Jane buried her face on Viola's breast and cried softly, and Viola's tears came again, but not with the abandonment she had lately shown. They were

healing tears of love and sympathy.

Jane dried her eyes, still leaning against Viola, and said: "I'm very glad you brought me here. Now I know. Now I know for certain."

"What do you know, dear?" Viola asked her gently. She felt the stirrings of love in her towards this child, so loyal and so steel-true. Her quiet tears, leaning on her breast, had brought out the child in her. She had been dreadfully hurt too, and needed for herself the consolation that she had only thought of giving, with a strength and wisdom beyond her years. Viola kissed her again as she asked her question.

"I know that Harry is alive," said Jane, sitting upright and looking out across the waters of the pool, upon which there was not a tremor. It was as if it had hushed itself to listen. "This place seems to be full of him. I know why. It's because of the love that it holds. Love can't die; it's there for always. Harry loves you just as much as he did when you came here together. I believe he loves me too, just as he used to when I was little. Once he sent me a message, before anybody, because we were friends. Now I believe he's sending me a message again. He loves you. Yes, he does. It isn't that he did love you, and then he died and you've only got that to remember. He loves you now, and he'll never leave off loving you, till you see him again, and are happy together as you used to be."

Viola's eyes had been fixed on her, as if fascinated. Her utterance was almost prophetic in its rapt intensity. When she had spoken she nestled to Viola again, and said in a softer tone: "It makes me almost happy now, believing that. Don't you feel that it's true?"

"Do you really *believe* we shall meet again some day?" Viola asked. "If you'd asked me—before—I should have said I believed that. But it hasn't given me any comfort, up till now. I suppose I didn't really believe it, as I used to believe I should meet him again the next day here. If I could only know it!"

"But don't you *feel* that Harry's alive?" said Jane. "I do. If you can't feel it yet it's only because you've been so sad and so puzzled that you haven't known. But if I can feel it you will be able to more still, because Harry loved you so much. I think he wants you to feel it now."

It was Viola's turn now to look out across the water. "It would be like Harry," she said, slowly. "Oh, Jane, if it's only true!"

She put her hand to her breast, and a smile broke out upon her face—such a smile as had not lightened it these many days.

"Of course it's true," said Jane, in her decisive way. "It's part of our religion. We say every Sunday in church: 'I believe in the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.'"

"Ah, but that's not the same. I want to think of Harry as alive now. It seemed to come to me just now that he really is—like the sun breaking through

the clouds. If *that's* true, Jane dear—if *that's* true, that my darling Harry is alive now somewhere, just like he used to be, and loving me all the time, and I only have to wait for a little before I see him again——"

"You won't even have to wait," said Jane, "if you know he's loving you, and you can go on loving him because he's alive, and not only remember what he was when he was here."

"No. It will only be like what it was when he went away before. My heart was going out to him always, and when he came back all the parting was forgotten, and it was sweeter than if we hadn't parted. Oh, Jane, fancy seeing Harry just like he used to be, beautiful and laughing and happy! Do you think it's possible that it can be really like that—that he's somewhere now—not lying out there in France, but just as he was when we loved each other so much? Tell me you really believe it, and are not saying it only to comfort me."

Jane clung to her again. "I'm sure of it," she said. "It's Harry's message. You don't mind it coming through me, do you? It's a message to you; he wants me to give it you. It's not in words, as if he were speaking. It's all through me. Harry wants your love just as much now as ever he did, and he loves you just as much too."

Viola sat silent, with a tender look in her eyes, and a smile upon her lips. Presently she said: "Harry once saw something, not belonging to the world which everybody can see, and when he told me I knew at once why he had seen it, because there had never been anything in the way with him. There never has been. You could look deep, deep, deep into him, and never find anything there that wasn't beautiful and true. I wonder if there's another place where people like that really belong—no, not a place, but something they belong to all the time they're in the world, and that goes on just the same for them when they have left the world. I think there must be, Jane, and that's how it is with Harry. That would make him here, with us, wouldn't it?"

"Yes," said Jane, softly. "That's what I feel about it. It's all love. I can't explain exactly, but when he was here with his body there was something else more important still, and just as real. It's love that is real—like a person. Can you understand?"

"Yes, I think I can, and it's what I meant, too, that is so comforting. What I loved most in him when he was here is just what he is still, and I can go on loving it, because it didn't die when he was killed. I wonder if he thought that too. I couldn't bear to think of him being killed, so he never talked about it."

"Wasn't that because he thought it didn't *really* matter?"

"Oh, how it matters to me! But perhaps God took him so that he should never be spoilt, not the least little bit. Oh, but I would have tried so hard to be worthy of him, if only he'd been left to me, just for a little little time longer.

He said I helped him. I believe I did, when he was unhappy—because the world wasn't like it had been to him here, and I knew more about the world than he did, poor darling!"

"It's very hard indeed, and you can't quite understand it all. But when you say to yourself, it's all it seems somehow to put it more right. And the text says, God is love, so that would come in too, though I don't quite know how till I think about it more. But what I'm quite certain of is that Harry couldn't have been *wasted*. I think that's what poor Lady Brent can't see. All of him that we loved is alive somewhere. I'm more and more sure of that every moment. I believe it's what Harry is trying to say to us. Let's just say we believe it, Viola dear. Perhaps it will even make him more happy if we do. I believe it. I believe Harry is alive and that he knows about us, and some day you will see him again, and you will be happier together than you have ever been. Say it, Viola."

"The last letter Harry wrote to me," said Viola, musingly, "he said he should love me always, always, always. Do you think he meant what we've been saying, Jane, though he wouldn't write about being killed?"

"I expect he did. I'm sure he must have believed it, and I'm sure he wants you to believe it now. Say it, Viola. Say you believe it."

Viola rose and stood before her. A smile was on her lips, and there was a light in her eyes. "I do believe it," she said, "and it will make everything different to me all through my life. Harry will be with me always."

She turned and stood, looking up to the clear space of sky above the pool. "Oh, Harry, my darling," she said very softly, and tenderly, "can you hear me—your own Viola, who loves you so? I do love you, darling, now and for ever."

A Word from Project Gutenberg

We will update this book if we find any errors.

This book can be found under: https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/54673

The Full Project Gutenberg License

Section 1. General Terms of Use & Redistributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

you indicate that you have read, understand, agree to and accept all the terms of this license and intellectual property (trademark/copyright) agreement. If you do not agree to abide by all the terms of this agreement, you must cease using and return or destroy all copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in your possession. If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work and you do not agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement, you may obtain a refund from the person or entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph 1.E.8.

1.B. "Project Gutenberg" is a registered trademark. It may only be used on or associated in any way with an electronic work by people who agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg™ electronic works even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See paragraph 1.C below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project Gutenberg™ electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. See paragraph 1.E below.

1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation ("the Foundation" or PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. Nearly all the individual works in the collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is unprotected by copyright law in the United States and you are located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg are removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting free access to electronic works by freely sharing Project Gutenberg™ works in compliance with the terms of this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg™ name associated with the work. You can easily comply with the terms of this agreement by keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project Gutenberg™ License when you share it without charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project Gutenberg™ work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any country outside the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate ac-

cess to, the full Project Gutenberg™ License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg™ work (any work on which the phrase "Project Gutenberg" appears, or with which the phrase "Project Gutenberg" is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

> This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at https://www.gutenberg.org . If you are not located in the United States, you'll have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this ebook.

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is derived from texts not protected by U.S. copyright law (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase "Project Gutenberg" associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg™ trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg™ License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg™ License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg™.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg™ License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg™ work in a format other than "Plain Vanilla ASCII" or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Guten-

berg™ web site (https://www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original "Plain Vanilla ASCII" or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg™ License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg™ works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works provided that

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg™ works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, "Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation."

- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works.

- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.

- You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg™ works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from both the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and The Project Gutenberg Trademark LLC, the owner of the

Project Gutenberg™ trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3. below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain "Defects," such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES – Except for the "Right of Replacement or Refund" described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND – If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you 'AS-IS,' WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PUR-

POSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY – You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg™ work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg™ work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg™

Project Gutenberg™ is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need, is critical to reaching Project Gutenberg™'s goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg™ collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg™ and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation web page at https://www.pglaf.org .

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation's EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project

Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state's laws.

The Foundation's principal office is in Fairbanks, Alaska, with the mailing address: PO Box 750175, Fairbanks, AK 99775, but its volunteers and employees are scattered throughout numerous locations. Its business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887, email business@pglaf.org. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's web site and official page at www.gutenberg.org/contact

For additional contact information:

Dr. Gregory B. Newby
Chief Executive and Director
gbnewby@pglaf.org

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg™ depends upon and cannot survive without wide spread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations ($1 to $5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit https://www.gutenberg.org/donate

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg Web pages for current donation meth-

ods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: https://www.gutenberg.org/donate

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg™ electronic works.

Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg™ concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For thirty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg™ eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg™ eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our Web site which has the main PG search facility:

https://www.gutenberg.org

This Web site includes information about Project Gutenberg™, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.