A KNIGHT

I

At Monte Carlo, in the spring of the year 189-, I used to notice an old fellow in a grey suit and sunburnt straw hat with a black ribbon. Every morning at eleven o’clock, he would come down to the Place, followed by a brindled German boarhound, walk once or twice round it, and seat himself on a bench facing the casino. There he would remain in the sun, with his straw hat tilted forward, his thin legs apart, his brown hands crossed between them, and the dog’s nose resting on his knee. After an hour or more he would get up, and, stooping a little from the waist, walk slowly round the Place and return up hill. Just before three, he would come down again in the same clothes and go into the casino, leaving the dog outside.

One afternoon, moved by curiosity, I followed him. He passed through the hall without looking at the gambling-rooms, and went into the concert. It became my habit after that to watch for him. When he sat on the Place I could see him from the window of my room. The chief puzzle to me was the matter of his nationality.

His lean, short face had a skin so burnt that it looked like leather; his jaw was long and prominent, his chin pointed, and he had hollows in his cheeks. There were wrinkles across his forehead; his eyes were brown; and little white moustaches were brushed up from the corners of his lips. The back of his head
bulged out above the lines of his lean neck and high, sharp shoulders; his grey hair was cropped quite close. In the Marseilles buffet, on the journey out, I had met an Englishman, almost his counterpart in features—but somehow very different! This old fellow had nothing of the other’s alert, autocratic self-sufficiency. He was quiet and undemonstrative, without looking, as it were, insulated against shocks and foreign substances. He was certainly no Frenchman. His eyes, indeed, were brown, but hazel-brown, and gentle—not the red-brown sensual eye of the Frenchman. An American? But was ever an American so passive? A German? His moustache was certainly brushed up, but in a modest, almost pathetic way, not in the least Teutonic. Nothing seemed to fit him. I gave him up, and nicknamed him “the Cosmopolitan.”

Leaving at the end of April, I forgot him altogether. In the same month, however, of the following year I was again at Monte Carlo, and going one day to the concert found myself seated next this same old fellow. The orchestra was playing Meyerbeer’s “Prophète,” and my neighbour was asleep, snoring softly. He was dressed in the same grey suit, with the same straw hat (or one exactly like it) on his knees, and his hands crossed above it. Sleep had not disfigured him—his little white moustache was still brushed up, his lips closed; a very good and gentle expression hovered on his face. A curved mark showed on his right temple, the scar of a cut on the side of his neck, and his left hand was covered by an old glove, the little finger of which was empty. He woke up when the march was over and brisked up his moustache.

The next thing on the programme was a little thing by Poise from *La joli Gilles*, played by Mons.
Corsanego on the violin. Happening to glance at my old neighbour, I saw a tear caught in the hollow of his cheek, and another just leaving the corner of his eye; there was a faint smile on his lips. Then came an interval; and while orchestra and audience were resting, I asked him if he were fond of music. He looked up without distrust, bowed, and answered in a thin, gentle voice: "Certainly. I know nothing about it, play no instrument, could never sing a note; but—fond of it! Who would not be?" His English was correct enough, but with an emphasis not quite American nor quite foreign. I ventured to remark that he did not care for Meyerbeer. He smiled.

"Ah!" he said, "I was asleep? Too bad of me. He is a little noisy—I know so little about music. There is Bach, for instance. Would you believe it, he gives me no pleasure? A great misfortune to be no musician!" He shook his head.

I murmured, "Bach is too elevating for you perhaps."

"To me," he answered, "any music I like is elevating. People say some music has a bad effect on them. I never found any music that gave me a bad thought—no—no—quite the opposite; only sometimes, as you see, I go to sleep. But what a lovely instrument the violin!" A faint flush came on his parched cheeks. "The human soul that has left the body. A curious thing, distant bugles at night have given me the same feeling."

The orchestra was now coming back, and, folding his hands, my neighbour turned his eyes towards them. When the concert was over we came out together. Waiting at the entrance was his dog.

"You have a beautiful dog!"

"Ah! yes. Freda, mia cara, da su mano!" The dog squatted on her haunches, and lifted her paw in
the vague, bored way of big dogs when requested to perform civilities. She was a lovely creature—the purest brindle, without a speck of white, and free from the unbalanced look of most dogs of her breed.

"Basta! basta!" He turned to me apologetically.

"We have agreed to speak Italian; in that way I keep up the language; astonishing the number of things that dog will understand!" I was about to take my leave, when he asked if I would walk a little way with him—"If you are free, that is." We went up the street with Freda on the far side of her master.

"Do you never 'play' here?" I asked him.

"Play? No. It must be very interesting; most exciting, but as a matter of fact, I can’t afford it. If one has very little, one is too nervous."

He had stopped in front of a small hairdresser’s shop.

"I live here," he said, raising his hat again. "Au revoir!—unless I can offer you a glass of tea. It’s all ready. Come! I’ve brought you out of your way; give me the pleasure!"

I have never met a man so free from all self-consciousness, and yet so delicate and diffident—the combination is a rare one. We went up a steep staircase to a room on the second floor. My companion threw the shutters open, setting all the flies buzzing. The top of a plane-tree was on a level with the window, and all its little brown balls were dancing, quite close, in the wind. As he had promised, an urn was hissing on a table; there was also a small brown teapot, some sugar, slices of lemon, and glasses. A bed, washstand, cupboard, tin trunk, two chairs, and a small rug were all the furniture. Above the bed a sword in a leather sheath was suspended from two nails. The photograph of a girl stood on the closed stove. My host went to the
cupboard and produced a bottle, a glass, and a second spoon. When the cork was drawn, the scent of rum escaped into the air. He sniffs at it, and dropped a teaspoonful into both glasses.

"This is a trick I learned from the Russians after Plevna; they had my little finger, so I deserved something in exchange." He looked round; his eyes, his whole face, seemed to twinkle. "I assure you it was worth it—makes all the difference. Try!" He poured off the tea.

"Had you a sympathy with the Turks?"

"The weaker side—" He paused abruptly, then added: "But it was not that." Over his face innumerable crow's-feet had suddenly appeared, his eyes twitched; he went on hurriedly, "I had to find something to do just then—it was necessary." He stared into his glass; and it was some time before I ventured to ask if he had seen much fighting.

"Yes," he replied gravely, "nearly twenty years altogether; I was one of Garibaldi's Miles in '60."

"Surely you are not Italian?"

He leaned forward with his hands on his knees. "I was in Genoa at that time learning banking; Garibaldi was a wonderful man! One could not help it." He spoke quite simply. "You might say it was like seeing a little man stand up to a ring of great hulking fellows; I went, just as you would have gone, if you'd been there. I was not long with them—our war began; I had to go back home." He said this as if there had been but one war since the world began. "In '61," he mused, "till '65. Just think of it! The poor country. Why, in my State, South Carolina—I was through it all—nobody could be spared there—we were one to three."
“I suppose you have a love of fighting?”

“H’m!?” he said, as if considering the idea for the first time. “Sometimes I fought for a living, and sometimes—because I was obliged; one must try to be a gentleman. But won’t you have some more?”

I refused more tea and took my leave, carrying away with me a picture of the old fellow looking down from the top of the steep staircase, one hand pressed to his back, the other twisting up those little white moustaches and murmuring, “Take care, my dear sir, there’s a step there at the corner.”

“To be a gentleman!” I repeated in the street, causing an old French lady to drop her parasol, so that for about two minutes we stood bowing and smiling to each other, then separated full of the best feeling.

II

A week later I found myself again seated next him at a concert. In the meantime I had seen him now and then, but only in passing. He seemed depressed. The corners of his lips were tightened, his tanned cheeks had a greyish tinge, his eyes were restless; and, between two numbers of the programme, he murmured, tapping his fingers on his hat, “Do you ever have bad days? Yes? Not pleasant, are they?”

Then something occurred from which all that I have to tell you followed. There came into the concert-hall the heroine of one of those romances, crimes, follies, or irregularities, call it what you will, which had just attracted the “world’s” stare. She passed us with her partner, and sat down in a chair a few rows to our right. She kept turning her head round, and at every
turn I caught the gleam of her uneasy eyes. Some one behind us said: "The brazen baggage!"

My companion turned full round, and glared at whoever it was who had spoken. The change in him was quite remarkable. His lips were drawn back from his teeth; he frowned; the scar on his temple had reddened.

"Ah!" he said to me. "The hue and cry! Contemptible! How I hate it! But you wouldn't understand—I—" he broke off, and slowly regained his usual air of self-obliteration; he even seemed ashamed, and began trying to brush his moustaches higher than ever, as if aware that his heat had robbed them of neatness.

"I'm not myself, when I speak of such matters," he said suddenly; and began reading his programme, holding it upside down. A minute later, however, he said in a peculiar voice: "There are people to be found who object to vivisecting animals; but the vivisection of a woman, who minds that? Will you tell me it's right, that because of some tragedy like this—believe me, it is always a tragedy—we should hunt down a woman? That her fellow-women should make an outcast of her? That we who are men should make a prey of her? If I thought that—" Again he broke off, staring very hard in front of him. "It is we who make them what they are; and even if that is not so—why! if I thought there was a woman in the world I could not take my hat off to—I—I—couldn't sleep at night." He got up from his seat, put on his old straw hat with trembling fingers, and, without a glance back, went out, stumbling over the chair-legs.

I sat there, horribly disturbed; the words, "One must try to be a gentleman!" haunting me. When
I came out, he was standing by the entrance with one hand on his hip and the other on his dog. In that attitude of waiting he was such a patient figure; the sun glared down and showed the threadbare nature of his clothes and the thinness of his brown hands, with their long fingers and nails yellow from tobacco. Seeing me he came up the steps again, and raised his hat.

"I am glad to have caught you; please forget all that." I asked if he would do me the honour of dining at my hotel.

"Dine?" he repeated with the sort of smile a child gives if you offer him a box of soldiers; "with the greatest pleasure. I seldom dine out, but I think I can muster up a coat. Yes—yes—and at what time shall I come? At half-past seven, and your hotel is—? Good! I shall be there. Freda, mia cara, you will be alone this evening. You do not smoke caporal, I fear. I find it fairly good; though it has too much bite." He walked off with Freda, puffing at his thin roll of caporal.

Once or twice he stopped, as if bewildered or beset by some sudden doubt or memory; and every time he stopped, Freda licked his hand. They disappeared round the corner of the street, and I went to my hotel to see about dinner. On the way I met Jules le Ferrier, and asked him to come too.

"My faith, yes!" he said with the rosy pessimism characteristic of the French editor. "Man must dine!"

At half-past six we assembled. My "Cosmopolitan" was in an old frock-coat braided round the edges, buttoned high and tight, defining more than ever the sharp lines of his shoulders and the slight kink of his back; he had brought with him, too, a dark-
peaked cap of military shape, which he had evidently selected as more fitting to the coat than a straw hat. He smelled slightly of some herb.

We sat down to dinner, and did not rise for two hours. He was a charming guest, praised everything he ate—not with commonplaces, but in words that made you feel it had given him real pleasure. At first, whenever Jules made one of his caustic remarks, he looked quite pained, but suddenly seemed to make up his mind that it was bark, not bite; and then at each of them he would turn to me and say, "Aha! that's good—isn't it?" With every glass of wine he became more gentle and more genial, sitting very upright, and tightly buttoned-in; while the little white wings of his moustache seemed about to leave him for a better world.

In spite of the most leading questions, however, we could not get him to talk about himself, for even Jules, most cynical of men, had recognised that he was a hero of romance. He would answer gently and precisely, and then sit twisting his moustaches, perfectly unconscious that we wanted more. Presently, as the wine went a little to his head, his thin, high voice grew thinner, his cheeks became flushed, his eyes brighter; at the end of dinner he said: "I hope I have not been noisy."

We assured him that he had not been noisy enough. "You're laughing at me," he answered. "Surely I've been talking all the time!"

"Mon Dieu!" said Jules, "we have been looking for some fables of your wars; but nothing—not enough to feed a frog!"

The old fellow looked troubled.

"To be sure!" he mused. "Let me think! there
is that about Colhoun at Gettysburg; and there's the story of Garibaldi and the Miller.” He plunged into a tale, not at all about himself, which would have been extremely dull, but for the conviction in his eyes, and the way he stopped and commented. “So you see,” he ended, “that's the sort of man Garibaldi was! I could tell you another tale of him.” Catching an introspective look in Jules's eye, however, I proposed taking our cigars over to the café opposite.

“Delightful!” the old fellow said: “We shall have a band and the fresh air, and clear consciences for our cigars. I cannot like this smoking in a room where there are ladies dining.”

He walked out in front of us, smoking with an air of great enjoyment. Jules, glowing above his candid shirt and waistcoat, whispered to me, “Mon cher Georges, how he is good!” then sighed, and added darkly: “The poor man!”

We sat down at a little table. Close by, the branches of a plane-tree rustled faintly; their leaves hung lifeless, speckled like the breasts of birds, or black against the sky; then, caught by the breeze, fluttered suddenly.

The old fellow sat, with head thrown back, a smile on his face, coming now and then out of his enchanted dreams to drink coffee, answer our questions, or hum the tune that the band was playing. The ash of his cigar grew very long. One of those bizarre figures in Oriental garb, who, night after night, offer their doubtful wares at a great price, appeared in the white glare of a lamp, looked with a furtive smile at his face, and glided back, discomfited by its unconsciousness. It was a night for dreams! A faint, half-eastern scent in the air, of black tobacco and spice; few people as yet at the little tables, the waiters leisurely,
the band soft! What was he dreaming of, that old fellow, whose cigar-ash grew so long? Of youth, of his battles, of those things that must be done by those who try to be gentlemen; perhaps only of his dinner; anyway of something gilded in vague fashion as the light was gilding the branches of the plane-tree.

Jules pulled my sleeve: "He sleeps." He had smilingly dropped off; the cigar-ash—that feathery tower of his dreams—had broken and fallen on his sleeve. He awoke, and fell to dusting it.

The little tables round us began to fill. One of the bandsmen played a czardas on the czymbal. Two young Frenchmen, talking loudly, sat down at the adjoining table. They were discussing the lady who had been at the concert that afternoon.

"It's a bet," said one of them, "but there's the present man. I take three weeks, that's enough—elle est déclassée; ce n'est que le premier pas—"

My old friend's cigar fell on the table. "Monsieur," he stammered, "you speak of a lady so, in a public place?"

The young man stared at him. "Who is this person?" he said to his companion.

My guest took up Jules's glove that lay on the table; before either of us could raise a finger, he had swung it in the speaker's face. "Enough!" he said, and, dropping the glove, walked away.

We all jumped to our feet. I left Jules and hurried after him. His face was grim, his eyes those of a creature who has been struck on a raw place. He made a movement of his fingers which said plainly. "Leave me, if you please!"

I went back to the café. The two young men had disappeared, so had Jules, but everything else was
going on just as before; the bandsman still twanging out his czardas; the waiters serving drinks; the orientals trying to sell their carpets. I paid the bill, sought out the manager, and apologised. He shrugged his shoulders, smiled and said: "An eccentric, your friend, nicht wahr?" Could he tell me where M. le Ferrier was? He could not. I left to look for Jules; could not find him, and returned to my hotel disgusted. I was sorry for my old guest, but vexed with him too; what business had he to carry his Quixotism to such an unpleasant length? I tried to read. Eleven o'clock struck; the casino disgorged a stream of people; the Place seemed fuller of life than ever; then slowly it grew empty and quite dark. The whim seized me to go out. It was a still night, very warm, very black. On one of the seats a man and woman sat embraced, on another a girl was sobbing, on a third—strange sight—a priest dozed. I became aware of some one at my side; it was my old guest.

"If you are not too tired," he said, "can you give me ten minutes?"

"Certainly; will you come in?"

"No, no; let us go down to the Terrace. I shan't keep you long."

He did not speak again till we reached a seat above the pigeon-shooting grounds; there, in a darkness denser for the string of lights still burning in the town, we sat down.

"I owe you an apology," he said; "first in the afternoon, then again this evening—your guest—your friend's glove! I have behaved as no gentleman should." He was leaning forward with his hands on the handle of a stick. His voice sounded broken and disturbed.
"Oh!" I muttered. "It's nothing!"

"You are very good," he sighed; "but I feel that I must explain. I consider I owe this to you, but I must tell you I should not have the courage if it were not for another reason. You see I have no friend." He looked at me with an uncertain smile. I bowed, and a minute or two later he began. . . .

III

"You will excuse me if I go back rather far. It was in '74, when I had been ill with Cuban fever. To keep me alive they had put me on board a ship at Santiago, and at the end of the voyage I found myself in London. I had very little money; I knew nobody. I tell you, sir, there are times when it's hard for a fighting man to get anything to do. People would say to me: 'Afraid we've nothing for a man like you in our business.' I tried people of all sorts; but it was true—I had been fighting here and there since '60, I wasn't fit for anything—" He shook his head. "In the South, before the war, they had a saying, I remember, about a dog and a soldier having the same value. But all this has nothing to do with what I have to tell you." He sighed again and went on, moistening his lips: "I was walking along the Strand one day, very disheartened, when I heard my name called. It's a queer thing, that, in a strange street. By the way," he put in with dry ceremony, "you don't know my name, I think: it is Brune—Roger Brune. At first I did not recognise the person who called me. He had just got off an omnibus—a square-shouldered man with heavy moustaches, and round spectacles. But when he shook
my hand I knew him at once. He was a man called Dalton, who was taken prisoner at Gettysburg; one of you Englishmen who came to fight with us—a major in the regiment where I was captain. We were comrades during two campaigns. If I had been his brother he couldn’t have seemed more pleased to see me. He took me into a bar for the sake of old times. The drink went to my head, and by the time we reached Trafalgar Square I was quite unable to walk. He made me sit down on a bench. I was in fact—drunk. It’s disgraceful to be drunk, but there was some excuse. Now I tell you, sir” (all through his story he was always making use of that expression, it seemed to infuse fresh spirit into him, to help his memory in obscure places, to give him the mastery of his emotions; it was like the piece of paper a nervous man holds in his hand to help him through a speech), “there never was a man with a finer soul than my friend Dalton. He was not clever, though he had read much; and sometimes perhaps he was too fond of talking. But he was a gentleman; he listened to me as if I had been a child; he was not ashamed of me—and it takes a gentleman not to be ashamed of a drunken man in the streets of London; God knows what things I said to him while we were sitting there! He took me to his home and put me to bed himself; for I was down again with fever.” He stopped, turned slightly from me, and put his hand up to his brow. “Well, then it was, sir, that I first saw her. I am not a poet and I cannot tell you what she seemed to me. I was delirious, but I always knew when she was there. I had dreams of sunshine and cornfields, of dancing waves at sea, young trees—never the same dreams, never anything for long together; and when I had my senses I was afraid to say
so for fear she would go away. She'd be in the corner of the room, with her hair hanging about her neck, a bright gold colour; she never worked and never read, but sat and talked to herself in a whisper, or looked at me for a long time together out of her blue eyes, a little frown between them, and her upper lip closed firm on her lower lip, where she had an uneven tooth. When her father came, she'd jump up and hang on to his neck until he groaned, then run away, but presently come stealing back on tiptoe. I used to listen for her footsteps on the stairs, then the knock, the door flung back or opened quietly—you never could tell which; and her voice, with a little lisp, 'Are you better to-day, Mr. Brune? What funny things you say when you're delirious! Father says you've been in heaps of battles!'

He got up, paced restlessly to and fro, and sat down again. "I remember every word as if it were yesterday, all the things she said, and did; I've had a long time to think them over, you see. Well, I must tell you, the first morning that I was able to get up, I missed her. Dalton came in her place, and I asked him where she was. 'My dear fellow,' he answered, 'I've sent Eilie away to her old nurse's inn down on the river; she's better there at this time of year.' We looked at each other, and I saw that he had sent her away because he didn't trust me. I was hurt by this. Illness spoils one. He was right, he was quite right, for all he knew about me was that I could fight and had got drunk; but I am very quick-tempered. I made up my mind at once to leave him. But I was too weak—he had to put me to bed again. The very next morning he came and proposed that I should go into partnership with him. He kept a fencing-school and pistol-gallery. It
seemed like the finger of God; and it was perhaps—who knows?" He fell into a reverie, and taking out his caporal, rolled himself a cigarette; having lighted it, he went on suddenly: "There, in the room above the school, we used to sit in the evenings, one on each side of the grate. The room was on the second floor, I remember, with two windows, and a view of nothing but the houses opposite. The furniture was covered up with chintz. The things on the bookshelf were never disturbed, they were Eilie's—half-broken cases with butterflies, a dead frog in a bottle, a horse-shoe covered with tinfoil, some shells too, and a cardboard box with three speckled eggs in it, and these words written on the lid: 'Mistle-thrush from Lucy's tree—second family, only one blown.'" He smoked fiercely, with puffs that were like sharp sighs.

"Dalton was wrapped up in her. He was never tired of talking to me about her, and I was never tired of hearing. We had a number of pupils; but in the evening when we sat there, smoking—our talk would sooner or later come round to her. Her bedroom opened out of that sitting-room; he took me in once and showed me a narrow little room the width of a passage, fresh and white, with a photograph of her mother above the bed, and an empty basket for a dog or cat." He broke off with a vexed air, and resumed sternly, as if trying to bind himself to the narration of his more important facts: "She was then fifteen—her mother had been dead twelve years—a beautiful face, her mother's; it had been her death that sent Dalton to fight with us. Well, sir, one day in August, very hot weather, he proposed a run into the country, and who should meet us on the platform when we arrived but Eilie, in a blue sun-bonnet and frock—flax blue,
her favourite colour. I was angry with Dalton for not telling me that we should see her; my clothes were not quite—my hair wanted cutting. It was black then, sir,” he added, tracing a pattern in the darkness with his stick. “She had a little donkey-cart; she drove, and, while we walked one on each side, she kept looking at me from under her sun-bonnet. I must tell you that she never laughed—her eyes danced, her cheeks would go pink, and her hair shake about on her neck, but she never laughed. Her old nurse, Lucy, a very broad, good woman, had married the proprietor of the inn in the village there. I have never seen anything like that inn: sweetbriar up to the roof! And the scent—I am very susceptible to scents!” His head drooped, and the cigarette fell from his hand. A train passing beneath sent up a shower of sparks. He started, and went on: “We had our lunch in the parlour—I remember that room very well, for I spent the happiest days of my life afterwards in that inn. . . . We went into a meadow after lunch, and my friend Dalton fell asleep. A wonderful thing happened then. Eilie whispered to me, ‘Let’s have a jolly time.’ She took me for the most glorious walk. The river was close by. A lovely stream, your river Thames, so calm and broad; it is like the spirit of your people. I was bewitched; I forgot my friend, I thought of nothing but how to keep her to myself. It was such a day! There are days that are the devil’s, but that was truly one of God’s. She took me to a little pond under an elm-tree, and we dragged it, we two, an hour, for a kind of tiny red worm to feed some creature that she had. We found them in the mud, and while she was bending over, the curls got in her eyes. If you could have seen her then, I think, sir, you would have said
she was like the first sight of spring. ... We had tea afterwards, all together, in the long grass under some fruit-trees. If I had the knack of words, there are things that I could say—” He bent, as though in deference to those unspoken memories. “Twilight came on while we were sitting there. A wonderful thing is twilight in the country! It became time for us to go. There was an avenue of trees close by—like a church with a window at the end, where golden light came through. I walked up and down it with her. ‘Will you come again?’ she whispered, and suddenly she lifted up her face to be kissed. I kissed her as if she were a little child. And when we said good-bye, her eyes were looking at me across her father’s shoulder, with surprise and sorrow in them. ‘Why do you go away?’ they seemed to say. ... But I must tell you,” he went on hurriedly, “of a thing that happened before we had gone a hundred yards. We were smoking our pipes, and I, thinking of her—when out she sprang from the hedge and stood in front of us. Dalton cried out, ‘What are you here for again, you mad girl?’ She rushed up to him and hugged him; but when she looked at me, her face was quite different—careless, defiant, as one might say—it hurt me. I couldn’t understand it, and what one doesn’t understand frightens one.

IV

“Time went on. There was no swordsman, or pistol-shot like me in London, they said. We had as many pupils as we liked—it was the only part of my life when I have been able to save money. I had no chance to spend it. We gave lessons all day, and in
the evening were too tired to go out. That year I had the misfortune to lose my dear mother. I became a rich man—yes, sir, at that time I must have had not less than six hundred a year.

"It was a long time before I saw Eilie again. She went abroad to Dresden with her father's sister to learn French and German. It was in the autumn of 1875 when she came back to us. She was seventeen then—a beautiful young creature." He paused, as if to gather his forces for description, and went on.

"Tall, as a young tree, with eyes like the sky. I would not say she was perfect, but her imperfections were beautiful to me. What is it makes you love—ah! sir, that is very hidden and mysterious. She had never lost the trick of closing her lips tightly when she remembered her uneven tooth. You may say that was vanity, but in a young girl—and which of us is not vain, eh? 'Old men and maidens, young men and children!'

"As I said, she came back to London to her little room, and in the evenings was always ready with our tea. You mustn't suppose she was housewifely; there is something in me that never admired housewifeliness—a fine quality, no doubt, still—" He sighed.

"No," he resumed, "Eilie was not like that, for she was never quite the same two days together. I told you her eyes were like the sky—that was true of all of her. In one thing, however, at that time, she always seemed the same—in love for her father. For me! I don't know what I should have expected; but my presence seemed to have the effect of making her dumb; I would catch her looking at me with a frown, and then, as if to make up to her own nature—and a more
loving nature never came into this world, that I shall maintain to my dying day—she would go to her father and kiss him. When I talked with him she pretended not to notice, but I could see her face grow cold and stubborn. I am not quick; and it was a long time before I understood that she was jealous, she wanted him all to herself. I’ve often wondered how she could be his daughter, for he was the very soul of justice and a slow man too—and she was as quick as a bird. For a long time after I saw her dislike of me, I refused to believe it—if one does not want to believe a thing there are always reasons why it should not seem true, at least so it is with me, and I suppose with all selfish men.

“I spent evening after evening there, when, if I had not thought only of myself, I should have kept away. But one day I could no longer be blind.

“It was a Sunday in February. I always had an invitation on Sundays to dine with them in the middle of the day. There was no one in the sitting-room; but the door of Eilie’s bedroom was open. I heard her voice: ‘That man, always that man!’ It was enough for me, I went down again without coming in, and walked about all day.

“For three weeks I kept away. To the school of course I came as usual, but not upstairs. I don’t know what I told Dalton—it did not signify what you told him, he always had a theory of his own, and was persuaded of its truth—a very single-minded man, sir.

“But now I come to the most wonderful days of my life. It was an early spring that year. I had fallen away already from my resolution, and used to slink up—seldom, it’s true—and spend the evening with them as before. One afternoon I came up to the sitting-room; the light was failing—it was warm, and the
windows were open. In the air was that feeling which comes to you once a year, in the spring, no matter where you may be, in a crowded street, or alone in a forest; only once—a feeling like—but I cannot, describe it.

"Eilie was sitting there. If you don’t know, sir, I can’t tell you what it means to be near the woman one loves. She was leaning on the window-sill, staring down into the street. It was as though she might be looking out for some one. I stood, hardly breathing. She turned her head, and saw me. Her eyes were strange. They seemed to ask me a question. But I couldn’t have spoken for the world. I can’t tell you what I felt—I dared not speak, or think, or hope. I have been in nineteen battles—several times in positions of some danger, when the lifting of a finger perhaps meant death; but I have never felt what I was feeling at that moment. I knew something was coming; and I was paralysed with terror lest it should not come!" He drew a long breath.

"The servant came in with a light and broke the spell. All that night I lay awake and thought of how she had looked at me, with the colour coming slowly up in her cheeks.

"It was three days before I plucked up courage to go again; and then I felt her eyes on me at once—she was making a ‘cat’s cradle’ with a bit of string, but I could see them stealing up from her hands to my face. And she went wandering about the room, fingering at everything. When her father called out: ‘What’s the matter with you, Eilie?’ she stared at him like a child caught doing wrong. I looked straight at her then, she tried to look at me, but she couldn’t; and a minute later she went out of the room.
knows what sort of nonsense I talked—I was too happy.

"Then began our love. I can't tell you of that time. Often and often Dalton said to me: 'What's come to the child? Nothing I can do pleases her.' All the love she had given him was now for me; but he was too simple and straight to see what was going on. How many times haven't I felt criminal towards him! But when you're happy, with the tide in your favour, you become a coward at once. . . .

V

"Well, sir," he went on, "we were married on her eighteenth birthday. It was a long time before Dalton became aware of our love. But one day he said to me with a very grave look:

"'Eilie has told me, Brune; I forbid it. She's too young, and you're—too old!' I was then forty-five, my hair as black and thick as a rook's feathers, and I was strong and active. I answered him: 'We shall be married within a month!' We parted in anger. It was a May night, and I walked out far into the country. There's no remedy for anger, or, indeed for anything, so fine as walking. Once I stopped—it was on a common, without a house or light, and the stars shining like jewels. I was hot from walking, I could feel the blood boiling in my veins—I said to myself: 'Old, are you?' And I laughed like a fool. It was the thought of losing her—I wished to believe myself angry, but really I was afraid; fear and anger in me are very much the same. A friend of mine, a bit of a poet, sir, once called them 'the two black wings
of self.' And so they are, so they are! . . . The next morning I went to Dalton again, and somehow I made him yield. I'm not a philosopher, but it has often seemed to me that no benefit can come to us in this life without an equal loss somewhere, but does that stop us? No, sir, not often. . . .

"We were married on the 30th of June, 1876, in the parish church. The only people present were Dalton, Lucy, and Lucy's husband—a big, red-faced fellow, with blue eyes and a golden beard parted in two. It had been arranged that we should spend the honeymoon down at their inn on the river. My wife, Dalton and I, went to a restaurant for lunch. She was dressed in grey, the colour of a pigeon's feathers." He paused, leaning forward over the crutch handle of his stick; trying to conjure up, no doubt, that long-ago image of his young bride in her dress "the colour of a pigeon's feathers," with her blue eyes and yellow hair, the little frown between her brows, the firmly shut red lips, opening to speak the words, "For better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health."

"At that time, sir," he went on suddenly, "I was a bit of a dandy. I wore, I remember, a blue frockcoat, with white trousers, and a grey top hat. Even now I should always prefer to be well dressed. . . .

"We had an excellent lunch, and drank Veuve Clicquot, a wine that you cannot get in these days! Dalton came with us to the railway station. I can't bear partings; and yet, they must come.

"That evening we walked out in the cool under the aspen-trees. What should I remember in all my life if not that night—the young bullocks snuffling in the gateways—the campion flowers all lighted up along the hedges—the moon with a halo—bats, too, in and out
among the stems, and the shadows of the cottages as black and soft as that sea down there. For a long time we stood on the river-bank beneath a lime-tree. The scent of the lime flowers! A man can only endure about half his joy; about half his sorrow. Lucy and her husband,” he went on, presently, “his name was Frank Tor—a man like an old Viking, who ate nothing but milk, bread, and fruit—were very good to us! It was like Paradise in that inn—though the commissariat, I am bound to say, was limited. The sweetbriar grew round our bedroom windows; when the breezes blew the leaves across the opening—it was like a bath of perfume. Eilie grew as brown as a gipsy while we were there. I don’t think any man could have loved her more than I did. But there were times when my heart stood still; it didn’t seem as if she understood how much I loved her. One day, I remember, she coaxed me to take her camping. We drifted downstream all the afternoon, and in the evening pulled into the reeds under the willow-boughs and lit a fire for her to cook by—though, as a matter of fact, our provisions were cooked already—but you know how it is; all the romance was in having a real fire. ‘We won’t pretend,’ she kept saying. While we were eating our supper a hare came to our clearing—a big fellow—how surprised he looked! ‘The tall hare,’ Eilie called him. After that we sat by the ashes and watched the shadows, till at last she roamed away from me. The time went very slowly; I got up to look for her. It was past sundown. I called and called. It was a long time before I found her—and she was like a wild thing, hot and flushed, her pretty frock torn, her hands and face scratched, her hair down, like some beautiful creature of the woods. If one loves, a little thing will
scare one. I didn’t think she had noticed my fright; but when we got back to the boat she threw her arms round my neck, and said, ‘I won’t ever leave you again!’

“Once in the night I woke—a water-hen was crying, and in the moonlight a kingfisher flew across. The wonder on the river—the wonder of the moon and trees, the soft bright mist, the stillness! It was like another world, peaceful, enchanted, far holier than ours. It seemed like a vision of the thoughts that come to one—how seldom! and go if one tries to grasp them. Magic—poetry—sacred!” He was silent a minute, then went on in a wistful voice: “I looked at her, sleeping like a child, with her hair loose, and her lips apart, and I thought: ‘God do so to me, if ever I bring her pain!’ How was I to understand her? the mystery and innocence of her soul!—The river has had all my light and all my darkness, the happiest days, and the hours when I’ve despaired; and I like to think of it, for, you know, in time bitter memories fade, only the good remain. . . . Yet the good have their own pain, a different kind of aching, for we shall never get them back. Sir,” he said, turning to me with a faint smile, “it’s no use crying over spilt milk. . . .

In the neighbourhood of Lucy’s inn, the Rose and Maybush—— Can you imagine a prettier name? I have been all over the world, and nowhere found names so pretty as in the English country. There, too, every blade of grass, and flower, has a kind of pride about it; knows it will be cared for; and all the roads, trees, and cottages, seem to be certain that they will live for ever. . . . But I was going to tell you: Half a mile from the inn was a quiet old house which we used to call the ‘Convent’—though I believe it was a farm.
We spent many afternoons there, trespassing in the orchard—Eilie was fond of trespassing; if there were a long way round across somebody else’s property, she would always take it. We spent our last afternoon in that orchard, lying in the long grass. I was reading Childe Harold for the first time—a wonderful, memorable poem! I was at that passage—the bull-fight—you remember:

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``Thrice sounds the clarion; lo! the signal falls,
The din expands, and expectation mute''—

when suddenly Eilie said: ‘Suppose I were to leave off loving you?’ It was as if some one had struck me in the face. I jumped up, and tried to take her in my arms, but she slipped away; then she turned, and began laughing softly. I laughed too. I don’t know why....

VI

``We went back to London the next day; we lived quite close to the school, and about five days a week Dalton came to dine with us. He would have come every day, if he had not been the sort of man who refuses to consult his own pleasure. We had more pupils than ever. In my leisure I taught my wife to fence. I have never seen any one so lithe and quick; or so beautiful as she looked in her fencing dress, with embroidered shoes.

``I was completely happy. When a man has obtained his desire he becomes careless and self-satisfied; I was watchful, however, for I knew that I was naturally a selfish man. I studied to arrange my time and save
my money, to give her as much pleasure as I could. What she loved best in the world just then was riding. I bought a horse for her, and in the evenings of the spring and summer we rode together; but when it was too dark to go out late, she would ride alone, great distances, sometimes spend the whole day in the saddle, and come back so tired she could hardly walk upstairs—I can’t say that I liked that. It made me nervous, she was so headlong—but I didn’t think it right to interfere with her. I had a good deal of anxiety about money, for though I worked hard and made more than ever, there never seemed enough. I was anxious to save—I hoped, of course—but we had no child, and this was a trouble to me. She grew more beautiful than ever, and I think was happy. Has it ever struck you that each one of us lives on the edge of a volcano? There is, I imagine, no one who has not some affection or interest so strong that he counts the rest for nothing, beside it. No doubt a man may live his life through without discovering that. But some of us—! I am not complaining; what is—is.” He pulled the cap lower over his eyes, and clutched his hands firmly on the top of his stick. He was like a man who rushed his horse at some hopeless fence, unwilling to give himself time, for fear of craning at the last moment. “In the spring of ’78, a new pupil came to me, a young man of twenty-one who was destined for the army. I took a fancy to him, and did my best to turn him into a good swordsman; but there was a kind of perverse recklessness in him; for a few minutes one would make a great impression, then he would grow utterly careless. ‘Francis,’ I would say, ‘if I were you I should be ashamed.’ ‘Mr. Brune,’ he would answer, ‘why should I be ashamed? I didn’t make myself.’ God
knows, I wish to do him justice, he had a heart—one
day he drove up in a cab, and brought in his poor dog,
who had been run over, and was dying. For half an
hour he shut himself up with its body, we could hear
him sobbing like a child; he came out with his eyes
all red, and cried: ‘I know where to find the brute
who drove over him,’ and off he rushed. He had
beautiful Italian eyes; a slight figure, not very tall;
dark hair, a little dark moustache; and his lips were
always a trifle parted—it was that, and his walk, and
the way he drooped his eyelids, which gave him
a peculiar, soft, proud look. I used to tell him that
he’d never make a soldier! ‘Oh!’ he’d answer,
‘that’ll be all right when the time comes!’ He be-
lieved in a kind of luck that was to do everything for
him, when the time came. One day he came in as I
was giving Eilie her lesson. This was the first time
they saw each other. After that he came more often,
and sometimes stayed to dinner with us. I won’t
deny, sir, that I was glad to welcome him; I thought
it good for Eilie. Can there be anything more odious,”
he burst out, “than such a self-complacent blindness?
There are people who say, ‘Poor man, he had such
faith!’ Faith, sir! Conceit! I was a fool—in this
world one pays for folly. . . .

“The summer came; and one Saturday in early
June, Eilie, I, and Francis—I won’t tell you his other
name—went riding. The night had been wet; there
was no dust, and presently the sun came out—a glorious
day! We rode a long way. About seven o’clock we
started back—slowly, for it was still hot, and there was
all the cool of night before us. It was nine o’clock
when we came to Richmond Park. A grand place,
Richmond Park; and in that half-light wonderful,
the deer moving so softly, you might have thought they were spirits. We were silent too—great trees have that effect on me...

"Who can say when changes come? Like a shift of the wind, the old passes, the new is on you. I am telling you now of a change like that. Without a sign of warning, Eilie put her horse into a gallop. 'What are you doing?' I shouted. She looked back with a smile, then he dashed past me too. A hornet might have stung them both: they galloped over fallen trees, under low-hanging branches, up hill and down. I had to watch that madness! My horse was not so fast. I rode like a demon; but fell far behind. I am not a man who takes things quietly. When I came up with them at last, I could not speak for rage. They were riding side by side, the reins on the horses' necks, looking in each other's faces. 'You should take care,' I said. 'Care!' she cried; 'life is not all taking care!' My anger left me. I dropped behind, as grooms ride behind their mistresses... Jealousy! No torture is so ceaseless or so black... In those minutes a hundred things came up in me—a hundred memories, true, untrue, what do I know? My soul was poisoned. I tried to reason with myself. It was absurd to think such things! It was unmanly... Even if it were true, one should try to be a gentleman! But I found myself laughing; yes, sir, laughing at that word." He spoke faster, as if pouring his heart out not to a live listener, but to the night. "I could not sleep that night. To lie near her with those thoughts in my brain was impossible! I made an excuse, and sat up with some papers. The hardest thing in life is to see a thing coming and be able to do nothing to prevent it. What could I do? Have you noticed how people
may become utter strangers without a word? It only needs a thought. . . . The very next day she said: 'I want to go to Lucy's,' 'Alone?' 'Yes.' I had made up my mind by then that she must do just as she wished. Perhaps I acted wrongly; I do not know what one ought to do in such a case; but before she went I said to her: 'Eillie, what is it?' 'I don't know,' she answered; and I kissed her—that was all. . . . A month passed; I wrote to her nearly every day, and I had short letters from her, telling me very little of herself. Dalton was a torture to me, for I could not tell him; he had a conviction that she was going to become a mother. 'Ah, Brune!' he said, 'my poor wife was just like that.' Life, sir, is a somewhat ironical affair! . . . He—I find it hard to speak his name—came to the school two or three times a week. I used to think I saw a change, a purpose growing up through his recklessness; there seemed a violence in him as if he chafed against my blade. I had a kind of joy in feeling I had the mastery, and could toss the iron out of his hand any minute like a straw. I was ashamed, and yet I gloried in it. Jealousy is a low thing, sir—a low, base thing! When he asked me where my wife was, I told him; I was too proud to hide it. Soon after that he came no more to the school.

"One morning, when I could bear it no longer, I wrote, and said I was coming down. I would not force myself on her, but I asked her to meet me in the orchard of the old house we called the Convent. I asked her to be there at four o'clock. It has always been my belief that a man must neither beg anything of a woman, nor force anything from her. Women are generous—they will give you what they can. I sealed
my letter, and posted it myself. All the way down I kept on saying to myself, 'She must come—surely she will come!'

VII

"I was in high spirits, but the next moment trembled like a man with ague. I reached the orchard before my time. She was not there. You know what it is like to wait? I stood still and listened; I went to the point whence I could see farthest; I said to myself, 'A watched pot never boils; if I don't look for her she will come.' I walked up and down with my eyes on the ground. The sickness of it! A hundred times I took out my watch. Perhaps it was fast, perhaps hers was slow—I can't tell you a thousandth part of my hopes and fears. There was a spring of water in one corner. I sat beside it, and thought of the last time I had been there—and something seemed to burst in me. It was five o'clock before I lost all hope; there comes a time when you're glad that hope is dead, it means rest. 'That's over,' you say, 'now I can act.' But what was I to do? I lay down with my face to the ground; when one's in trouble, it's the only thing that helps—something to press against and cling to that can't give way. I lay there for two hours, knowing all the time that I should play the coward. At seven o'clock I left the orchard and went towards the inn; I had broken my word, but I felt happy. I should see her—and, sir, nothing—nothing seemed to matter beside that. Tor was in the garden snipping at his roses. He came up, and I could see that he couldn't look me in the face. 'Where's my wife?' I said. He answered, 'Let's get Lucy.' I ran indoors. Lucy
met me with two letters; the first—my own—unopened; and the second, this:—

"I have left you. You were good to me, but now—it is no use.

EILIE."

"She told me that a boy had brought a letter for my wife the day before, from a young gentleman in a boat. When Lucy delivered it she asked, 'Who is he, Miss Eilie? What will Mr. Brune say?' My wife looked at her angrily, but gave her no answer—and all that day she never spoke. In the evening she was gone, leaving this note on the bed. . . . Lucy cried as if her heart would break. I took her by the shoulders and put her from the room; I couldn't bear the noise. I sat down and tried to think. While I was sitting there Tor came in with a letter. It was written on the notepaper of an inn twelve miles up the river: these were the words:—

"'Eilie is mine. I am ready to meet you where you like.'"

He went on with a painful evenness of speech. "When I read those words, I had only one thought—to reach them; I ran down to the river, and chose out the lightest boat. Just as I was starting, Tor came running. 'You dropped this letter, sir,' he said. 'Two pair of arms are better than one.' He came into the boat. I took the sculls and I pulled out into the stream. I pulled like a madman; and that great man, with his bare arms crossed, was like a huge, tawny bull sitting there opposite me. Presently he took my place,
and I took the rudder lines. I could see his chest, covered with hair, heaving up and down, it gave me a sort of comfort—it meant that we were getting nearer. Then it grew dark, there was no moon, I could barely see the bank; there’s something in the dark which drives one into oneself. People tell you there comes a moment when your nature is decided—‘saved’ or ‘lost’ as they call it—for good or evil. That is not true, your self is always with you, and cannot be altered; but, sir, I believe that in a time of agony one finds out what are the things one can do, and what are those one cannot. You get to know yourself, that’s all. And so it was with me. Every thought and memory and passion was so clear and strong! I wanted to kill him. I wanted to kill myself. But her—no! We are taught that we possess our wives, body and soul, we are brought up in that faith, we are commanded to believe it—but when I was face to face with it, those words had no meaning; that belief, those commands, they were without meaning to me, they were—vile. Oh yes, I wanted to find comfort in them, I wanted to hold on to them—but I couldn’t; You may force a body; how can you force a soul? No, no—cowardly! But I wanted to—I wanted to kill him and force her to come back to me! And then, suddenly, I felt as if I were pressing right on the most secret nerve of my heart. I seemed to see her face, white and quivering, as if I’d stamped my heel on it. They say this world is ruled by force; it may be true—I know I have a weak spot in me. . . . I couldn’t bear it. At last I jumped to my feet and shouted out, ‘Turn the boat round!’ Tor looked up at me as if I had gone mad. And I had gone mad. I seized the boat-hook and threatened him; I called him fearful
names. 'Sir,' he said, 'I don't take such names from any one!' 'You'll take them from me,' I shouted; 'turn the boat round, you idiot, you hound, you fish!' . . . I have a terrible temper, a perfect curse to me. He seemed amazed, even frightened; he sat down again suddenly and pulled the boat round. I fell on the seat, and hid my face. I believe the moon came up; there must have been a mist too, for I was cold as death. In this life, sir, we cannot hide our faces—but by degrees the pain of wounds grows less. Some will have it that such blows are mortal; it is not so. Time is merciful.

"In the early morning I went back to London. I had fever on me—and was delirious. I dare say I should have killed myself if I had not been so used to weapons—they and I were too old friends, I suppose—I can't explain. It was a long while before I was up and about. Dalton nursed me through it; his great heavy moustache had grown quite white. We never mentioned her; what was the good? There were things to settle of course, the lawyer—this was unspeakably distasteful to me. I told him it was to be as she wished, but the fellow would come to me, with his—there, I don't want to be unkind. I wished him to say it was my fault, but he said—I remember his smile now—he said, that was impossible, would be seen through, talked of collusion—I don't understand these things, and what's more, I can't bear them, they are—dirty.

"Two years later, when I had come back to London, after the Russo-Turkish war, I received a letter from her. I have it here." He took an old, yellow sheet of paper out of a leathern pocket-book, spread it in his fingers, and sat staring at it. For some minutes he did not speak.
"In the autumn of that same year she died in childbirth. He had deserted her. Fortunately for him, he was killed on the Indian frontier, that very year. If she had lived she would have been thirty-two next June; not a great age. . . . I know I am what they call a crank; doctors will tell you that you can’t be cured of a bad illness, and be the same man again. If you are bent, to force yourself straight must leave you weak in another place. I must and will think well of women—everything done, and everything said against them is a stone on her dead body. Could you sit and listen to it?" As though driven by his own question, he rose, and paced up and down. He came back to the seat at last.

"That, sir, is the reason of my behaviour this afternoon, and again this evening. You have been so kind, I wanted—I wanted to tell you. She had a little daughter—Lucy has her now. My friend Dalton is dead; there would have been no difficulty about money, but, I am sorry to say, that he was swindled—disgracefully. It fell to me to administer his affairs—he never knew it, but he died penniless; he had trusted some wretched fellows—had an idea they would make his fortune. As I very soon found they had ruined him. It was impossible to let Lucy—such a dear woman—bear that burden. I have tried to make provision; but, you see," he took hold of my sleeve, "I, too, have not been fortunate; in fact, it’s difficult to save a great deal out of £190 a year; but the capital is perfectly safe—and I get £47 10s. a quarter, paid on the nail. I have often been tempted to reinvest at a greater rate of interest, but I’ve never dared. Anyway, there are no debts—I’ve been obliged to make a rule not to buy what I couldn’t pay for on the spot—."
Now I am really plaguing you—but I wanted to tell you—in case—anything should happen to me.” He seemed to take a sudden scare, stiffened, twisted his moustache, and muttering, “Your great kindness! Shall never forget!” turned hurriedly away.

He vanished; his footsteps, and the tap of his stick grew fainter and fainter. They died out. He was gone. Suddenly I got up and hastened after him. I soon stopped—what was there to say?

VIII

The following day I was obliged to go to Nice, and did not return till midnight. The porter told me that Jules le Ferrier had been to see me. The next morning, while I was still in bed, the door was opened, and Jules appeared. His face was very pale; and the moment he stood still drops of perspiration began coursing down his cheeks.

“Georges!” he said, “he is dead. There, there! How stupid you look! My man is packing. I have half an hour before the train; my evidence shall come from Italy. I have done my part, the rest is for you. Why did you have that dinner! The Don Quixote! The idiot! The poor man! Don’t move! Have you a cigar? Listen! When you followed him, I followed the other two. My infernal curiosity! Can you conceive a greater folly? How fast they walked, those two! feeling their cheeks, as if he had struck them both, you know; it was funny. They soon saw me, for their eyes were all round about their heads; they had the mark of a glove on their cheeks.” The colour began to come back into Jules’s face; he gesticu-
lated with his cigar and became more and more dramatic.

"They waited for me. 'Teins!'' said one, 'this gentleman was with him. My friend's name is M. le Baron de——. The man who struck him was an odd-looking person; kindly inform me whether it is possible for my friend to meet him?' Eh!'' commented Jules, 'he was offensive! Was it for me to give our dignity away? 'Perfectly, monsieur!' I answered. 'In that case,' he said, 'please give me his name and address.'... I could not remember his name, and as for the address, I never knew it!... I reflected. 'That,' I said, 'I am unable to do, for special reasons.' 'Aha!' he said, 'reasons that will prevent our fighting him, I suppose?' 'On the contrary,' I said. 'I will convey your request to him; I may mention that I have heard he is the best swordsman and pistol-shot in Europe. Good-night!' I wished to give them something to dream of, you understand.... Patience, my dear! Patience! I was coming to you, but I thought I would let them sleep on it—there was plenty of time! But yesterday morning I came into the Place, and there he was on the bench, with a big dog. I declare to you he blushed like a young girl. 'Sir,' he said, 'I was hoping to meet you; last evening I made a great disturbance. I took an unpardonable liberty'—and he put in my hand an envelope. My friend, what do you suppose it contained—a pair of gloves! Senor Don Punctilioso, bien? He was the devil, this friend of yours; he fascinated me with his gentle eyes and his white moustachettes, his humility, his flames—poor man!... I told him I had been asked to take him a challenge. 'If anything comes of it,' I said, 'make use of me!' 'Is that so?' he said. 'I am most grateful for your kind offer. Let me see—it
is so long since I fought a duel. The sooner it's over
the better. Could you arrange to-morrow morning?
Weapons? Yes; let them choose.' . . . You see,
my friend, there was no hanging back here; non
voil la m thain.'

Jules took out his watch. "I have sixteen minutes.
It is lucky for you that you were away yesterday, or you
would be in my shoes now. I fixed the place, right
hand of the road to Roquebrune, just by the railway
cutting, and the time—five-thirty of the morning.
It was arranged that I should call for him. Disgusting
hour; I have not been up so early since I fought
Jacques Tirbaut in '85. At five o'clock I found him
ready and drinking tea with rum in it—singular man !
he made me have some too, brrr! He was shaved,
and dressed in that old frock-coat. His great dog
jumped into the carriage, but he bade her get out,
took her paws on his shoulders, and whispered in her
ear some Italian words; a charm, bein / and back she
went, the tail between the legs. We drove slowly, so
as not to shake his arm. He was more gay than I.
All the way he talked to me of you: how kind you were!
how good you had been to him! 'You do not speak
of yourself!' I said. 'Have you no friends, nothing
to say? Sometimes an accident will happen!'
'Oh!' he answered, 'there is no danger; but if by
any chance—well, there is a letter in my pocket.' 'And
if you should kill him?' I said. 'But I shall not,'
he answered slyly: 'do you think I am going to fire at
him? No, no; he is too young.' 'But,' I said,
'I am not going to stand that!' 'Yes,' he replied,
'I owe him a shot; but there is no danger—not the
least danger.' We had arrived; already they were
there. Ah ! bah! You know the preliminaries, the
politeness—this duelling, you know, it is absurd, after all. We placed them at twenty paces. It is not a bad place. There are pine-trees round, and rocks; at that hour it was cool and grey as a church. I handed him the pistol. How can I describe him to you, standing there, smoothing the barrel with his fingers! 'What a beautiful thing a good pistol!' he said. 'Only a fool or a madman throws away his life,' I said. 'Certainly,' he replied, 'certainly; but there is no danger,' and he regarded me, raising his moustachette.

'There they stood then, back to back, with the mouths of their pistols to the sky. 'Un! I cried, 'deux! tirez!' They turned, I saw the smoke of his shot go straight up like a prayer; his pistol dropped. I ran to him. He looked surprised, put out his hand, and fell into my arms. He was dead. Those fools came running up. 'What is it?' cried one. I made him a bow. 'As you see,' I said; 'you have made a pretty shot. My friend fired in the air. Messieurs, you had better breakfast in Italy.' We carried him to the carriage, and covered him with a rug; the others drove for the frontier. I brought him to his room. Here is his letter.' Jules stopped; tears were running down his face. 'He is dead; I have closed his eyes. Look here, you know, we are all of us cads—it is the rule; but this—this, perhaps, was the exception.' And without another word he rushed away. . . .

Outside the old fellow's lodging a dismounted cocher was standing disconsolate in the sun. "How was I to know they were going to fight a duel?" he burst out on seeing me. "He had white hair—I call you to witness he had white hair. This is bad for me; they will ravish my licence. Aha! you will see—this is bad for me!" I gave him the slip and found my
way upstairs. The old fellow was alone, lying in the bed, his feet covered with a rug as if he might feel cold; his eyes were closed, but in this sleep of death, he still had that air of faint surprise. At full length, watching the bed intently, Freda lay, as she lay nightly when he was really asleep. The shutters were half open; the room still smelt slightly of rum. I stood for a long time looking at the face; the little white fans of moustache brushed upwards even in death, the hollows in his cheeks, the quiet of his figure; he was like some old knight... The dog broke the spell. She sat up, and resting her paws on the bed, licked his face. I went downstairs—I couldn’t bear to hear her howl. This was his letter to me, written in a pointed handwriting:

"My dear Sir,—Should you read this I shall be gone. I am ashamed to trouble you—a man should surely manage so as not to give trouble; and yet I believe you will not consider me importunate. If, then, you will pick up the pieces of an old fellow, I ask you to have my sword, the letter enclosed in this, and the photograph that stands on the stove buried with me. My will and the acknowledgments of my property are between the leaves of the Byron in my tin chest; they should go to Lucy Tor—address thereon. Perhaps you will do me the honour to retain for yourself any of my books that may give you pleasure. In the Pilgrim’s Progress you will find some excellent recipes for Turkish coffee, Italian and Spanish dishes, and washing wounds. The landlady’s daughter speaks Italian, and she would, I know, like to have Freda; the poor dog will miss me. I have read of old Indian warriors taking their horses and dogs with them to the
happy hunting-grounds. Freda would come—noble animals are dogs! She eats once a day—a good large meal—and requires much salt. If you have animals of your own, sir, don’t forget—all animals require salt. I have no debts, thank God! The money in my pockets would bury me decently—not that there is any danger. And I am ashamed to weary you with details—the least a man can do is not to make a fuss—and yet he must be found ready.—Sir, with profound gratitude, your servant,

“Roger Brune.”

Everything was as he had said. The photograph on the stove was that of a young girl of nineteen or twenty, dressed in an old-fashioned style, with hair gathered backward in a knot. The eyes gazed at you with a little frown, the lips were tightly closed; the expression of the face was eager, quick, wilful, and, above all, young.

The tin trunk was scented with dry fragments of some herb, the history of which in that trunk man knoweth not. . . . There were a few clothes, but very few, all older than those he usually wore. Besides the Byron and Pilgrim’s Progress were Scott’s Quintin Durward, Captain Marryat’s Midshipman Easy, a pocket Testament, and a long and frightfully stiff book on the art of fortifying towns, much thumbed, and bearing date 1863. By far the most interesting thing I found, however, was a diary, kept down to the preceding Christmas. It was a pathetic document, full of calculations of the price of meals; resolutions to be careful over this or that; doubts whether he must not give up smoking; sentences of fear that Freda had not enough to eat. It appeared that he had tried to live on ninety pounds a
year, and send the other hundred pounds home to
Lucy for the child; in this struggle he was always
failing, having to send less than the amount—the entries
showed that this was a nightmare to him. The last
words, written on Christmas Day, were these: “What
is the use of writing this, since it records nothing
but failure!”

The landlady’s daughter and myself were at the
funeral. The same afternoon I went into the concert-
room, where I had spoken to him first. When I came
out Freda was lying at the entrance, looking into the
faces of every one that passed, and sniffing idly at their
heels. Close by the landlady’s daughter hovered, a
biscuit in her hand, and a puzzled, sorry look on her
face.

September, 1900.
THE JURYMAN

I

"Don't you see, brother, I was reading yesterday the Gospel about Christ, the little Father; how He suffered, how He walked on the earth. I suppose you have heard about it?"

"Indeed, I have," replied Stepanitch; "but we are people in darkness; we can't read."—TOLSTOI.

Mr. Henry Bosengate, of the London Stock Exchange, seated himself in his car that morning during the Great War with a sense of injury. Major in a Volunteer Corps; member of all the local committees; lending this very car to the neighbouring hospital, at times even driving it himself for their benefit; subscribing to funds, so far as his diminished income permitted—he was conscious of being an asset to the country, and one whose time could not be wasted with impunity. To be summoned to sit on a jury at the local assizes, and not even the grand jury at that! It was in the nature of an outrage.

Strong and upright, with hazel eyes and dark eyebrows, pinkish-brown cheeks, a forehead white, well-shaped, and getting high, with greyish hair glossy and well-brushed, and a trim moustache, he might have been taken for that colonel of Volunteers which indeed he was in a fair way of becoming.

His wife had followed him out under the porch, and stood bracing her supple body clothed in lilac linen.
Red rambler roses formed a sort of crown to her dark head; her ivory-coloured face had in it just a suggestion of the Japanese.

Mr. Bosengate spoke through the whirr of the engine:

"I don't expect to be late, dear. This business is ridiculous. There oughtn't to be any crime in these days."

His wife—her name was Kathleen—smiled. She looked very pretty and cool, Mr. Bosengate thought. To one bound on this dull and stuffy business everything he owned seemed pleasant—the geranium beds beside the gravel drive, his long, red-brick house mellowing decorously in its creepers and ivy, the little clock-tower over stables now converted to a garage, the dovecote, masking at the other end the conservatory which adjoined the billiard-room. Close to the red-brick lodge his two children, Kate and Harry, ran out from under the acacia trees, and waved to him, scrambling bare-legged on to the low, red, ivy-covered wall which guarded his domain of eleven acres. Mr. Bosengate waved back, thinking: 'Jolly couple—by Jove, they are!' Above their heads, through the trees, he could see right away to some Downs, faint in the July heat haze. And he thought: 'Pretty a spot as one could have got, so close to town!'

Despite the war he had enjoyed these last two years more than any of the ten since he built "Charmleigh" and settled down to semi-rural domesticity with his young wife. There had been a certain piquancy, a savour added to existence, by the country's peril, and all the public service and sacrifice it demanded. His chauffeur was gone, and one gardener did the work of three. He enjoyed—positively enjoyed—his com-
mittee work; even the serious decline of business and increase of taxation had not much worried one continually conscious of the national crisis and his own part therein. The country had wanted waking up, wanted a lesson in effort and economy; and the feeling that he had not spared himself in these strenuous times had given a zest to those quiet pleasures of bed and board which, at his age, even the most patriotic could retain with a good conscience. He had denied himself many things—new clothes, presents for Kathleen and the children, travel, and that pine-appeal house which he had been on the point of building when the war broke out; new wine, too, and cigars, and membership of the two Clubs which he had never used in the old days. The hours had seemed fuller and longer, sleep better earned—wonderful, the things one could do without when put to it! He turned the car into the high road, driving dreamily, for he was in plenty of time. The war was going pretty well now; he was no fool optimist, but now that conscription was in force, one might reasonably hope for its end within a year. Then there would be a boom, and one might let oneself go a little. Visions of theatres and supper with his wife at the Savoy afterwards, and cosy night drives back into the sweet-smelling country behind your own chauffeur once more teased a fancy which even now did not soar beyond the confines of domestic pleasures. He pictured his wife in new dresses by Jay—she was fifteen years younger than himself, and “paid for dressing” as they said. He had always delighted—as men older than their wives will—in the admiration she excited from others not privileged to enjoy her charms. Her rather queer and ironical beauty, her cool, irreproachable wifeliness, was a constant balm to him. They would
give dinner parties again, have their friends down from town, and he would once more enjoy sitting at the foot of the dinner table while Kathleen sat at the head, with the light soft on her ivory shoulders, behind flowers she had arranged in that original way of hers, and fruit which he had grown in his hot-houses; once more he would take legitimate interest in the wine he offered to his guests—once more stock that Chinese cabinet wherein he kept cigars. Yes—there was a certain satisfaction in these days of privation, if only from the anticipation they created.

The sprinkling of villas had become continuous on either side of the high road; and women going out to shop, tradesmen’s boys delivering victuals, young men in khaki, began to abound. Now and then a limping or bandaged form would pass—some bit of human wreckage! and Mr. Bosengate would think mechanically: ‘Another of those poor devils! Wonder if we’ve had his case before us!’

Running his car into the best hotel garage of the little town, he made his way leisurely over to the court. It stood back from the market-place, and was already lapped by a sea of persons having, as in the outer ring at race meetings, an air of business at which one must not be caught out, together with a soaked or flushed appearance. Mr. Bosengate could not resist putting his handkerchief to his nose. He had carefully drenched it with lavender water, and to this fact owed, perhaps, his immunity from the post of foreman on the jury—for, say what you will about the English, they have a deep instinct for affairs.

He found himself second in the front row of the jury box, and through the odour of “Sanitas” gazed at the judge’s face expressionless up there, for all the world
like a be-wigged bust. His fellows in the box had that appearance of falling between two classes characteristic of jurymen. Mr. Bosengate was not impressed. On one side of him the foreman sat, a prominent upholsterer, known in the town as "Gentleman Fox." His dark and beautifully brushed and oiled hair and moustache, his radiant linen, gold watch and chain, the white piping to his waistcoat, and a habit of never saying "Sir" had long marked him out from commoner men; he undertook to bury people too, to save them trouble; and was altogether superior. On the other side Mr. Bosengate had one of those men who, except when they sit on juries, are never seen without a little brown bag, and the appearance of having been interrupted in a drink. Pale and shiny, with large loose eyes shifting from side to side, he had an underdone voice and uneasy, flabby hands. Mr. Bosengate disliked sitting next to him. Beyond this commercial traveller sat a dark pale young man with spectacles; beyond him again, a short old man with grey moustache, mutton chops, and innumerable wrinkles; and the front row was completed by a chemist. The three immediately behind, Mr. Bosengate did not thoroughly master; but the three at the end of the second row he learned in their order of an oldish man in a grey suit, given to winking; an inanimate person with the mouth of a moustachioed codfish, over whose long bald crown three wisps of damp hair were carefully arranged; and a dried, dapperish, clean-shorn man, whose mouth seemed terrified lest it should be surprised without a smile. Their first and second verdicts were recorded without the necessity for withdrawal, and Mr. Bosengate was already sleepy when the third case was called. The sight of khaki revived his drooping attention. But
what a weedy-looking specimen! This prisoner had a truly nerveless, pitiable, dejected air. If he had ever had a military bearing it had shrunk into him during his confinement. His ill-shaped brown tunic, whose little brass buttons seemed trying to keep smiling, struck Mr. Bosengate as ridiculously short, used though he was to such things. 'Absurd,' he thought—'Lumbago! Just where they ought to be covered!' Then the officer and gentleman stirred in him, and he added to himself: 'Still, there must be some distinction made!' The little soldier's visage had once perhaps been tanned, but was now the colour of dark dough; his large brown eyes with white showing below the iris, as so often in the eyes of very nervous people—wandered from face to face, of judge, counsel, jury, and public. There were hollows in his cheeks, his dark hair looked damp; around his neck he wore a bandage. The commercial traveller on Mr. Bosengate's left turned, and whispered: "Felo de se! My hat! what a guy!" Mr. Bosengate pretended not to hear—he could not bear that fellow!—and slowly wrote on a bit of paper: "Owen Lewis." Welsh! Well, he looked it—not at all an English face. Attempted suicide—not at all an English crime! Suicide implied surrender, a putting-up of hands to Fate—to say nothing of the religious aspect of the matter. And suicide in khaki seemed to Mr. Bosengate particularly abhorrent; like turning tail in face of the enemy; almost meriting the fate of a deserter. He looked at the prisoner, trying not to give way to this prejudice. And the prisoner seemed to look at him, though this, perhaps, was fancy.

The counsel for the prosecution, a little, alert, grey, decided man, above military age, began detailing the circumstances of the crime. Mr. Bosengate, though
not particularly sensitive to atmosphere, could perceive a sort of current running through the court. It was as if jury and public were thinking rhythmically in obedience to the same unexpressed prejudice of which he himself was conscious. Even the Cæsar-like pale face up there, presiding, seemed in its ironic serenity responding to that current.

"Gentlemen of the jury, before I call my evidence, I direct your attention to the bandage the accused is still wearing. He gave himself this wound with his Army razor, adding, if I may say so, insult to the injury he was inflicting on his country. He pleads not guilty; and before the magistrates he said that absence from his wife was preying on his mind"—the advocate’s close lips widened—"Well, gentlemen, if such an excuse is to weigh with us in these days, I’m sure I don’t know what’s to happen to the Empire."

‘No, by George!’ thought Mr. Bosengate.

The evidence of the first witness, a room-mate who had caught the prisoner’s hand, and of the sergeant, who had at once been summoned, was conclusive, and he began to cherish a hope that they would get through without withdrawing, and he would be home before five. But then a hitch occurred. The regimental doctor failed to respond when his name was called; and the judge having for the first time that day showed himself capable of human emotion, intimated that he would adjourn until the morrow.

Mr. Bosengate received the announcement with equanimity. He would be home even earlier! And gathering up the sheets of paper he had scribbled on, he put them in his pocket and got up. The would-be suicide was being taken out of the court—a shambling drab figure with shoulders hunched. What good were
men like that in these days! What good! The prisoner looked up. Mr. Bosengate encountered in full the gaze of those large brown eyes, with the white showing underneath. What a suffering, wretched, pitiful face! A man had no business to give you a look like that! The prisoner passed on down the stairs, and vanished. Mr. Bosengate went out and across the market-place to the garage of the hotel where he had left his car. The sun shone fiercely and he thought: 'I must do some watering in the garden.' He brought the car out, and was about to start the engine, when someone passing said: "Good evenin'. Seedy-lookin' beggar that last prisoner, ain't he? We don't want men of that stamp." It was his neighbour on the jury, the commercial traveller, in a straw hat, with a little brown bag already in his hand and the froth of an interrupted drink on his moustache. Answering curtly: "Good evening!" and thinking: 'Nor of yours, my friend!' Mr. Bosengate started the car with unnecessary clamour. But as if brought back to life by the commercial traveller's remark, the prisoner's figure seemed to speed along too, turning up at Mr. Bosengate his pitifully unhappy eyes. Want of his wife!—queer excuse that for trying to put it out of his power ever to see her again. Why! Half a loaf, even a slice, was better than no bread. Not many of that neurotic type in the Army—thank Heaven! The lugubrious figure vanished, and Mr. Bosengate pictured instead the form of his own wife bending over her "Gloire de Dijon" roses in the rosery, where she generally worked a little before tea now that they were short of gardeners. He saw her, as often he had seen her, raise herself and stand, head to one side, a gloved hand on her slender hip, gazing as it were ironically
from under drooped lids at buds which did not come out fast enough. And the word 'Caline,' for he was something of a French scholar, shot through his mind: 'Kathleen—Caline! ' If he found her there when he got in, he would steal up on the grass—and ah! but with great care not to crease her dress or disturb her hair! 'If only she weren't quite so self-contained,' he thought. 'It's like a cat you can't get near, not really near!'

The car, returning faster than it had come down that morning, had already passed the outskirt villas, and was breasting the hill to where, among fields and the old trees, Charmleigh lay apart from commoner life. Turning into his drive, Mr. Bosengate thought with a certain surprise: 'I wonder what she does think of! I wonder!' He put his gloves and hat down in the outer hall and went into the lavatory, to dip his face in cool water and wash it with sweet-smelling soap—delicious revenge on the unclean atmosphere in which he had been stewing so many hours. He came out again into the hall dazed by soap and the mellowed light, and a voice from half-way up the stairs said: "Daddy! Look!" His little daughter was standing up there with one hand on the balisters. She scrambled on to them and came sliding down, her frock up to her eyes and her holland knickers to her middle. Mr. Bosengate said mildly:

"Well, that's elegant!"

"Tea's in the summer-house. Mummy's waiting. Come on!"

With her hand in his, Mr. Bosengate went on, through the drawing-room, long and cool, with sun-blinds down, through the billiard-room, high and cool, through the conservatory, green and sweet-smelling out on to
the terrace and the upper lawn. He had never felt such sheer exhilarated joy in his home surroundings, so cool, glistening and green under the July sun; and he said:

"Well, Kit, what have you all been doing?"

"I've fed my rabbits and Harry's; and we've been in the attic; Harry got his leg through the skylight."

Mr. Bosengate drew in his breath with a hiss.

"It's all right, Daddy; we got it out again, it's only grazed the skin. And we've been making swabs— I made seventeen—Mummy made thirty-three, and then she went to the hospital. Did you put many men in prison?"

Mr. Bosengate cleared his throat. The question seemed to him untimely.

"Only two."

"What's it like in prison, Daddy?"

Mr. Bosengate, who had no more knowledge than his little daughter, replied in an absent voice:

"Not very nice."

They were passing under a young oak tree, where the path wound round to the rosery and summer-house. Something shot down and clawed Mr. Bosengate's neck. His little daughter began to hop and suffocate with laughter.

"Oh, Daddy! Aren't you caught! I led you on purpose!"

Looking up, Mr. Bosengate saw his small son lying along a low branch above him—like the leopard he was declaring himself to be (for fear of error), and thought blithely: 'What an active little chap it is!'

"Let me drop on your shoulders, Daddy—like they do on the deer."

"Oh, yes! Do be a deer, Daddy!"

Mr. Bosengate did not see being a deer; his hair
had just been brushed. But he entered the rosary buoyantly between his offspring. His wife was standing precisely as he had imagined her, in a pale blue frock open at the neck, with a narrow black band round the waist, and little accordion pleats below. She looked her coolest. Her smile, when she turned her head, hardly seemed to take Mr. Bosengate seriously enough. He placed his lips below one of her half-drooped eyelids. She even smelled of roses. His children began to dance round their mother, and Mr. Bosengate, firmly held between them, was also compelled to do this, until she said:

"When you've quite done, let's have tea!"

It was not the greeting he had imagined coming along in the car. Earwigs were plentiful in the summer-house—used perhaps twice a year, but indispensable to every country residence—and Mr. Bosengate was not sorry for the excuse to get out again. Though all was so pleasant, he felt oddly restless, rather suffocated; and lighting his pipe, began to move about among the roses, blowing tobacco at the greenfly; in war-time one was never quite idle!

And suddenly he said:

"We're trying a wretched Tommy at the assizes."

His wife looked up from a rose.

"What for?"

"Attempted suicide."

"Why did he?"

"Can't stand the separation from his wife."

She looked at him, gave a low laugh, and said:

"Oh dear!"

Mr. Bosengate was puzzled. Why did she laugh? He looked round, saw that the children were gone, took his pipe from his mouth, and approached her.
"You look very pretty," he said. "Give me a kiss!"

His wife bent her body forward from the waist, and pushed her lips out till they touched his moustache. Mr. Bosengate felt a sensation as if he had arisen from breakfast without having eaten marmalade. He mastered it and said:

"That jury are a rum lot."

His wife's eyelids flickered. "I wish women sat on juries."

"Why?"

"It would be an experience."

Not the first time she had used that curious expression! Yet her life was far from dull, so far as he could see; with the new interests created by the war, and the constant calls on her time made by the perfection of their home life, she had a useful and busy existence. Again the random thought passed through him: 'But she never tells me anything!' And suddenly that lugubrious khaki-clad figure started up among the rose bushes. "We've got a lot to be thankful for!" he said abruptly. "I must go to work!" His wife, raising one eyebrow, smiled. "And I to weep!" Mr. Bosengate laughed—she had a pretty wit! And stroking his comely moustache where it had been kissed, he moved out into the sunshine. All the evening, throughout his labours, not inconsiderable, for this jury business had put him behind time, he was afflicted by that restless pleasure in his surroundings; would break off in mowing the lower lawn to look at the house through the trees; would leave his study and committee papers to cross into the drawing-room and sniff its dainty fragrance; paid a special good-night visit to the children having supper in the schoolroom;
pottered in and out from his dressing-room to admire his wife while she was changing for dinner; dined with his mind perpetually on the next course; talked volubly of the war; and in the billiard-room afterwards, smoking the pipe which had taken the place of his cigar, could not keep still, but roamed about, now in conservatory, now in the drawing-room, where his wife and the governess were still making swabs. It seemed to him that he could not have enough of anything. About eleven o’clock he strolled out—beautiful night, only just dark enough—under the new arrangement with Time—and went down to the little round fountain below the terrace. His wife was playing the piano. Mr. Bosengate looked at the water and the flat dark water-lily leaves which floated there; looked up at the house, where only narrow chinks of light showed, because of the Lighting Order. The dreamy music drifted out; there was a scent of heliotrope. He moved a few steps back, and sat in the children’s swing under an old lime tree. Jolly—blissful—in the warm, bloomy dark! Of all hours of the day, this before going to bed was perhaps the pleasantest. He saw the light go up in his wife’s bedroom, unscreened for a full minute, and thought: ‘Aha! If I did my duty as a special, I should “strafe” her for that.’ She came to the window, her figure lighted, hands up to the back of her head, so that her bare arms gleamed. Mr. Bosengate wafted her a kiss, knowing he could not be seen. ‘Lucky chap!’ he mused; ‘she’s a great joy!’ Up went her arm, down came the blind—the house was dark again. He drew a long breath. ‘Another ten minutes,’ he thought, ‘then I’ll go in and shut up. By Jove! The limes are beginning to smell already!’ ‘And, the better to take in that acme
of his well-being, he tilted the swing, lifted his feet from the ground, and swung himself toward the scented blossoms. He wanted to whelm his senses in their perfume, and closed his eyes. But instead of the domestic vision he expected, the face of the little Welsh soldier, hare-eyed, shadowy, pinched and dark and pitiful, started up with such disturbing vividness that he opened his eyes again at once. Curse! The fellow almost haunted one! Where would he be now—poor little devil! lying in his cell, thinking—thinking of his wife! Feeling suddenly morbid, Mr. Bosengate arrested the swing and stood up. Absurd!—all his well-being and mood of warm anticipation had deserted him! 'A d--d world!' he thought. 'Such a lot of misery! Why should I have to sit in judgment on that poor beggar, and condemn him?' He moved up on to the terrace and walked briskly, to rid himself of this disturbance before going in. 'That commercial traveller chap,' he thought, 'the rest of those fellows— they see nothing!' And, abruptly turning up the three stone steps, he entered the conservatory, locked it, passed into the billiard-room, and drank his barley water. One of the pictures was hanging crooked; he went up to put it straight. Still life. Grapes and apples, and lobsters! They struck him as odd for the first time. Why lobsters? The whole picture seemed dead and oily. He turned off the light, and went upstairs, passed his wife's door, into his own room, and undressed. Clothed in his pyjamas he opened the door between the rooms. By the light coming from his own he could see her dark head on the pillow. Was she asleep? No—not asleep, certainly. The moment of fruition had come; the crowning of his pride and pleasure in his home. But he continued
to stand there. He had suddenly no pride, no pleasure, no desire; nothing but a sort of dull resentment against everything. He turned back, shut the door, and slipping between the heavy curtains and his open window, stood looking out at the night. ‘Full of misery!’ he thought. ‘Full of d——d misery!’

II

Filing into the jury box next morning, Mr. Bosengate collided slightly with a short juryman, whose square figure and square head of stiff yellow-red hair he had only vaguely noticed the day before. The man looked angry, and Mr. Bosengate thought: ‘An ill-bred dog that!’

He sat down quickly, and, to avoid further recognition of his fellows, gazed in front of him. His appearance on Saturdays was always military, by reason of the route march of his Volunteer Corps in the afternoon. Gentleman Fox, who belonged to the corps too, was also looking square; but that commercial traveller on his other side seemed more louche, and as if surprised in immorality, than ever; only the proximity of Gentleman Fox on the other side kept Mr. Bosengate from shrinking. Then he saw the prisoner being brought in, shadowy and dark behind the brightness of his buttons, and he experienced a sort of shock, this figure was so exactly that which had several times started up in his mind. Somehow he had expected a fresh sight of the fellow to dispel and disprove what had been haunting him, had expected to find him just an outside phenomenon, not, as it were, a part of his own life. And he gazed at the carven immobility of the judge’s
face, trying to steady himself, as a drunken man will, by looking at a light. The regimental doctor, unabashed by the judge's comment on his absence the day before, gave his evidence like a man who had better things to do, and the case for the prosecution was forthwith rounded in by a little speech from counsel. The matter—he said—was clear as daylight. Those who wore His Majesty's uniform, charged with the responsibility and privilege of defending their country, were no more entitled to desert their regiments by taking their own lives than they were entitled to desert in any other way. He asked for a conviction. Mr. Bosengate felt a sympathetic shuffle passing through all feet; the judge was speaking:

"Prisoner, you can either go into the witness box and make your statement on oath, in which you may be cross-examined on it; or you can make your statement there from the dock, in which case you will not be cross-examined. Which do you elect to do?"

"From here, my lord."

Seeing him now full face, and, as it might be, come to life in the effort to convey his feelings, Mr. Bosengate had suddenly a quite different impression of the fellow. It was as if his khaki had fallen off, and he had stepped out of his own shadow, a live and quivering creature. His pinched clean-shaven face seemed to have an irregular, wilder, hairier look, his large nervous brown eyes darkened and glowed; he jerked his shoulders, his arms, his whole body, like a man suddenly freed from cramp or a suit of armour. He spoke, too, in a quick, crisp, rather high voice, pinching his consonants a little, sharpening his vowels, like a true Welshman.

"My lord and misters the jury," he said: "I was
a hairdresser when the call came on me to join the army. I had a little home and a wife. I never thought what it would be like to be away from them, I surely never did; and I'm ashamed to be speaking it out like this—how it can squeeze and squeeze a man, how it can prey on your mind when you're nervous like I am. 'Tis not everyone that cares for his home—there's lots o' them never wants to see their wives again. But for me 'tis like being shut up in a cage, it is!" Mr. Bosengate saw daylight between the skinny fingers of the man's hand thrown out with a jerk. "I cannot bear it shut up away from wife and home like what you are in the army. So when I took my razor that morning I was wild—an' I wouldn't be here now but for that man catching my hand. There was no reason in it, I'm willing to confess. It was foolish; but wait till you get feeling like what I was, and see how it draws you. Misters the jury, don't send me back to prison; it is worse still there. If you have wives you will know what it is like for lots of us; only some is more nervous than others. I swear to you, sirs, I could not help it——" Again the little man flung out his hand, his whole thin body shook and Mr. Bosengate felt the same sensation as when he drove his car over a dog——"Misters the jury, I hope you may never in your lives feel as I've been feeling."

The little man ceased, his eyes shrunk back into their sockets, his figure back into its mask of shadowy brown and gleaming buttons, and Mr. Bosengate was conscious that the judge was making a series of remarks; and, very soon, of being seated at a mahogany table in the jury's with-drawing room, hearing the voice of the man with hair like an Irish terrier's saying: "Didn't he talk through his hat, that little blighter!" Con-
scious, too, of the commercial traveller, still on his left—always on his left!—mopping his brow, and muttering: "Phew! It's hot in there to-day!" while an effluvium, as of an inside accustomed to whisky, came from him. Then the man with the underlip and the three plastered wisps of hair said:

"Don't know why we withdrew, Mr. Foreman!"

Mr. Bosengate looked round to where, at the head of the table, Gentleman Fox sat, in defensive gentility and the little white piping to his waistcoat. "I shall be happy to take the sense of the jury," he was saying blandly.

There was a short silence, then the chemist murmured:

"I should say he must have what they call claustrophobia."

"Clauster fiddlesticks! The feller's a shirker, that's all. Misses his wife—pretty excuse! Indecent, I call it!"

The speaker was the little wire-haired man; and emotion, deep and angry, stirred in Mr. Bosengate. That ill-bred little cur! He gripped the edge of the table with both hands.

"I think it's d——d natural!" he muttered. But almost before the words had left his lips he felt dismay. What had he said—he, nearly a colonel of volunteers—endorsing such a want of patriotism! And hearing the commercial traveller murmuring: "'Ear, 'ear!" he reddened violently.

The wire-headed man said roughly:

"There's too many of these blighted shirkers, and too much pampering of them."

The turmoil in Mr. Bosengate increased; he remarked in an icy voice:
“I agree to no verdict that’ll send the man back to prison.”

At this a real tremor seemed to go round the table, as if they all saw themselves sitting there through lunch time. Then the large grey-haired man given to winking, said:

“Oh! Come, sir—after what the judge said! Come, sir! What do you say, Mr. Foreman?”

Gentleman Fox—as who should say ‘This is excellent value, but I don’t wish to press it on you!’—answered:

“We are only concerned with the facts. Did he or did he not try to shorten his life?”

“Of course he did—said so himself,” Mr. Bosengate heard the wire-haired man snap out, and from the following murmur of assent he alone abstained. Guilty! Well—yes! There was no way out of admitting that, but his feelings revolted against handing “that poor little beggar” over to the tender mercy of his country’s law. His whole soul rose in arms against agreeing with that ill-bred little cur, and the rest of this job-lot. He had an impulse to get up and walk out, saying: “Settle it your own way. Good-morning.”

“It seems, sir,” Gentleman Fox was saying, “that we’re all agreed to guilty, except yourself. If you will allow me, I don’t see how you can go behind what the prisoner himself admitted.”

Thus brought up to the very guns, Mr. Bosengate, red in the face, thrust his hands deep into the side pockets of his tunic, and, staring straight before him, said:

“Very well; on condition we recommend him to mercy.”

“What do you say, gentlemen; shall we recommend him to mercy?”
"'Ear 'ear!" burst from the commercial traveller, and from the chemist came the murmur:
"No harm in that."

"Well, I think there is. They shoot deserters at the front, and we let this fellow off. I'd hang the cur."

Mr. Bosengate stared at that little wire-haired brute. "Haven't you any feeling for others?" he wanted to say. "Can't you see that this poor devil suffers tortures?" But the sheer impossibility of doing this before ten other men brought a slight sweat out on his face and hands; and in agitation he smote the table a blow with his fist. The effect was instantaneous. Everybody looked at the wire-haired man, as if saying: "Yes, you've gone a bit too far there!" The "little brute" stood it for a moment, then muttered surlily:

"Well, commend 'im to mercy if you like; I don't care."

"That's right; they never pay any attention to it," said the grey-haired man, winking heartily. And Mr. Bosengate filed back with the others into court.

But when from the jury box his eyes fell once more on the hare-eyed figure in the dock, he had his worst moment yet. Why should this poor wretch suffer so —for no fault, no fault; while he, and these others, and that snapping counsel, and the Caesar-like judge up there, went off to their women and their homes, blithe as bees, and probably never thought of him again? And suddenly he was conscious of the judge's voice:

"You will go back to your regiment, and endeavour to serve your country with better spirit. You may thank the jury that you are not sent to prison, and your good fortune that you were not at the front when you tried to commit this cowardly act. You are lucky to be alive."
A policeman pulled the little soldier by the arm; his drab figure, with eyes fixed and lustreless, passed down and away. From his very soul Mr. Bosengate wanted to lean out and say: "Cheer up, cheer up! I understand."

It was nearly ten o'clock that evening before he reached home, motoring back from the route march. His physical tiredness was abated, for he had partaken of a snack and a whisky and soda at the hotel; but mentally he was in a curious mood. His body felt appeased, his spirit hungry. To-night he had a yearning, not for his wife's kisses, but for her understanding. He wanted to go to her and say: "I've learnt a lot to-day—found out things I never thought of. Life's a wonderful thing, Kate, a thing one can't live all to oneself; a thing one shares with everybody, so that when another suffers, one suffers too. It's come to me that what one has doesn't matter a bit—it's what one does, and how one sympathises with other people. It came to me in the most extraordinary vivid way, when I was on that jury, watching that poor little rat of a soldier in his trap; it's the first time I've ever felt—the—the spirit of Christ, you know. It's a wonderful thing, Kate—wonderful! We haven't been close—really close, you and I, so that we each understand what the other is feeling. It's all in that, you know; understanding—sympathy—it's priceless. When I saw that poor little devil taken down and sent back to his regiment to begin his sorrows all over again—wanting his wife, thinking and thinking of her just as you know I would be thinking and wanting you, I felt what an awful outside sort of life we lead, never telling each other what we really think and feel, never being really close. I daresay that little chap and his wife keep
nothing from each other—live each other’s lives. That’s what we ought to do. Let’s get to feeling that what really matters is—understanding and loving, and not only just saying it as we all do, those fellows on the jury, and even that poor devil of a judge—what an awful life, judging one’s fellow-creatures! When I left that poor little Tommy this morning, and ever since, I’ve longed to get back here quietly to you and tell you about it, and make a beginning. There’s something wonderful in this, and I want you to feel it as I do, because you mean such a lot to me.”

This was what he wanted to say to his wife, not touching, or kissing her, just looking into her eyes, watching them soften and glow as they surely must catching the infection of his new ardour. And he felt unsteady, fearfully unsteady with the desire to say it all as it should be said: swiftly, quietly, with the truth and fervour of his feeling.

The hall was not lit up, for daylight still lingered under the new arrangement. He went towards the drawing-room, but from the very door shied off to his study and stood irresolute under the picture of a “Man catching a flea” (Dutch school), which had come down to him from his father. The governess would be in there with his wife! He must wait. Essential to go straight to Kathleen and pour it all out, or he would never do it. He felt as nervous as an undergraduate going up for his viva voce. This thing was so big, so astoundingly and unexpectedly important. He was suddenly afraid of his wife, afraid of her coolness and her grace, and that something Japanese about her—of all those attributes he had been accustomed to admire most; afraid, as it were, of her attraction. He felt young to-night, almost boyish; would she see that he
was not really fifteen years older than herself, and she not really a part of his collection, of all the admirable appointments of his home; but a companion spirit to one who wanted a companion badly? In this agitation of his soul he could keep still no more than he could last night in the agitation of his senses; and he wandered into the dining-room. A dainty supper was set out there, sandwiches, and cake, whisky and cigarettes—even an early peach. Mr. Bosengate looked at this peach with sorrow rather than disgust. The perfection of it was of a piece with all that had gone before this new and sudden feeling. Its delicious bloom seemed to heighten his perception of the hedge around him, that hedge of the things he so enjoyed, carefully planted and tended these many years. He passed it by uneaten, and went to the window. Out there all was darkening, the fountain, the lime tree, the flower-beds, and the fields below, with the Jersey cows who would come to your call; darkening slowly, losing form, blurring into soft blackness, vanishing, but there none the less—all there—the hedge of his possessions. He heard the door of the drawing-room open, the voices of his wife and the governess in the hall, going up to bed. If only they didn’t look in here! If only——! The voices ceased. He was safe now—had but to follow in a few minutes, to make sure of Kathleen alone. He turned round and stared down the length of the dark dining-room, over the rosewood table, to where in the mirror above the sideboard at the far end, his figure bathed, a stain, a mere blurred shadow; he made his way down to it along the table edge, and stood before himself as close as he could get. His throat and the roof of his mouth felt dry with nervousness; he put out his finger and touched his
face in the glass. 'You’re an ass!' he thought. 'Pull yourself together, and get it over. She will see; of course she will!' He swallowed, smoothed his moustache, and walked out. Going up the stairs, his heart beat painfully; but he was in for it now, and marched straight into her room.

Dressed only in a loose blue wrapper, she was brushing her dark hair before the glass. Mr. Bosengate went up to her and stood there silent, looking down. The words he had thought of were like a swarm of bees buzzing in his head yet not one would fly from between his lips. His wife went on brushing her hair under the light which shone on her polished elbows. She looked up at him from beneath one lifted eyebrow.

"Well, dear—tired?"

With a sort of vehemence the single word "No" passed out. A faint, a quizzical smile flitted over her face; she shrugged her shoulders ever so gently. That gesture—he had seen it before! And in desperate desire to make her understand, he put his hand on her lifted arm.

"Kathleen, stop—listen to me!" His fingers tightened in his agitation and eagerness to make his great discovery known. But before he could get out a word he became conscious of that cool round arm, conscious of her eyes half-closed, sliding round at him, of her half-smiling lips, of her neck under the wrapper. And he stammered:

"I want—I must—Kathleen, I—"

She lifted her shoulders again in that little shrug.

"Yes—I know; all right!"

A wave of heat and shame, and of God knows what came over Mr. Bosengate; he fell on his knees and pressed his forehead to her arm; and he was silent, more
silent than the grave. Nothing—nothing came from him but two long sighs. Suddenly he felt her hand stroke his cheek—compassionately, it seemed to him. She made a little movement towards him; her lips met his, and he remembered nothing but that. . . .

In his own room Mr. Bosengate sat at his wide-open window, smoking a cigarette; there was no light. Moths went past, the moon was creeping up. He sat very calm, puffing the smoke out into the night air. Curious thing—life! Curious world! Curious forces in it—making one do the opposite of what one wished; always—always making one do the opposite, it seemed! The furtive light from that creeping moon was getting hold of things down there, stealing in among the boughs of the trees. 'There's something ironical,' he thought, 'which walks about. Things don't come off as you think they will. I meant, I tried—but one doesn't change like that all of a sudden, it seems. Fact is, life's too big a thing for one! All the same, I'm not the man I was yesterday—not quite! He closed his eyes, and in one of those flashes of vision which come when the senses are at rest, he saw himself as it were far down below—down on the floor of a street narrow as a grave, high as a mountain, a deep dark slit of a street—walking down there, a black midget of a fellow, among other black midgets—his wife, and the little soldier, the judge and those jury chaps—fantoches straight up on their tiny feet, wandering down there in that dark, infinitely tall, and narrow street. "Too much for one!" he thought. "Too high for one—no getting on top of it. We've got to be kind, and help one another, and not expect too much, and not think too much. That's—all!" And, squeezing out his cigarette, he took six deep breaths of the night air, and got into bed.

1916.
TIMBER

Sir Arthur Hirrie, Baronet, of Hirrieugh, in a northern county, came to the decision to sell his timber in that state of mind—common during the War—which may be called patrio-profiteering. Like newspaper proprietors, writers on strategy, shipbuilders, owners of works, makers of arms and the rest of the working classes at large, his mood was: "Let me serve my country, and if thereby my profits are increased, let me put up with it, and invest in National Bonds."

With an encumbered estate and some of the best coverts in that northern county, it had not become practical politics to sell his timber till the Government wanted it at all costs. To let his shooting had been more profitable, till now, when a patriotic action and a stroke of business had become synonymous. A man of sixty-five, but not yet grey, with a reddish tinge in his moustache, cheeks, lips, and eyelids, slightly knock-kneed, and with large, rather spreading feet, he moved in the best circles in a somewhat embarrassed manner. At the enhanced price, the timber at Hirrieugh would enfranchise him for the remainder of his days.' He sold it therefore one day of April when the War news was bad to a Government official on the spot. He sold it at half-past five in the afternoon, practically for cash down, and drank a stiff whisky and soda to wash away the taste of the transaction; for, though no sentimentalist, his great-great-grandfather had planted most of it, and his grandfather the rest. Royalty too had shot
there in its time; and he himself (never much of a sportsman) had missed more birds in the rides and hollows of his fine coverts than he cared to remember. But the country was in need, and the price considerable. Bidding the Government official good-bye, he lighted a cigar, and went across the Park to take a farewell stroll among his timber.

He entered the home covert by a path leading through a group of pear trees just coming into bloom. Smoking cigars and drinking whisky in the afternoon in preference to tea, Sir Arthur Hirries had not much sense of natural beauty. But those pear trees impressed him, greenish white against blue sky and fleecy thick clouds which looked as if they had snow in them. They were deuced pretty, and promised a good year for fruit, if they escaped the late frosts, though it certainly looked like freezing to-night! He paused a moment at the wicket gate to glance back at them—like scantily-clothed maidens posing on the outskirts of his timber. Such, however, was not the vision of Sir Arthur Hirries, who was considering how he should invest the balance of the cash down after paying off his mortgages. National Bonds—the country was in need!

Passing through the gate he entered the ride of the home covert. Variety lay like colour on his woods. They stretched for miles, and his ancestors had planted almost every kind of tree—beech, oak, birch, sycamore, ash, elm, hazel, holly, pine; a lime tree and a hornbeam here and there, and further in among the winding coverts, spinneys and belts of larch. The evening air was sharp, and sleet showers came whirling from those bright clouds; he walked briskly, drawing at his richly fragrant cigar, the whisky still warm within him. He walked thinking, with a gentle melancholy slowly
turning a little sulky, that he would never again be pointing out with his shooting stick to such or such a guest where he was to stand to get the best birds over him. The pheasants had been let down during the War, but he put up two or three old cocks who went clattering and whirring out to left and right; and rabbits crossed the rides quietly to and fro, within easy shot. He came to where Royalty had stood fifteen years ago during the last drive. He remembered Royalty saying: "Very pretty shooting at that last stand, Hirries; birds just about as high as I like them." The ground indeed rose rather steeply there, and the timber was oak and ash, with a few dark pines sprinkled into the bare greyish twiggery of the oaks, always costive in spring, and the just greening feather of the ashes.

"They'll be cutting those pines first," he thought—strapping trees, straight as the lines of Euclid, and free of branches, save at their tops. In the brisk wind those tops swayed a little and gave forth soft complaint. "Three times my age," he thought; "prime timber." The ride wound sharply and entered a belt of larch, whose steep rise entirely barred off the rather sinister sunset—a dark and wistful wood, delicate dun and grey, whose green shoots and crimson tips would have perfumed the evening coolness, but for the cigar smoke in his nostrils. "They'll have this spinney for pit props," he thought; and, taking a cross ride through it, he emerged in a heathery glen of birch trees. No forester, he wondered if they would make anything of those whitened, glistening shapes. His cigar had gone out now, and he leaned against one of the satin-smooth stems, under the lacerity of twig and bud, sheltering the flame of a relighting match. A hare lopped away among the bilberry shoots; a jay, painted like a fan,
squawked and fluttered past him up the glen. Interested in birds, and wanting just one more jay to complete a fine stuffed group of them, Sir Arthur, though devoid of a gun, followed to see where “the beggar’s” nest was. The glen dipped rapidly, and the character of the timber changed, assuming a greater girth and solidity. There was a lot of beech here, a bit he did not know, for though taken in by the beaters, no guns could be stationed there because of the lack of undergrowth. The jay had vanished, and light had begun to fail. “I must get back,” he thought, “or I shall be late for dinner.” He debated for a moment whether to retrace his steps or to cut across the beeches and regain the home covert by a loop. The jay, reappearing to the left, deciding him to cross the beech grove. He did so, and took a narrow ride up through a dark bit of mixed timber with heavy undergrowth. The ride, after favouring the left for a little, bent away to the right; Sir Arthur followed it hurriedly, conscious that twilight was gathering fast. It must bend again to the left in a minute! It did, and then to the right, and, the undergrowth remaining thick, he could only follow on, or else retrace his steps. He followed on, beginning to get hot in spite of a sleet shower falling through the dusk. He was not framed by Nature for swift travelling—his knees turning in and his toes turning out—but he went at a good bat, uncomfortably aware that the ride was still taking him away from home, and expecting it at any minute to turn left again. It did not, and hot, out of breath, a little bewildered, he stood still in three-quarter darkness, to listen. Not a sound save that of wind on the tops of the trees, and a faint creaking of timber, where two stems had grown athwart and were touching.
The path was a regular will-o'-the-wisp. He must make a bee line of it through the undergrowth into another ride! He had never before been amongst his timber in the dusk, and he found the shapes of the confounded trees more weird, and as if menacing, than he had ever dreamed of. He stumbled quickly on in and out of them among the undergrowth, without coming to a ride.

"Here I am stuck in this damned wood!" he thought. To call these formidably encircling shapes "a wood" gave him relief. After all, it was his wood, and nothing very untoward could happen to a man in his own wood, however dark it might get; he could not be more than a mile and a half at the outside from his dining-room! He looked at his watch, whose hands he could just see—nearly half-past seven! The sleet had become snow, but it hardly fell on him, so thick was the timber just here. But he had no overcoat and suddenly he felt that first sickening little drop in his chest, which presages alarm. Nobody knew he was in this damned wood! And in a quarter of an hour it would be as black as your hat! He must get on and out! The trees amongst which he was stumbling produced quite a sick feeling now in one who hitherto had never taken trees seriously. What monstrous growths they were! The thought that seeds, tiny seeds or saplings, planted by his ancestors, could attain such huge impending and imprisoning bulk—ghostly great growths mounting up to heaven and shutting off this world—exasperated and unnerved him. He began to run, caught his foot in a root and fell flat on his face. The cursed trees seemed to have a down on him! Rubbing elbows and forehead with his snow-wetted hands, he leaned against a trunk to get his breath, and summon the sense of
direction to his brain. Once as a young man he had been “bushed” at night in Vancouver Island; quite a scary business! But he had come out all right, though his camp had been the only civilised spot within a radius of twenty miles. And here he was, on his own estate, within a mile or two of home, getting into a funk. It was childish! And he laughed. The wind answered, sighing and threshing in the tree tops. There must be a regular blizzard blowing now, and, to judge by the cold, from the north—but whether north-east or north-west was the question. Besides, how keep definite direction without a compass, in the dark? The timber, too, with its thick trunks, diverted the wind into keen, directionless draughts. He looked up, but could make nothing of the two or three stars that he could see. It was a mess! And he lighted a second cigar with some difficulty, for he had begun to shiver. The wind in this blasted wood cut through his Norfolk jacket and crawled about his body, which had become hot from his exertions, and now felt clammy and half-frozen. This would mean pneumonia, if he didn’t look out! And, half feeling his way from trunk to trunk, he started on again, but for all he could tell he might be going round in a circle, might even be crossing rides without realising, and again that sickening drop occurred in his chest. He stood still and shouted. He had the feeling of shouting into walls of timber, dark and heavy, which threw the sound back at him.

‘Curse you!’ he thought; ‘I wish I’d sold you six months ago!’ The wind fleered and mowed in the tree tops; and he started off again at a run in that dark wilderness; till, hitting his head against a low branch, he fell stunned. He lay several minutes unconscious,
came to himself deadly cold, and struggled on to his feet.

"By Jove!" he thought, with a sort of stammer in his brain; "this is a bad business! I may be out here all night!" For an unimaginative man, it was extraordinary what vivid images he had just then. He saw the face of the Government official who had bought his timber, and the slight grimace with which he had agreed to the price. He saw his butler, after the gong had gone, standing like a stuck pig by the sideboard, waiting for him to come down. What would they do when he didn’t come? Would they have the nous to imagine that he might have lost his way in the coverts, and take lanterns and search for him? Far more likely they would think he had walked over to "Greenlands" or "Berrymoor," and stayed there to dinner. And, suddenly, he saw himself slowly freezing out here, in the snowy night, among this cursed timber. With a vigorous shake, he butted again into the darkness among the tree trunks. He was angry now with himself, with the night, with the trees; so angry that he actually let out with his fist at a trunk against which he had stumbled, and scored his knuckles. It was humiliating; and Sir Arthur Hirries was not accustomed to humiliation. In anybody else’s wood—yes; but to be lost like this in one’s own coverts! Well, if he had to walk all night, he would get out! And he plunged on doggedly in the darkness.

He was fighting with his timber now, as if the thing were alive and each tree an enemy. In the interminable stumbling exertion of that groping progress his angry mood gave place to half-comatose philosophy. Trees! His great-great-grandfather had planted them! His own was the fifth man’s life, but the trees were almost
as young as ever; they made nothing of a man's life! He sniggered: And a man made nothing of theirs! Did they know they were going to be cut down? All the better if they did, and were sweating in their shoes. He pinched himself—his thoughts were becoming so queer! He remembered that once, when his liver was out of order, trees had seemed to him like solid, tall diseases—bulbous, scarred, cavernous, witch-armed, fungoid emanations of the earth. Well, so they were! And he was among them, on a snowy pitch-black night, engaged in this death-struggle! The occurrence of the word death in his thoughts brought him up all standing. Why couldn't he concentrate his mind on getting out; why was he mooning about the life and nature of trees instead of trying to remember the conformation of his coverts, so as to re-kindled in himself some sense of general direction? He struck a number of matches to get a sight of his watch again. Great heaven! He had been walking nearly two hours since he last looked at it; and in what direction? They said a man in a fog went round and round because of some kink in his brain! He began now to feel the trees, searching for a hollow trunk. A hollow would be some protection from the cold—his first conscious confession of exhaustion. He was not in training, and he was sixty-five. The thought: "I can't keep this up much longer," caused a second explosion of sullen anger. Damnation! Here he was—for all he could tell—standing where he had sat perhaps a dozen times on his spread shooting stick; watching sunlight on bare twigs, or the nose of his spaniel twitching beside him, listening to the tap of the beaters' sticks, and the shrill, drawn-out: "Mrrk! Cock over!" Would they let the dogs out, to pick up his tracks? No! ten to
one they would assume he was staying the night at the Summertons,' or at Lady Mary's, as he had done before now, after dining there. And suddenly his strained heart leaped. He had struck a ride again! His mind slipped back into place like an elastic let-go, relaxed, quivering gratefully. He had only to follow this ride, and somewhere, somehow he would come out. And be hanged of he would let them know what a fool he had made of himself! Right or left—which way. He turned so that the flying snow came in his back, hurrying forward between the denser darkness on either hand, where the timber stood in walls, moving his arms across and across his body, as if dragging a concertina to full stretch, to make sure that he was keeping in the path. He went what seemed an interminable way like this, till he was brought up all standing by trees, and could find no outlet, no continuation. Turning in his tracks, with the snow in his face now he retraced his steps till once more he was brought up short by trees. He stood panting. It was ghastly—ghastly! And in a panic he dived this way and that to find the bend, the turning, the way on. The sleet stung his eyes, the wind fleeced and whistled, the boughs sloughed and moaned. He struck matches, trying to shade them with his cold, wet hands, but one by one they went out, and still he found no turning. The ride must have a blind alley at either end, the turning be down the side somewhere! Hope revived in him. Never say die! He began a second retracing of his steps, feeling the trunks along one side to find a gap. His breath came with difficulty. What would old Brodley say if he could see him, soaked, frozen, tired to death, stumbling along in the darkness among this cursed timber—old Brodley who had told him his heart was
in poor case! . . . A gap? Ah! No trunks—a
ride at last! He turned, felt a sharp pain in his knee and
pitched forward. He could not rise—the knee dis-
located six years ago was out again. Sir Arthur Hirries
clenched his teeth. Nothing more could happen to
him! But after a minute—blank and bitter—he began
to crawl along the new ride. Oddly he felt less dis-
couraged and alarmed on hands and knee—for he
could use but one. It was a relief to have his eyes fixed
on the ground, not peering at the tree trunks; or perhaps
there was less strain for the moment on his heart. He
crawled, stopping every minute or so to renew his
strength. He crawled mechanically, waiting for his
heart, his knee, his lungs to stop him. The earth was
snowed over, and he could feel its cold wetness as he
scrapped along. Good tracks to follow, if anybody
struck them! But in this dark forest——! In one
of his halts, drying his hands as best he could, he struck
a match, and sheltering it desperately, fumbled out his
watch. Past ten o’clock! He wound the watch,
and put it back against his heart. If only he could
wind his heart! And squatting there he counted his
matches—four! “Well,” he thought grimly, “I won’t
light them to show me my blasted trees. I’ve got a
cigar left; I’ll keep them for that.” And he crawled
on again. He must keep going while he could!

He crawled till his heart and lungs and knee struck
work; and leaning his back against a tree, sat huddled
together, so exhausted that he felt nothing save a sort
of bitter heartache. He even dropped asleep, waking
with a shudder, dragged from a dream armchair at his
Club into this cold, wet darkness and the blizzard
moaning in the trees. He tried to crawl again, but
could not, and for some minutes stayed motionless,
hugging his body with his arms. "Well," he thought vaguely, "I have done it!" His mind was in such lethargy that he could not even pity himself. His matches: could he make a fire? But he was no woodsman, and, though he groped around, could find no fuel that was not soaking wet. He scraped a hole and with what papers he had in his pockets tried to kindle the wet wood. No good! He had only two matches left now, and he remembered his cigar. He took it out, bit the end off, and began with infinite precautions to prepare for lighting it. The first burned, and the cigar drew. He had one match left, in case he dozed and let the thing go out. Looking up through the blackness he could see a star. He fixed his eyes on it, and leaning against the trunk, drew the smoke down into his lungs. With his arms crossed tightly on his breast he smoked very slowly. When it was finished—what? Cold, and the wind in the trees until the morning! Halfway through the cigar, he dozed off, slept a long time, and woke up so cold that he could barely summon vitality enough to strike his last match. By some miracle it burned, and he got his cigar to draw again. This time he smoked it nearly to its end, without mentality, almost without feeling, except the physical sense of bitter cold. Once with a sudden clearing of the brain, he thought faintly: "Thank God, I sold the——trees, and they'll all come down!" The thought drifted away in frozen incoherence, drifted out like his cigar smoke into the sleet; and with a faint grin on his lips he dozed off again....

An under-keeper found him at ten o'clock next morning, blue from cold, under a tall elm tree, within a mile of his bed, one leg stretched out, the other hunched up toward his chest, with its foot dug into the under-
growth for warmth, his head huddled into the collar of his coat, his arms crossed on his breast. They said he must have been dead at least five hours. Along one side snow had drifted against him; but the trunk had saved his back and other side. Above him, the spindly top boughs of that tall tree were covered with green-gold clusters of tiny crinkled elm flowers, against a deep blue sky—gay as a song of perfect praise. The wind had dropped, and after the cold of the night the birds were singing their clearest in the sunshine.

They did not cut down the elm tree under which they found his body, with the rest of the sold timber, but put a little iron fence round it, and a little tablet on its trunk.

1920.