I did not go out with Rosie again for more than a week. She was going down to Haversham to spend a night with her mother. She had various engagements in London. Then she asked me if I would go to the Haymarket Theatre with her. The play was a success and free seats were not to be had so we made up our minds to go in the pit. We had a steak and a glass of beer at the Café Monico and then stood with the crowd. In those days there was no orderly queue and when the doors were opened there was a mad rush and scramble to get in. We were hot and breathless and somewhat battered when at last we pushed our way into our seats.

We walked back through St. James’s Park. The night was so lovely that we sat down on a bench. In the starlight Rosie’s face and her fair hair glowed softly. She was suffused, as it were (I express it awkwardly, but I do not know how to describe the emotion she gave me) with a friendliness at once candid and tender. She was like a silvery flower of the night that only gave its perfume to the moonbeams. I slipped my arm round her waist and she turned her face to mine. This time it was I who kissed. She did not move; her soft red lips submitted to the pressure of mine with a
calm, intense passivity as the water of a lake accepts
the light of the moon. I don’t know how long we
stayed there.

"I’m awfully hungry," she said suddenly.

"So am I," I laughed.

"Couldn’t we go and have some fish and chips
somewhere?"

"Rather."

In those days I knew my way very well about West-
minster, not yet a fashionable quarter for parliamentary
and otherwise cultured persons, but slummy and down-
at-heel; and after we had come out of the park,
crossing Victoria Street, I led Rosie to a fried fish shop
in Horseferry Row. It was late and the only other
person there was the driver of a four-wheeler waiting
outside. We ordered our fish and chips and a bottle
of beer. A poor woman came in and bought two
penn’orth of mixed and took it away with her in a piece
of paper. We ate with appetite.

Our way back to Rosie’s led through Vincent Square
and as we passed my house I asked her:

"Won’t you come in for a minute? You’ve never
seen my rooms."

"What about your landlady? I don’t want to get
you into trouble."

"Oh, she sleeps like a rock."

"I’ll come in for a little."

I slipped my key into the lock and because the passage
was dark took Rosie’s hand to lead her in. I lit the gas
in my sitting-room. She took off her hat and vigorously
scratched her head. Then she looked for a glass, but I was very artistic and had taken down the mirror that was over the chimney-piece and there was no means in the room for anyone to see what he looked like.

"Come into my bedroom," I said. "There's a glass there."

I opened the door and lit the candle. Rosie followed me in and I held it up so that she should be able to see herself. I looked at her in the glass as she arranged her hair. She took two or three pins out, which she put in her mouth, and taking one of my brushes, brushed her hair up from the nape of her neck. She twisted it, patted it, and put back the pins, and as she was intent on this her eyes caught mine in the glass and she smiled at me. When she had replaced the last pin she turned and faced me; she did not say anything; she looked at me tranquilly, still with that little friendly smile in her blue eyes. I put down the candle. The room was very small and the dressing-table was by the bed. She raised her hand and softly stroked my cheek.

I wish now that I had not started to write this book in the first person singular. It is all very well when you can show yourself in an amiable or touching light; and nothing can be more effective than the modest heroic or pathetic humorous which in this mode is much cultivated; it is charming to write about yourself when you see on the reader’s eyelash the glittering tear and on his lips the tender smile; but it is not so nice when you have to exhibit yourself as a plain damned fool.

A little while ago I read in the Evening Standard an
article by Mr. Evelyn Waugh in the course of which he remarked that to write novels in the first person was a contemptible practice. I wish he had explained why, but he merely threw out the statement with just the same take-it-or-leave-it casualness as Euclid used when he made his celebrated observation about parallel straight lines. I was much concerned and forthwith asked Alroy Kear (who reads everything, even the books he writes prefaces for) to recommend to me some works on the art of fiction. On his advice I read The Craft of Fiction by Mr. Percy Lubbock, from which I learned that the only way to write novels was like Henry James; after that I read Aspects of the Novel by Mr. E. M. Forster, from which I learned that the only way to write novels was like Mr. E. M. Forster; then I read The Structure of the Novel by Mr. Edwin Muir, from which I learned nothing at all. In none of them could I discover anything to the point at issue. All the same I can find one reason why certain novelists, such as Defoe, Sterne, Thackeray, Dickens, Emily Brontë and Proust, well known in their day but now doubtless forgotten, have used the method that Mr. Evelyn Waugh reprehends. As we grow older we become more conscious of the complexity, incoherence and unreasonableness of human beings; this indeed is the only excuse that offers for the middle-aged or elderly writer, whose thoughts should more properly be turned to graver matters, occupying himself with the trivial concerns of imaginary people. For if the proper study of mankind is man it is evidently more sensible to
occupy yourself with the coherent, substantial and significant creatures of fiction than with the irrational and shadowy figures of real life. Sometimes the novelist feels himself like God and is prepared to tell you everything about his characters; sometimes, however, he does not; and then he tells you not everything that is to be known about them but the little he knows himself; and since as we grow older we feel ourselves less and less like God I should not be surprised to learn that with advancing years the novelist grows less and less inclined to describe more than his own experience has given him. The first person singular is a very useful device for this limited purpose.

Rosie raised her hand and softly stroked my face. I do not know why I should have behaved as I then did; it was not at all how I had seen myself behaving on such an occasion. A sob broke from my tight throat. I do not know whether it was because I was shy and lonely (not lonely in the body, for I spent all day at the hospital with all kinds of people, but lonely in the spirit) or because my desire was so great, but I began to cry. I felt terribly ashamed of myself; I tried to control myself, I couldn’t; the tears welled up in my eyes and poured down my cheeks. Rosie saw them and gave a little gasp.

"Oh, honey, what is it? What’s the matter? Don’t. Don’t!"

She put her arms round my neck and began to cry too, and she kissed my lips and my eyes and my wet cheeks. She undid her bodice and lowered my head
till it rested on her bosom. She stroked my smooth face. She rocked me back and forth as though I were a child in her arms. I kissed her breasts and I kissed the white column of her neck; and she slipped out of her bodice and out of her skirt and her petticoats and I held her for a moment by her corrected waist; then she undid it, holding her breath for an instant to enable her to do so, and stood before me in her shift. When I put my hands on her sides I could feel the ribbing of the skin from the pressure of the corsets.

"Blow out the candle," she whispered.

It was she who awoke me when the dawn peering through the curtains revealed the shape of the bed and of the wardrobe against the darkness of the lingering night. She woke me by kissing me on the mouth and her hair falling over my face tickled me.

"I must get up," she said. "I don't want your landlady to see me."

"There's plenty of time."

Her breasts when she leaned over me were heavy on my chest. In a little while she got out of bed. I lit the candle. She turned to the glass and tied up her hair and then she looked for a moment at her naked body. Her waist was naturally small; though so well developed she was very slender; her breasts were straight and firm and they stood out from the chest as though carved in marble. It was a body made for the act of love. In the light of the candle, struggling now with the increasing day, it was all silvery gold; and the only colour was the rosy pink of the hard nipples.
We dressed in silence. She did not put on her corsets again, but rolled them up and I wrapped them in a piece of newspaper. We tiptoed along the passage and when I opened the door and we stepped out into the street the dawn ran to meet us like a cat leaping up the steps. The square was empty, already the sun was shining on the eastern windows. I felt as young as the day. We walked arm in arm till we came to the corner of Limpus Road.

"Leave me here," said Rosie. "One never knows."

I kissed her and I watched her walk away. She walked rather slowly, with the firm tread of the country woman who likes to feel the good earth under her feet, and held herself erect. I could not go back to bed. I strolled on till I came to the Embankment. The river had the bright hues of the early morning. A brown barge came down stream and passed under Vauxhall Bridge. In a dinghy two men were rowing close to the side. I was hungry.
After that for more than a year whenever Rosie came out with me she used on the way home to drop into my rooms, sometimes for an hour, sometimes till the breaking day warned us that the slaveys would soon be scrubbing the doorsteps. I have a recollection of warm sunny mornings when the tired air of London had a welcome freshness, and of our footfalls that seemed so noisy in the empty streets, and then of scurrying along huddled under an umbrella, silent but gay, when the winter brought cold and rain. The policeman on point duty gave us a stare as we passed, sometimes of suspicion; but sometimes also there was a twinkle of comprehension in his eyes. Now and then we would see a homeless creature huddled up asleep in a portico and Rosie gave my arm a friendly little pressure when (chiefly for show and because I wanted to make a good impression on her, for my shillings were scarce) I placed a piece of silver on a shapeless lap or in a skinny fist. Rosie made me very happy. I had a great affection for her. She was easy and comfortable. She had a placidity of temper that communicated itself to the people she was with; you shared her pleasure in the passing moment.

Before I became her lover I had often asked myself
if she was the mistress of the others, Forde, Harry Retford and Hillier, and afterward I questioned her. She kissed me.

"Don't be so silly. I like them, you know that. I like to go out with them, but that's all."

I wanted to ask her if she had been the mistress of George Kemp, but I did not like to. Though I had never seen her in a temper, I had a notion that she had one and I vaguely felt that this was a question that might anger her. I did not want to give her the opportunity of saying things so wounding that I could not forgive her. I was young, only just over one and twenty, Quentin Forde and the others seemed old to me; it did not seem unnatural to me that to Rosie they were only friends. It gave me a little thrill of pride to think that I was her lover. When I used to look at her chatting and laughing with all and sundry at tea on Saturday afternoons, I glowed with self-satisfaction. I thought of the nights we passed together and I was inclined to laugh at the people who were so ignorant of my great secret. But sometimes I thought that Lionel Hillier looked at me in a quizzical way, as if he were enjoying a good joke at my expense, and I asked myself uneasily if Rosie had told him that she was having an affair with me. I wondered if there was anything in my manner that betrayed me. I told Rosie that I was afraid Hillier suspected something; she looked at me with those blue eyes of hers that always seemed ready to smile.
"Don't bother about it," she said. "He's got a nasty mind."

I had never been intimate with Quentin Forde. He looked upon me as a dull and insignificant young man (which of course I was) and though he had always been civil he had never taken any notice of me. I thought it could only be my fancy that now he began to be a little more frigid with me than before. But one day Harry Retford to my surprise asked me to dine with him and go to the play. I told Rosie.

"Oh, of course you must go. He'll give you an awfully good time. Good old Harry, he always makes me laugh."

So I dined with him. He made himself very pleasant and I was impressed to hear him talk of actors and actresses. He had a sarcastic humour and was very funny at the expense of Quentin Forde, whom he did not like; I tried to get him to talk of Rosie, but he had nothing to say of her. He seemed to be a gay dog. With leers and laughing innuendoes he gave me to understand that he was a devil with the girls. I could not but ask myself if he was standing me this dinner because he knew I was Rosie's lover and so felt friendly disposed toward me. But if he knew, of course the others knew too. I hope I did not show it, but in my heart I certainly felt somewhat patronizing toward them.

Then in winter, toward the end of January, someone new appeared at Limpus Road. This was a Dutch Jew named Jack Kuypcr, a diamond merchant
from Amsterdam, who was spending a few weeks in London on business. I do not know how he had come to know the Driffelds and whether it was esteem for the author that brought him to the house, but it was certainly not that which caused him to come again. He was a tall, stout, dark man with a bald head and a big hooked nose, a man of fifty, but of a powerful appearance, sensual, determined and jovial. He made no secret of his admiration for Rosie. He was rich apparently, for he sent her roses every day; she chid him for his extravagance, but was flattered. I could not bear him. He was blatant and loud. I hated his fluent conversation in perfect but foreign English; I hated the extravagant compliments he paid Rosie; I hated the heartiness with which he treated her friends. I found that Quentin Forde liked him as little as I; we almost became cordial with one another.

"Mercifully he's not staying long." Quentin Forde pursed his lips and raised his black eyebrows; with his white hair and long sallow face he looked incredibly gentlemanly. "Women are always the same; they adore a bounder."

"He's so frightfully vulgar," I complained.

"That is his charm," said Quentin Forde.

For the next two or three weeks I saw next to nothing of Rosie. Jack Kuyper took her out night after night, to this smart restaurant and that, to one play after another. I was vexed and hurt.

"He doesn't know anyone in London," said Rosie, trying to soothe my ruffled feelings. "He wants to
see everything he can while he’s here. It wouldn’t be very nice for him to go alone all the time. He’s only here for a fortnight more.”

I did not see the object of this self-sacrifice on her part.

“But don’t you think he’s awful?” I said.

“No. I think he’s fun. He makes me laugh.”

“Don’t you know that he’s absolutely gone on you?”

“Well, it pleases him and it doesn’t do me any harm.”

“He’s old and fat and horrible. It gives me the creeps to look at him.”

“I don’t think he’s so bad,” said Rosie.

“You couldn’t have anything to do with him,” I protested. “I mean, he’s such an awful cad.”

Rosie scratched her head. It was an unpleasant habit of hers.

“It’s funny how different foreigners are from English people,” she said.

I was thankful when Jack Kuyper went back to Amsterdam. Rosie had promised to dine with me the day after and as a treat we arranged to dine in Soho. She fetched me in a hansom and we drove on.

“Has your horrible old man gone?” I asked.

“Yes,” she laughed.

I put my arm round her waist. (I have elsewhere remarked how much more convenient the hansom was for this pleasant and indeed almost essential act in human intercourse than the taxi of the present day, so
unwillingly refrain from labouring the point.) I put my arm round her waist and kissed her. Her lips were like spring flowers. We arrived. I hung my hat and my coat (it was very long and tight at the waist, with a velvet collar and velvet cuffs; very smart) on a peg and asked Rosie to give me her cape.

"I'm going to keep it on," she said.

"You'll be awfully hot. You'll only catch cold when we go out."

"I don't care. It's the first time I've worn it. Don't you think it's lovely. And look: the muff matches."

1 gave the cape a glance. It was of fur. I did not know it was sable.

"It looks awfully rich. How did you get that?"

"Jack Kuyper gave it to me. We went and bought it yesterday just before he went away." She stroked the smooth fur; she was as happy with it as a child with a toy. "How much d'you think it cost?"

"I haven't an idea."

"Two hundred and sixty pounds. Do you know I've never had anything that cost so much in my life? I told him it was far too much, but he wouldn't listen. He made me have it."

Rosie chuckled with glee and her eyes shone. But I felt my face go stiff and a shiver run down my spine.

"Won't Driffield think it's rather funny, Kuyper giving you a fur cape that costs all that?" said I, trying to make my voice sound natural.

Rosie's eyes danced mischievously.
"You know what Ted is, he never notices anything; if he says anything about it I shall tell him I gave twenty pounds for it in a pawnshop. He won't know any better." She rubbed her face against the collar. "It's so soft. And everyone can see it cost money."

I tried to eat and in order not to show the bitterness in my heart I did my best to keep the conversation going on one topic or another. Rosie did not much mind what I said. She could only think of her new cape and every other minute her eyes returned to the muff that she insisted on holding on her lap. She looked at it with an affection in which there was something lazy, sensual and self-complacent. I was angry with her. I thought her stupid and common.

"You look like a cat that's swallowed a canary," I could not help snapping.

She only giggled.

"That's what I feel like."

Two hundred and sixty pounds was an enormous sum to me. I did not know one could pay so much for a cape. I lived on fourteen pounds a month and not at all badly either; and in case any reader is not a ready reckoner I will add that this is one hundred and sixty-eight pounds a year. I could not believe that anyone would make as expensive a present as that from pure friendship; what did it mean but that Jack Kuyper had been sleeping with Rosie, night after night, all the time he was in London, and now when he went away was paying her? How could she accept it? Didn't she see how it degraded her? Didn't
she see how frightfully vulgar it was of him to give her a thing that cost so much? Apparently not, for she said to me:

"It was nice of him, wasn't it? But then Jews are always generous."

"I suppose he could afford it," I said.

"Oh, yes, he's got lots of money. He said he wanted to give me something before he went away and asked me what I wanted. Well, I said, I could do with a cape and a muff to match, but I never thought he'd buy me anything like this. When we went into the shop I asked them to show me something in astrakhan, but he said: No, sable, and the best money can buy. And when we saw this he absolutely insisted on my having it."

I thought of her with her white body, her skin so milky, in the arms of that old fat gross man and his thick loose lips kissing hers. And then I knew that the suspicion that I had refused to believe was true; I knew that when she went out to dinner with Quentin Forde and Harry Retford and Lionel Hillier she went to bed with them just as she came to bed with me. I could not speak; I knew that if I did I should insult her. I do not think I was jealous so much as mortified. I felt that she had been making a damned fool of me. I used all my determination to prevent the bitter jibes from passing my lips.

We went on to the theatre. I could not listen to the play. I could only feel against my arm the smoothness of the sable cape; I could only see her fingers for ever
stroking the muff. I could have borne the thought of the others; it was Jack Kuypers who horrified me. How could she? It was abominable to be poor. I longed to have enough money to tell her that if she would send the fellow back his beastly furs I would give her better ones instead. At last she noticed that I did not speak.

"You're very silent to-night."

"Am I?"

"Aren't you well?"

"Perfectly."

She gave me a sidelong look. I did not meet her eyes, but I knew they were smiling with that smile at once mischievous and childlike that I knew so well. She said nothing more. At the end of the play, since it was raining, we took a hansom and I gave the driver her address in Limpus Road. She did not speak till we got to Victoria Street, then she said:

"Don't you want me to come home with you?"

"Just as you like."

She lifted up the trap and gave the driver my address. She took my hand and held it, but I remained inert. I looked straight out of the window with angry dignity. When we reached Vincent Square I handed her out of the cab and let her into the house without a word. I took off my hat and coat. She threw her cape and her muff on the sofa.

"Why are you so sulky?" she asked, coming up to me.

"I'm not sulky," I answered, looking away.
She took my face in her two hands.

"How can you be so silly? Why should you be angry because Jack Kuyper gives me a fur cape? You can't afford to give me one, can you?"

"Of course I can't."

"And Ted can't either. You can't expect me to refuse a fur cape that cost two hundred and sixty pounds. I've wanted a fur cape all my life. It means nothing to Jack."

"You don't expect me to believe that he gave it you just out of friendship."

"He might have. Anyhow, he's gone back to Amsterdam, and who knows when he'll come back?"

"He isn't the only one, either."

I looked at Rosie now, with angry, hurt, resentful eyes; she smiled at me, and I wish I knew how to describe the sweet kindliness of her beautiful smile; her voice was exquisitely gentle.

"Oh, my dear, why d'you bother your head about any others? What harm does it do you? Don't I give you a good time! Aren't you happy when you're with me?"

"Awfully."

"Well, then. It's so silly to be fussy and jealous. Why not be happy with what you can get? Enjoy yourself while you have the chance, I say; we shall all be dead in a hundred years and what will anything matter then? Let's have a good time while we can."

She put her arms round my neck and pressed
her lips against mine. I forgot my wrath. I only thought of her beauty and her enveloping kindness.

"You must take me as I am, you know," she whispered.

"All right," I said.
DURING all this time I saw really very little of Driffield. His editorship occupied much of his day and in the evening he wrote. He was, of course, there every Saturday afternoon, amiable and ironically amusing; he appeared glad to see me and chatted with me for a little while pleasantly of indifferent things; but naturally most of his attention was given to guests older and more important than 1. But I had a feeling that he was growing more aloof; he was no longer the jolly, rather vulgar companion that I had known at Black-stable. Perhaps it was only my increasing sensibility that discerned as it were an invisible barrier that existed between him and the people he chaffed and joked with. It was as though he lived a life of the imagination that made the life of every day a little shadowy. He was asked to speak now and then at public dinners. He joined a literary club. He began to know a good many people outside the narrow circle into which his writing had drawn him, and he was increasingly asked to luncheon and tea by the ladies who like to gather about them distinguished authors. Rosie was asked too, but seldom went; she said she didn’t care for parties, and after all they didn’t want her, they only wanted Ted. I think she was shy and felt out
of it. It may be that hostesses had more than once let her see how tiresome they thought it that she must be included; and after inviting her because it was polite, ignored her because to be polite irked them.

It was just about then that Edward Driffield published *The Cup of Life*. It is not my business to criticise his works, and of late as much has been written about them as must satisfy the appetite of any ordinary reader; but I will permit myself to say that *The Cup of Life*, though certainly not the most celebrated of his books, not the most popular, is to my mind the most interesting. It has a cold ruthlessness that in all the sentimentality of English fiction strikes an original note. It is refreshing and astringent. It tastes of tart apples. It sets your teeth on edge, but it has a subtle, bitter-sweet savour that is very agreeable to the palate. Of all Driffield's books it is the only one I should like to have written. The scene of the child's death, terrible and heart-rending, but written without slop or sickliness, and the curious incident that follows it, cannot easily be forgotten by anyone who has read them.

It was this part of the book that caused the sudden storm that burst on the wretched Driffield's head. For a few days after publication it looked as though it would run its course like the rest of his novels, namely that it would have substantial reviews, laudatory on the whole but with reservations, and that the sales would be respectable, but modest. Rosie told me that he expected to make three hundred pounds out of it and was talking of renting a house on the river for the
summer. The first two or three notices were non-committal; then in one of the morning papers appeared a violent attack. There was a column of it. The book was described as gratuitously offensive, obscene, and the publishers were rated for putting it before the public. Harrowing pictures were drawn of the devastating effect it must have on the youth of England. It was described as an insult to womanhood. The reviewer protested against the possibility of such a work falling into the hands of young boys and innocent maidens. Other papers followed suit. The more foolish demanded that the book should be suppressed and some asked themselves gravely if this was not a case where the public prosecutor might with fitness intervene. Condemnation was universal; if here and there a courageous writer, accustomed to the more realistic tone of continental fiction, asserted that Edward Driffield had never written anything better, he was ignored. His honest opinion was ascribed to a base desire to play to the gallery. The libraries barred the book and the lessors of the railway bookstalls refused to stock it.

All this was naturally very unpleasant for Edward Driffield, but he bore it with philosophic calm. He shrugged his shoulders.

"They say it isn’t true," he smiled. "They can go to hell. It is true."

He was supported in this trial by the fidelity of his friends. To admire The Cup of Life became a mark of aesthetic acumen: to be shocked by it was
to confess yourself a philistine. Mrs. Barton Trafford had no hesitation in saying that it was a masterpiece, and though this wasn’t quite the moment for Barton’s article in the Quarterly, her faith in Edward Driffield’s future remained unshaken. It is strange (and instructive) to read now the book that created such a sensation; there is not a word that could bring a blush to the cheek of the most guileless, not an episode that could cause the novel reader of the present day to turn a hair.
About six months later, when the excitement over *The Cup of Life* had subsided and Driffield had already begun the novel which he published under the name of *By Their Fruits*, I, being then an in-patient dresser and in my fourth year, in the course of my duties went one day into the main hall of the hospital to await the surgeon whom I was accompanying on his round of the wards. I glanced at the rack in which letters were placed, for sometimes people, not knowing my address in Vincent Square, wrote to me at the hospital. I was surprised to find a telegram for me. It ran as follows:

*Please come and see me at five o'clock this afternoon without fail. Important. Isabel Trafford.*

I wondered what she wanted me for. I had met her perhaps a dozen times during the last two years, but she had never taken any notice of me, and I had never been to her house. I knew that men were scarce at teatime and a hostess, short of them at the last moment, might think that a young medical student was better than nothing; but the wording of the telegram hardly suggested a party.

The surgeon for whom I dressed was prosy and
verbose. It was not till past five that I was free and then it took me a good twenty minutes to get down to Chelsea. Mrs. Barton Trafford lived in a block of flats on the Embankment. It was nearly six when I rang at her door and asked if she was at home. But when I was ushered into her drawing-room and began to explain why I was late she cut me short.

"We supposed you couldn't get away. It doesn't matter."

Her husband was there.

"I expect he'd like a cup of tea," he said.

"Oh, I think it's rather late for tea, isn't it?" She looked at me gently, her mild, rather fine eyes full of kindness. "You don't want any tea, do you?"

I was thirsty and hungry, for my lunch consisted of a scone and butter and a cup of coffee, but I did not like to say so. I refused tea.

"Do you know Allgood Newton?" asked Mrs. Barton Trafford, with a gesture toward a man who had been sitting in a big armchair when I was shown in, and now got up. "I expect you've met him at Edward's."

I had. He did not come often, but his name was familiar to me and I remembered him. He made me very nervous and I do not think I had ever spoken to him. Though now completely forgotten, in those days he was the best-known critic in England. He was a large, fat, blond man, with a fleshy white face, pale blue eyes and greying fair hair. He generally wore a pale blue tie to bring out the colour of his
eyes. He was very amiable to the authors he met at Driffield’s and said charming and flattering things to them, but when they were gone he was very amusing at their expense. He spoke in a low, even voice, with an apt choice of words: no one could with more point tell a malicious story about a friend.

Allgood Newton shook hands with me and Mrs. Barton Trafford, with her ready sympathy, anxious to put me at my ease, took me by the hand and made me sit on the sofa beside her. The tea was still on the table and she took a jam sandwich and delicately nibbled it.

"Have you seen the Driffords lately?" she asked me as though making conversation.

"I was there last Saturday."

"You haven’t seen either of them since?"

"No."

Mrs. Barton Trafford looked from Allgood Newton to her husband and back again as though mutely demanding their help.

"Nothing will be gained by circumlocution, Isabel," said Newton, a faintly malicious twinkle in his eye, in his fat precise way.

Mrs. Barton Trafford turned to me.

"Then you don’t know that Mrs. Driffield has run away from her husband."

"What!"

I was flabbergasted. I could not believe my ears.

"Perhaps it would be better if you told him the facts, Allgood," said Mrs. Trafford.
The critic leaned back in his chair and placed the tips of the fingers of one hand against the tips of the fingers of the other. He spoke with unction.

"I had to see Edward Driffield last night about a literary article that I am doing for him and after dinner, since the night was fine, I thought I would walk round to his house. He was expecting me; and I knew besides that he never went out at night except for some function as important as the Lord Mayor's banquet or the Academy dinner. Imagine my surprise then, nay, my utter and complete bewilderment, when as I approached I saw the door of his house open and Edward in person emerge. You know of course that Immanuel Kant was in the habit of taking his daily walk at a certain hour with such punctuality that the inhabitants of Königsberg were accustomed to set their watches by the event and when once he came out of his house an hour earlier than usual they turned pale, for they knew that this could only mean that some terrible thing had happened. They were right; Immanuel Kant had just received intelligence of the fall of the Bastille."

Allgood Newton paused for a moment to mark the effect of his anecdote. Mrs. Barton Trafford gave him her understanding smile.

"I did not envisage so world-shaking a catastrophe as this when I saw Edward hurrying toward me, but it immediately occurred to me that something untoward was afoot. He carried neither cane nor gloves. He wore his working coat, a venerable garment in black alpaca, and a wide-awake hat. There was something
wild in his mien and distraught in his bearing. I asked myself, knowing the vicissitudes of the conjugal state, whether a matrimonial difference had driven him headlong from the house or whether he was hastening to a letter-box in order to post a letter. He sped like Hector flying the noblest of the Greeks. He did not seem to see me and the suspicion flashed across my mind that he did not want to. I stopped him. 'Edward,' I said. He looked startled. For a moment I could have sworn he did not know who I was. 'What avenging furies urge you with such hot haste through the rakish purlices of Pimlico?' I asked. 'Oh, it's you,' he said. 'Where are you going?' I asked. 'Nowhere,' he replied.'

At this rate I thought Allgood Newton would never finish his story and Mrs. Hudson would be vexed with me for turning up to dinner half an hour late.

"I told him on what errand I had come, and proposed that we should return to his house where we could more conveniently discuss the question that perturbed me. 'I'm too restless to go home,' he said; 'let's walk. You can talk to me as we go along.' Assenting, I turned round and we began to walk; but his pace was so rapid that I had to beg him to moderate it. Even Dr. Johnson could not have carried on a conversation when he was walking down Fleet Street at the speed of an express train. Edward's appearance was so peculiar and his manner so agitated that I thought it wise to lead him through the less frequented streets. I talked to him of my article. The subject that occupied me was
more copious than had at first sight appeared, and I was doubtful whether after all I could do justice to it in the columns of a weekly journal. I put the matter before him fully and fairly and asked him his opinion. 'Rosie has left me,' he answered. For a moment I did not know what he was talking about, but in a trice it occurred to me that he was speaking of the buxom and not unprepossessing female from whose hands I had on occasion accepted a cup of tea. From his tone I divined that he expected condolence from me rather than felicitation.'

Allgood Newton paused again and his blue eyes twinkled.

"You're wonderful, Allgood," said Mrs. Barton Trafford.

"Priceless," said her husband.

"Realising that the occasion demanded sympathy, I said: 'My dear fellow.' He interrupted me. 'I had a letter by the last post,' he said. 'She's run away with Lord George Kemp.'"

I gasped, but said nothing. Mrs. Trafford gave me a quick look.

"'Who is Lord George Kemp?' 'He's a Black-stable man,' he replied. I had little time to think. I determined to be frank. 'You're well rid of her,' I said. 'Allgood!' he cried. I stopped and put my hand on his arm. 'You must know that she was deceiving you with all your friends. Her behaviour was a public scandal. My dear Edward, let us face the fact: your wife was nothing but a common strumpet.'
He snatched his arm away from me and gave a sort of low roar, like an orang-utan in the forests of Borneo forcibly deprived of a coconut, and before I could stop him he broke away and fled. I was so startled that I could do nothing but listen to his cries and his hurrying footsteps."

"You shouldn’t have let him go," said Mrs. Barton Trafford. "In the state he was he might have thrown himself in the Thames."

"The thought occurred to me, but I noticed that he did not run in the direction of the river, but plunged into the meaner streets of the neighbourhood in which we had been walking. And I reflected also that there is no example in literary history of an author committing suicide while engaged on the composition of a literary work. Whatever his tribulations, he is unwilling to leave to posterity an uncompleted opus."

I was astounded at what I heard and shocked and dismayed; but I was worried too because I could not make out why Mrs. Trafford had sent for me. She knew me much too little to think that the story could be of any particular interest to me; nor would she have troubled to let me hear it as a piece of news.

"Poor Edward," she said. "Of course no one can deny that it is a blessing in disguise, but I’m afraid he’ll take it very much to heart. Fortunately he’s done nothing rash." She turned to me. "As soon as Mr. Newton told us about it I went round to Limpus Road. Edward was out, but the maid said he’d only just left; that means that he must have gone home
between the time he ran away from Allgood and this morning. You'll wonder why I asked you to come and see me."

I did not answer. I waited for her to go on.

"It was at Blackstable you first knew the Driffsfields, wasn't it? You can tell us who is this Lord George Kemp. Edward said he was a Blackstable man."

"He's middle-aged. He's got a wife and two sons. They're as old as I am."

"But I don't understand who he can be. I can't find him in Debrett."

I almost laughed.

"Oh, he's not really a lord. He's the local coal merchant. They call him Lord George at Blackstable because he's so grand. It's just a joke."

"The quiddity of bucolic humour is often a trifle obscure to the uninitiated," said Allgood Newton.

"We must all help dear Edward in every way we can," said Mrs. Barton Trafford. Her eyes rested on me thoughtfully. "If Kemp has run away with Rosie Driffelld he must have left his wife."

"I suppose so," I replied.

"Will you do something very kind?"

"If I can."

"Will you go down to Blackstable and find out exactly what has happened? I think we ought to get in touch with the wife."

I have never been very fond of interfering in other people's affairs.

"I don't know how I could do that," I answered.
"Couldn't you see her?"
"No, I couldn't."

If Mrs. Barton Trafford thought my reply blunt she did not show it. She smiled a little.

"At all events that can be left over. The urgent thing is to go down and find out about Kemp. I shall try to see Edward this evening. I can't bear the thought of his staying on in that odious house by himself. Barton and I have made up our minds to bring him here. We have a spare room and I'll arrange it so that he can work there. Don't you agree that that would be the best thing for him, Allgood?"
"Absolutely."

"There's no reason why he shouldn't stay here indefinitely, at all events for a few weeks, and then he can come away with us in the summer. We're going to Brittany. I'm sure he'd like that. It would be a thorough change for him."

"The immediate question," said Barton Trafford, fixing on me an eye nearly as kindly as his wife's, "is whether this young sawbones will go to Blackstable and find out what he can. We must know where we are. That is essential."

Barton Trafford excused his interest in archaeology by a hearty manner and a jocose, even slangy way of speech.

"He couldn't refuse," said his wife, giving me a soft, appealing glance. "You won't refuse, will you? It's so important and you're the only person who can help us."
Of course she did not know that I was as anxious to find out what had happened as she; she could not tell what a bitter jealous pain stabbed my heart.

"I couldn't possibly get away from the hospital before Saturday," I said.

"That'll do. It's very good of you. All Edward's friends will be grateful to you. When shall you return?"

"I have to be back in London early on Monday morning."

"Then come and have tea with me in the afternoon. I shall await you with impatience. Thank God, that's settled. Now I must try and get hold of Edward."

I understood that I was dismissed. Allgood Newton took his leave and came downstairs with me.

"Our Isabel has un petit air of Catherine of Aragon to-day that I find vastly becoming," he murmured when the door was closed behind us. "This is a golden opportunity and I think we may safely trust our friend not to miss it. A charming woman with a heart of gold. Vénus toute entière à sa proie attachée."

I did not understand what he meant, for what I have already told the reader about Mrs. Barton Trafford I only learned much later, but I realised that he was saying something vaguely malicious about her, and probably amusing, so I sniggered.

"I suppose your youth inclines you to what my good Dizzy named in an unlucky moment the gondola of London."

"I'm going to take a bus," I answered.
"Oh? Had you proposed to go by hansom I was going to ask you to be good enough to drop me on your way, but if you are going to use the homely conveyance which I in my old-fashioned manner still prefer to call an omnibus, I shall hoist my unwieldy carcase into a four-wheeler."

He signalled to one and gave me two flabby fingers to shake.

"I shall come on Monday to hear the result of what dear Henry would call your so exquisitely delicate mission."
But it was years before I saw Allgood Newton again, for when I got to Blackstable I found a letter from Mrs. Barton Trafford (who had taken the precaution to note my address) asking me, for reasons that she would explain when she saw me, not to come to her flat but to meet her at six o’clock in the first-class waiting-room at Victoria Station. As soon then as I could get away from the hospital on Monday I made my way there, and after waiting for a while saw her came in. She came toward me with little tripping steps.

"Well, have you anything to tell me? Let us find a quiet corner and sit down."

We sought a place and found it.

"I must explain why I asked you to come here," she said. "Edward is staying with me. At first he did not want to come, but I persuaded him. But he's nervous and ill and irritable. I did not want to run the risk of his seeing you."

I told Mrs. Trafford the bare facts of my story and she listened attentively. Now and then she nodded her head. But I could not hope to make her understand the commotion I had found at Blackstable. The town was beside itself with excitement. Nothing so thrilling had happened there for years and no one could talk of
anything else. Humpty-dumpty had had a great fall. Lord George Kemp had absconded. About a week before he had announced that he had to go up to London on business, and two days later a petition in bankruptcy was filed against him. It appeared that his building operations had not been successful, his attempt to make Blackstable into a frequented seaside resort meeting with no response, and he had been forced to raise money in every way he could. All kinds of rumours ran through the little town. Quite a number of small people who had entrusted their savings to him were faced with the loss of all they had. The details were vague, for neither my uncle nor my aunt knew anything of business matters, nor had I the knowledge to make what they told me comprehensible. But there was a mortgage on George Kemp's house and a bill of sale on his furniture. His wife was left without a penny. His two sons, lads of twenty and twenty-one, were in the coal business, but that too was involved in the general ruin. George Kemp had gone off with all the cash he could lay hands on, something like fifteen hundred pounds, they said, though how they knew I cannot imagine; and it was reported that a warrant had been issued for his arrest. It was supposed that he had left the country; some said he had gone to Australia and some to Canada.

"I hope they catch him," said my uncle. "He ought to get penal servitude for life."

The indignation was universal. They could not forgive him because he had always been so noisy and
boisterous, because he had chaffed them and stood them drinks and given them garden parties, because he had driven such a smart trap and worn his brown billycock hat at such a rakish angle. But it was on Sunday night after church in the vestry that the churchwarden told my uncle the worst. For the last two years he had been meeting Rosie Driffield at Haversham almost every week and they had been spending the night together at a public-house. The licensee of this had put money into one of Lord George’s wildcat schemes, and on discovering that he had lost it blurted out the whole story. He could have borne it if Lord George had defrauded others, but that he should defraud him who had done him a good turn and whom he looked upon as a chum, that was the limit.

"I expect they’ve run away together," said my uncle.

"I shouldn’t be surprised," said the churchwarden.

After supper, while the housemaid was clearing away, I went into the kitchen to talk to Mary-Ann. She had been at church and had heard the story too. I cannot believe that the congregation had listened very attentively to my uncle’s sermon.

"The vicar says they’ve run away together," I said. I had not breathed a word of what I knew.

"Why, of course they ’ave," said Mary-Ann. "He was the only man she ever really fancied. He only ’ad to lift ’is little finger and she’d leave anyone no matter who it was."

I lowered my eyes. I was suffering from bitter mortification; and I was angry with Rosie. I
thought she had behaved very badly to me.

"I suppose we shall never see her again," I said.

It gave me a pang to utter the words.

"I don't suppose we shall," said Mary-Ann cheerfully.

When I had told Mrs. Barton Trafford as much of this story as I thought she need know, she sighed, but whether from satisfaction or distress I had no notion.

"Well, that's the end of Rosie at all events," she said. She got up and held out her hand. "Why will these literary men make these unfortunate marriages? It's all very sad, very sad. Thank you so much for what you've done. We know where we are now. The great thing is that it shouldn't interfere with Edward's work."

Her remarks seemed a trifle disconnected to me. The fact was, I have no doubt, that she was giving me not the smallest thought. I led her out of Victoria Station and put her into a bus that went down the King's Road, Chelsea; then I walked back to my lodgings.
XXI

I lost touch with Driffeld. I was too shy to seek him out; I was busy with my examinations, and when I had passed them I went abroad. I remember vaguely to have seen in the paper that he had divorced Rosie. Nothing more was heard of her. Small sums reached her mother occasionally, ten or twenty pounds, and they came in a registered letter with a New York postmark; but no address was given, no message enclosed, and they were presumed to come from Rosie only because no one else could possibly send Mrs. Gann money. Then in the fullness of years Rosie's mother died, and it may be supposed that in some way the news reached her, for the letters ceased to come.
XXII

Alroy Kear and I, as arranged, met on Friday at Victoria Station to catch the five ten to Blackstable. We made ourselves comfortable in opposite corners of a smoking compartment. From him I now learned roughly what had happened to Driffield after his wife ran away from him. Roy had in due course become very intimate with Mrs. Barton Trafford. Knowing him and remembering her, I realised that this was inevitable. I was not surprised to hear that he had travelled with her and Barton on the continent, sharing with them to the full their passion for Wagner, post-impressionist painting and baroque architecture. He had lunched assiduously at the flat in Chelsea and when advancing years and failing health had imprisoned Mrs. Trafford to her drawing-room, notwithstanding the many claims on his time he had gone regularly once a week to sit with her. He had a good heart. After her death he wrote an article about her in which with admirable emotion he did justice to her great gifts of sympathy and discrimination.

It pleased me to think that his kindliness should receive its due and unexpected reward, for Mrs. Barton Trafford had told him much about Edward Driffield that could not fail to be of service to him in the work of
love on which he was now engaged. Mrs. Barton Trafford, exercising a gentle violence, not only took Edward Driffield into her house when the flight of his faithless wife left him what Roy could only describe by the French word désemparé, but persuaded him to stay for nearly a year. She gave him the loving care, the unfailing kindness and the intelligent understanding of a woman who combined feminine tact with masculine vigour, a heart of gold with an unerring eye for the main chance. It was in her flat that he finished *By Their Fruits*. She was justified in looking upon it as her book and the dedication to her is a proof that Driffield was not unmindful of his debt. She took him to Italy (with Barton of course, for Mrs. Trafford knew too well how malicious people were, to give occasion for scandal) and with a volume of Ruskin in her hand revealed to Edward Driffield the immortal beauties of that country. Then she found him rooms in the Temple and arranged little luncheons there, she acting very prettily the part of hostess, where he could receive the persons whom his increasing reputation attracted.

It must be admitted that this increasing reputation was very largely due to her. His great celebrity came only during his last years when he had long ceased to write, but the foundations of it were undoubtedly laid by Mrs. Trafford's untiring efforts. Not only did she inspire (and perhaps write not a little, for she had a dexterous pen) the article that Barton at last contributed to the *Quarterly* in which the claim was first made that Driffield must be ranked with the masters of British
fiction, but as each book came out she organised its reception. She went here and there, seeing editors and, more important still, proprietors of influential organs; she gave soirées to which everyone was invited who could be of use. She persuaded Edward Driffield to give readings at the houses of the very great for charitable purposes; she saw to it that his photographs should appear in the illustrated weeklies; she revised personally any interview he gave. For ten years she was an indefatigable press agent. She kept him steadily before the public.

Mrs. Barton Trafford had a grand time, but she did not get above herself. It was useless indeed to ask him to a party without her; he refused. And when she and Barton and Driffield were invited anywhere to dinner they came together and went together. She never let him out of her sight. Hostesses might rave; they could take it or leave it. As a rule they took it. If Mrs. Barton Trafford happened to be a little out of temper it was through him she showed it, for while she remained charming, Edward Driffield would be uncommonly gruff. But she knew exactly how to draw him out and when the company was distinguished could make him brilliant. She was perfect with him. She never concealed from him her conviction that he was the greatest writer of his day; she not only referred to him invariably as the master, but, perhaps a little playfully and yet how flatteringly, addressed him always as such. To the end she retained something kittenish.

Then a terrible thing happened. Driffield caught
pneumonia and was extremely ill; for some time his life was despaired of. Mrs. Barton Trafford did everything that such a woman could do, and would willingly have nursed him herself, but she was frail, she was indeed over sixty, and he had to have professional nurses. When at last he pulled through, the doctors said that he must go into the country, and since he was still extremely weak insisted that a nurse should go with him. Mrs. Trafford wanted him to go to Bournemouth so that she could run down for week-ends and see that everything was well with him, but Driffield had a fancy for Cornwall, and the doctors agreed that the mild airs of Penzance would suit him. One would have thought that a woman of Isabel Trafford’s delicate intuition would have had some foreboding of ill. No. She let him go. She impressed on the nurse that she entrusted her with a grave responsibility; she placed in her hands, if not the future of English literature, at least the life and welfare of its most distinguished living representative. It was a priceless charge.

Three weeks later Edward Driffield wrote and told her that he had married his nurse by special license.

I imagine that never did Mrs. Barton Trafford exhibit more pre-eminently her greatness of soul than in the manner in which she met this situation. Did she cry, Judas, Judas? Did she tear her hair and fall on the floor and kick her heels in an attack of hysterics? Did she turn on the mild and learned Barton and call him a blithering old fool? Did she inveigh against the faithlessness of men and the wantonness of women or
did she relieve her wounded feelings by shouting at the top of her voice a string of those obscenities with which the alienists tell us the chastest females are surprisingly acquainted? Not at all. She wrote a charming letter of congratulation to Driffield and she wrote to his bride telling her that she was glad to think that now she would have two loving friends instead of one. She begged them both to come and stay with her on their return to London. She told everyone she met that the marriage had made her very, very happy, for Edward Driffield would soon be an old man and must have someone to take care of him; who could do this better than a hospital nurse? She never had anything but praise for the new Mrs. Driffield; she was not exactly pretty, she said, but she had a very nice face; of course she wasn't quite, quite a lady, but Edward would only have been uncomfortable with anyone too grand. She was just the sort of wife for him. I think it may be not unjustly said that Mrs. Barton Trafford fairly ran over with the milk of human kindness, but all the same I have an inkling that if ever the milk of human kindness was charged with vitriol, here was a case in point.
When we arrived at Blackstable, Roy and I, a car, neither ostentatiously grand nor obviously cheap, was waiting for him and the chauffeur had a note for me asking me to lunch with Mrs. Driffield next day. I got into a taxi and went to the 'Bear and Key.' I had learned from Roy that there was a new Marine Hotel on the front, but I did not propose for the luxuries of civilisation to abandon a resort of my youth. Change met me at the railway station, which was not in its old place, but up a new road, and of course it was strange to be driven down the High Street in a car. But the 'Bear and Key' was unaltered. It received me with its old churlish indifference: there was no one at the entrance, the driver put my bag down and drove away; I called, no one answered; I went into the bar and found a young lady with shingled hair reading a book by Mr. Compton Mackenzie. I asked her if I could have a room. She gave me a slightly offended look and said she thought so, but as that seemed to exhaust her interest in the matter I asked politely whether there was anyone who could show it to me. She got up and, opening a door, in a shrill voice called: "Katie."

"What is it?" I heard.

"There's a gent wants a room."

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In a little while appeared an ancient and haggard female in a very dirty print dress, with an untidy mop of grey hair, and showed me, two flights up, a very small grubby room.

"Can't you do something better than that for me?" I asked.

"It's the room commercials generally 'ave," she answered with a sniff.

"Haven't you got any others?"

"Not single."

"Then give me a double room."

"I'll go and ask Mrs. Brentford."

I accompanied her down to the first floor and she knocked at a door. She was told to come in, and when she opened it I caught sight of a stout woman with grey hair elaborately marcelled. She was reading a book. Apparently everyone at the 'Bear and Key' was interested in literature. She gave me an indifferent look when Katie said I wasn't satisfied with number seven.

"Show him number five," she said.

I began to feel that I had been a trifle rash in declining so haughtily Mrs. Driffield's invitation to stay with her and then putting aside in my sentimental way Roy's wise suggestion that I should stay at the Marine Hotel. Katie took me upstairs again and ushered me into a largish room looking on the High Street. Most of its space was occupied by a double bed. The windows had certainly not been opened for a month.

I said that would do and asked about dinner.
"You can 'ave what you like," said Katie. "We 'aven't got nothing in, but I'll run round and get it."

Knowing English inns, I ordered a fried sole and a grilled chop. Then I went for a stroll. I walked down to the beach and found that they had built an esplanade and there was a row of bungalows and villas where I remembered only windswept fields. But they were scedy and bedraggled and I guessed that even after all these years Lord George's dream of turning Blackstable into a popular seaside resort had not come true. A retired military man, a pair of elderly ladies walked along the crumbling asphalt. It was incredibly dreary. A chill wind was blowing and a light drizzle swept over from the sea.

I went back into the town and here, in the space between the 'Bear and Key' and the 'Duke of Kent,' were little knots of men standing about notwithstanding the inclement weather; and their eyes had the same pale blue, their high cheekbones the same ruddy colour as that of their fathers before them. It was strange to see that some of the sailors in blue jerseys still wore little gold rings in their ears; and not only old ones but boys scarcely out of their teens. I sauntered down the street and there was the bank refronted, but the stationery shop where I had bought paper and wax to make rubbings with an obscure writer whom I had met by chance was unchanged; there were two or three cinemas and their garish posters suddenly gave the prim street a dissipated air so that it looked like a respectable elderly woman who had taken a drop too much.
It was cold and cheerless in the commercial room where I ate my dinner alone at a large table laid for six. I was served by the slatternly Katie. I asked if I could have a fire.

"Not in June," she said. "We don't 'ave fires after April."

"I'll pay for it," I protested.

"Not in June. In October, yes, but not in June."

When I had finished I went into the bar to have a glass of port.

"Very quiet," I said to the shingled barmaid.

"Yes, it is quiet," she answered.

"I should have thought on a Friday night you'd have quite a lot of people in here."

"Well, one would think that, wouldn't one?"

Then a stout red-faced man with a close-cropped head of grey hair came in from the back and I guessed that this was my host.

"Are you Mr. Brentford?" I asked him.

"Yes, that's me."

"I knew your father. Will you have a glass of port?"

I told him my name, in the days of his boyhood better known than any other at Blackstable, but somewhat to my mortification I saw that it aroused no echo in his memory. He consented, however, to let me stand him a glass of port.

"Down here on business?" he asked me. "We get quite a few commercial gents at one time and another. We always like to do what we can for them."
I told him that I had come down to see Mrs. Driffeld and left him to guess on what errand.

"I used to see a lot of the old man," said Mr. Brentford. "He used to be very partial to dropping in here and having his glass of bitter. Mind you, I don't say he ever got tiddly, but he used to like to sit in the bar and talk. My word, he'd talk by the hour and he never cared who he talked to. Mrs. Driffeld didn't half like his coming here. He'd slip away, out of the house, without saying a word to anybody, and come toddling down. You know it's a bit of a walk for a man of that age. Of course when they missed him Mrs. Driffeld knew where he was, and she used to telephone and ask if he was here. Then she'd drive over in the car and go in and see my wife. 'You go in and fetch him, Mrs. Brentford,' she'd say; 'I don't like to go in the bar meself, not with all those men hanging about'; so Mrs. Brentford would come in and she'd say, 'Now Mr. Driffeld, Mrs. Driffeld's come for you in the car, so you'd better finish your beer and let her take you home.' He used to ask Mrs. Brentford not to say he was here when Mrs. Driffeld rang up, but of course we couldn't do that. He was an old man and all that and we didn't want to take the responsibility. He was born in this parish, you know, and his first wife, she was a Blackstable girl. She's been dead these many years. I never knew her. He was a funny old fellow. No side, you know; they tell me they thought a rare lot of him in London and when he died the papers were full of him; but you'd never have known it to talk to him. He
might have been just nobody like you and me. Of course we always tried to make him comfortable; we tried to get him to sit in one of them easy chairs, but no, he must sit up at the bar; he said he liked to feel his feet on a rail. My belief is he was happier here than anywhere. He always said he liked a bar. He said you saw life there and he said he'd always loved life. Quite a character he was. Reminded me of my father, except that my old governor never read a book in his life and he drank a bottle of French brandy a day and he was seventy-eight when he died and his last illness was his first. I quite missed old Drissfield when he popped off. I was only saying to Mrs. Brentford the other day, I'd like to read one of his books some time. They tell me he wrote several about these parts.”
Next morning it was cold and raw, but it was not raining, and I walked down the High Street toward the vicarage. I recognised the names over the shops, the Kentish names that have been borne for centuries—the Ganns, the Kemps, the Cobbs, the Iggyldens—but I saw no one that I knew. I felt like a ghost walking down that street where I had once known nearly everyone, if not to speak to, at least by sight. Suddenly a very shabby little car passed me, stopped and backed, and I saw someone looking at me curiously. A tall, heavy, elderly man got out and came toward me.

"Aren't you Willie Ashenden?" he asked.

Then I recognised him. He was the doctor's son, and I had been at school with him; we had passed from form to form together, and I knew that he had succeeded his father in his practice.

"Hullo, how are you?" he asked. "I've just been along to the vicarage to see my grandson. It's a preparatory school now, you know, and I put him there at the beginning of this term."

He was shabbily dressed and unkempt, but he had a fine head and I saw that in youth he must have had unusual beauty. It was funny that I had never noticed it.
"Are you a grandfather?" I asked.

"Three times over," he laughed.

It gave me a shock. He had drawn breath, walked the earth and presently grown to man's estate, married, had children and they in turn had had children; I judged from the look of him that he had lived, with incessant toil, in penury. He had the peculiar manner of the country doctor, bluff, hearty and unctuous. His life was over. I had plans in my head for books and plays, I was full of schemes for the future; I felt that a long stretch of activity and fun still lay before me; and yet, I supposed, to others I must seem the elderly man that he seemed to me. I was so shaken that I had not the presence of mind to ask about his brothers whom as a child I had played with, or about the old friends who had been my companions; after a few foolish remarks I left him. I walked on to the vicarage, a roomy, rambling house too far out of the way for the modern incumbent who took his duties more seriously than did my uncle and too large for the present cost of living. It stood in a big garden and was surrounded by green fields. There was a great square notice board that announced that it was a preparatory school for the sons of gentlemen and gave the name and the degrees of the head master. I looked over the paling; the garden was squalid and untidy and the pond in which I used to fish for roach was choked up. The glebe fields had been cut up into building lots. There were rows of little brick houses with bumpy ill-made roads. I walked along Joy Lane and there were houses here too,
bungalows facing the sea; and the old turnpike house was a trim tea shop.

I wandered about here and there. There seemed innumerable streets of little houses of yellow brick, but I do not know who lived in them for I saw no one about. I went down to the harbour. It was deserted. There was but one tramp lying a little way out from the pier. Two or three sailormen were sitting outside a warehouse and they stared at me as I passed. The bottom had fallen out of the coal trade and colliers came to Blackstable no longer.

Then it was time for me to go to Ferne Court and I went back to the 'Bear and Key.' The landlord had told me that he had a Daimler for hire and I had arranged that it should take me to my luncheon. It stood at the door when I came up, a brougham, but the oldest, most dilapidated car of its make that I had ever seen; it panted along with squeaks and thumps and rattlings, with sudden angry jerks, so that I wondered if I should ever reach my destination. But the extraordinary, the amazing thing about it was that it smelled exactly like the old landau which my uncle used to hire every Sunday morning to go to church in. This was a rank odour of stables and of stale straw that lay at the bottom of the carriage; and I wondered in vain why, after all these years, the motor car should have it too. But nothing can bring back the past like a perfume or a stench, and, oblivious to the country I was trundling through, I saw myself once more a little boy on the front seat with the communion plate beside me and, facing
me, my aunt, smelling slightly of clean linen and eau-de-Cologne, in her black silk cloak and her little bonnet with a feather, and my uncle in his cassock, a broad band of ribbed silk round his ample waist and a gold cross hanging over his stomach from the gold chain round his neck.

"Now, Willie, mind you behave nicely to-day. You're not to turn round, and sit up properly in your seat. The Lord's House isn't the place to loll in and you must remember that you should set an example to other little boys who haven't had your advantages."

When I arrived at Ferne Court Mrs. Driffield and Roy were walking round the garden and they came up to me as I got out of the car.

"I was showing Roy my flowers," said Mrs. Driffield, as she shook hands with me. And then with a sigh: "They're all I have now."

She looked no older than when last I saw her six years before. She wore her weeds with quiet distinction. At her neck was a collar of white crêpe and at her wrists cuffs of the same. Roy, I noticed, wore with his neat blue suit a black tie; I supposed it was a sign of respect for the illustrious dead.

"I'll just show you my herbaceous borders," said Mrs. Driffield, "and then we'll go in to lunch."

We walked round and Roy was very knowledgeable. He knew what all the flowers were called, and the Latin names tripped off his tongue like cigarettes out of a cigarette-making machine. He told Mrs. Driffield where she ought to get certain varieties that she
absolutely must have and how perfectly lovely were certain others.

"Shall we go in through Edward’s study?" suggested Mrs. Driffield. "I keep it exactly as it was when he was here. I haven’t changed a thing. You’d be surprised how many people come over to see the house, and of course above all they want to see the room he worked in."

We went in through an open window. There was a bowl of roses on the desk and on a little round table by the side of the armchair a copy of the Spectator. In the ash trays were the master’s pipes and there was ink in the inkstand. The scene was perfectly set. I do not know why the room seemed so strangely dead; it had already the mustiness of a museum. Mrs. Driffield went to the bookshelves and with a little smile, half playful, half sad, passed a rapid hand across the back of half a dozen volumes bound in blue.

"You know that Edward admired your work so much," said Mrs. Driffield. "He re-read your books quite often."

"I’m very glad to think that," I said politely.

I knew very well that they had not been there on my last visit and in a casual way I took one of them out and ran my fingers along the top to see whether there was dust on it. There was not. Then I took another book down, one of Charlotte Bronte’s, and making a little plausible conversation tried the same experiment. No, there was no dust there either. All I learned was that Mrs. Driffield was an excellent housekeeper
and had a conscientious maid.

We went in to luncheon, a hearty British meal of roast beef and Yorkshire pudding, and we talked of the work on which Roy was engaged.

"I want to spare dear Roy all the labour I can," said Mrs. Drifferd, "and I've been gathering together as much of the material as I could myself. Of course it's been rather painful, but it's been very interesting, too. I came across a lot of old photographs that I must show you."

After luncheon we went into the drawing-room and I noticed again with what perfect tact Mrs. Drifferd had arranged it. It suited the widow of a distinguished man of letters almost more than it had suited the wife. Those chintzes, those bowls of pot-pourri, those Dresden China figures—there was about them a faint air of regret; they seemed to reflect pensively upon a past of distinction. I could have wished on this chilly day that there were a fire in the grate, but the English are a hardy as well as a conservative race; and it is not difficult for them to maintain their principles at the cost of the discomfort of others. I doubted whether Mrs. Drifferd would have conceived the possibility of lighting a fire before the first of October. She asked me whether I had lately seen the lady who had brought me to lunch with the Drifferds, and I surmised from her faint acerbity that since the death of her eminent husband the great and fashionable had shown a distinct tendency to take no further notice of her. We were just settling down to talk about the defunct; Roy and
Mrs. Driffield were putting artful questions to incite me to disclose my recollections and I was gathering my wits about me so that I should not in an unguarded moment let slip anything that I had made up my mind to keep to myself; when suddenly the trim parlour-maid brought in two cards on a small salver.

"Two gentlemen in a car, mum, and they say, could they look at the house and garden?"

"What a bore!" cried Mrs. Driffield, but with astonishing alacrity. "Isn't it funny I should have been speaking just now about the people who want to see the house? I never have a moment's peace."

"Well, why don't you say you're sorry you can't see them?" said Roy, with what I thought a certain cattiness.

"Oh, I couldn't do that. Edward wouldn't have liked me to." She looked at the cards. "I haven't got my glasses on me."

She handed them to me, and on one I read 'Henry Beard MacDougald, University of Virginia'; and in pencil was written: 'Assistant professor in English Literature.' The other was 'Jean-Paul Underhill' and there was at the bottom an address in New York.

"Americans," said Mrs. Driffield. "Say I shall be very pleased if they'll come in."

Presently the maid ushered the strangers in. They were both tall young men and broad-shouldered, with heavy, clean-shaven, swarthy faces and handsome eyes; they both wore horn-rimmed spectacles and they both had thick black hair combed straight back from their
foreheads. They both wore English suits that were evidently brand-new; they were both slightly embarrassed, but verbose and extremely civil. They explained that they were making a literary tour of England and, being admirers of Edward Driffield, had taken the liberty of stopping off on their way to Rye to visit Henry James’s house in the hope that they would be permitted to see a spot sanctified by so many associations. The reference to Rye did not go down very well with Mrs. Driffield.

"I believe they have some very good links there," she said.

She introduced the Americans to Roy and me. I was filled with admiration for the way in which Roy rose to the occasion. It appeared that he had lectured before the University of Virginia and had stayed with a distinguished member of the faculty. It had been an unforgettable experience. He did not know whether he had been more impressed by the lavish hospitality with which those charming Virginians had entertained him or by their intelligent interest in art and literature. He asked how So-and-So was, and So-and-So; he had made lifelong friends there, and it looked as though everyone he had met was good and kind and clever. Soon the young professor was telling Roy how much he liked his books, and Roy was modestly telling him what in this one and the other his aim had been and how conscious he was that he had come far short of achieving it. Mrs. Driffield listened with smiling sympathy, but I had a feeling that her smile was growing a trifle strained.
It may be that Roy had too, for he suddenly broke off.

"But you don’t want me to bore you with my stuff," he said in his loud hearty way. "I’m only here because Mrs. Drissfield has entrusted to me the great honour of writing Edward Drissfield’s Life."

This of course interested the visitors very much.

"It’s some job, believe me," said Roy, playfully American. "Fortunately I have the assistance of Mrs. Drissfield, who was not only a perfect wife, but an admirable amanuensis and secretary; the materials she has placed at my disposal are so amazingly full that really little remains for me to do but take advantage of her industry and her—her affectionate zeal."

Mrs. Drissfield looked down demurely at the carpet and the two young Americans turned on her their large dark eyes in which you could read their sympathy, their interest and their respect. After a little more conversation—partly literary but also about golf, for the visitors admitted that they hoped to get a round or two at Rye, and here again Roy was on the spot, for he told them to look out for such and such a bunker and when they came to London hoped they would play with him at Sunningdale; after this, I say, Mrs. Drissfield got up and offered to show them Edward’s study and bedroom, and of course the garden. Roy rose to his feet, evidently bent on accompanying them, but Mrs. Drissfield gave him a little smile; it was pleasant but firm.

"Don’t you bother to come, Roy," she said. "I'll
take them round. You stay here and talk to Mr. Ashenden.”

“Oh, all right. Of course.”

The strangers bade us farewell and Roy and I settled down again in the chintz armchairs.

“Jolly room this is,” said Roy.

“Very.”

“Amy had to work hard to get it. You know the old man bought this house two or three years before they were married. She tried to make him sell it, but he wouldn’t. He was very obstinate in some ways. You see, it belonged to a certain Miss Wolfe, whose bailiff his father was, and he said that when he was a little boy his one idea was to own it himself and now he’d got it he was going to keep it. One would have thought the last thing he’d want to do was to live in a place where everyone knew all about his origins and everything. Once poor Amy very nearly engaged a housemaid before she discovered she was Edward’s great-niece. When Amy came here the house was furnished from attic to cellar in the best Tottenham Court Road Road manner; you know the sort of thing, Turkey carpets and mahogany sideboards, and a plush-covered suite in the drawing-room, and modern marquetry. It was his idea of how a gentleman’s house should be furnished. Amy says it was simply awful. He wouldn’t let her change a thing and she had to go to work with the greatest care; she says she simply couldn’t have lived in it and she was determined to have things right, so she had to change things one by one so
that he didn’t pay any attention. She told me the hardest job she had was with his writing-desk. I don’t know whether you’ve noticed the one there is in his study now. It’s a very good period piece; I wouldn’t mind having it myself. Well, he had a horrible American roll-top desk. He’d had it for years and he’d written a dozen books on it and he simply wouldn’t part with it, he had no feeling for things like that; he just happened to be attached to it because he’d had it so long. You must get Amy to tell you the story how she managed to get rid of it in the end. It’s really priceless. She’s a remarkable woman, you know; she generally gets her own way.”

“I’ve noticed it,” I said.

It had not taken her long to dispose of Roy when he showed signs of wishing to go over the house with the visitors. He gave me a quick look and laughed. Roy was not stupid.

“You don’t know America as well as I do,” he said. “They always prefer a live mouse to a dead lion. That’s one of the reasons why I like America.”
When Mrs. Driffield, having sent the pilgrims on their way, came back she bore under her arm a portfolio.

"What very nice young men!" she said. "I wish young men in England took such a keen interest in literature. I gave them that photo of Edward when he was dead and they asked me for one of mine, and I signed it for them." Then very graciously: "You made a great impression on them, Roy. They said it was a real privilege to meet you."

"I've lectured in America so much," said Roy, with modesty.

"Oh, but they've read your books. They say that what they like about them is that they're so virile."

The portfolio contained a number of old photographs, groups of schoolboys among whom I recognized an urchin with untidy hair as Driffield only because his widow pointed him out, Rugby fifties with Driffield a little older, and then one of a young sailor in a jersey and a reefer jacket, Driffield when he ran away to sea.

"Here's one taken when he was first married," said Mrs. Driffield.

He wore a beard and black-and-white check trousers; in his buttonhole was a large white rose.
backed by maidenhair and on the table beside him a
chimney-pot hat.

"And here is the bride," said Mrs. Driffield, trying
not to smile.

Poor Rosie, seen by a country photographer over
forty years ago, was grotesque. She was standing very
stiffly against a background of baronial hall, holding a
large bouquet; her dress was elaborately draped,
pinched at the waist, and she wore a bustle. Her fringe
came down to her eyes. On her head was a wreath
of orange blossoms, perched high on a mass of hair,
and from it was thrown back a long veil. Only I knew
how lovely she must have looked.

"She looks fearfully common," said Roy.

"She was," murmured Mrs. Driffield.

We looked at more photographs of Edward, photo-
graphs that had been taken of him when he began to
be known, photographs when he wore only a moustache
and others, all the later ones, when he was clean-shaven.
You saw his face grown thinner and more lined. The
stubborn commonplace of the early portraits melted
gradually into a weary refinement. You saw the change
in him wrought by experience, thought and achieved
ambition. I looked again at the photograph of the
young sailorman and fancied that I saw in it already a
trace of that aloofness that seemed to me so marked
in the older ones and that I had had years before the
vague sensation of in the man himself. The face you
saw was a mask and the actions he performed were with-
out significance. I had an impression that the real man,
to his death unknown and lonely, was a wraith that went a silent way unseen between the writer of his books and the man who led his life, and smiled with ironical detachment at the two puppets that the world took for Edward Driffield. I am conscious that in what I have written of him I have not presented a living man, standing on his feet, rounded, with comprehensible motives and logical activities; I have not tried to: I am glad to leave that to the abler pen of Alroy Kear.

I came across the photographs that Harry Retford, the actor, had had taken of Rosie, and then a photograph of the picture that Lionel Hillier had painted of her. It gave me a pang. That was how I best remembered her. Notwithstanding the old-fashioned gown, she was alive there and tremulous with the passion that filled her. She seemed to offer herself to the assault of love.

"She gives you the impression of a hefty wench," said Roy.

"If you like the milkmaid type," answered Mrs. Driffield. "I've always thought she looked rather like a white nigger."

That was what Mrs. Barton Trafford had been fond of calling her, and with Rosie's thick lips and broad nose there was indeed a hateful truth in the description. But they did not know how silvery golden her hair was, nor how golden silver her skin; they did not know her enchanting smile.

"She wasn't a bit like a white nigger," I said. "She
was virginal like the dawn. She was like Hebe. She was like a tea rose."

Mrs. Drifflefield smiled and exchanged a meaning glance with Roy.

"Mrs. Barton Trafford told me a great deal about her. I don’t wish to seem spiteful, but I’m afraid I don’t think that she can have been a very nice woman."

"That’s where you make a mistake," I replied. "She was a very nice woman. I never saw her in a bad temper. You only had to say you wanted something for her to give it to you. I never heard her say a disagreeable thing about anyone. She had a heart of gold."

"She was a terrible slattern. Her house was always in a mess; you didn’t like to sit down in a chair because it was so dusty and you dared not look in the corners. And it was the same with her person. She could never put a skirt on straight and you’d see about two inches of petticoat hanging down on one side."

"She didn’t bother about things like that. They didn’t make her any the less beautiful. And she was as good as she was beautiful."

Roy burst out laughing and Mrs. Drifflefield put her hand up to her mouth to hide her smile.

"Oh, come, Mr. Ashenden, that’s really going too far. After all, let’s face it, she was a nymphomaniac."

"I think that’s a very silly word," I said.

"Well, then, let me say that she can hardly have been a very good woman to treat poor Edward as she did. Of course it was a blessing in disguise. If she..."
hadn't run away from him he might have had to bear that burden for the rest of his life, and with such a handicap he could never have reached the position he did. But the fact remains that she was notoriously unfaithful to him. From what I hear she was absolutely promiscuous."

"You don't understand," I said. "She was a very simple woman. Her instincts were healthy and ingenuous. She loved to make people happy. She loved love."

"Do you call that love?"

"Well, then, the act of love. She was naturally affectionate. When she liked anyone it was quite natural for her to go to bed with him. She never thought twice about it. It was not vice; it wasn't lasciviousness; it was her nature. She gave herself as naturally as the sun gives heat or the flowers their perfume. It was a pleasure to her and she liked to give pleasure to others. It had no effect on her character; she remained sincere, unspoiled and artless."

Mrs. Drisfield looked as though she had taken a dose of castor oil and had just been trying to get the taste of it out of her mouth by sucking a lemon.

"I don't understand," she said. "But then I'm bound to admit that I never understood what Edward saw in her."

"Did he know that she was carrying on with all sorts of people?" asked Roy.

"I'm sure he didn't," she replied quickly.
"You think him a bigger fool than I do, Mrs. Driffield," I said.

"Then why did he put up with it?"

"I think I can tell you. You see, she wasn't a woman who ever inspired love. Only affection. It was absurd to be jealous over her. She was like a clear deep pool in a forest glade into which it's heavenly to plunge, but it is neither less cool nor less crystalline because a tramp and a gipsy and a gamekeeper have plunged into it before you."

Roy laughed again and this time Mrs. Driffield without concealment smiled hungrily.

"It's comic to hear you so lyrical," said Roy.

I stifled a sigh. I have noticed that when I am most serious people are apt to laugh at me, and indeed when after a lapse of time I have read passages that I wrote from the fullness of my heart I have been tempted to laugh at myself. It must be that there is something naturally absurd in a sincere emotion, though why there should be I cannot imagine, unless it is that man, the ephemeral inhabitant of an insignificant planet, with all his pain and all his striving is but a jest in an eternal mind.

I saw that Mrs. Driffield wished to ask me something. It caused her a certain embarrassment.

"Do you think he'd have taken her back if she'd been willing to come?"

"You knew him better than I. I should say no. I think that when he had exhausted an emotion he took no further interest in the person who had aroused it."
I should say that he had a peculiar combination of strong feeling and extreme callousness."

"I don't know how you can say that," cried Roy.
"He was the kindest man I ever met."

Mrs. Driffield looked at me steadily and then dropped her eyes.

"I wonder what happened to her when she went to America," he asked.

"I believe she married Kemp," said Mrs. Driffield.
"I heard they had taken another name. Of course they couldn't show their faces over here again."

"When did she die?"

"Oh, about ten years ago."

"How did you hear?" I asked.

"From Harold Kemp, the son; he's in some sort of business at Maidstone. I never told Edward. She'd been dead to him for many years and I saw no reason to remind him of the past. It always helps you if you put yourself in other people's shoes and I said to myself that if I were he I shouldn't want to be reminded of an unfortunate episode of my youth. Don't you think I was right?"
MRS. DRIFIELD very kindly offered to send me back to Blackstable in her car, but I preferred to walk. I promised to dine at Ferne Court next day and meanwhile to write down what I could remember of the two periods during which I had been in the habit of seeing Edward Driffield. As I walked along the winding road, meeting no one by the way, I mused upon what I should say. Do they not tell us that style is the art of omission? If that is so I should certainly write a very pretty piece, and it seemed almost a pity that Roy should use it only as material. I chuckled when I reflected what a bombshell I could throw if I chose. There was one person who could tell them all they wanted to know about Edward Driffield and his first marriage; but this fact I proposed to keep to myself. They thought Rosie was dead; they erred; Rosie was very much alive.

Being in New York for the production of a play and my arrival having been advertised to all and sundry by my manager’s energetic press representative, I received one day a letter addressed in a handwriting I knew but could not place. It was large and round, firm but uneducated. It was so familiar to me that I was exasperated not to remember whose it was. It would
have been more sensible to open the letter at once, but instead I looked at the envelope and racked my brain. There are handwritings I cannot see without a little shiver of dismay and some letters that look so tiresome that I cannot bring myself to open them for a week. When at last I tore open the envelope what I read gave me a strange feeling. It began abruptly:

I have just seen that you are in New York and would like to see you again. I am not living in New York any more, but Yonkers is quite close and if you have a car you can easily do it in half an hour. I expect you are very busy so leave it to you to make a date. Although it is many years since we last met I hope you have not forgotten your old friend

Rose Iggulden (formerly Driffield)

I looked at the address; it was the Albemarle, evidently a hotel or an apartment house, then there was the name of a street, and Yonkers. A shiver passed through me as though someone had walked over my grave. During the years that had passed I had sometimes thought of Rosie, but of late I had said to myself that she must surely be dead. I was puzzled for a moment by the name. Why Iggulden and not Kemp? Then it occurred to me that they had taken this name, a Kentish one too, when they fled from England. My first impulse was to make an excuse not to see her; I am always shy of seeing again people I have not seen for a long time; but then I was seized with curiosity. I wanted to see what she was like and to
hear what had happened to her. I was going down to Dobb's Ferry for the week-end, to reach which I had to pass through Yonkers, and so answered that I would come at about four on the following Saturday.

The Albemarle was a huge block of apartments, comparatively new, and it looked as though it were inhabited by persons in easy circumstances. My name was telephoned up by a negro porter in uniform and I was taken up in the elevator by another. I felt uncommonly nervous. The door was opened for me by a coloured maid.

"Come right in," she said. "Mrs. Iggulden's expecting you."

I was ushered into a living-room that served also as dining-room, for at one end of it was a square table of heavily carved oak, a dresser and four chairs of the kind that the manufacturers in Grand Rapids would certainly describe as Jacobean. But the other end was furnished with a Louis XV suite, gilt and upholstered in pale blue damask; there were a great many small tables, richly carved and gilt, on which stood Sévres vases with ormolu decorations and nude bronze ladies with draperies flowing as though in a howling gale that artfully concealed those parts of their bodies that decency required; and each one held at the end of a playfully outstretched arm an electric lamp. The gramophone was the grandest thing I had ever seen out of a shop window, all gilt and shaped like a sedan chair and painted with Watteau courtiers and their ladies.
After I had waited for about five minutes a door was opened and Rosie came briskly in. She gave me both her hands.

"Well, this is a surprise," she said. "I hate to think how many years it is since we met. Excuse me one moment." She went to the door and called: "Jessie, you can bring the tea in. Mind the water’s boiling properly." Then, coming back: "The trouble, I’ve had to teach that girl to make tea properly, you’d never believe."

Rosie was at least seventy. She was wearing a very smart sleeveless frock of green chiffon, heavily diamanté, cut square at the neck and very short; it fitted like a bursting glove. By her shape I gathered that she wore rubber corsets. Her nails were blood-coloured and her eyebrows plucked. She was stout, and she had a double chin; the skin of her bosom, although she had powdered it freely, was red, and her face was red too. But she looked well and healthy and full of beans. Her hair was still abundant, but it was quite white, shingled and permanently waved. As a young woman she had had soft, naturally waving hair and these stiff undulations, as though she had just come out of a hairdresser’s, seemed more than anything else to change her. The only thing that remained was her smile, which had still its old childlike and mischievous sweetness. Her teeth had never been very good, irregular and of bad shape; but these now were replaced by a set of perfect evenness and snowy brilliancy; they were obviously the best money could buy.
The coloured maid brought in an elaborate tea with pâté sandwiches and cookies and candy and little knives and forks and tiny napkins. It was all very neat and smart.

"That's one thing I've never been able to do without—my tea," said Rosie, helping herself to a hot buttered scone. "It's my best meal, really, though I know I shouldn't eat it. My doctor keeps on saying to me: 'Mrs. Iggulden, you can't expect to get your weight down if you will eat half a dozen cookies at tea.'" She gave me a smile, and I had a sudden inkling that, notwithstanding the marcelled hair and the powder and the fat, Rosie was the same as ever. "But what I say is: A little of what you fancy does you good."

I had always found her easy to talk to. Soon we were chatting away as though it were only a few weeks since we had last seen one another.

"Were you surprised to get my letter? I put Driffield so as you should know who it was from. We took the name of Iggulden when we came to America. George had a little unpleasantness when he left Black-stable, perhaps you heard about it, and he thought in a new country he'd better start with a new name, if you understand what I mean."

I nodded vaguely.

"Poor George, he died ten years ago, you know."

"I'm sorry to hear that."

"Oh, well, he was getting on in years. He was past seventy, though you'd never have guessed it to look at him. It was a great blow to me. No woman could
want a better husband than what he made me. Never a cross word from the day we married till the day he died. And I'm pleased to say he left me very well provided for."

"I'm glad to know that."

"Yes, he did very well over here. He went into the building trade, he always had a fancy for it, and he got in with Tammany. He always said the greatest mistake he ever made was not coming here over twenty years before. He liked the country from the first day he set foot in it. He had plenty of go and that's what you want here. He was just the sort to get on."

"Have you never been back to England?"

"No, I've never wanted to. George used to talk about it sometimes, just for a trip, you know, but we never got down to it, and now he's gone I haven't got the inclination. I expect London would seem very dead and alive to me after New York. We used to live in New York, you know. I only came here after his death."

"What made you choose Yonkers?"

"Well, I always fancied it. I used to say to George, when we retire we'll go and live at Yonkers. It's like a little bit of England to me, you know. Maidstone or Guildford or some place like that."

I smiled, but I understood what she meant. Notwithstanding its trams and its tootling cars, its cinemas and electric signs, Yonkers, with its winding main street, has a faint air of an English market town gone jazz.
"Of course I sometimes wonder what's happened to all the folks at Blackstable. I suppose they're most of them dead by now and I expect they think I am too."

"I haven't been there for thirty years."

I did not know then that the rumour of Rosie's death had reached Blackstable. I dare say that someone had brought back the news that George Kemp was dead and thus a mistake had arisen.

"I suppose nobody knows here that you were Edward Driffield's first wife?"

"Oh, no; why, if they had I should have had the reporters buzzing around my apartment like a swarm of bees. You know sometimes I've hardly been able to help laughing when I've been out somewhere playing bridge and they've started talking about Ted's books. They like them no end in America. I ne'er thought so much of them myself."

"You never were a great novel reader, were you?"

"I used to like history better, but I don't seem to have much time for reading now. Sunday's my great day. I think the Sunday papers over here are lovely. You don't have anything like them in England. Then of course I play a lot of bridge; I'm crazy about contract."

I remembered that when as a young boy I had first met Rosie her uncanny skill at whist had impressed me. I felt that I knew the sort of bridge player she was, quick, bold and accurate: a good partner and a dangerous opponent.

"You'd have been surprised at the fuss they made
over here when Ted died. I knew they thought a lot of him, but I never knew he was such a big bug as all that. The papers were full of him, and they had pictures of him and Ferne Court; he always said he meant to live in that house some day. Whatever made him marry that hospital nurse? I always thought he'd marry Mrs. Barton Trafford. They never had any children, did they?"

"No."

"Ted would have liked to have some. It was a great blow to him that I couldn't have any more after the first."

"I didn't know you'd ever had a child," I said with surprise.

"Oh, yes. That's why Ted married me. But I had a very bad time when it came and the doctors said I couldn't have another. If she'd lived, poor little thing, I don't suppose I'd ever have run away with George. She was six when she died. A dear little thing she was and as pretty as a picture."

"You never mentioned her."

"No, I couldn't bear to speak about her. She got meningitis and we took her to the hospital. They put her in a private room and they let us stay with her. I shall never forget what she went through, screaming, screaming all the time, and nobody able to do anything."

Rosie's voice broke.

"Was it that death" Driffield described in *The Cup of Life*?
“Yes, that’s it. I always thought it so funny of Ted. He couldn’t bear to speak of it, any more than I could, but he wrote it all down; he didn’t leave out a thing; even little things I hadn’t noticed at the time he put in and then I remembered them. You’d think he was just heartless, but he wasn’t, he was upset just as much as I was. When we used to go home at night he’d cry like a child. Funny chap, wasn’t he?”

It was The Cup of Life that had raised such a storm of protest; and it was the child’s death and the episode that followed it that had especially brought down on Driffield’s head such virulent abuse. I remembered the description very well. It was harrowing. There was nothing sentimental in it; it did not excite the reader’s tears, but his anger rather that such cruel suffering should be inflicted on a little child. You felt that God at the Judgment Day would have to account for such things as this. It was a very powerful piece of writing. But if this incident was taken from life was the one that followed it also? It was this that had shocked the public of the ’nineties and this that the critics had condemned as not only indecent but incredible. In The Cup of Life the husband and wife (I forget their names now) had come back from the hospital after the child’s death—they were poor people and they lived from hand to mouth in lodgings—and had their tea. It was latish: about seven o’clock. They were exhausted by the strain of a week’s ceaseless anxiety and shattered by their grief. They had nothing to say to one another. They sat in a miserable silence. The hours passed.
Then on a sudden the wife got up and going into their bedroom put on her hat.

"I'm going out," she said.

"All right."

They lived near Victoria Station. She walked along the Buckingham Palace Road and through the park. She came into Piccadilly and went slowly toward the Circus. A man caught her eye, paused and turned round.

"Good-evening," he said.

"Good-evening." She stopped and smiled.

"Will you come and have a drink?" he asked.

"I don't mind if I do."

They went into a tavern in one of the side streets of Piccadilly, where harlots congregated and men came to pick them up, and they drank a glass of beer. She chatted with the stranger and laughed with him. She told him a cock-and-bull story about herself. Presently he asked if he could go home with her; no, she said, he couldn't do that, but they could go to a hotel. They got into a cab and drove to Bloomsbury and there they took a room for the night. And next morning she took a bus to Trafalgar Square and walked through the park; when she got home her husband was just sitting down to breakfast. After breakfast they went back to the hospital to see about the child's funeral.

"Will you tell me something, Rosie?" I asked.

"What happened in the book after the child's death
—did that happen too?"

She looked at me for a moment doubtfully; then her lips broke into her still beautiful smile.

“Well, it’s all so many years ago, what odds does it make? I don’t mind telling you. He didn’t get it quite right. You see, it was only guesswork on his part. I was surprised that he knew as much as he did; I never told him anything.”

Rosie took a cigarette and pensively tapped its end on the table, but she did not light it.

“We came back from the hospital just like she said. We walked back; I felt I couldn’t sit still in a cab, and I felt all dead inside me. I’d cried so much I couldn’t cry any more, and I was tired. Ted tried to comfort me, but I said: ‘For God’s sake shut up.’ After that he didn’t say any more. We had rooms in the Vauxhall Bridge Road then, on the second floor, just a sitting-room and a bedroom, that’s why we’d had to take the poor little thing to the hospital; we couldn’t nurse her in lodgings; besides, the landlady said she wouldn’t have it, and Ted said she’d be looked after better at the hospital. She wasn’t a bad sort, the landlady; she’d been a tart and Ted used to talk to her by the hour together. She came up when she heard us come in.

“‘How’s the little girl to-night?’ she said.

“‘She’s dead,’ said Ted.

“I couldn’t say anything. Then she brought up the tea. I didn’t want anything, but Ted made me eat some ham. Then I sat at the window. I didn’t look
round when the landlady came up to clear away, I didn’t want anyone to speak to me. Ted was reading a book; at least he was pretending to, but he didn’t turn the pages, and I saw the tears dropping on it. I kept on looking out of the window. It was the end of June, the twenty-eighth, and the days were long. It was just near the corner where we lived and I looked at the people going in and out of the public-house and the trams going up and down. I thought the day would never come to an end; then all of a sudden I noticed that it was night. All the lamps were lit. There was an awful lot of people in the street. I felt so tired. My legs were like lead.

"’Why don’t you light the gas?’ I said to Ted.

’Do you want it?’ he said.

’It’s no good sitting in the dark,’ I said.

He lit the gas. He began smoking his pipe. I knew that would do him good. But I just sat and looked at the street. I don’t know what came over me. I felt that if I went on sitting in that room I’d go mad. I wanted to go somewhere where there were lights and people. I wanted to get away from Ted; no, not so much that, I wanted to get away from all that Ted was thinking and feeling. We only had two rooms. I went into the bedroom; the child’s cot was still there, but I wouldn’t look at it. I put on my hat and a veil and I changed my dress and then I went back to Ted.

’I’m going out,’ I said.

‘Ted looked at me. I dare say he noticed I’d got
my new dress on and perhaps something in the way I spoke made him see I didn’t want him.

"‘All right,’ he said.

"In the book he made me walk through the park, but I didn’t do that really. I went down to Victoria and I took a hansom to Charing Cross. It was only a shilling fare. Then I walked up the Strand. I’d made up my mind what I wanted to do before I came out. Do you remember Harry Retford? Well, he was acting at the Adelphi then, he had the second comedy part. Well, I went to the stage door, and sent up my name. I always liked Harry Retford. I expect he was a bit unscrupulous and he was rather funny over money matters, but he could make you laugh and with all his faults he was a rare good sort. You know he was killed in the Boer War, don’t you?"

"I didn’t. I only knew he’d disappeared and one never saw his name on playbills; I thought perhaps he’d gone into business or something."

"No, he went out at once. He was killed at Lady-smith. After I’d been waiting a bit he came down and I said: ‘Harry, let’s go on the razzle to-night. What about a bit of supper at Romano’s? ’ ‘Not ’alf,’ he said. ‘You wait here and the minute the show’s over and I’ve got my make-up off I’ll come down.’ It made me feel better just to see him; he was playing a racing tout and it made me laugh just to look at him in his check suit and his billycock hat and his red nose. Well, I waited till the end of the show and then he came down and we walked along to Romano’s."
"Are you hungry?" he said to me.
"Starving," I said; and I was.
"Let's have the best," he said, "and blow the expense. I told Bill Terris I was taking my best girl out to supper and I touched him for a couple of quid."
"Let's have champagne," I said.
"Three cheers for the widow!" he said.
"I don't know if you ever went to Romano's in the old days. It was fine. You used to see all the theatrical people and the racing men, and the girls from the Gaiety used to go there. It was the place. And the Roman. Harry knew him and he came up to our table; he used to talk in funny broken English; I believe he put it on because he knew it made people laugh. And if someone he knew was down and out he'd always lend him a fiver.

"How's the kid?" said Harry.
"Better," I said.

"I didn't want to tell him the truth. You know how funny men are; they don't understand some things. I knew Harry would think it dreadful of me to come out to supper when the poor child was lying dead in the hospital. He'd be awfully sorry and all that, but that's not what I wanted; I wanted to laugh."

Rosie lit the cigarette that she had been playing with.

"You know how when a woman is having a baby, sometimes the husband can't stand it any more and he goes out and has another woman. And then when
she finds out, and it's funny how often she does, she kicks up no end of a fuss; she says, that the man should go and do it just then, when she's going through hell, well, it's the limit. I always tell her not to be silly. It doesn't mean he doesn't love her, and isn't terribly upset, it doesn't mean anything, it's just nerves; if he wasn't so upset he wouldn't think of it. I know, because that's how I felt then.

"When we'd finished our supper Harry said: 'Well, what about it?'

'What about what?' I said.

'There wasn't any dancing in those days and there was nowhere to go.

'What about coming round to my flat and having a look at my photograph album?' said Harry.

'I don't mind if I do,' I said.

'He had a little bit of a flat in the Charing Cross Road, just two rooms and a bath and a kitchenette, and we drove round there, and I stayed the night.

'When I got back next morning the breakfast was already on the table and Ted had just started. I'd made up my mind that if he said anything I was going to fly out at him. I didn't care what happened. I'd earned my living before, and I was ready to earn it again. For two pins I'd have packed my box and left him there and then. But he just looked up as I came in.

'You've just come in time,' he said. 'I was going to eat your sausage.'

'I sat down and poured him out his tea. And he went on reading the paper. After we'd finished break-
fast we went to the hospital. He never asked me where I'd been. I didn't know what he thought. He was terribly kind to me all that time. I was miserable, you know. Somehow I felt that I just couldn't get over it, and there was nothing he didn't do to make it easier for me."

"What did you think when you read the book?" I asked.

"Well, it did give me a turn to see that he did know pretty well what had happened that night. What beat me was his writing it at all. You'd have thought it was the last thing he'd put in a book. You're queer fish, you writers."

At that moment the telephone bell rang. Rosie took up the receiver and listened.

"Why, Mr. Vanuzzi, how very nice of you to call me up! Oh, I'm pretty well, thank you. Well, pretty and well, if you like. When you're my age you take all the compliments you can get."

She embarked upon a conversation which, I gathered from her tone, was of a facetious and even flirtatious character. I did not pay much attention, and since it seemed to prolong itself I began to meditate upon the writer's life. It is full of tribulation. First he must endure poverty and the world's indifference; then, having achieved a measure of success, he must submit with a good grace to its hazards. He depends upon a fickle public. He is at the mercy of journalists who want to interview him and photographers who want to take his picture, of editors who harry him
for copy and tax gatherers who harry him for income

tax, of persons of quality who ask him to lunch and
secretaries of institutes who ask him to lecture, of
women who want to marry him and women who want
to divorce him, of youths who want his autograph,
actors who want parts and strangers who want a loan,
of gushing ladies who want advice on their matrimonial
affairs and earnest young men who want advice on their
compositions, of agents, publishers, managers, bores,
ammirers, critics, and his own conscience. But he has
one compensation. Whenever he has anything on his
mind, whether it be a harassing reflection, grief at the
death of a friend, unrequited love, wounded pride,
anger at the treachery of someone to whom he has
shown kindness, in short any emotion or any perplexing
thought, he has only to put it down in black and white,
using it as a theme of a story or the decoration of an
essay, to forget all about it. He is the only free man.

Rosie put back the receiver and turned to me.

"That was one of my beaux. I'm going to play
bridge to-night and he rang up to say he'd call round
for me in his car. Of course he's a Wop, but he's real
nice. He used to run a big grocery store down town,
in New York, but he's retired now."

"Have you never thought of marrying again, Rosie?"

"No." She smiled. "Not that I haven't had offers.
I'm quite happy as I am. The way I look on it is this,
I don't want to marry an old man, and it would be silly
at my age to marry a young one. I've had my time
and I'm ready to call it a day."
“What made you run away with George Kemp?”

“Well, I’d always liked him. I knew him long before I knew Ted, you know. Of course, I never thought there was any chance of marrying him. For one thing he was married already and then he had his position to think of. And then when he came to me one day and said that everything had gone wrong and he was bust and there’d be a warrant out for his arrest in a few days and he was going to America and would I go with him, well, what could I do? I couldn’t let him go all that way by himself, with no money perhaps, and him having been always so grand and living in his own house and driving his own trap. It wasn’t as if I was afraid of work.”

“I sometimes think he was the only man you ever cared for,” I suggested.

“I dare say there’s some truth in that.”

“I wonder what it was you saw in him.”

Rosie’s eyes travelled to a picture on the wall that for some reason had escaped my notice. It was an enlarged photograph of Lord George in a carved gilt frame. It looked as if it might have been taken soon after his arrival in America; perhaps at the time of their marriage. It was a three-quarter length. It showed him in a long frock coat, tightly buttoned, and a tall silk hat cocked rakishly on one side of his head; there was a large rose in his buttonhole; under one arm he carried a silver-headed cane and smoke curled from a big cigar that he held in his right hand. He had a heavy moustache, waxed at the ends, a
saucy look in his eye, and in his bearing an arrogant swagger. In his tie was a horseshoe in diamonds. He looked like a publican dressed up in his best to go to the Derby.

"I'll tell you," said Rosie. "He was always such a perfect gentleman."

THE END