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TAUCHNITZ EDITION

COLLECTION OF BRITISH AND AMERICAN AUTHORS

VOL. 4889

PORTRAIT OF A SPY

BY

TEMPLE THURSTON

IN ONE VOLUME

LEIPZIG: BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

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BY

TEMPLE THURSTON

AUTHOR OF

"THE GREATEST WISH IN THE WORLD," "JANE CARROLL," ETC.

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BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1929

PORTAIT OF A SPY

FRANK THURSTON

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TO
ADMIRAL SIR REGINALD HALL, K.C.M.G., M.P.
IN SINCERE GRATITUDE

TO
ADMIRAL SIR EDWARD HALL, K.C.M.G., M.P.
IN HIS PRIVATE CAPACITY

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PARIS

1910-11

PARIS
1910-11

PORTRAIT OF A SPY

PAURELLE'S

A LIFE of Liane Sonrel would be impossible. There is no clear sequence of facts for the compilation and arrangement of the biographer. She is seen in this place and that place, in Bavaria, in Tangore, in Paris, Madrid, London, and then is not seen again. No more than that can be said of her. Perhaps that elusiveness was inevitable in the way of life she chose.

So much as George Le Mesurier saw of her in Paris during those three periods when they met cannot be called anything else but mere glimpses of her life. Her meetings with Admiral Gawthorne in London in 1917, her brief acquaintance with Mrs. Dewlands in that boarding-house in Torrington Square, are even less than this.

But it is possible from these that a portrait can be realised. None too highly lighted: an impression. Something which, if it were in paint upon canvas, might summon the eye and, at most, leave the mind wondering of all the secrets that it hid.

§ I

FOR George Le Mesurier was there at that establishment in the *Rue Berthe* the night when Paurelle introduced Liane Sonrel for the first time to the company.

Paurelle's was a club, in the sense that night after night it was monopolised by the same men, artists, writers—the artistic riff-raff of *Montmartre*. Those who had them, all brought their girls there. Was there one who hadn't a girl? But it wasn't a public establishment, except in so far as that it was licenced. It submitted to the authorities. Anyone from anywhere could come in and take a table if they could find one unoccupied.

It was late in November of 1910 when Paurelle appeared one night at the end of that long room over those stables where they kept the bus horses. In his hand was that glass gong he used to strike when he had any information to convey to his patrons. It had a queer note, penetrating through the length of that room like a thin shaft of daylight through a crack in a barn. It seemed to reach the lower levels of your mind first. You might be talking at the top of your voice. Everybody did at Paurelle's. Then, gradually, long after the stroke, you would hear it rising up through the sound of your voice. Silence fell upon everyone. Voices tailed off into whispers—then ceased.

There was nothing mysterious about it. That was just the effect it had.

He struck his gong that night three times, and slowly all the clatter, the noise and the gusts of laughter died down. Paurelle had a pronouncement to make. He was saying:

“Messieurs, there has been no cabaret for the last three weeks.”

He seemed to expect some comment upon that. There was none. He went on:

“I went to Marseilles last week. You know.”

There was so much laughter here that he had to

wait half a minute before he could continue. Everyone knew Paurelle's regular disappearances. He had a mistress in Marseilles who would not come to Paris. He had a business and a wife in Paris, and would not live in Marseilles. Whenever he grew fractious at home, Madame Paurelle, who kept the books and managed all the business side of his *café* would drive him in a *fiacre* to the *Gare de Lyon* and say:

"*Allez!*"

She would kiss him on the cheek. She would stand on the platform waving a hand to him while the train steamed out of the station. Then she would return to the *Rue Berthe* with a shine about her face that was never so noticeable when he was at home.

When the laughter had subsided, Paurelle said again:

"I go to Marseilles. I go into one of their *cafés*, on the *Quai du Monde*. I see a girl there. She dance."

He closed his eyes. He stood for a moment in complete silence. Then he put his fingers up to his lips. From out of the middle of his black beard he picked a kiss, as it might have been a crumb of food, and threw it upwards. He knew the value of these demonstrations. He did not make that gesture often.

"The man who had her there, he say to me: 'How much, Monsieur Paurelle?' And I say: 'So much.' And he say: 'So much.' And the girl she stand there looking up out of her eyes at me. And suddenly—do I know why?—I say: 'Oh, yes.' I have brought her back with me, messieurs. She is here!"

No one could have failed to recognise the touch of showmanship in that. In his small and intimate way of business, Paurelle was a great man.

Having said this, he looked across at Cæsaire, the conductor of his orchestra and, lifting the tips of his fingers, he raised the sound of music out of the air. The fiddlers began a low Oriental *motif*.

Of course they had rehearsed it all. He and Cæsaire were always planning their effects. The curtains at the far end of the room fell apart with a rattle of rings. They revealed a recess. It was not a stage. The proportions of that room under the rafters did not allow of it.

Sitting on the floor with her legs crossed was a girl. At the first sight of her, George was no more than mildly interested. He was used to Paurelle's dramatic effects. Often they were hopelessly banal.

From her ankles to her waist she wore those diaphanous Turkish trousers. From her waist upwards she was swathed in something alternately dull and glittering, dark and bright. She began to unwreath it from her naked body. It looked like a scarf made from some coiling metal. It was a snake.

It sounds more like a turn for the *Cirque Medrano*. But apparently it was not that. The snake had little or nothing to do with the performance. It was merely a garment she shed before she began to dance. Yet it stripped her body with such effect that George, who had been painting from the nude all day long, sat staring at her nakedness.

Paurelle must have realised, from that first silence that fell about them all as coil by coil she untwined this sinuous raiment from about her, that he had brought something to amuse his patrons this time.

Holding the submissive beast by the neck, she stood up to her full height and raised it above her. Then,

throwing back her head so that her neck rose in a slim pillar from her shoulders and the light ran in thin drawn curves down her throat, she brought the reptile's mouth to her lips and kissed it.

Its black tongue was licking like a stray hair blown about her cheeks. With no further gesture she dropped it into a basket on the floor at her side, standing there like a figure, half marble, half ivory, for them to accept her or not, as they chose.

Probably that was the only time when George was capable of clear criticism of her. He felt that nothing of the kind of nautch dance that followed was comparable to that first pagan and defiant gesture. It was so contemptuous of the human element of her audience as to lift it entirely above the immediate suggestion of the obscene.

Even her dancing, insignificant as it was, judged by its skill, had that same opulent contempt. In every gesture, in every sway of her body, it seemed that night as though she were mocking all the shibboleths that men cling to. Laughing at them (though there was no essential gaiety in her face) and shattering them with her laughter.

It was even more definite than that. There was the direct claim of worship about her. She stood there in that first posture of hers in the concentration of lights Paurelle contrived for his cabaret shows and she revealed herself. Not for her skill. Not even for her beauty. But as something which rouses in man the pursuit of the unattainable.

This is about as near as one can get to the effect she created that November night in 1910 when she first appeared at Paurelle's in the *Rue Berthe*, to the same effect

she repeated just before the War upon the vast audiences that flocked to see her in Paris.

Whatever her creed may have been, certainly the mystery that shrouded her existence paid service to it. No man could ever have followed her through all the vicissitudes of her life. She just appeared and disappeared.

She appeared to Paurelle at that *café* on the quays of Marseilles. She appeared to George Le Mesurier and all the others that night in November in the *Rue Berthe*.

The applause that followed this first performance of hers was cyclonic. Glasses rattled on the tables. Cries and cat-calls, stampings of feet and yells of "*Bis! Bis!*" greeted the final rattle of those curtain rings along the rod.

When Paurelle came out and announced there would be no repetition of her performance until the next night, he was shouted down. Somehow or other George did not feel inclined, as they all did then, to see her again. Such effect as she had created upon him was of this nature, that he did not want it to be repeated. He was half afraid that if he saw her again it would be gone.

He sat there, a spectator, as a dozen men rushed to the end of the room, flinging Paurelle aside and tearing back the curtain. The little recess was empty. That was the first sensation George had of her quality of disappearance. She was gone. The snake-basket had vanished. Paurelle was surrounded by men asking him where she lived. He would not say.

It was the custom for any performer who had pleased that childishly critical audience to come amongst them

afterwards. She would dance with them and drink with them. It would be part of her success with Paurelle if she could induce the men to discard their *bocks* and *petits verres* for absinthe or to treat her to champagne if she could get it out of them.

But here Paurelle was adamant. He refused all demands to bring her amongst them. With the crush of their bodies they pinned him up against the wall, but still he would not say where she lived.

What had come over the man? Had he forgotten the mere rudiments of his business? Had she bewitched him? Was he keeping her for himself?

It was Madame Paurelle who came out of the kitchens like a cat with her back up and her tail bushed to rescue him from that accusation.

"Messieurs, he may keep his mistress in Marseilles! But if she come into this place, I have nails to my fingers longer than she will have the eyes in her head!"

Paurelle was released. But he had to sit amongst a group of them, drinking innumerable *bocks* at their expense, and telling them in full the story of his discovery in that *café* on the quays of Marseilles.

It was then that George joined them—Pinet, Gregoire, Delair—all that crowd. His curiosity was aroused. At that distance he first heard her name. Liane Sonrel. She was French then. That surprised him. It was not only her costume and her performance, it was something in her face that had already suggested to his mind the Eastern blood in her veins.

"It was a dirty little *café*," Paurelle was saying as he joined them. "*Mon ami*, she tell me: 'You go to Larocque's and, mind you, you come out as you went

Portrait of a Spy



in.' I went. It was a dirty place. There was sand on the floor. It grit the soles of your boots. Men come off the sea with earrings in their ears. Black men. Yellow men. All sorts. They all spit on the floor. Some put their feet in it. *Peu de gens sont vraiment polis.* There was no orchestra. Just a man playing a piano in the corner of the room. He chew the tobacco and he play. Liane Sonrel, she come in through a door. There is no announcement. She just sit in the sand with her snake and she begin to unwind it off her body. As you see. Some men they turn and look. The piano, he plays. He spits. The brown juice it flies—zut!—over her head. *Elle est nue—sans défense.* She stand up. She kiss the beast with her lips. You see her. A few more men they look. They have seen all this before. In the East. Liane, she is not the beauty. It is something more than that. And if you do not see that something more it is so much the less. Oh, yes. It is not a face to find on the pillow with joy. Unless you know. Ah-h-h! *Certainement! Et puis!* But these have seen more beautiful women in Port Said, in Colombo, in Shanghai. They turn and look and they look away. But one man, he move across the room. He knows. He has seen. But even he does not understand. He comes up and looks in her face. *Et puis, il presse le bout de ses seins.*" He paused.

"*Mon Dieu!* I have seen the lightning strike a tree. Zip! And it is in shreds, in little splinters. It dies in front of your face. He died. She had the neck of that beast in her hand. She struck him with it across the mouth. The snake bleed and he bleed with his lip. And she was gone. The door bang. Everyone they look round. There is no one, but the piano. He play a little louder

and he begin to sing. And the man, he stand there with the blood in his mouth."

M. Paurelle stopped and looked about him. This was the first they had heard of her disappearances. Drinking his *bock* with his eyes swimming round over the top of his glass, Paurelle added up the interest of all those faces about him. They wanted more. He went on:

"I call M. Larocque and I say to him: '*Vous êtes un homme d'affaires.*' He understand, and he take me into a little room at the back. She is there, Liane Sonrel. She is like a thing in a cage. She stamp the room. But presently she come so still and she listen. I ask him how he got her there. He tell me she came on a ship from Pondichéry. We look at her, and she nod her head. She travel steerage with the scum of the people. She have a child. She live in a room in the *bas quartiers de Marseilles*. Anything he say that is right, she nod her head. When he say what is wrong, she catch at the sleeve of his coat. It was as though she might be dumb. Yet I had heard her speak to that man in the *café*. And she has a voice. Oh, yes! But when we ask her what she is doing in Pondichéry, she will not say. And when we say, 'Whose child was it?' she shut her lips and her eyes, and her whole face is shut like a door. And then I ask M. Larocque how much. And he say—so much. And I say—so much. And he shake his head and say—so much. And then I see her eyes open and they were looking at me. I cannot describe it. I feel like a man who does not care how much, and I say: 'Oh, yes.' Then I go out, just as I came in, and I go back to *mon ami*."

§ 2

PAURELLE's had no distinguishing mark of invitation. It offered you a black door in a grey wall. You pushed it open and the prospect was no more attractive. A dark passage under the house led you down, as it were with a beckoning whisper, into a *cour d'écurie*. A gas lamp at the farther end gave you faint direction and imperfectly lit up the uneven cobbled stones of the yard. You could see your way across. That was about all. The puddles of manure water were not revealed to you.

The shaky wooden structure across the yard, half ladder, half staircase, which led to Paurelle's premises above the stables was peculiar to the whole approach. The not-unwholesome iodic smell of the animals in the stables below was in keeping with the character of the place.

It was not that the frequenters of that *café* knew or cared anything about horses—except perhaps Gregoire, who painted them. But they made no objection to the atmosphere. It had become associated in their minds with Paurelle's. It had its characteristic noises too. The sudden stamping of a horse's foot on the cobbled floor of its stall in the small hours of the morning was one of those sounds you companion with your sense of a place having associations of its own.

Delair, a bit of a rhymester, a bit of a musician, a bit of a fool, had set a song to the noise of it. You know how, when a horse starts stamping at night, he goes on with it, a regular beat that becomes almost rhythmic.

At that given signal, arising from the stables below,

all conversation would cease by mutual accord. To the beat of the old horse's hoof as they danced, all of them would stamp their feet and shout in unison that doggerel of Delair's:

Sacré de nom!
Prrrom! pom! pom!
La vie est brève,
La nuit est longue,
Sacré de nom!
Prrrom! pom! pom!

And on it went. Cantos of it. Sometimes fast, sometimes slow, according to the lead of their equine conductor. Comically it related the mind of the irritated beast with the mind of the human and descended at times to the utmost obscenities, punctuated after every couplet with that—

Sacré de nom!
Prrrom! pom! pom!

There was little pretence at decoration there above those stables, except for pictures which, from time to time, the artists out of their studios had given to Paurelle in lieu of a long-standing account. Occasionally, as at times of *Mi-Carême*, *Réveillon* or New Year's Eve, the whole place was festooned with balloons and paper decorations. Usually it was just a room under the rafters, with no pretensions to gaiety beyond that supplied by the spirits of its habitués.

Paurelle's cabaret in the *Rue Berthe* was an impromptu business. You could see nothing like it any-

where else in Paris. No one ever knew what was coming. For nights together he might have nothing to show them at all. It was not their fancy to be entertained with girls from the *Ba-ta-clan*, showing the legs they had already shown on the *Boulevards*.

So long as there was that *esprit de coterie* about it all, no one complained when there was no special entertainment. Paurelle could not find anyone attractive. He knew if he brought just any girl along she might be hissed out of the room and he would have to pay a week's engagement for nothing.

At a first performance of some unfortunate creature, the whole room had been known to stand up in the middle of the song and begin their infernal—

Sacré de nom!
Prrrom! pom! pom!

No one with the stoutest heart in the world could sing through that.

Every man brought his own girl. There were no hangers-on. The whole length of that room was there for them to dance in. Against all the walls there were tables where they sat and talked the wildest schemes of Art and offered the most hare-brained criticisms.

The cubists were just then coming into vogue. Men were beginning to say you must look at life from every conceivable angle. Convention was being flung out of top windows. A movement had begun. There was a group of painting men there who called themselves the Trigonometrists. These movements do not recognise themselves until they have a label. Pinet was one of them.

George Le Mesurier was the sanest of all the men who were going there at that time. Was that because he was not a real Frenchman? He came from Guernsey, had been educated in Ireland, where his people lived, and had clung to his sense about beauty with a fierceness equal to any of the extravagances that raged about him.

It is not so simple to understand why it should have been George who fell deepest to the seduction of Liane Sonrel. It seemed she ought more to have been a symbol for those Trigonometrists. It was their boast they could dispense with the Greek line and form and the plain colour of beauty.

"The existence of beauty," they shouted over those tables in the *Rue Berthe*, "is in a state of the mind. There are no traditions. Science is continually shifting its grounds. So must Art!"

Standing on a table and gesticulating with a long stick of bread, Pinet shouted with that tremendous voice of his:

"Einstein has upset the principles of gravitation! I, Pinet, will destroy the traditions of form!"

Yet it was not that Liane Sonrel was an unbeautiful creature. Of all the women who have exposed their figures for the delight of Paris (which admittedly has a taste in these matters), there was probably none whose perfection of grace could compare with hers. She had subtlety and an essential ease of movement. You could not look at the shapeliness of her arms without a quickened consciousness of their embrace. Perhaps that was it, that provocation which made you follow her inevitably with your eyes.

Paurelle gave the true Gallic criticism of a woman's

looks when he said hers was not a face to find on one's pillow with joy. This is the French standard. There is no *postiche* about it. It allows woman a place in the world, but has no hesitation in saying what that place shall be, or at what time it would be most appropriate to find her there.

And yet Paurelle was wise enough to qualify his criticism. There was no doubt about his nationality. He could not quite let her go at that.

"But if you knew!" he had said. "Ah-h-h. *Certainement! Et puis!*"

George, certainly, came to know, though at first it would have seemed he was not so intrigued as the others. Pinet with that great voice of his, with his dynamic personality and his revolutionary ideas of Art, laid siege to her at once. The very next night.

Marching right down the room with a Prrrom! pom! pom! as she stood there, poised in front of them all, he made her an elaborate bow. His red, Montmartre beard was bent flat against his chest.

"Mademoiselle," he bellowed at her. "I am a painter. I destroy art to make it live. I will paint you for the truth. You shall see how it is you destroy the souls of men."

That was all as it might be. She did go to Pinet's studio in the *Rue Becquerel*, but when after three sittings she saw the portrait he had painted of her, she knocked some of that dynamic personality out of him with the blow she gave him across the face.

To any other view but that of the Trigonometrists, the portrait was grotesque. The skin was pallid. There was no blood beneath it. It was of the texture of a

quilted bed-cover. You see these portraits by the hundred now in exhibitions of modern art.

But it was the angle from which the portrait was painted that lent it most of its burlesque. Only that his proportions did not allow of such gymnastics, you might have imagined that Pinet had climbed up on to a corner of the mantelpiece and flattened himself against the wall in order to arrive at his vision. The whole beautiful figure of Liane Sonrel was slipping away from you off the canvas. It was in a distorted perspective. No one, unless they had been perched at some impossible altitude, could have seen her thus. And yet it possessed its significance. It did not debase your ideals of women, so much as it destroyed them. You could not see that portrait, believe in it, and feel an exaltation for its model any more.

Yet undoubtedly it was a vision of her. There was the truth—a truth—in it. If she were an iconoclast, so was Pinet. He destroyed her beauty with the heartless penetration of his vision. It was so grotesquely unlike a portrait of her and yet it was so diabolically like herself. She did more than strike him. She spat in his face. Possibly she had learnt that habit from her association with the *cafés* on the quays of Marseilles.

"You call yourself artist!" she shrieked at him. "You are a dirty man—*saligaud!*"

Pinet was delighted. He defended his canvas from what would have been her violent assault on it and showed it in his studio to everyone. George saw it and said a shrewd thing. It was like his idealism. He said: "You can't reduce human nature to your own level. You're not mankind. You're merely man. The whole truth doesn't exist in anyone."

It was probably from that moment his mind was roused to a deeper interest in Liane Sonrel. She had been at the *Rue Berthe* for a fortnight. Every night for those two weeks Paurelle's had been crowded. The women hated her. And that was significant. They felt she assailed some secret privilege to which they were entitled. They sensed her destruction of the very foundations of their existence. The demands she made were for the supreme desires of men. In herself and with that particular form of lure she possessed, she foiled the far-reaching purposes of Nature.

Certainly there was a child she had brought with her from the East. Paurelle had told them about that. At some period of her life that was wrapped in secrecy, she had not herself failed in the commitments of Nature. But that did not succeed in reassuring the women's views of her. She might have had a child. She might have had a dozen. In some slum of *Montmartre*, wherever she was living, she might still be affording it her protection. They did not ask about that. With an unfaltering instinct, they judged her as they saw her.

It did not matter that they were all mistresses. There was not a wife among them. She threatened the whole psychological relation of the sexes, by which women call men in to the herd. She roused that by which, through the deceits of their emotions, men reach out to those things which are beyond their grasp.

It was significant that the women hated her.

They flung up their heads with nasal cracks of laughter when they heard Pinet had painted her. They clapped their hands in front of it, some of them who were invited to see the portrait.

"There she is!" they cackled with glee. They might have been sitting round the guillotine in another age, watching Pinet, the executioner, slicing off her head into a basket.

"La dame qui se défile!"

This may have contained some allusion to the snake. But that was what they thought about her.

There is no doubt George must have seen something more than that. His picture *La Charmeuse de Serpent*, though one of his early works, shows the impulsive quality of inspiration. He did not admit himself to the intoxication of any sentiment when he painted it. He had his own view of the truth. Liane Sonrel in that picture is no bewildering beauty. You see her large mouth with its generosity and its humour, but subservient to the cruder appetites of life. Her eyes are true to their breadth of nobility, but they do not inspire it. Yet in the delicate lines of her body as she holds the snake to her lips and kisses its mouth with that black streak of its tongue darting on her cheek there is a perfection of form that could presumably be translated into a sublimation of the desire she aroused in everyone.

Many men for that first fortnight when she was at Paurelle's set themselves out for her capture. It cannot be supposed she was averse to it. She must have been very poor. No one knew how much that "so much" was that Paurelle had paid for her.

And yet, after that experience with Pinet, as though she knew the power she had in herself to rise above this environment, she withheld herself from that rabble of men who collected night after night in the *Rue*

Berthe. For the first week indeed, as he admitted later M. Paurelle accommodated her in some attic in his own house—number ten. By that time she had found lodgings in *Montmartre*. And for some few weeks she eluded every effort that was made to discover her *piéd à terre*.

Here again was her characteristic, not so much of elusiveness as of disappearance. She could evade. She had the quality of escape. It was probably too subtle for her to have actually known it about herself and yet she was continually using it.

It was George who ran her to earth. Something must have roused the scent in his nostrils and quickened him to the chase. More than probable it was that portrait of Pinet's. There was no doubt, from what he said when he saw it, that he was stung to present her through some vision of his own. In common with all artists, he could not bear to see another perform that which he knew he was able to accomplish himself.

It was one night at the beginning of the New Year—1911. On the New Year's Eve, for the first time, Liane had joined the crowd collected in that long room above the stables. Everyone was in some kind of fancy-dress. It was all in the festal spirit. Legs and arms, masks and faces, a jumble of colours were flung in a heap about the floor like the rag-bag of a theatrical costumier's. In that skelter of bodies you could scarcely tell male from female. She had danced first with one and then another. In that sweating and shouting human medley, George was one of those who had jostled himself with her in the dance. Pinet was one who had not.

George had asked her what she would like to drink

and, without the faintest hesitation or consideration for his pocket, she had said:

"Champagne."

It was a general understanding at Paurelle's that once you had flattered a girl with champagne, you established a claim upon her, for that night at least, which no one in any decency would dispute. Pinet rumbled with laughter into the bush of his beard as he passed their table. In the costume of a dragoman, he had stupendously baggy trousers in which his colossal body gyrated with oscillating perambulations. He rolled by.

George gave her champagne, possibly wondering when or how he was going to meet the bill. She danced with him. In the inexpensive everyday clothes she wore then, she was not really so much to look at. She knew that. Any woman would.

After a few dances, she left him, and when he came to look for her again, she was gone. Paurelle did not know where. He threw his hands to heaven. How could he keep his eye on all that rabble! But where did she live? How could he say? It was as much as his contract with her was worth.

"And do you think I could ever get her back, once they snatch her from me on the *Boulevards*?"

She was not performing the next night, but Paurelle regularly gave her her supper in the kitchen. It was part of the contract. She sat there eating in silence and, when the eye of Madame Paurelle was not on her, slipping scraps of food off the table into a paper bag in her lap to take home to her *appartement*. She called it that. A room under the slates in the *Rue Blanche*.

George had come to know of that feeding clause in the contract. It was a pelting wet night. Rain had been falling all day. There were rivers of dirty water in the gutters. Under a corrugated-roof extension in the yard where they heaped the manure out of the horses' stables to sell to the *marailleurs*, he waited till she came out. She was picking her way across the puddles with nothing to protect her from the rain, when he came out of his shelter. With an eye calculating the possibilities of this situation, he had borrowed an umbrella from his *concierge*. She turned at the rattle of its ribs as he put it up.

"You'll get drenched if you walk home in this rain," he said.

"Then lend me your umbrella, and I'll return it tomorrow night."

He laughed at that.

"And get wet myself."

"If you like."

He made a bargain with her.

"I know all about this mystery," he said. "I don't want to find out where you live. But I'm not going to get wet through for anyone. We'll share the umbrella to my studio and then you can take it yourself wherever you want to."

"And you don't follow me?"

"No."

"They've tried to do that—some of them."

"I won't follow you."

She agreed. She slipped out her hand and took his arm as they walked. It linked them closer together under the shelter. They never said a word. The rain

was nagging on the umbrella over their heads. When they reached George's house in the *Rue Lepic*, near the *Moulin Rouge*, she put out her hand for the umbrella.

"It's still early," he said.

She said it was still wet.

He told her if she came up for a while to his studio the rain might clear.

"This is what you've been manoeuvring for?" she asked. She used the word *intriguan*t.

"Why, yes. You disappeared last night. I was going to ask you to come and see my pictures then."

"Are they anything like those monstrosities of M. Pinet?"

"No, please God."

Perhaps she was curious to see what they were like. This man who had given her champagne and scarcely held her as they danced. Perhaps she cared nothing about his pictures and only regarded them as indications of the sort of man he was. She looked up at him out of a slant of her eye and without another word she followed him upstairs.

Three flights on the bare boards. Her heels tapped behind him as other women's had done. Yet this time he heard a difference. There was something more assured, less promiscuous, about the noise of it. She planted her feet as one who has a right to be walking there. When he opened the door of his attic, she marched in, from the gas-light out on the landing to the darkness within the room. There was none of the pretty, hypocritical hesitation of a *cocotte* about her.

He lit the gas-jets. The stove was still burning. The room was warm. She sat down on a low seat under a dormer window, wriggling herself in her clothes with a

consciousness of unexpected comfort and looking about her with an inquisitive interest.

It was unlike Pinet's studio. In George's room there was the sense of a man who lived with his work. Pinet—she had said it—he was a dirty fellow—*sali-gaud!*

Smiling and sometimes nodding her head, she watched him set about the preparations for making coffee.

"You think I stop here," she said presently.

"Till you've seen some of my pictures."

"Ah-ha."

It was a somewhat nasal sound. No laughter in it and yet amusement. Hearing it, one might have thought her cynical. It was impossible to know quite what she meant by it.

Giving her her cup of coffee, he began dragging out canvases like books out of a shelf from their heaps against the walls. Again and again he said the sort of thing that artists always say about the light—like farmers who always have things to say about the weather. When God made light, He never made the kind quite suitable for an artist in which to show his pictures.

Again and again as he put his canvases up on the easel, clamped them down and swung the easel round, she looked and made that enigmatic sound:

"Ah-ha."

What did she mean by it? He never quite knew. He never knew to the last time he saw her whether she were a woman of uncommon intelligence or just that animal wit that enables a fox to get out of a trap and leads a beast of prey through a strait path of the jungle to its food.

It was when he had shown her the whole collection

of his canvases to no more than that nasal acknowledgment of hers that she looked up at him and said:

"You paint my picture—*hein?*"

He stood in front of her looking down into her face as she sat there below the dormer window, and he said:

"Yes."

She stood up.

"You paint it now?"

"Not now—there's no light."

"But you draw it first? With the charcoal? You do not draw with the brush?"

"Some do. I don't."

"Then you draw me first?"

"Of course."

She took off her hat and threw it on to the seat. She took off her coat. She was standing in front of him calmly watching his eyes as one by one she took the garments off her body.

"But how do you know I want to do you in the nude?" he asked.

She looked astonished.

"*Mais, c'est moi—assurément!*"

It was then, when she looked up at him, he realised for the first time the queer droop in one of her eyelids, and was aware he had never really seen her till then.

LA RUE LEPIC

§ I

LIANE SONREL must have arrived at some swift opinion about George's work when she saw his pictures that night in the *Rue Lepic*. It could not have been an artist's opinion. She was no artist. Unless it is true that one can be, as they say, an artist about life. In her own way she was that.

But whatever her opinion may have been and whatever her object in flinging off her garments in that manner, it seemed she was determined there should be no opportunity for him to change his mind.

"Your painting—it is beautiful," she said.

But that meant nothing. Not in criticism, anyhow. As an indication of what was in her mind, it probably meant a great deal. After her experience with Pinet, when one might have expected to find she had done with these artists for good and all, it was surprising to see how importunately she wanted herself to be committed to canvas.

There was undoubtedly something she discovered in George himself, apart from the angle of his vision as an artist, which had roused in her this sudden concession to their acquaintance.

It was to be the study for his *La Charmeuse de Serpent*. This was natural enough that he should be unable at first to see her in any other character than as that they all spoke and thought of her at *Paurelle's*. Of course it was a flamboyant subject. There was no getting away from

that. A certain flamboyancy was inseparable from her. The sun was in her blood.

He arranged her in that pose. Arms lifted above her head, the head itself thrown back. He gave her a scarf to hold to do service for her snake. She held it touching her mouth. Her lips were half opened for the caress.

She had not been standing there for three minutes when she said:

"You make me beautiful, eh? Like your pictures?"

It was characteristic of George to take that seriously. Pinet would have bellowed with laughter. His charcoal was scratching on the paper a few moments before he said:

"You're sure you are beautiful."

"My body—oh, yes."

She looked round at him to see what he had to reply to that. He was working with the quick, absorbed stroke of the artist who has gone away from every material consideration but the plain truth of what he sees. He said nothing.

"Do you not think my body is beautiful?"

"Oh, yes."

"Then the picture will be beautiful?"

"Probably."

"Why do you say—'probably'?"

"Because—beauty—isn't wholly—a matter of line and form."

It must have been obvious in his tone he had more to say. But she had to wait with that scratching noise irritating the silence before he continued:

"Those fellows at Paurelle's—Pinet—all that lot—they've got hold of a truth."

Still that scratching!

"The root of beauty's—in the mind. Head back where it was."

She put it back and listened.

"The soil for that root to spread in—is the truth. Anything—that arrives at mere beauty—without truth—is slop. It's slop—to talk like this."

"It is what I think," she said.

"What's that?"

"You are—idealist."

How soon she had seen that.

"Nothing to be ashamed of."

She laughed.

"*Oh, mon Dieu!*"

He looked up for the first time to see some unexpected light into her mind. There was an edged cynicism in her voice. Her laugh was like a sudden crack in a piece of porcelain. Not that her voice ever had that precious quality. The sudden surprise of it was like that.

"You don't believe in that nonsense?" he said.

"But no! Not at all!" Her eye wandered. "I shall rest."

She sat over by the stove. He brought her a shawl and dropped it about her shoulders. She looked up, somewhat surprised. She said the stove was warm enough. He told her he never knew a woman who was not a fool about her personal comfort.

"I've known women starve themselves," he said, "just because they weren't amused by eating food."

"You paint lots of women?"

He asked her had she looked at his canvases at all when he had shown her them.

"Oh, yes—I look. Lots of women. And you are still idealist?"

"Why not?"

She pulled the shawl about her and hugged herself in it. She smiled and allowed a little shake of her shoulders to convey laughter.

"It is impossible," she said. "Men, they are all the same. Women—they are all the same. I know. It is just in the beginning that you hear the birds singing, you smell the flowers, you look up at the sky and you see the good God, how He make everything. And it is so beautiful, you cry. Oh, yes. I have had the tears in my eyes. I know."

He asked her if she wanted to pose any more. She shook her head and made a grimace with her lips. Clearly it was not the picture she was interested in. It never had been. She had become more interested in him, in herself. Her eyes as she raised them to stare at him were looking back—far back.

It was impossible to him as he watched her not to realise how close one could be and how little one could know. In the dark light of her pupils was the whole of her life of which he knew nothing. Before that appearance of hers in M. Larocque's *café*, as recounted by Paurelle, her existence was veiled, in a shroud, a mystery. It was like the inner life of royalty one sees so often passing in the streets, performing at public functions. One could see them plainly, see their smiles, hear what they said or were reported to say and yet know that what one saw and heard was merely a physical embodiment of some idea they were deputed by circumstance to represent. One knew that these projections were not the real people; that in the closet of their minds they did not think regally, or behave regally, but were just ordinary sensitive expressions of matter, a little more complicated and delicate in response

than the dog that is driven away with its tail between its legs in front of their horses' feet.

He knew her to be a dancer, a girl possibly of no morals, no restraints. Yet all she was, was merely a thrown projection of what she had been. It was a shadow on a blind. Of the real substance casting that shadow, close as he was to it, he knew nothing. Nor she of him.

A faint sight of this substance of herself she had allowed him with her birds singing and those tears at a vision of God. But what had she ever seen of God, he asked her.

She shrugged her shoulders under the shawl.

"I was in a convent," she declared. "I had the vocation."

At his look of surprise, she nodded her head. Kept nodding it at him till she had worn down that look of his astonishment. Yet he felt that if he pressed her to tell him more, she would draw back into herself. That confession had not been exactly voluntary. What had she ever seen of God? He had asked her that. That had drawn it out of her.

There was inclined to be in him that curiosity men have about the inception of frailty in a woman who is flagrantly without the moral sense. There was inclined to be in her that resentment such women have to any prying at their past. It is as though they had clothed themselves in physical complacency and any inquisitiveness about their history were stripping them to a virginal nakedness they were too modest to look upon again.

Had she been what Gissing called the highly finished article of commerce, this undoubtedly would have been the motive in her reticence and nothing else. But she was

far from that. If it were a trade she had wanted, there were men enough at Paurelle's to buy from her.

George had realised it was not quite this. He was not aware of the emotions she bordered on, but it was not quite a sense of shame, or modesty or sentimental regret, that held and delayed her tongue. Beneath her invective against that idealism of youth, there had been a barb of antagonism. At some time, he could dimly feel, she had been stung to a lasting passion of hatred. However young she had been, however old she was then, it could still spring upward sharply to her eye. He saw the flash of it.

"You think I am French?" she said presently.

"But aren't you?"

"I am French and I am Dutch. My mother was Van der Zelle. She was Javanese. I was born in Batavia."

So much for a while. In short sentences interrupted with abrupt pauses of silence, when her eyes ran quickly to his and looked and satisfied themselves, she gave him a half-told story. Always, all the time, he was aware of the pages here and there she turned, so rapidly that he was not meant to see. There would always be that about her which she would hold in reserve. Just when it seemed she was appearing, materialising for his mind in recognisable substance, she would disappear. It was only by lying still, as when you would watch a bird in a wood, that he could observe the strange markings of that life she showed him. A word of encouragement here, a word of interest there—these, as it might have been, were only the sounds of Nature in the wood. He dared not disturb her with any sudden human movement of his voice.

Born in Batavia, and in a convent when she was

fifteen. Ah-ha. But not driven there, you must understand.

"J'avais la vocation pour la vie religieuse."

That was exactly what she said.

To have doubted it might have scared her from the tranquillity of that woodland branch she sat on, preening her breast-feathers, making this unconscious toilet of her life. Yet his curiosity was greater at that moment than his prudence. He thought she was deceiving herself—romancing. Those flamboyant exhibitions of her body at Paurelle's and here in the studio before he had ever told her that he wanted her for the altogether; that inference of hers that her body was herself—these were not attitudes of a mind that had ever been exalted with the ecstasy of a dedication to God.

"You thought that at the time," he said. "Of course you realise now it was the hysteria of youth."

Her eyes blazed. The man who insulted her in Larocque's *café* must have seen that look.

"You are idealist," she flung at him, "and you call it the hysteria of youth! Did you not know it when you were the young boy—that gift of the good God when you see the trees all buds with Spring—when you see——"

He was afraid for her own sake she would become sentimental about these memories. He interrupted, because he did not want her to lose the reality of herself. He said:

"Then why this now? Isn't it a long step from giving your soul to God to—to this?"

"This what?"

He chose words quickly—but carefully.

"This presentation of your body to—men?"

She appeared to use that strange droop of the eyelid

to obscure her glance as she looked at him and laughed. But very softly.

"A long step? A day, *mon ami*—an hour—a minute."

"I don't understand."

"There was a French *curé* in Batavia. He give mass at the convent. He put the wafer on my tongue."

The whisper of that word—the pause—the slow glance beneath the droop of the eyelid. It was all she ever told him of that incident of her life. But the invective she poured forth once she had said it was like a stream of lava from her lips.

Those French! She hated them! Their knowledge of women! The way they knew that power which women possessed! The guile with which they taught them how to use it! It was like showing a beast its strength that at the last it might destroy itself.

She had known nothing. All about her had been what she had said—the sweet gifts of God. She had seen the sisters in the convent who had never known, and were there ever such happy women in the world as they? But now it was her pride that she knew all. She could boast of it. She could be glad of it. Once the beast has learnt its strength, what is the good of ropes to hold him?

George was sitting the other side of the stove, watching her. She laughed at him. Leaning forward, she took his face in her hands and laughed with the breath of her laughter against his mouth.

"You have these idealist thoughts in your mind," she said, "as I had all the birds and the flowers and the gifts of that good God! But where are they when a woman stands in front of you?"

"But you've just been standing in front of me. I've

drawn the figure—roughed it in. You can see it there on the easel. I never thought of you once while I was drawing. Only just this line and that line. Proportions. The length of curve there is from your waist to the knee. Heaps of things. Not that.”

“Why then you fetch that shawl?”

“I didn’t want you to get cold.”

She stood up in front of him with a smile about her face that flickered like a moving light.

“You lie,” she said.

§ 2

AT six o’clock, in the dark of the morning, Liane Sonrel crept down the stairs of the house in the *Rue Lepic*. In one hand was her paper bag; in the other, George’s umbrella. It was still raining.

She had tried to slip away without waking him. In his sleep he had felt her warmth leave his side. The physical subconsciousness of vacancy. He had stirred, wakened. Across that black darkness he had seen her moving with the spectral unreality of substance a body has about it in the dim and early hours. For a few moments he could only watch her without speaking. It filtered with slow drops of thought into his mind that she was going—leaving him. She would just have disappeared. He sat up in the bed.

“Where are you going?”

“I must go.”

“Why? Where?”

“My *appartement*.”

“What for?”

“I go to make the food.”

"You can have it here. With me. Rolls and coffee. Everything you want."

"No. I must go back."

"Ah."

"Why that ah?"

"This child of yours."

She stopped in her dressing. From being a nebulous shade moving in that darkness, her sudden stillness gave her substance. He wakened to a more poignant consciousness that she was leaving him.

"Who told you about the child?"

"Paurette."

"Ah-ha, *c'est un cancanier, ça!*"

"But isn't there someone to look after it?"

He had the masculine idea about children, that they could be kennelled like dogs and flung a bone.

"And feed it! Is that what you would have? And put on its clothes! And be there in the bed with it when it wakes!"

"Are you going back to undress and get into bed again?"

"But of course!"

"How old is it?"

"She is three years—a little more."

He tried to conceive the mother she must have been three years ago. Was she twenty now? Sixteen she must have been then. Was that priest the father? He found it difficult to realise her as a mother at all. Had she the instinct? He said something like that as she finished her dressing and heard the muffled sound of her laughing as she picked up her paper bag. She became spectral again as she moved through the darkness to the door. There she stopped.

"You are all instincts and ideas and funny thoughts that have no shape, *mon ami*. Women are mothers without this instinct, believe me. They are mothers because the man he say, 'Come here,' and she come. She is afraid. But what does that matter? He is not. What should he be afraid of? All that happens after, it is nothing to do with him. The first time, what is there more than that? He just say: 'Come here.' But the next time. Ah-ha."

She had opened the door. She was going like this.

"The child doesn't mean anything to you then?"

"Oh—but certainly, it is a child. It has a face that must be washed. There is the food it cannot properly put into its mouth. It has little fears when it is alone. It needs the little things to be done—you know—it cannot do. But of course it means all these."

He was still sitting up in the bed. Sleep was gone out of the room. The darkness had dissolved into a grey light in which he could see her face and the black line of her lips he had known were red. He stretched out his hand to her and said:

"Come here."

She came with a low murmur of laughter and took his hand.

"Why do you laugh?"

"You do not hear?"

"Hear what?"

"What you say."

"What did I say?"

"You say: 'Come here.'"

He pulled her into his arms. She lay there quite quietly, voluntarily, with one hand holding out the paper

bag at arm's-length on the bed so that he did not crush it.

"Why do you go away and leave me like this?"

"I tell you."

"You don't want to stay."

"Oh, *mon Dieu!* When it is all warm and close—eh! And you get up when it is day in the room and you light the stove and you make the coffee! And I sit tight in the bed with the clothes up to my chin and I watch you hop here and hop there, and when it is all ready you come back—eh! And we are warm and we eat our rolls. We drink our coffee. We laugh and talk *et puis!* Not want to stay! *Mon Dieu!*"

"Why not stay then?"

"I tell you."

"To-night then?"

"Again?"

"Yes. And again and again."

"You like me—eh?"

"I adore you."

She laughed in his ear.

"And again and again I get up in the nasty dark? And I go through the streets, and the *gendarme* he say: '*Chérie!*' And there are men in the dark. And I know men. Do I do all that because I love you?"

"Do you love me?"

She would still laugh in his ear.

"That little word. It is a big one—eh?"

"I mean it."

"But, my friend, it lasts a very little while, if I must get up at six o'clock in the morning. Believe me. I know. You have ideas. You think love warm itself."

He was meant to understand that the movement she made in his arms was a shaking of her head.

"Come and live here then," he muttered to her.

"Here?"

"Yes."

"Where you paint?"

"Yes."

She worked herself out of his arms and sat up on the bed. He was foolish, this man.

"Have you ever live in one room with a child?"

"No."

"Then you do not know. It is like a monkey in a birdcage. My God! In one day you would be mad. I am mad. Sometimes I tear my hair and I cry. And she sit there on the floor and both of us we cry. *C'est les tourments de l'enfer.*"

There was a room on the floor below that was vacant. She could come and live there. He would not be defeated by these difficulties. He would pay for the room. Then he was making money with his pictures? No. Not much. Here and there, now and then, he sold a picture. He had his bit of money from home.

"You have a home?"

"Well, why not?"

She nodded her head. It was as though he had told her he had an estate of land. Something that belonged to him. Some place or thing of which he could say: "This is mine." She looked at him somewhat in curiosity.

"When I haven't got enough," he said, "we'll share. When I have, you can save. I don't want anything for myself. I just want you here with me—every day—every night. All the time."

"And your work?"

"Oh, I shall work. Better I shall work. *Mon Dieu!* Won't I want to be here! Just to paint you!"

"I have the beauty then?"

"Who said you hadn't?"

"You."

"When?"

"Last night when I begin the pose."

He took her in his arms again.

"I didn't know what I was talking about. I was thinking about the picture. I wasn't thinking of you."

"You think of me now—eh?"

"I can't think of anything else."

There was the shaded light of a smile on her face which he could not see in that darkness as she raised herself up out of his arms. It had no triumph in it—just satisfaction. There was a buoyancy about her, an assurance of flight, like a bird feeling the air under its wing-feathers. He felt it rather than saw it. He found her standing there beside him before he had actually realised she had left the bed.

"Well—what do you say?"

"I come."

"When?"

"You arrange about the room and I give them notice where I am to-day."

He stretched far out of the bed to catch her hand. She stood looking down at the top of his head while he pressed it against his mouth. She was smiling again. She had found a place in the chaos of that city of Paris like a bird resting on the yard-arm of a ship at sea. There was always this sense of passage about her. She was migratory.

George had the suggestion of that without knowing

it. When she went out of the door and he heard her footsteps sounding down the wooden stairs to a diminuendo, it was as one who had gone away. He believed she would come back. But there, in that dumb light of the early morning, she had gone away. Even then he did not know where her *appartement* was. Perhaps that was it. The knowledge that she had just gone out into the streets of Paris.

She walked quickly—confidently. She held the paper bag tightly in her hand. And he lay there, still listening to her footsteps after they had gone until he fell asleep.

§ 3

THE sort of ménage that was established at that house in the *Rue Lepic* was very much like any other characterising the lives of those men who frequented Paurelle's. A few exceptions like Pinet and Delair were free-lances. They had no ties of any duration. They were promiscuous, like dogs that have no home, never betraying the mark of the collar. They wandered, lean-ribbed, from one place to another. Not that in appearance there was much that was lean-ribbed about Pinet.

Liane Sonrel brought her child and her python, about the only substantial belongings she possessed. She planted them down in the furnished room on the floor below George's studio. "*Meublé*" is a term. It had a bed, a dressing-table, a table and a cupboard; but they might have been thrown in there as lumber is thrown into an attic, to be broken up some day for firewood. There was the rag of a carpet on the floor. The tatters of blinds at the windows.

She was used to these accommodations. In the slums of Marseilles she had known worse. She did not complain. The ground beneath her feet had shifted so often in her life that she had come to regard no place of abode with any thought of permanence. They were no more than resting-places. She settled upon them, looked about her, combed out her disordered feathers, and was flown again.

It was when he first saw that child of hers peering down into the shallow well of the house between the bars of the banisters on the landing that George was dimly aware of the vagrancy of Liane Sonrel's life. Whoever the father may have been, whether the French priest or another, there was a suggestion of the East about this girl. The pale, sallow cheeks, the deep, lustrous brown eyes, gave her that distant, that dumb and patient look all Eastern people share with the animals. Between those bars of the banisters, looking down, she appeared to him like a monkey in captivity that is mournful with loneliness because it has never known the fellowship of its kind.

As he passed her on his way to the studio, he stopped to look down and pat her cheek. She stared up at him blankly with eyes that were not only her mother's but, even at that age, her own.

As a daughter of Liane's, even in that enraptured state of his mind, he was roused to no interest in this child. With none of Liane's sense of responsibility, he felt even more than she did about it. It was an obstacle. It was in the way. Yet that pale face and those brooding eyes were disturbing. Distantly he was conscious of a human being temporarily imprisoned behind those bars. He was aware of the nomadic nature of its existence.

How much already of the world had it seen at the age of three? Where had it come from? Where would it go next?

That sight of her, gazing between the banisters, left his mind uncertain, restless and confused with sensations of the insecurity of his own emotions. He could not work that day, could not summon the impetus of concentration. He wanted to be with Liane. He kept going downstairs to the floor below and knocking on her door. She would not let him enter. It was the day of her arrival. She was unpacking her things.

For one who had no sense of reticence about the exposure of her body, there was an unexpected sound of alarm and privacy about her voice when she called out:

"The door is locked. You can't come in."

He did not know then it was the poverty of her existence she was determined to conceal. That she was ashamed of it. That there was in her some urgent sense of the recognition due to the quality of her self and that as things were, with the responsibility of her child and the precariousness of her occupation, life was merely insulting her.

She did not want anyone—certainly, just then, she did not want him—to behold these insults. It had needed no little persuasion to bring her to that house in the *Rue Lepic*. Once there, she had no intention of allowing her privacy to be disturbed.

During all the time she was there, George never saw within that room she occupied. When she went out, leaving Aurore, the little girl, behind her, she locked the door, taking the key with her. This was a precaution she pursued at once after that first day when she heard

that Aurore had come out of the room and was waiting for her on the landing.

George had told her. They were eating their *déjeuner*, the two of them with him, in his studio. She said nothing. She patted Aurore's head and smiled at her. But that was what she did.

Sometimes, but not often, he heard Aurore beating on the door after Liane had gone out. She never kept it up long enough for him to go downstairs and shout at her. On the whole she was an extraordinarily quiet child, very docile, very self-absorbed. Whatever she did with herself on those occasions when she was alone, she was very still about it. George did not even hear her moving in the room below.

So it was, in the sense that she lived in the same house, shared her meals with him and allowed no other man at Paurelle's to be familiar with her, that Liane Sonrel came to be George's mistress. It was a recognised relationship in the *Rue Berthe*. She still gave her performances there. Not regularly. Whatever her contract was with Paurelle—and George never knew the clauses of this—it enabled him to let her out to other *cafés* in *Montmartre*.

Their first difference, their first misunderstanding, arose out of Paurelle's engagement of her to the *Bal Bouffons*, a third-rate dancing-hall which the hardships of the War shut up with a snap like the click of a mouse-trap.

It was not so much that she cared to go there or was regarding closely the terms of her contract. It was George's jealousy. So long as she was at the *Rue Berthe*, and he could take her back at night after the performance, he had nothing to say against those exhibitions

of herself—that stripping of the snake from her naked body. More than probably he didn't like it. No man in love would. But that was the way he had seen her first. That, as it were, had been their introduction. The possessive instincts of men are without reason. They are blind; they are deaf; they are dumb. But they are conscious and very swift.

When first he heard of it, George asked her not to go to the *Bal Bouffons*. She looked at him with eyes so wide that even the drooping of that eyelid was not apparent.

“Why not?”

“I don't want you to.”

“Why not?”

She repeated it without variation of tone. It was the assumption of a child asking him a question.

“It's not the same as at Paurelle's.”

“But exactly the same. I bring the snake. I take him off my body. I dance the nautch dance as I learn it in the Tamil temple at Tangore. As you see. Then I come away.”

“I don't mean that. You do the same things, perhaps. But the *Bal Bouffons* is not Paurelle's.”

He was as inarticulate, as dumb as that. A blind pride in him made it impossible for him to see he was giving her no just reasons. Before she had spoken, he was already deaf to any arguments she might use. But he was conscious of his fear before it reached him and as swiftly armed in readiness to fight for her.

“It is a place for the dance,” she said. “The same.”

“They're not the same people there. They are mixed. Anybody goes there. At Paurelle's we all know

each other. Night after night they are the same men—the same girls.”

“Ah-ah.”

She would always say this, with that low nasal note, at moments when he least understood her. In the short while they had been together, scarcely more than ten days, he had come already to be apprehensive at the sound of it. It contained such a quality of reserve. It was cynical and yet with no bravado. It had the effect of a soft accompaniment to some mental manœuvre as she withdrew into herself, made an exit. It was the sound of her escape, as though she had pulled aside some heavy curtain of her mind and disappeared behind it.

“Why do you say that? Why do you make that sound like that?”

“I smile, because you do not understand.”

“But I do.”

“No.”

“What then?”

“You do not understand I must go where I like and do what I like. Since I know what that damned French priest, he taught me, I know that. Oh, yes.”

They stood together in the studio at the *Rue Lepic* looking at each other. It was at mid-day. Carts were rumbling by outside. Some pigeons were cooing in a patch of winter sunshine on the roof. Aurore was singing a tuneless song to herself in the locked room below.

It was a battle of their eyes. His were burning. Hers were bright and cold. Then, at that moment, that one eyelid was drooping very low. And he lost—utterly, hopelessly, confusedly. His hands were flung out to her shoulders. He was holding her with his fingers tightly gripping the smooth round of her neck. His face was

close against hers, so that his words were pouring out in the hot stream of his breath on to her cheek. He was saying:

"Don't you know why I don't want you to go? I don't want to lose you. I can keep you while you're here, while you're at Paurelle's. They all know. Of course they know. They wouldn't dare. But when you get away there—and God knows when they see you. Stripping yourself. And then that dance. I can't lose you!"

He pulled her into his arms.

"I can't!"

That might well have been the end of his claims on her. In the quick consciousness of his fear, he might well have known it. For whatever doubt she may have had of herself in the epicurean civilisation of that city of Paris, George must surely have dispelled it then. This was assurance such as any woman might feel would set her out enriched for the adventure of her life. Once secured with it, she would not be likely to turn back into the quieter channels of submission. Even at that age, when she was scarcely more than twenty, she had travelled far, and must have known in herself there was farther yet to go.

"Are you going?" he whispered at her.

He was painfully in love. He knew he was. That adoration he had declared to her the first night they were together in the *Rue Lepic* was no exaggeration. He was a young man then. Not more than twenty-six. It was a volcanic passion that draws the substance of its flame out of the very crater of a man's existence. It is never to be forgotten. With him it never was.

He knew she was nodding her head back at him, and he held her in his arms as though he were trying to

reduce her to powerlessness for the making of that answer. But still her head nodded.

"Then you'll let me come there when it's over. You'll let me come and take you away!"

Whether from diplomacy or the weakness his passion gave him or what it was, he had not overstrained her patience. He had not tried to exercise authority. She may have felt grateful to him for that, because she was not incapable of tenderness, and he had treated her so much better than any of the others. She felt a pity for him that was not without generosity. Just as she felt pity for Aurore.

She lay in his arms, just as he was holding her, and he heard her say:

"You can bring me back. You can carry me back in your arms if you like. All the way through the streets. All the way up the stairs. And you shall put me there in the bed—eh?"

§ 4

SHE was to make her appearance at the *Bal Bouffons* soon after midnight. From half-suggested things she said during the day, George suspected it was in her mind that he should take her there as soon as the festivities began; that they should be seen in the hall together, should mix with the crowd and then perhaps, when her performance was over, that he should take her away.

He did not then realise in this the simplicity of her desire for a cavalier. She wanted someone, as it were, to open the door for her, to acclaim and warrant her in a new world. It must have been partly to defy this feeling that life was insulting her. She had that con-

ception of herself. It is the authority of beauty. Women who have no real beauty possess it. However degrading had been her treatment by circumstance, she had kept that as a woman keeps the one jewel with which she will not part. So she had struck the man across the mouth at Larocque's. So she kept her door bolted on the second floor in the *Rue Lepic*. In this consciousness of some quality of her sex, she had that *flamme de la royauté*. It was the unattainable thing about her.

The point of all this was that the door she desired him to open for her was the very one George would have kept locked, if he could. With all the instincts of a cavalier about him at that time, this was the one entrance to life he would have barred against her had it been in his power. He knew it was not. Certainly the fear he had of losing her was only instinctive. But it was none the less real. It accounted for his taking her down to dine that night at one of the more expensive *cafés* in the *Boulevards*, for bringing her afterwards to the *Folies Bergères*.

This succeeded, as he intended, in distracting her mind from other projects. She felt these attentions to be in the nature of a recognition. They were too distracting for her to suspect he was avoiding this proposal of his going to the *Bal Bouffons*. To him that place was the world that would take her from him. For this reason he was afraid of it. He did not see in her then what in some sense she must have seen in herself. He did not realise a kind of splendour there was about her. Nothing more perhaps than a dazzling flamboyance in her complete lack of morals, and after all there was nothing so splendid in that. This was not a world where anyone thought particularly of morals. If he didn't take her, some other man

would. Perhaps the very next who came along. That is the sort of thing he must have believed. And so long as she was with him at Paurelle's, he counted her to be safe. But in that mixed crowd at the *Bal Bouffons*, God knew as well as he did, or He ought to.

In those days, George scarcely plumbed the depths of his feelings for her, even in what he had decided to do that night. For he had decided to do it then, that evening when he took her out to dinner. There had been no other thought in his mind all day long. He had determined to ask her to marry him.

It was sudden enough, but not so sudden as if, in the throes of some wild exaltation, it had escaped like a thing driven by passion out of his mind.

He had been to every dealer he knew that morning. For three hours he had wandered from one place to another, and at last had sold a picture. With a fierce resistance he had finally accepted a hundred and fifty francs. Practically the whole amount of that sum had been spent in buying a ring in a little jeweller's shop in the *Rue St-Jacques* and a silk night-dress in the *Galeries Lafayette*. For a man's conception of a wedding there is nothing original in this. With what remained, there was just enough for the splash of that dinner and their seats at the *Folies Bergères*.

She was impressed by these entertainments. Undoubtedly she had a cavalier. If not that door of the *Bal Bouffons*, at least he was opening a door for her into this world of Paris. She felt a sense of place, only depreciated for her by the fact that every other woman about her was better dressed than she. This was the first time she had ventured out of *Montmartre* since Paurelle had brought her up from Marseilles. She was exhilarated. Her eyes

missed nothing. It was not so much a joy she seemed to have at being there as a suppressed exaltation.

George mistook it for mere sensuous pleasure. When in the *Folies Bergères* her eyes were fixed in a stare at the stage, and she said, "Will you feel a great *tressaillement*—" (that was the word she used. It has no equivalent)—"will you feel a great *tressaillement* when you come and see me on that stage there?" he just laughed and told her that what they liked in *Montmartre* was no criterion of their taste on the *Boulevards*.

She nodded her head. He might say that. That was what he might think. She was not offended, but she turned her eyes from him with an involuntary exclusion. In the next few minutes, so far as there was any contact between them, it was to him like the sound of her footsteps retreating down his stairs in a diminuendo. She had left him. With little attentions, designed to attract her, he had to call her back.

As soon as the performance at the *Folies Bergères* was over, he took her up the steep streets into *Montmartre*. It was time for her to prepare for her appearance at the *Bal Bouffons*. Although he had successfully avoided the occasion for them to be seen there dancing together first, he soon discovered that she still counted upon his walking down the hall with her, upon it being seen by all that she was not without her *amant*.

When he prepared to leave her at the door, she caught his arm.

"You leave me here?"

"Yes; I'll come back when it's over. You'll find me here waiting for you."

"You will not see me dance?"

"I don't want to."

She insinuated her body closer to him.

"But I dance for you. You sit there and watch me. Then we go back together. Eh?"

He shook his head. He did not want to tell her a second time of his fear that he would lose her. He was saying to himself that the less a man showed a woman he cared, the more she clung to him. He had never felt like this about a woman before. He was unaccountably uncertain of himself. Always she was just beyond his reach, a thing he could touch but could not grasp. He did not know whether it were best wholly to give way to it, to lean right out and submit to this bondage, or resist it with all the consciousness of his independence. When they were married it would be a different thing. She would be his. He had all the normal possessive instincts.

"Praps you will be dancing for me," he said, "but there'll be all the others."

She would not let him go. She still held his arm. He felt the drag against his resistance, not so much of her will opposed to his as of a kind of current force. Her whole self bearing them together. It was more that he could not deny this than that he could not deny her.

She had opened the door. Through a sort of *foyer du public* they could hear the sound of the orchestra and the thumping noise of feet treading the floor. She had drawn him in. Before he could exercise the will of his independence, he found himself in the crush of people hurrying to go through. She still had his arm. Irresistibly he felt himself to be a part of her. He could not break himself away. He had never meant to come and he was there.

He pushed his way with her through the mass of

men and women flung together there in the common impulse of finding enjoyment. They were human beings. They had minds to feed. This was the food they were devouring. In this fashion they were not unlike a herd of pigs snuffling with their noses in the ground, self-absorbed, concentrated, bent upon acquiring the fruit of their search, violent and irresponsible in the anger of their resentment at any interference of their pleasures.

No one knew or cared just then who these two might be thrusting their way to the end of the hall. When they got in the way of the dancers, elbowing them, unavoidably jostling them, they were greeted with vicious looks and muttered imprecations. The scent of the heat of human bodies mulled with cheap and heavy perfumes was a suffocation till the nostrils became immune to it. The noise of the thumping feet and the gusts of human voices and human laughter were a confusion until the ears assimilated them.

It was very different from Paurelle's. There was no mark of personality about it. You could not pick out an individual here or there like a Pinet or a Gregoire. It had no leaven of mentality. That mass of faces, men's and women's, was one common mask of the human mind. It was all cast in one grinning mould. This was life in the herd. Human nature reverting to the mere greedy elements of itself. These were the People.

Near as it was to Paurelle's, George had never been there before, but it was what he expected. Again and again as they made their way down to the curtained dressing-room at the end of the hall, he wished he had not come. Life was insulting him now with the

thought that she must appear and perform before this rabble.

Was he idealising her, then? He may have been. This determination upon marriage was more than a mere instinct for protecting his own. There was no occasion for it unless. The freedom of their relationship was recommended by the lives of all the men that were about him in that bohemian environment. He had no occasion to marry. At that stage of his career as an artist, it would hamper rather than assist him. He had no instincts of paternity. Even the existence of that child Aurore was unpalatable to him. Yet he saw Liane with a permanence in his life that overruled all the obvious objections there were to such a project.

This was the influence she had upon men, and one which, in her inner consciousness of its possession, she would not part with in exchange for the bondage of security. Once she had yielded this possession. To the French priest in Batavia she must have undoubtedly given that which in a man corresponds to what the ecclesiastics would call his soul. "What shall it profit a man——?" It would appear to be a compensatory possession, peculiar to his sex. The equivalent of this was what she had yielded, recovering it soiled and damaged, but still her own, from the mud in which he had thrown it.

She never spoke more of that incident in her life than just to say she had dedicated herself to the religious life and that this man had come to the convent, celebrating mass and putting the wafer on her tongue.

That and her hatred of Frenchmen was enough.

The fierce resentment and reserve of it was vivid in its brevity.

And possibly it was this possession she retained, a very different thing, no doubt, from what it had been in the time of her innocence, which roused that spark of idealism in George to the flame of his purpose.

Sitting there that night at one of the tables ranged around the walls at the *Bal Bouffons*, drinking one absinthe after another and watching the faces of those about him as they looked on at her performance, he probably suffered the sort of hell a man goes through when he is having the work of his life criticised from commercial standards. He could not look at her. When every face in the room turned at her entrance between the curtains, he turned his away. He looked anywhere but at her. With a perversity of mind he tortured himself with this scrutiny of the faces about him. They were all the same. There was a sudden awakening of appetite about them. In every eye there was a look as of a herd unexpectedly summoned by the herdsman to the familiar cry of his voice. They appeared, every one of them, to turn from what they were doing, to gather in one common idea of their minds and surge towards her.

The applause that broke out upon the conclusion of her performance was only a further interpretation of his impressions. It was an idea vocalised. He felt sick at the sound of it. A man near him with a girl sitting on his knee, shouting "*Bis! Bis!*" clutching the girl spasmodically about her body and straining his eyes in the direction of those curtains where Liane had disappeared, roused George to such violence of disgust that

he had to leave his table lest his feelings got the better of him.

Would she give the encore they were asking of her? Had she that vanity about her? Did she care what feelings she excited in her audience? He stood, restlessly, in another part of the hall waiting, sick in his throat and hot-eyed to see what she would do.

In response to the repeated cries of his patrons for more, the manager appeared amongst the orchestra and said:

“Messieurs et mesdames—c'est tout. Il n'y aura pas de représentation jusqu'à demain soir.”

It was the first sensation of relief he had had since the moment she had drawn him into that place. There was, then, that something of reserve about her. Vaguely in those moments he may have known it was withholding of herself, such as in those first days they had all known of her at Paurelle's, that gave substance to this sudden idealisation he had found in his mind about her. There was something he had found which the others, Pinet, Gregoire and Delair had not. Something which the man at Larocque's in Marseilles had not understood. He did not think of it in a phrase. It had no words for him. Possibly it was that *flamme de la royauté*. However degrading the circumstance in which circumstance placed her, even if it were in the gutter, she would still beg with the air of one who cannot be denied.

What would not a man with his inspirations make of that? He had the astounding conceit of his temperament. More than all that, he was bewilderingly, incredibly in love.

When Liane came out of the dressing-room into the

hall and the men and the women began to flock about her, he strode down between the tables to reach her side. She was laughing with the pleasure of her success, but there was evidently no desire in her to participate in it. She was trying to extricate herself from them. They would not let her go.

Thrusting people to right and left of him, George made a swift way to her. It was with a sharp exclamation of gratitude that she found him beside her, and clung to his arm. With no sense of gratification because of the *réclame* that had suddenly fallen upon him, he drew her out of the hall.

This was what she had wanted. Here was her cavalier. And it was not his looks for which she had chosen him. With that broad forehead, the slightly misshapen nose and wide but sensitive mouth, there was nothing in George's appearance to recommend him. But of all those men at Paurelle's, he had eyes with a quick fire in them. There was no cold cynicism as there was in Pinet's. None of the indolent insolence as in Delair's. He had not the slow subservience to beauty that was to be seen in the sleepy eyes of Gregoire. In George's face there was a creative virility.

This was what she had eliminated from amongst all those men at Paurelle's. It was this she clung to as she walked with him through those crowds out of the *Bal Bouffons*.

As the night-wind blew cold and sweet in his face, George exclaimed:

"Thank God that's over!"

After that they walked back to the *Rue Lepic* in silence. By a divination of her instincts, she knew what his sensations were. Whether at that age she had learnt

it of men, or whether it was the inherent shrewdness of her sex, she knew he was in no mood for pleasantries. By the side of him along the pavement she walked, almost obediently, satisfied in herself to hear the submissive sound of her heels tapping beside his footsteps on the stones. She was in that mood. She was allowing herself to be docile, manageable. In response to that flame she had seen in his eyes as he thrust his way through those crowds to claim her, she was permitting a passivity about herself that only once in her life had been won from her.

Then they came to the house in the *Rue Lepic* and, standing in the dark hall at the foot of the stairs while he closed the door, she touched his arm. He looked across the diluted light of the gas-jet into her face.

"Are you angry with me?" she asked.

He thought she was his then. He thought he had mastered her; that the resentment of his disapproval had convinced her this possessive passion in his soul was not to be played with.

She came into his arms willingly. Gladly, it seemed to him. He lifted her off her feet.

"Now, my God, I'll carry you!" he muttered against her face, and he mounted the stairs with her.

The *concierge* opened her door. She looked out, blinking her eyes. She saw them disappearing into the upper darkness of the house. She was an old woman. She shrugged her shoulders. She shut her door again and went to bed.

§ 5

It was past one o'clock when George carried her into that studio room of his under the roof and laid her down. She was laughing in his ear as he bent over her. The hours till dawn, when she would glide like a morning ghost down the stairs in the grey light to her *appartement* where Aurore was sleeping, were all theirs. Thought of sleep for themselves had not entered their heads. She lay on the bed, stretched out, resting after her performance, feeling a lulled contentment at the sight of him—hopping here and hopping there—rousing the fire in the stove, preparing the coffee for their supper.

While the water was heating, he brought over the parcel of the night-dress and stood by the side of the bed looking down at her.

"What's that?"

Her eyes were quickened by the sight of that flat shape of the brown paper. It was its flatness. Nothing in bulk could have sharpened her eyes like that. There was no greed, but a sudden alertness of excitation in her look. A bird wakes in this fashion. It is asleep. Its eyes open. In an instant it is alive to the world about it. She rose to the support of her elbow. He put the parcel in her hand, already open to receive it.

"It's for you. Open it."

There was a sense of order, of construction in George's mind. Doubtless it was the creative artist in him. He was very young then. The illusioned sentimentality of youth was confused in him with sharp strains of cruelty and intolerance. Both were evident that night. With the

purchase of that ring, of that garment, and with his determination to marry her, he had seen these incidents set out in anticipation. This, as he had arranged it, was to be their wedding-night. Involuntarily he had idealised it, made it sacred.

To a great extent this was why he had not wanted to go with her to the *Bal Bouffons*; why, being drawn there against his will, he had sickened so much at the sight of it. For the time, it had almost destroyed the ecstatic environment he had created out of their relationship. He would have made a picture, and it was not so much that he had failed in the creation of it, as that it had been seized upon and besmeared by the praise of those who had not the faintest conception of what beauty was.

All the way back he had spoken no word to her. This was that mixture of cruelty. He was quite conscious of its injustice. There was no reason for it. She had her living to earn. It was Paurelle's arrangement that she should appear at the *Bal Bouffons*. She could not have escaped it. Nevertheless there was an unfortunate devil of disillusionment in him. He could have helped treating her like that, but he didn't want to help it.

With an innate vision of men, that came to her as imperceptibly as the breath she breathed, Liane had sensed what his feelings were. She had soothed them with a submissiveness she had never felt for a moment. She knew that before long the melting heat of his passion would destroy them as a spring snowfall is melted and disappears like magic beneath the warmth of the sun.

It had blazed forth that instant when they were

standing down in the hall and he was looking at her across the dirty light of that pallid gas-jet. She had felt it burning against her as he carried her up the stairs. All men were like that. Always they were like that. And now, as she took this flimsy parcel out of his hand, she knew he had as easily and absolutely forgotten all disillusionment that had ever for a moment destroyed his joy in her.

“What is it? What is it?”

He persisted in silence, letting her undo the string and unfold the paper.

There was something in the nature of a miracle to her in the way that from being a parcel of brown paper it became the texture of that garment in her hands. The wrappings fell away from it on to the bed. Suddenly she was holding the silky thing aloft in her fingers. Her eyes were bewildered with joy.

The full significance of the gift escaped her. It was a tribute to his passion. She realised that. It was an outburst of that generosity to which most men were liable in the impulsive gratitude of their emotions. She knew this too. But more than that, it was not in the range of her mind to reckon. She was far too absorbed with what it meant to herself.

For this was silk to touch her skin. He could never have thought of that. She had not let him know how poor she was. Always she had hidden her garments from him. Rolled them into a ball. Thrown them somewhere out of sight. Nakedness was not a condition she had any reason to be ashamed of. And yet, with all the experience of her life, she had somehow continued to preserve the right of it to herself. In all their intimacy, George had never felt the sure possession of her.

And here was something to enhance the value of that right she had retained. It was silk that would touch her skin. She jumped up on the bed with her arms to reach his neck. He had the satisfaction of hearing a woman pour her endearing gratitude into his ear.

It was not wholly the kind of satisfaction that he wanted. He had not tried to buy her with a present. This would never have been his conception of the conquest of any woman. She meant more to him than a thing procured by purchase.

In this it was he who had no inspiration of understanding about her. Did not know what the touch of that silk meant. Had no means of realising her gratitude was as much for that as for the possession of a pretty thing.

Nevertheless, it had become a moment of ecstatic consciousness for both of them. She clung to him, mixing her kisses with her endearments before she flung away and jumped up from the bed to array herself in her riches.

"You do not look! You go on with that coffee in the pot! I tell you when you may see!"

When to the command of her voice he turned round to look at her, there were no signs of the garments she had discarded. They had disappeared. She just stood there, half embarrassed in that drapery, with slight movements of the shoulder, enough for her to feel the touch of that material on her skin. He would have lied, as she told him before, if he had said he wanted no more than to paint her picture then.

It was later, in that still hour of the morning, the short hour of hiatus in the life of Paris, when the carts

on the cobbles have gone by and for the moment seem as if they would not return, it was then, in the darkness and beneath the bed-clothes—all as he had designed it—he found her hand and slipped the ring over her finger.

There was a sudden stillness about them; about him after he had done it, about her when she felt the band of metal tightened on her finger. For a moment they lay like that—not moving a limb. Scarcely breathing.

Slowly then she drew her hand away from him. She brought it out from beneath the bed-clothes. By the light of the candle that was still burning beside the bed, she looked at what it was that was round her finger. Somehow she must have guessed, for seeing it quite plainly, even in that meagre light, she pretended she did not know. She said:

“What is it?”

“A ring.”

“Oh, yes. I know.”

“I bought it to-day.”

“Why?”

“When I bought the night-dress.”

“Why?”

“Because I want you to wear it—always.”

He said that, forcing a matter-of-fact voice because he did not want it to sound sentimental to her. He felt no trace of sentiment. There was a quick stream of joy flowing through his mind. Sentiment had nothing to do with it. It was the same kind of sensation as when he saw and captured a clear sight of the truth with paint on canvas. It contained a consciousness of creative power. In that moment it was not actually so much that he had made her his, as that he had achieved a force of

unity. He was relating himself to things outside himself. He was reaching the unattainable.

"Always?"

The lid of her eye was drooping very low as she looked up at him. She repeated his word without its meaning.

Their voices had not broken the stillness there was between them. He had not moved since he had put the ring on her finger. Since she had raised her hand above the bed-clothes she had not stirred a muscle of her body.

"Why do you want me to wear it always?"

"Because we're going to be married."

He could not understand why, even to him then, that word seemed to have a preposterous sound about it. Was it the silence, the stillness in which she lay at his side when she had heard it? When she never moved he realised how he must have expected some demonstration of emotion from her, as when he had given her that night-dress. It was not, even with his parentage, that he had any old-fashioned ideas about the supreme honour of marriage. It may have been, perhaps, to him the most unmistakable expression of his affections. It was a pledge, where pledges were not essentially demanded. He knew quite well they could go on together as they were with no harm done either to her or to himself. But this gratification of his senses was not enough. Rightly or wrongly, he had found in her, in that short time, something more than the mere presentation of herself she offered at Paurelle's and now was displaying for that more open market in the *Bal Bouffons*.

He was an idealist about his work. It was an in-

creasing astonishment to him that he had become idealist about a woman. But it was what he felt had happened to him. This was much more than infatuation. Actually, as never before, he realised himself to be in love. He would have given her anything she had asked of him. This offering of his name seemed nothing. And the moment he had spoken of marriage a fear smote him that it seemed nothing to her. He was conscious of a suspension through the whole of his being while he waited for her answer.

She looked at the ring a long while. The thought shamed his mind that she might be thinking what a cheap piece of jewellery it was. Because it was cheap. So cheap that when he saw her beginning slowly to take it off her finger he was at first stung with pride. Then, as she looked up and he found the pupils of her eyes magnified in a mist behind the tears that were in them, he knew she would never belong to him.

There are some women whose refusals are partly the expression of a mood, partly sometimes no more than a pledge to their vanity. A man feels that the siege and battery of his will and his persistence will conquer them in the end. He sensed it was not this with her.

The moment he saw her lifting that ring from her finger he knew he was done. Never could any man have asked a woman to marry him at more propitious a moment than that. He realised if he couldn't get her then, he would never get her. It was not that he actually gave up hope. It was impossible for him to do that, even when he thought his last chance was gone. He simply just knew that, close as she was to him, she wasn't his.

She took off the ring. Slowly over the knuckle of her finger, but deliberately. Never as if she were in any

doubt. His hand was under the bed-clothes. She had to find it. He didn't help her. When she had found it, he wouldn't open his fingers to receive it. She tried to prise them open. He would not consent. The ring fell down into the bed between them.

"Why?" he said.

At first she could only shake her head. Was she a woman of deep emotions? Who can say? That night with George in his studio she must have been profoundly moved.

"Why?" he said again.

And again, and still she could only shake her head. At last she said:

"It is not a good thing—this marriage. I know. I have tried it. Believe me."

Here she shook her head. Kept on shaking it until she appeared ready to speak again. It was then she told him her story, as much of it, probably, as any man has ever heard. She sat up in the bed with her hands clasped round her knees and her chin resting on them.

Abbreviated, even as she gave it, it made the ordinary woman's life seem as empty as a leaky kettle thrown out on a dustbin.

"I ran away from that convent in Batavia. I told you. That French priest. He give up his vows. He leave the Church. Then he give me up. You see. It is very simple for the man. He disappear. I never hear of him since. The world is too big for women to find the men who spoil them. And it is too small for the women who have been spoiled to find room for themselves. Oh, yes. I go back to my mother and she beat me. It is the woman you beat when these things happen. But do you not

know that? Who made the first sin? Was it Adam or was it Eve? You may ask yourself."

She drew away the hair that was falling about her eyes. She went on:

"And then my father, he go to India, and my mother, she put me with the nautch-girls in the temple at Tangore. That is where I learn my dance. And other things I learn too, my dear friend."

She was still sitting up in the bed. He was watching her, the fine line of her profile lit with a glow of halation from the burning candle beyond her head. He could not see what this had to do with the matter, and yet he could not stop her. There was that fixed look of determined reminiscence in her eyes, when you know that the only way a person can come back to you is down that path of memory on which they have set themselves. After a pause, when he felt she was reviewing in her mind the things she would not tell, she went on again:

"I was the servant of the priests in that Tamil temple. You know the life of a nautch-girl—yes? I dance for them. I fan the figure of the god with Tibetan ox-tails. I carry the holy light that is called Kumbarti. There are one hundred of us. We all dance. We all belong to the priests. You understand? You know the priest? The holy man he is? The beautiful soul he has, so faithful to his God? You know? But, my friend, I would sooner have the dirty bodies of those priests in the Tamil temple than the sweet voice of that French *curé* who put the wafer on my tongue."

Her voice had such a quietness then, he could scarcely hear her words. This irony of hatred she revealed for the ideals of the priesthood was full of poison in the sacs of its restraint. Then with a sudden change of tone, she

left that part of her story for him to imagine the life she led in Tangore. But not before she had given him that quick and piercing sight of her loathing for the man who had destroyed her vision of the birds and the flowers and her good God Who had made them all.

Probably the fact of his not quite French extraction, and that he had spent all his youth in Ireland, had something to do with that first attraction George may have had for her. This may be exaggerating her hatred. Yet regarding the apparent purpose of all she did afterwards, it is possible it does not. Anyhow, her reserve about it indicates the depths of her feelings. She spoke in a completely different voice as she went on.

"That was not for me," she said. "I do not stay there long. They kill their women as you kill flies. They bear children till they can bear no more and then they die. I would not bear their children. I would not die. Not then. An English soldier, he see me in the temple. You know the English soldier in India—yes? He have a round eye. His, it become very round and big. He take me away. Oh, yes. I ran away. He was clean. He had a bath every day. He smell like a piece of soap. After the Tamil priests! Oh, my God! It was like being in a Turkish bath. We marry. Oh, yes. I had not known that sort of man before. Only those that married other peoples. We have two children. First a boy—then a girl. We are very respectable."

She must have seen a look in George's eye, for she said quickly:

"You think Aurore is the child of the *curé*? Oh, no! He was not a man to leave a trace behind him. Aurore, she is a proper child. She is all right. So was the other. Just all right. And then they kill the other. A servant

kill him. My little son. Oh, I knew that. They poison him. I could prove it. And one day I kill that servant with my knife. Turn round. I show you. So!" She plunged her fist against his chest. Then stopped to look at him. It was as though she were saying: "Now you believe!" Then she went on:

"In the night I take Aurore and we go. You think I should have stayed with the English soldier? Have you seen the English soldier in India? Oh, my God! His boots creak, my friend, and his mind it is all new and polished like his boots. He would drive a woman mad with his creaking. I have heard it. Upstairs and downstairs. His mind is made of leather I tell you, and it is cut to a shape, and when you fit it to your own, it pinches and pinches and pinches. One day I screamed and then I went. But I had killed that servant first. How did I get to Pondichéry? I do not know. Aurore and I, we walk, we ride in bullock-carts. We get there. Do you know the rest? Has that *cancanier* told you? Marseilles. Larocque's. Then Monsieur Paurelle himself."

She changed the whole note of her voice to a sudden and unexpected tenderness as she said:

"Then you."

He took her in his arms and held her to him.

"But why in the name of God won't you marry me? I'm not an English soldier. I can make you happy. All the rest of your life I can. I'll give up everything I have for that."

Her face was against his neck. He could just hear what she said and feel the warmth of her words as her breath came from her lips against his skin.

"Do you think I do not know by this time?" she asked. "My friend, you are all the same and we women,

we are all the same. You say: 'Come here,' and we come. Then we know. And if we are wise we do not come quite there ever any more."

He turned his face away from her. He lay very still. The first market-cart of the new day rumbled over the stones down the *Rue Lepic*. The candle was beginning to gutter with leaping flames and gigantic twisting shadows of their two heads flickering on the ceiling.

LE BAL BOUFFONS

§ I

LIANE'S performance at the *Bal Bouffons* was engaged for a fortnight. At one o'clock every night George was there at the door waiting to take her back to the *Rue Lepic*.

In the whole of that period he scarcely did a stroke of work. Liane herself noticed it.

"You promise you work more when I come," she said. "My God! you do not work at all. *Vous êtes cagnard.*"

He had no inclination to tell her why. Since that night, he had said no other word about marriage. Finding that ring in the bed after she had gone down to *Aurore* and controlling an impulse to fling it out of the window, he had thrown it into a drawer with half-used tubes of paints and old, unwashed brushes. He had made up his mind, without any nonsense about it, that words, persuasions and appeals were not going to win her for him. With a certain degree of fortitude, he had realised she would soon sicken of that kind of emotion.

Instead, night after night he took her down into the town, dining her at the restaurants, bringing her to the play, surrounding her mind with the impression that he could give her the full of life.

Some of the money for this he obtained by the sale of canvases that stood around the walls of his studio. The prices he asked were ludicrous, even for that early work. All he wanted was to sell—to get money.

He was convinced she did not know what was going on. There is every reason to suppose he was right. The attention that was showered upon her afterwards could never be attributed to any conscious design of her own. She was one of those women, one of those creatures, whom life seems to single out for its vividity. She had the quality of primal colour.

After the third or fourth day of these persistent entertainments, she said to him:

“You are not so poor—eh?”

“I’ve just had an extra dose of money from home.”

“Ah-ha—that home. It must be funny, a home like that. No—what do I mean? Not funny. I mean nice.”

Apparently she meant both. With the childhood she had had, such a home as George represented his was must have seemed like a fairy-tale to her.

But this tale about money from Ireland was all lies. He was selling things—other things than his pictures. For the whole of that fortnight he was in and out of the *mont-de-piété*. His watch, his tie-pin, his watch-chain, even some of his clothes—they all went with little hope of recovery. By the time he had the money to redeem them, they had been sold. And this was not the only source he applied to. He borrowed money. Five francs, ten francs, here and there at Paurelle’s. At the end of

that fortnight there was a bill outstanding against him in the *Rue Berthe* for *déjeuners* with Liane, who never took her meals with Madame Paurelle in the kitchen now and had almost forgotten what it was like to carry home a paper bag.

There was probably no man in all Liane Sonrel's life who deprived himself to the extent that George Le Mesurier did those days in his effort to win her. Afterwards, if such a state could ever describe those Bohemians in *Montmartre*, he was bankrupt.

And all that time he was watching her with his heart and his eyes and his ears for any sign of her relenting.

"This is the life I used to think of when my father tell me stories of Paris."

She said that once on an occasion when he had bought her an evening dress and they had gone to the Opera. His ears had seized that and flung it onwards to his heart. He thought he was winning her then. But it must be admitted she gave him no false hopes. It was his interpretation of that that lent it promise. She never spoke of that night or of the ring again. She never led him to think that this entertainment of her would achieve its purpose.

Perhaps she saw what that purpose was. It was never possible to know with her how keen her intelligence was. She kept the mystery of her own purpose with the same secrecy as she had concealed the insult of her poverty. But there must have been a purpose which no one could have known until the end and then could only guess at.

Whatever she may have felt about George's attentions to her at that time, she still pursued her calling as a cabaret dancer. Finding themselves well provided for and

making that meagre pittance Paurelle must have been paying, a lot of women would have thrown that up. For the time at least.

But night after night, when their entertainments in the town were over, she went punctually to the *Bal Bouffons*.

Every time as it approached the hour for her appointment, George hoped she would express a disgust at the thought of her performance. Had she done that, she would have come closer within the arm of his protection. A little nearer he would have drawn her to him. But she never said a word of complaint.

The only difference in her attitude he noticed was that she no longer expressed the desire for him to come into the hall with her. She was satisfied to find him waiting outside for her afterwards, still glad, apparently, to catch his arm and walk back with him to the *Rue Lepic*.

"Carry me," she said once, as he closed the door behind them and they stood under the light of the gas-jet in the hall.

"Carry me."

He laughed and shook his head.

"You don't want carrying," he said, and believed he had kept the bitterness out of his voice. In case he hadn't, he made a quick movement to the stairs and heard the independence of her heels tapping up the uncarpeted steps behind him.

It was one night near the end of her engagement at the *Bal Bouffons* that George found himself waiting beyond the customary hour of her departure. She had never been late before, but these cabaret shows were liable to postponement. For half an hour he walked up and down

the pavement outside, hitting the railings with a stick he carried, smiting at a piece of wastepaper that lay in the gutter each time as he passed it by.

At the end of half an hour he went into the *foyer* and asked the door-keeper whether the cabaret was over. He was told it was. The orchestra was playing. The thumping of feet was making a pulse in the air.

"Has Mademoiselle Sonrel come out yet?"

"No, monsieur."

He went inside the hall. It was the same crowd. The same herd. He felt a nauseous anger at the thought that she was amongst them. Was she dancing with them, as she had danced with the men at Paurelle's on New Year's Eve? He stood on the fringe of the crowd watching the faces all wearing that mask of gaiety as they approached and passed and melted again into the mass.

She was not amongst them. Much as he would have hated to have seen her there, he felt an increasing sense of apprehension at her absence. He made his way through the crush of dancers down the hall. The same looks of intolerant resentment were thrown at him whenever he jostled a dancer's arm or forced a couple out of step by the impact of his body. They were impatient, vindictive to any interruption of their pleasures. But he was in no mood to consider them then.

At none of the tables down one side of the room was she to be seen. And then, through one of those gaps in the crowd that appear like a bubble on a moving stream and burst and disappear, he saw her at a table the other side of the room. It was a small table. There was only accommodation for two. He just saw her, saw that she was

seated there with a man, and then the crowd of dancers obscured them.

He made his way round the room. It was impossible to cross it. Some few paces from her table he found himself wedged in a block of the dancers who were just swaying backwards and forwards to the music. They were in an eddy of the stream. They could not progress. Liane's back was all he could see of her as she leant over the table. The man was facing him. With a concentration of his senses, George could just hear what he was saying. But more than what he said, it was the appearance of the man that disturbed him.

He was not of the class of people that frequented the *Bal Bouffons*. He was superior. Considerably superior. Obviously he was one of those visitors to Paris who come round to these places in *Montmartre* to see the sights. It was not possible to place him. He was not a Frenchman. At his first glance, George felt quite certain of that. His moustache was too clipped—too trained. There was an upward inclination to it more German than French or English. He was suave, polite. The excellence of his manners contrasted as vividly as his appearance with those about him. This was the possibility George had feared and had not dared to think. The herd of faces around him in comparison had a simple, harmless look. They were just healthy, unsophisticated animals. There was a subtle sense of strategy about this man's face. He was outside the herd, superior to it. His was a directing rather than a following intelligence. He had command. He even appeared to be dictating to Liane as he talked.

If it had not been for that crush of dancers, George could have leaned forward from where he was and

touched Liane's shoulder. Quite plainly he could hear her companion saying:

"Then you're not wholly French?"

"No," said Liane.

"But your sympathies, of course?"

She half looked about her, not turning far enough to see George in the crush behind her; then she shook her head. Her companion leant forward a little farther over the table and said something which George could not hear. At first she laughed and then she looked at him.

"I always hesitate to express my international likes and dislikes," George heard him say. "Until I know exactly where I am."

"I wouldn't mind saying it out loud," said she.

"You would not be wise."

"Why not?"

"There is a lot of unrest just now—believe me."

This little fragment of conversation occupied no more than a moment or two while George was detained by the crowd. Except for her companion's use of one word, he might have learnt nothing from it. It was when he spoke of unrest; instead of employing the word *inquiétude*, he used one which did not clearly convey what he meant. He said *détresse*. And it was with the guttural rolling of that "r" that George realised he was a German.

It was not a startling realisation. There were plenty of Germans in Paris then in 1911. It meant nothing to him beyond a confirmation of his first suspicions that Liane's companion was neither English nor French.

By that time the crush about him had dissolved. He was free to move. He reached Liane's side and put his hand on her shoulder.

It must always be remembered that George was not a Frenchman. Even his name amongst the educated English was pronounced Le Measurer. To accommodate everyone he called it that himself, except when he was abroad. He had been educated in Ireland. He talked English with an accent so slight that to most people it must only have sounded like a faint peculiarity of speech.

Had he been a Frenchman pure and simple, he might have approached that table where his mistress was sitting with a flashing eye and every evidence of an outraged honour. As it was, his face was expressionless; his voice utterly without emotion.

Knowing him as well as she did, Liane probably guessed what he was feeling, as she had guessed it that first night when he took her home from the *Bal Bouffons*. But to the stranger who sat opposite, he had most likely never seen a more unemotional lover than George.

"I've been waiting outside," he said.

"And I was just coming."

Another man might have said how long he had been waiting. Half an hour. More. There was a pride about George that was almost feminine. Of course he was feminine. He was an artist.

"Are you ready to come now?"

"In a minute. I finish this absinthe. Let me present you, *messieurs*."

She effected an introduction with surprising ease.

"Monsieur George Le Mesurier. Herr von Kleingardt."

The German smiled at her as though he complimented her upon the way she had done it.

"You are Parisian, monsieur?"

"No."

"Ah? What part of France?"

"I am not French."

George took some pride in saying that. There was, as Herr von Kleingardt had informed Liane, a lot of unrest in Europe just then. Men were conscious of their nationalities. He took pride again when he added:

"I come from Guernsey. I am English."

Probably von Kleingardt did not know at the moment how wide his eyes had opened. Realising it the moment after, he almost closed them as he bowed.

"Will you do me the honour, monsieur, of having an absinthe with us, or whatever it is you select to drink?"

George sat down.

He had found Liane. He did not feel inclined to leave her then.

A *garçon* brought him an absinthe. For a few moments, as always seems to happen when a third party invades a *tête-à-tête*, a silence fell between them. They all looked about the room at the dancing. George was made to feel, possibly without intention, that the conversation he had interrupted could not be continued.

How had she come to know this man? Had she met him before? Or was this their first acquaintance, of which her cabaret show had been the introduction? In that world, if the word "introduction" had any meaning at all it was only a term.

He was determined to let them know he had heard their conversation. After a few moments, he broke the silence deliberately.

"What was that I heard you saying about unrest?" he asked. "Just before I joined you."

Von Kleingardt looked at him with undisturbed eyes. He looked and paused a moment before he answered.

"Oh, yes. I said that. Don't you agree with me?"

George said:

"I think there's a lot of talk about unrest. The sort of talk that is calculated to make people restless."

"Restless for what?"

"Well—war, I suppose, if war's a sort of thing that human beings ever do want."

The German looked solemnly at George, and then he smiled. His whole face smiled. It was as though his mind had been suffused with a humorous thought, though nothing humorous in their conversation had appeared up to then.

"You are an idealist about human nature," he said.

Liane laughed across then—not unkindly.

"I think that governments fight—not people," said George.

"You think that in your South African War?"

"Absolutely."

"Oh—you are honest."

"I don't feel it that way. It seems to me common sense. Wasn't it your Government and the French that fought in '71?"

By the faint elevation of his eyebrows, von Kleingardt intimated surprise at this outspokenness.

"You English," he said, "are a peculiar people. You will talk out so loud. Shall we talk in English if we are going to speak of these things?"

"You speak English as well as you do French?"

"Oh—certainly."

"Well—it will hardly be polite to mademoiselle. She has only French."

The German bowed his apologies to Liane for making the suggestion.

"It doesn't matter," she said. "I've finished my absinthe. I'm going back to my *appartement*."

She stood up from the table. George rose immediately with her.

"Are you leaving?"

She appeared a little surprised.

"Why, of course."

She gave her hand to von Kleingardt. He bent over it.

"I have had great honour in meeting you, *mademoiselle*," he said.

"I have four more days here," she replied.

He nodded his head. He did not say he would come there again for the purpose of finding her. It was just that nodding of his head. Then he bowed again.

George had taken Liane's arm. He did not wait for a farewell from von Kleingardt. He steered a way for her through the dancers. One or two of them called out a good night to her. She answered. He was aware that in these last few days she had been dancing there she had come to know some of the habitués. Why not? What else could he have expected? But this German. So utterly a stranger to that element. In those last few moments he had learnt there was a danger of losing her greater than that amongst her own vagabond class. This man was an aristocrat. It was in his appearance. It was in his voice. He probably had wealth as well as position. There was some suppressed authority about him that suggested he had power as well.

As they walked together along the streets to the *Rue Lepic*, George felt as though the very pavements were un-solid beneath his feet. In that last week he had strained

every nerve to win her. In one moment a man like this could appear and reveal with damnable clearness the whole insecurity of his heart.

What had she said herself once to him? "Isn't it a long step," he had asked, "from giving your soul to God, to this?" And she had said: "A long step? A day, *mon ami*,—an hour—a minute."

Was this the moment when he was to lose her? Had it come as soon and suddenly as this? Tentatively he took her arm. She did not draw it away.

"Who was that German?" he asked.

"I do not know."

"He just spoke to you there?"

"Oh, yes."

"What was he talking about?"

"Something what you heard. He was very polite."

"Is that all?"

"Oh, and about the danger of speaking what one really thinks in public places. The same as he said to you."

"Why should it be dangerous?"

"Because there are spies everywhere."

"What sort of spies?"

"Oh—the different governments, you understand, they have their people."

"He seemed surprised to hear you weren't really French."

"Oh—yes. He was surprised. He was pleased, I think. That was because he was German."

"What did he say to you in a whisper when you shook your head and showed him your sympathies were not French?"

"Ah—you were watching a long time."

She took her arm away.

"Only a minute while I was caught up in the crush."

"And you saw him whisper."

"I don't want to know what it was if you don't want to tell me."

For some reason he could not follow she put her arm again in his.

"You are nice," she said, and for that moment his heart rose like a kite into a gust of wind. He could not be sure whether it would fly or not, but it rose. He felt she still cared for him.

"I will tell you just what it was," she said affectionately. "It is no secret of the heart." She laughed out loud. "He said to me then: 'You nod your head as though you hate the French.' That was what he said. And, my friend, I have told you. You know. You know more than any man I have ever told. I did not tell him. But I look back at him with my eyes and he understand."

It was nothing then. A mere polite conversation over two glasses of absinthe. An acquaintance such as he must expect her to make at any moment in a place like that. He put his arm round her waist. They walked that way till they came to the house in the *Rue Lepic*.

Once he had closed the door behind them, he picked her up in his arms.

"Now shall I carry you?"

"To my door," she answered. "I'm tired to-night, my dear."

§ 2

THE next morning, when Liane and Aurore came up to the studio for their rolls and coffee, she said to George:

"Why do you come to the *Bal Bouffons* to fetch me if you dislike it so much?"

"I never said I disliked it."

She made inquiring circles of her eyes as she turned her head to look at him.

"My God! But did you not implore me not to go there?"

"I don't mind coming and fetching you. That's not the same thing."

She had a roll in her hand. With a slow deliberation she broke it in half. He was watching her. She was looking at the two halves as though one were his point of view, the other hers. Aurore was munching her bread at the other side of the table. She looked more like a little monkey than ever. Her eyes kept turning to them and then turning away as though they were strange beings it would not be wise to watch too much. She had that suppressed, inquisitive similarity to humans that monkeys have. In those abrupt glances she seemed, as monkeys often do, to be thinking:

"Some time or another I shall be like them. Once upon a time they were like me."

The astonishment of that thought never quite seemed to leave her face.

Liane looked up at him from her pieces of bread. She was smiling, as when women smile at the childishness in all men. He felt as though she were protecting him from something when she touched his hand.

"Please do not come again," she said. "It is only four days more. You do not like me to be there. You hate that place. I would prefer you did not come."

He had never attempted authority with her. Some instinct of caution informed him it would be futile.

Holding her hand then, the hand with which she had touched him, he asked her plainly whether she said this because she had made a definite arrangement with that German to meet him again.

"Oh, no. You heard. He say perhaps we shall meet again. P'raps not. I do not know why he come to the *Bal Bouffons*. It is just as likely he will never come any more."

And then she leant across the table with a look as near to tenderness as any expression he had ever seen in her eyes.

"You are jealous?"

He tried to laugh.

She shook her head at him. Slowly and again and again she shook it.

"My dear friend, you are all the same. It is what I told you first, that night when I stood here—you remember. But I think you are nearest to those great things you talk of than any man I shall ever know. Much nearer. Oh, yes."

What could he suppose from that? At once it roused his hopes and immediately arrested them. All immediate sensation of jealousy of von Kleingardt left him. But in place of it he knew he was jealous of the whole of life. It was then he understood her hatred of the French priest. He felt it himself. What must she have been had he known her then before that damned *curé* came to the convent to celebrate mass and put the wafer on her tongue?

The futility of human relationships that at times comes to everyone became a weight on his spirits. He knew it was no good insisting on coming to meet her at the *Bal Bouffons*. It was not because he had not the

force to direct his own life. Though even that may have seemed doubtful to him just then. It was more that sense of evasion she had about her; again the bird on a high branch that at the very glimpse of capture would be gone.

He was trying to play a waiting game. When she said that about his ideals, he couldn't help hoping. It seemed to him to mean that she was coming to find a value about him in her life.

He did not go to the *Bal Bouffons* any of those four days to meet her. Not to meet her, but he was there. He could not keep away. Down a side street that provided an oblique view of the door of the hall he walked up and down, waiting until she came out.

The first night it was after two o'clock when she appeared. Von Kleingardt was with her. It was all he could do to restrain his impulse to rush down the street to meet them, to pick some easy quarrel, to settle the matter there and then.

Here he had to summon the aid of an unwilling common sense to guide him. Perhaps it was nothing. She had intimated that. Supposing it were, it would lose her for ever if he threatened her liberty like that.

"Watch them! See! See for yourself."

This was what he kept saying under his breath. He knew it was a caddish thing to do. But he did not feel a cad. He did not even feel the shrewdness of his own cunning in the way he kept them in sight yet never exposed himself for their discovery.

But nothing happened further to rouse his suspicions. Von Kleingardt walked with her back to the *Rue Lepic*. She did not linger over their parting. He clicked his heels and bent over her hand a moment. That was

all. A moment later she opened the door and disappeared.

George went back to Paurette's. They were still dancing there. Pinet, Gregoire, the old crowd of them.

Standing in front of him, blowing out his red beard, Pinet put his hand on his shoulder and said:

"She is painting your face green, my friend. Damn these women!"

His face may well have looked like that. He was in hell.

The next night and the next, George watched them as before. And still he saw no sign of intimacy between them. Had she not spoken of von Kleingardt during the day, undoubtedly his suspicions would have increased. But she confessed quite openly he had been there at the *Bal Bouffons*, that she had danced with him and that he had brought her home.

"What is he?" George asked her.

"I do not know. *Probablement dans le service diplomatique*. He does not say at once. But he speak like that. He tell me stories of the spies they have for France in Germany. Oh, my God! The world is full of people like the rabbits under the ground. He say there will be one day war with France and Germany."

"War?"

"He did not tell me that at the *Bal Bouffons*. He is discreet. He say that as we come home through the street."

"Why should there be war?"

"France want her revenge for '71. She want Alsace and Lorraine."

"She may want, but she's not going through all that welter of blood again to get 'em."

"He say war is a good thing. It make men noble and give them courage."

"What sort of nobility? At whose expense? And I don't know that the courage of a man when he fights is by any means the highest type there is. Dogs have that sort of courage once their tempers are roused. It doesn't seem much to me to be as brave or a little braver than dogs. Is he one of those devils whose interest it is to go about rousing the anger of people till fighting is the only thing they can see?"

He felt some satisfaction, the only little satisfaction there was to him then, in opposing, for the mere sake of opposition, the ideas von Kleingardt had been discussing with her. She seemed to George to have been impressed by this man's conversation. But so long as he talked to her on vague, international subjects, such as this, what did it matter? Yet love can be made in various ways. There was no man he would implicitly have trusted with her just then.

"It could be of no interest to him," she said—"to want war with France."

"Why?"

"He says there is a treaty with France and Russia and that then Germany would have a war on both sides."

"Serve her damn well right," said George.

She threw her head back and laughed at him.

"Ah-ha—you see! You English would be glad to fight against Germany if you could—unless someone else would do it for you. And still you say you have ideals. My friend—always—always—always you men you are all the same. You do not like fighting—eh?"

"Don't mind fighting. I hate war."

"Yes—and if there were war you would rush off with all the rest and get your gun. I think myself war is a good thing."

"You do?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Because some people can only be punished that way."

He looked at her face and the suppression of hatred in it was almost evil. That one eyelid had drooped so low, he could scarcely see the pupil beneath it. The knowledge of how little he understood her was almost a shock to him then.

"Do you mean the French?" he asked.

He felt she was thinking about that French *curé*. It scarcely seemed possible to him that an emotion could be so encompassing as that. Yet what else could she have in her mind?

"Is that what you mean?"

She nodded her head. Aurore was still munching her roll. She glanced at her mother and then glanced quickly away, as though she had seen something in one of these human beings that had frightened her.

"Did you tell him that?"

"Yes."

"That pleased him, I've no doubt."

When she nodded her head again, George could imagine the compliments that German had fulsomely offered her for her sentiments. What had he said to her? Was it any good pursuing the topic any further? He would never know. It seemed apparent he had not made love to her. Then what was his interest in coming there night after night to the *Bal Bouffons*? It was

impossible to say. This delicate cross-examination of her was eliciting nothing. They had talked about war. Everyone was talking about war. It was appearing and disappearing in the minds of everybody. He had heard of a German waiter who after listening to the Jingo talk at a dinner-party in his restaurant had gone home to his attic and taken out his rifle from beneath his bed to clean it. Of course there were Germans everywhere. But who could know if that story were true? It was the sort of talk that was going about. The papers there in Paris and in London were hinting at it at every possible opportunity. It was impossible to escape from the realisation that there were people in high places who wanted war. What more conventional a subject could von Kleingardt have chosen to speak to her about?

Suddenly he leant across the table and took both her hands in his. Aurore stared at them. It was the Saturday, the last day of her appearance at the *Bal Bouffons*.

"Come and dine with me to-night," he said, "and we'll go to a play again before your performance."

He was almost surprised that she agreed so readily. There could be nothing between this man and her, he told himself, no emotional understanding, however he might interest her with his attentions.

After their rolls and coffee he went off that morning and scraped enough money together for their entertainment. He was reduced to last resources. There were no more men he could borrow from. There were no more canvases he could hope to sell. His watch and chain and tie-pin were gone. He packed a case with clothes and found them considerably more marketable than jewellery. That night he had fifty francs and spent it all.

She had never been so tender to him. Tenderness was not a quality he looked for in her. But that night there was a softer look in her eyes. It was as though for the moment she had abandoned her self-reliance and were allowing him to make the most of her for himself.

He was exhilarated with this. What man so much in love would not have been? She saw George at his best that night. Whatever danger there had been of his losing her, he felt it was past. They laughed at everything. They drank too much. It did not seem to matter. She was quite capable of giving her last performance at the *Bal Bouffons*, but was not taking it with her usual sense of responsibility.

She did not care, she said that night, whether she ever danced in Paris again. He was making almost certain of her then. In the taxi in which he took her back to *Montmartre*, she lay in his arms with her face against his, so lavish in the demonstration of her affection that he felt a kind of recklessness about her. She did not care. She said she did not care whether Paulette took her back or not.

At the door of the dancing-hall he said:

"I will come and fetch you to-night."

But she shook her head. Not with any seriousness. Nothing could have made them serious just then.

"I will come back soon. I will not wait. Have the stove warm in the studio. Make the coffee. Be ready for me."

It was the look in her eyes then, dangerous with the promise of herself, that sent him back singing and leaping to the *Rue Lepic*.

Seeing a *sergent de ville* chewing a straw as he walked along, George said:

"Good night."

"Good night," said the *sergent de ville*, still sucking his straw, at which George, in an impulse, made a sudden snatch with his fingers.

Before the astonished official could realise it was only a straw he had lost, George was running down the street like a hare, and just because he wanted an excuse for running, just because he wanted to get back to the studio as fast as his legs would carry him. For he knew, if she were not late, she would be telling von Kleingardt that night that she could not stay and dance or drink with him. That would put the damned German in his place. That would show him there was no hope for his attentions.

And she was not late. It was not more than twenty minutes past her usual hour when he heard the door close down in the hall and the sound of her heels, now tapping to a crescendo, mounting the stairs.

She was still in the same mood. Perhaps more reckless even than before. Yet it was not so much that she bewitched him as that he found an exalted madness in his love of her which rarely comes to a man more than once in his life.

The night they spent together after the conclusion of her performance at the *Bal Bouffons* reached a crisis of emotion in George's mind he would not be likely ever to forget. In such ecstasies as these there are lovers that prefer death rather than parting. He had that thought. It shot in a flash across his mind.

With Liane herself, the shroud of mystery was, and always would be, about her. She wore it as a garment which, at moments such as that night in the *Rue Lepic*, she threw off with a splendid gesture. She was *sans défense*, as Paurelle once said of her.

In the early dawn she left him. Nebulous and unreal, she glided away out of the room. Half awake, he heard the door of the studio close. Confused with the return of sleep, he heard her slippered feet descending the stairs. The closing of her door in the quiet house shut her away from all his consciousness with silence.

He was asleep.

When he awoke at mid-day, she was gone away—out of the house. She was gone.

§ 3

GEORGE was not conscious of a silence in the room below when he dressed that morning. He was singing to himself. He heard nothing but the sound of his own voice and the high wind of his spirits that has a way of drowning every other noise in the world.

He was still singing as he went downstairs, half dressed, to fetch his water from the common tap on the second-floor landing. Having filled his jug, he knocked on Liane's door. It was no more than a salute of "good morning." A good morning after the amazement of that night. He had no intention of seeking for admission. That privacy she demanded without words, by tones of her voice, by straight glances of her eye, was a condition he involuntarily respected. There had always been that about her. Notwithstanding the obvious licentiousness of her performance, she had always kept herself immune from familiarity. The men at Paurelle's had recognised the impalpable distance between themselves and her. With all that rabble at the *Bal Bouffons* she had preserved the intimate value of herself.

He was half smiling at the expectation of that sharp

reply: "You can't come in!" That was what she would say, whoever it was. That was what she always said.

The expectant look on his face became inquiry. The silence from the room had an empty sound. It was hollow, reverberating. He knocked again. There was still no answer. He tried the door. It was locked. But then often she went out in the mornings. Her energy was indefatigable. She never seemed to want more than four or five hours of sleep.

He was turning away to go upstairs again with his jug of water when he saw the *concierge* down in the hall below. He called out to her through the banisters:

"Has Mademoiselle Sonrel gone out?"

"Yes, m'sieu."

"When did she go?"

"At about nine o'clock."

"Nine!"

She could not have slept more than three hours.

"Yes, monsieur. She pay up. She take everything with the little girl. She go."

He set the jug of water down on the landing and leapt down the stairs. Hearing the noise of his descent, the old woman was waiting for him. With a pair of scrofulous eyes, she stood blinking at that consuming terror in his face. He was conscious of being afraid, as afraid as if he had been listening to a doctor telling him he was smitten with a fatal disease. And with all the professional remoteness of one who can appreciate no more than the bare facts, she was staring with her blood-shot eyes into his face.

"What do you mean she's gone? Gone away?"

"Yes, m'sieu."

"Not coming back?"

She shook her head. It detached a drop of liquid from her eye that rolled like a tear down a furrow of her cheek.

"Did she say where she was going?"

"No, m'sieu." She wiped the drop away from her chin with the back of her hand.

"But surely to God she left some message for me?"

"No, m'sieu."

"That must be a lie! You're keeping something."

The *concierge* appeared quite unperturbed by the doubt cast on her veracity. She merely shook her head again.

"Have you got her key?"

"Yes, m'sieu; she give everything up when she go."

"Let me have it."

Without a word, she went to her room and brought it back to him. He sped up the stairs again. His mind had not accepted the belief that she was gone. Not after their night together. It was unthinkable. Neither man nor woman shattered life like that when it so wholly belonged to them. It was not human. He was saying that aloud as he ran up the stairs. It was not human.

He flung the door open. There was her *appartement*. The one room with the damp paper beginning to peel off the walls, the tattered carpet, the ragged curtains. He saw her poverty then, saw the way life had been insulting her, and that was the first moment when the realisation began to penetrate his mind that she was gone.

What human beings would not leave a place like that if they could. It was obvious to him as he looked

about him she could never have meant to stay. It was incongruous to think of that splendour there was about her and set it there in that mean and cheerless place.

She had left a pair of stockings on the floor. From the way they were lying, it was evident she had thrown, not dropped them there. He picked them up. They were silk, but worn and mended and worn again. It was like a bird that had flown from its branch and left a tattered feather behind it.

There was a faint odour of some scent he had given her lingering in the air. It was mixed with the damp smell there was about everything. For there was no stove. The room had never been warmed. He remembered the way she sometimes hugged herself up against the stove in his studio.

It was this room she had come to in her dressing-gown and with slippared feet those mornings in the early light after they had been together. Why hadn't she let him know? What a waste of money those dinners and theatres had been! He could have had a stove put in her room. He had not thought of it. He could have put new curtains, warm and clean, to her windows, a new carpet on that floor. But he had not known.

It seemed to him then that with all the emotion she had roused in him, he had not valued her enough. As he stood there in that empty room, he came to realise he had not treated her so differently from all the other men she had known. No wonder she said all men were the same. He had asked what they had asked. She had given what she had given before, and now she was gone.

He understood her better in this devastating absence than ever he had done when she lay close to him in his arms. In his mind he turned fiercely, bitterly upon himself.

"You bloody fool!"

And he strode out of the room.

With a sudden hope spurring him to speed, he ran through the streets to Paurelle's.

They had heard nothing. She was expected to give her performance that night in the *Rue Berthe*. A week's pay was due to her. She had not come, as she usually did on Saturday morning, to ask for it.

"How much was it?"

Paurelle spread out his hands. This was a professional secret. It was not customary to talk about these things.

"Something damned little, I expect!" said George.

Monsieur could speak like that, but it was not Monsieur's affair. Madame Paurelle stood at an available distance with her hands on her hips, ready to interpose the weight of her temper.

"I happen to know how poor she was!" shouted George.

That was as it might be. A young woman coming for the first time to Paris from the slums of Marseilles could not hope to command a fee in *Montmartre* such as girls received on the *Boulevards*.

He could hear no more of that cold-blooded commercialism. That wasn't helping him. He went to the *Bal Bouffons* and found the manager yawning and in his shirt-sleeves. Had he seen mademoiselle after her performance last night?

"Yes, m'sieu."

"Did she sit in the hall?"

"She did."

"Who with?"

"A German gentleman."

"Ah! Did she go out with him?"

"She did. She drink one absinthe and then she go."

"Von Kleingardt was the man's name. Who was he?"

"I hear he stay in Paris a short while. Then he go back to Germany."

"When?"

The manager called one of the waiters.

"When did that German gentleman go back to Berlin?"

"This morning."

George felt a slow sickness, a revulsion of body and mind. He stood on the floor worn with the dancing of feet and, in that hall, half lit with cold streams of daylight, he gazed at the waiter in front of him. He wanted to seize the man's neck and shake him. It did not seem to be his own voice that he heard saying:

"How do you know?"

"They talk, m'sieu. He and mademoiselle. I bring them two glasses of absinthe and I hear him say: 'The train leaves Paris to-morrow at half-past nine. It gets to Berlin——' I forget the time he say. And then he say: 'I must go by that.'"

"Did you hear anything more?"

"No, m'sieu. They do not stay long. Just that one glass of absinthe and then they go."

He returned, numb and dazed, to the *Rue Lepic*. He got out of the way of vehicles in the street, wondering why he did so. It was not that he wanted to put an end

to himself. There was no hysterical inclination in him towards self-destruction. It was just that the streets seemed empty—Paris was empty—the whole world was empty. There was no life anywhere. It was a dead world. He saw a man laughing and felt there would be no laughter anywhere if everyone knew how dead and senseless a place the world was.

Knocking on the *concierge's* door, he called her out again.

"Did you see mademoiselle go?"

"Yes, m'sieu. She paid me here at the door. I was standing here when she drove away."

"What in?"

"A taxi."

"Was there anyone else in the taxi?"

"Yes, m'sieu."

He heard himself, at an indescribable distance, asking her who.

"A gentleman."

"Describe him."

She described von Kleingardt.

He went upstairs to his studio. Opening the door, he stood looking at the bed. It was still unmade. There was the pillow still impressed with the indentation where her head had been.

If he had known how to treat her! If he had treated her differently! Hadn't she every excuse for thinking all men were the same? Yet might she not have understood when he had asked her to marry him? With every man perhaps it began that way.

It had to begin that way. It was no unpardonable fault of his that nature was so eternally crude. But couldn't she have realised that with him it had passed,

even in that short time, beyond the mere crudeness of an appetite?

With no excess of sentiment, but just because he was hurt and in pain and dumb, like a dog nursing a sore, he went across to the bed and sat down. He sat down staring at that indentation on the pillow.

She had known she was going those few hours ago when she rose from that place where he was sitting. She had known it the night before. That had been the spirit of her recklessness. It had been the impulse of overwhelming generosity.

He realised how near she must have come to that entire submission of her life to his and how irrevocably he must have thrown her away with the insulting selfishness of his passion.

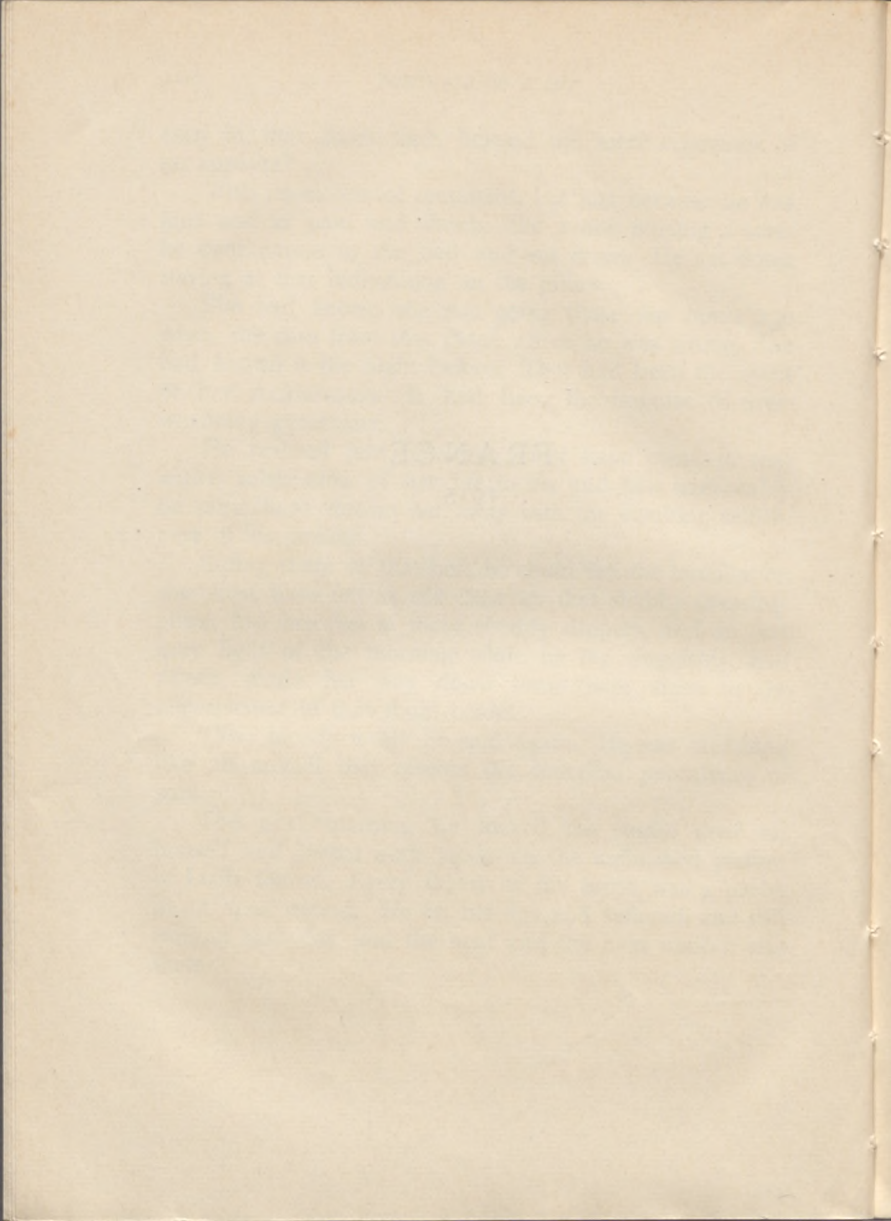
Sitting there on that bed, he could feel the humiliation she must have felt as she drew on that shabby dressing-gown, hid her feet in those shoddy slippers, and, in that grey light of the morning while he lay sluggishly, half asleep, made her way down those bare stairs to the offensiveness of that room below.

"You bloody fool!" he said again. He was breathing like an animal that resents the senseless persistency of pain.

The next morning he locked the studio door on himself and began work again on the unfinished picture of Liane Sonrel. Every thrust of his brush was a probe in an open wound. He set his lips and suffered, and still worked that day and the next and the next until it was done.

FRANCE

1915



EDUARDES SQUARE

THAT quality of escape in Liane Sonrel must have been so beyond recapture with almost every other man but George Le Mesurier. She came into the lives of those she knew and she went out of them with the same abrupt conclusion as she vanished that morning from the *Rue Lepic*. Yet with the exception of Gaston Laperque, the French *curé* she had known in Batavia, there was probably no other man but George whom she encountered again once she had parted from him.

George had left Paris late in 1911. His picture of Liane had been exhibited in the Salon of that year. For a first acceptance, it had created considerable attention. On the strength of a growing reputation amongst artists (who are a herd in themselves and know at once when a stranger enters their midst) he took one of the inexpensive Chelsea studios off the King's Road.

Apart from his student days in Paris, this was the declaration of his independence. He said good-bye to his mother as though he were departing to the other ends of the earth. Out of her drawing-room window she watched him drive away in a cab with his belongings. He was the last of the family to go.

Mrs. Le Mesurier, the personality making that home he had once spoken of to Liane, was one of those women who have a philosophy that defies both time and circum-

stance. What she suffered, she concealed beneath an external flamboyance of hostility that betrayed no secret. She had an infectious laugh. A laugh she gave her whole body to with a generous merriment. She used it against every blow fate dealt her.

She had had four children. Two sons—two daughters. Just before George's birth, which had gone hardly with her, her health had hovered in the balance. She was given to fainting-fits which she described as ridiculous in a woman of her age. Feeling the approach of one of these seizures, the day before George made his appearance in the world, she had sent the maid for the brandy. Her husband was there in the room with her when the girl brought up the decanter from the dining-room. She heard him say:

"But that's liqueur brandy! My God, girl, go down to the kitchen and see if there isn't some cooking-brandy!"

At that she had laughed, a loud blast of explosive laughter like the pæan of a trumpet. It only left her lips to make way for an unconsciousness that no brandy, cooking or otherwise, could possibly affect.

The pain she suffered with the birth of George probably roused her affection for him more than for any other of her children, though she had no favourites. In any event suffering had always been a spur to her. That hostility of hers to fate only seemed to aggravate it the more. But instead of retreating from it, she went out with her laughter to meet it, much as a regiment of soldiers used to go out to battle with a noisy brass band.

Two years after her marriage she learnt that her husband was supporting another establishment, the responsibility of which had been contracted during the

period when he was courting her. It did not break her spirit. To her husband's intense incomprehension, she insisted on visiting his illegitimate family and helping them when she could.

"It's—it's absolutely immoral!" he declared, and as little understood her laughter then as he did at any other time of her life.

In his last illness she fought for his life with a tireless ferocity for two long months and, at his death—which occurred just before George went to Paris—she told her children he had been the best of husbands. They did not believe her. He had indeed loved them with a fierce sense of possession from the complete disillusion of which death saved him before they took their own ways out into the world. But the two girls had already formed their ideas about husbands, while both George and his brother loved their mother too well.

There is a fundamental impulse of affinity in women for the creative urge in men. Mrs. Le Mesurier showed no favouritism, but the fact that George had ambitions to be an artist, whilst his brother was content to enter trade, induced a leaning of her heart towards him which she concealed even from herself.

It was from this mother he received those sums of money in Paris that had made possible his life in the *Rue Lepic*. It was with her encouragement and help that he took the studio off the King's Road. She lived herself in one of the little houses in Edwardes Square. She called it the Grand Babylon Hotel, possibly out of admiration for Arnold Bennett, but largely because of a flamboyance in the name which amused her extravagant spirit whenever she looked at that pile of single rooms

balanced one on top of the other like a house of cards. That she had thought of it as an hotel at all was on account of the fact that it was used by her children whenever they wanted a bed to sleep on or a meal when no other food was convenient.

Apart from these invasions, she had a secret predilection for living alone. There may have been moments when she guessed she was a little odd, not easy to live with, rational and reasonable to such a passionate extent that sometimes it amounted to eccentricity. As well as this, she had enough character in herself to be able to dispense with the need of company.

She liked these tourist appearances of her children at the Grand Babylon Hotel, but she never persuaded them to stay. The most satisfactory moments of her life were after midnight, when the streets were empty, dark and still and she made a complete tour of the Square with a miserable-looking little toy terrier, running like a bedraggled centipede at her heels. It was only by the tinkling of a bell round its neck that she could be satisfied it was accompanying her in that darkness. The moment the bell ceased ringing, she would stop automatically, without looking round, and wait. After a moment or two, as though she were speaking to a fractious child, she would say:

"That's enough of that."

Immediately the bell would start ringing again and, still without looking round, she would proceed. With countless interruptions of this nature, she would encircle the Square, wrapped in her own thoughts, and absolutely happy in that complete solitude of her own company.

To this mother George owed all the force and

originality of his mind. She was not English. She was Irish. In marrying a Le Mesurier she had believed she was marrying a Frenchman, and only found out her mistake when she came to live in England and discovered that it was more convenient to call herself Le Measurer.

George's portrait of her in the Academy of 1913 showed a realisation of his sitter's character not common in modern painters who are more aware of their own. She did not admit to him that she saw in his art the prospects of a proud future. She greeted her portrait with a shout of laughter. But silently, as she walked round Edwardes Square at night with her dog, she allowed herself to realise how true it was.

George might have guessed that from her contempt of the modern painter. Probably he did. She hated all modern art without reasonable exceptions. Modern music was like the screeching of slate pencils in her ears. She could only drive out the torture of it with Bach. Yet there was none of the conventionality of the herd about her. She was no adherent. The revolutionary and the idealist were paramount in her. It was more that she possessed an innate sense of beauty that refused to be insulted by the modern experiments of art.

Concerning George's life in Paris she made no inquiries. Partly by intuition, partly through experience with her husband, she knew that men were men. But she had never received any pleasure from that knowledge. A passionate emotion was something that no man had ever succeeded in arousing in her. She anticipated that George would one day marry. She thanked God many times at midnight in Edwardes Square that as yet he had not.

In a shrewd way, concealed from him, and often from herself, by laughter, she kept an eye on the women she found hovering about his life. Forgetting sometimes her knowledge about men, she would occasionally fancy he had taken after her in the unapproachability of his emotions. Perhaps he would never really care for any woman, she thought to herself as she paced the Square, and then she would always have him for herself.

At the cessation of the tinkling bell, she stopped on one occasion, contemplating the alluring possibility of that thought. It held her, entranced, for a moment. A sudden thought of George's father destroyed it.

"Don't you be such a consummate old fool!" she said aloud.

At the mere sound of her voice the bell started ringing again. At whatever discomfort, the dog had obeyed the tone of her voice.

She continued her progress round the Square.

But with all her wisdom she had not thought of the War. When, in November of 1914, George came one afternoon to the Grand Babylon Hotel and told her he was going to join up for the ranks, she felt the first sick uncertainty of life she had ever known. The death of her husband had been nothing to this. Beyond a certain age, there was a sublime security to her in the thought of death. But this young man. She refused to realise it was because he was hers. It was his youth. She knew there were thousands of other young men who had gone. But they were the age for fighting. She was not attempting to use her reason here. She was just saying, "They want men up to twenty-five." With all the power of her will and her nature, she clung to that.

"But you're thirty."

"What difference does that make?" asked George doggedly.

"They're only asking for men up to twenty-five."

"I can't help that. A man of forty 'll make a better soldier than one of twenty-five, if he wants to go."

"You want to?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

He could not tell her exactly. He could not exactly tell himself. After the first declaration of war, he had worked hard in his Chelsea studio, harder than ever, as though the very thought of the men fighting were giving him a stimulus. Work, he had said, was the only thing to be done then. Probably they would all realise that now.

This mood had lasted for the first three or four weeks. By that time it was spent. They all thought the war would be over in six months. Remembering France in '71 in her childhood, Mrs. Le Mesurier said nothing to this. She heard of the railway carriages, carrying the troops, being chalked on the panels with the words "To Berlin," and she had laughed. "Business as usual" was a catch phrase that contrived to get itself set to music.

But six months had begun to seem interminable to George. The streets were filling with men in khaki. Slogans rousing the voluntary spirit were beginning to appear on the advertisement hoardings. Patriotic songs were being sung in the music-halls. Young ladies were looking for white feathers in their wardrobes.

"If I ever hear of your putting a white feather in a

man's coat," Mrs. Le Mesurier had said to one of her daughters, "I'll lock the door and pour dirty water on you from the top window."

George knew nothing of the cry of the herd when the warning terror gathers it together in its numbers. Nobody in those days knew anything about such things as that. But an expression had found its way into his face as of a man listening to a summoning note.

In six months, he believed, it would all be over. Coming at times to Edwardes Square, he would say that to his mother and, with a sniff of her nose, she would say:

"No doubt."

It was not what she said when she walked round the Square at night with her dog.

But every day between the first morning paper and the latest evening editions began to seem like a year to George. Six months! One hundred and eighty days! How could men go on fighting for a hundred and eighty days?

In the battle of Ypres, that was just over, the Germans were reported to have lost two hundred and fifty thousand men, while the British had lost one hundred thousand. Three hundred and fifty thousand human beings with hopes and fears and quickening emotions, linked up in their minds with countless other beings who were thinking of them, waiting for them, praying for them, all disfigured, dismembered, destroyed in three weeks! How could it last!

Yet still it went on, and every day that cry of the herd grew louder, clearer, more insistent, calling one individual after another out of the loneliness of his soul into the cheerful unthinking company of that mass of

bodies, where even mutilation and death were preferable to these shadowing fears of isolation.

And now George had answered that penetrating summons of the herd. He could bear it no longer. He had escaped from the imprisoning loneliness. There was a joy in his face as he stood in front of his mother in the narrow drawing-room in Edwardes Square, the joy as of a man who has found a strange and unsuspected freedom.

Mrs. Le Mesurier looked at her son with appraising eyes. She could not laugh at this, but there was nothing he saw in her face that betrayed what she thought about it all. It was the whole of war that was an atrocity to her. She had fought all her life for the freedom of her children, not that they should be sacrificed like this.

"War," she said, when it was first declared, "is the sickness of men that have overeaten themselves."

Again she said—and this was a constant opinion in her life:

"It's nothing less than a tragedy to be a woman."

Yet notwithstanding these extremes of view, her laughter remained infectious. She firmly believed these things were so, but they could not crush her spirit. Not even when George stood in front of her saying he was going to join the ranks.

"What have you done about it?"

"I enlisted this morning."

She tightened her lips.

"Then that's that. What are you going to do about the studio?"

"Let it. I've put it in the agent's hands."

Like his father there. But he would never have given her the cooking-brandy.

"When do you go?"

"I have to report at Salisbury barracks the day after to-morrow."

She nodded her head. She would not say any more.

In that winter of 1914 this struggle was going on in a thousand homes. Men eager for release from the aching pains of loneliness were facing women desperate to preserve their hearts from the irrecoverable wound. The war was still new to everyone. The tragic need of victory was not so apparent then. In the country villages it was still being thought heroic for a young man to throw down his implements in the fields and join the army. Recruiting-sergeants were still laughing with the ribbons blowing in their hats.

Mrs. Le Mesurier employed no argument to hinder him. She went down to his studio and helped him to pack up. The evening before he left, he dined with her in Edwardes Square. With a persistent skill, she avoided all talk of the war. Only in his arms at the front-door when he was going, she said:

"Write to me."

Then he was gone. At midnight she took her miserable dog and walked like a spectre round the Square.

THE TRENCHES

In the early summer of 1915 George Le Mesurier, private 6035 of the 13th Battalion of the London Territorials, recruited from Kensington, came out of the trenches for four days of local leave. He went to Paris.

For two months, relieving and being relieved, he had been in the front line. During that time he had learnt his experience of war. It had written itself in his face. It was like a dry-point etching, indelibly bitten with fine lines and subtle tones upon the sensitive surface of his mind. There was nothing he had seen he could forget.

In training, that companionship of men had given him the sense of freedom of a boy at school. In that vein he had written cheerful and humorous letters to Edwardes Square.

Discipline can be damned annoying (he wrote to his mother), but it takes an obligation off your shoulders as completely as you'd change your clothes when you're wet through. I sometimes feel as though I should never take the responsibility of painting a portrait on my own again. I shall need to work under a sergeant-major. I suppose the one we have is the regular army type. Most of them are. He asked me the other day in front of the whole company what I was when I was a civilian. It was the first time I'd realised I was a civilian no longer. I said: "A painter." Somehow on Salisbury Plain the word artist seems out of place. He said: "Well—if you think you

can mess about with a pot and a brush here, you're bloody well mistaken." I give you a bowdlerised version of his language. But this was a subtle and cynical allusion to the way I'd sloped arms, or effected some performance with my rifle. The rifle, I must tell you, is an implement needing a sympathetic understanding before you can do any tricks with it. Indeed, there is what you might call an art in its manipulation. The salute is a fine gesture. It contains all the symbolism of faith in an unquestionable infallibility. I am getting used to my rifle and can now wield it like a mahlstick.

Mrs. Le Mesurier could not help liking these letters. There was the spirit of her hostility in them. She heard him laughing with her laughter at that sergeant-major. But the joy of being one of the herd was louder even than that. She could not shut her ears to it. He was an individual no longer. He had flung himself into the mass of men. He could still laugh, but he was laughing with them. The possessive ideals of the tribe were getting hold of him. It might have been a jest, that remark about his working at a portrait under a sergeant-major, but there was an awful truth in it.

And then the tone of these letters, which she read again and again, changed gradually but perceptibly as he neared the firing line. His first sight of wounded men pouring into the base hospital sobered their note. The lighter laughter went out of them. He described none of his real sensations to her. Of his first clear consciousness of the mutilation and squander of war he said nothing. His letters still had enthusiasm, the enthusiasm of one eager to put into practice the lesson he has learnt.

But there was no humour in them. Less and less. Receiving these sometimes by the last post, Mrs. Le Mesurier trudged round the Square with them at midnight, holding them gripped like a dumb-bell in her hand.

After his first engagement he wrote nothing for a week. He could say nothing of his experience. It was too filthy, too obscene.

Reading the letters that came less frequently after that, Mrs. Le Mesurier realised that something had happened to him. There had, of course, been no address. She did not know where he was. But she realised the consciousness of disillusionment in them. He might be as cheerful as he liked, but there was a bitterness he could not hide from her. She had borne him. She had fainted and been revived by cooking-brandy. Ultimately she had brought him into the world. She knew.

And she was not wrong. He had thought, they had all thought, there would be that feeling of a team at work in those hours of waiting and most of all in the moment of attack. A few perhaps may have felt it. George was not one who did.

They marched together into the front line of trenches. There was the sense then at times of a man's shoulder rubbing against his own. Of the sound of feet in unison with his. But waiting there in the slime of mud through the night hours for the adulterated light of dawn and the signal for attack, George knew himself irrevocably to be alone.

They were to advance on Fremelles over the northern part of the *Aubers* ridge. Climbing over the heap of sand-bags after the bombardment had died down, he felt him-

self deserted in an empty world. The companionship of the herd had left him. Alone, in a chaos, he ran across that desolation of land between the enemy's trenches and their own.

There were men running beside him. A few hours before he had known them by name. He knew no one then. They were strangers, like people he would pass in the street.

He was George Le Mesurier, the painter, the man who they said after his exhibition in the Academy in 1913 would ultimately take his place amongst the leading artists of his day. Was he that? Or was he someone else altogether? Were there two people? The first, perhaps, was what he had been. This other was one who had to kill other men. He had been trained and taught to do it. Those bags of straw on Salisbury Plain that he had lunged upon with his bayonet. Those fiendish noises he had been told to make and had made, half laughing at the ridiculousness of it all as he made them. He was beginning, already, automatically to make them beneath his breath and in his throat as he ran through that thin light of dawn. In another moment or two he would be thrusting his bayonet in the body of a man, as he had thrust it into those bags of straw on Salisbury Plain.

Snatches of a lecture that had been given the men on close warfare in the trenches came back to him in those few hundreds of yards as at first they crept on their bellies through the mud of shell-ploughed earth. Dimly he remembered how it had sickened him. The things they had been told they could do with their hands and their knees, when fighting was too close for the use of the bayonet. That lecture, by a major in a Scottish

regiment, had been like a butcher boasting to schoolboys of the different ways of killing panicking animals in a slaughter-house. He had not believed it was possible he could ever employ his hands in such a way.

Yet the thought of it was not sickening him now. Behind the phantom of his fear it was whispering with an exultant assurance. There were many ways in which to kill or disable a man. In another moment he would be seeing face to face, for the first time, an utter stranger, a man he had never seen in his life before, in the sole purpose of whose mind would be the devouring thought to kill him.

That was it. It was not that he wanted to kill anyone. It was the feeling that there, through that slime and darkness, there was a man stirred by hatred to kill him. He was saving his own life. That was what he was doing. Men on either side of him had got to their feet and were running. He was running with them. He was not running away, but onwards towards that faint dark line in the distance to save his life. At all costs he must save his life. It was the only thing he had. He had no soul. The degradation of bestiality seemed nothing now.

Another few yards and he would be leaping over into the German trench. The last vestige of thought had left him. He was shouting then. The others were shouting all about him. The air was loud with nightmare voices. He did not see the men falling in the mud. The sound of the bullets about him was nothing. It was just a note, like the dominant note of a bagpipe, a hum that drones beneath the cry of the tune. To him the tune was just his own voice shouting. Rage and fear.

He had leapt over the pile of their sandbags into the trench. There was a man there. He recognised the German uniform. It seemed in that first moment as though there were only just that one. And he knew him. It was almost as if he had seen him before. It was the man who wanted to kill him, whom he could not visualise then, but whom he knew now because of that filthy look of fear in his face.

George sprang at him, lunging in that close space with his bayonet. He knew nothing more. For the next quarter of an hour, which might have been a moment or might have been a thousand years, he was killing—killing beasts he no longer knew to be men.

When he heard a voice shouting some unbelievable words and knew that it was over, that the line had been won, he picked himself up from the sweating heat of a body that was beneath him. Then he looked down and saw that he had gouged out a man's eyes with his fingernails. One of them was hanging by threads of blood on his cheek. And he was still alive. His body was heaving and twisting like a worm in the mud.

With a cry of rage that it should still remind him of life, George took up his bayonet and thrust it once, twice, and again into the lump of clothes till it heaved no more. He was trembling, whimpering, muttering when the other men came round wiping the mud and blood off their faces with their sleeves, laughing with jerky laughter and boasting like schoolboys after a football match.

This was his first engagement, his first shattering disillusionment about the noble companionship of war. It was not nobility, it was fear that held men together. The building of the machine of war was fear—the fear

of pride, the fear of the man who possesses that he will lose what he has got.

He had taken part in a successful advance. The papers in London would shout in their praise of a glorious victory. He looked at the lump of that body lying twisted and contorted in its slimy bed of mud and dimly he realised that that was how glory had been achieved. All along the line. By men who, in the terror of a desolating loneliness, had forgotten they were men.

Late in May, after various advances and repulses, after killing in night patrols, then resting, then killing again in a fresh attack, George came out of the trenches on his first week of leave.

He had no desire to go back to England. Besides, it was only local leave. The hunger in him for freedom was greater than ever. With a passionate hatred then he loathed the war. His mother was right. He knew it. The sickness of men who had overeaten themselves. Often he thought of that when he saw staff-officers drunk with authority. And they were only a part of the same machine into which he and all these countless others were inextricably pinned.

Who was responsible? Those who laid the whole blame at the doors of human nature were liars, cheats. There had been some fraternisation between the British and German lines that Christmas. Ruthlessly it had been crushed by the Higher Command. The common instincts of humanity had no place there. There could be no Christ on the battlefield. If the lowest intelligence of mankind was moved by the impulse of forgiveness, then it must have its hatreds roused afresh to justify the creation of that machine of war.

George came out of the trenches at the end of May like a man who, in a disgust with life, seeks desperately to regain his belief. With quickening hope he returns to the place of his youth in search of the sensation of those ideals that are gone. With all that impedimenta a soldier carried in those days, George turned his back on that nightmare and went to Paris.

In the *Rue Lepic* there was a cheap hotel. He took a room there, flinging his things into a corner and first of all taking a bath to wash the lice off his body. As soon as he was clean, he went to the old house where he had had his studio. The *concierge* was still there. The sight of her wooden face and scrofulous eyes was like a tonic.

He climbed the stairs, thinking persistently of that night when he had carried Liane in his arms up to the attic room. It was all coming back. There were unbelievable moments in his mind when there might have been no war, no filth, no beastliness; when life was just the same clean, adventurous thing it always had been to him. They were only moments.

As he stood at the door, looking into the old room, it seemed to him that his failure to destroy that insult of life with which circumstance had offended her was part of the same failure in human nature to destroy the insulting degradation of war. No one took his chance. The spirit was there. Who would deny that after those Christmas festivities between men who had been taught to hate and could not hate? It was the will to seek out the best, the faith to believe it was there, that was weak. The unbelievable moment of oblivion was gone. He shut the door and turned away.

That night, still hoping, he went to Paurelle's. It was

no longer Paurelle's. Monsieur and Madame were still there. But there were no horses in the stables beneath that room under the rafters. They were all commandeered for the guns at the front. Paurelle, himself, with his fat stomach, was confidently expecting to be called up for service. He had seen '71. He had eaten dog's-flesh in the siege of Paris.

Gregoire, Delair, Pinet—they were all serving in the war with the rest of them. Paurelle had received intimation from the authorities that his premises might be required at any moment for a kind of hostel.

He sat and talked with them till the early hours of the morning. He heard what it had been like in Paris before the battle of the Marne, when the Government had moved to Bordeaux and, away there at Compiègne, the guns could be heard, day and night, gathering around the city like wolves growling around an exhausted beast.

At two o'clock in the morning, finding suddenly the need of sleep and realising with amazement it was his to take if he wanted it, George went back to his hotel. M. Paurelle came down the rickety staircase with him into the yard and walked, still talking about the war, through the passage with its flimsy gas-jet to the door that opened into the *Rue Berthe*.

"They are all gone, monsieur," he said despondently. "There is no one come here now has ever heard that '*Sacré de nom! Prrom! pom! pom!*' They are all finish. I never hear of them. Perhaps they are killed. Death is easy these days. There is only one I hear of again. *Ah mais oui! Quel succès!*"

"Who's that?"

"You should know Mademoiselle Sonrel, monsieur.

Who would not remember her if it was not you? That morning—eh—when you come here—*au bout de votre rouleau*—and you walk up and down, up and down, and you swear and she is gone.”

“What about her?”

It was not so much that he felt a rush of sensation at the sound of her name. He had thought of her a hundred times that day. Rather it was as though there were a sudden cessation of all feeling through every vein and every nerve in his body. He was arrested in the act of breathing, moving, even of volition. It was scarcely of his will he put his question.

“You have not heard, monsieur?”

“Nothing.”

“She is the great Mada Garass—the dancer. She have taken all Paris with her performance at the *Folies Bergères*. She is rich. *Oh mon Dieu! Quel embarras de richesses!* She live in a big house at Neuilly. Oh, yes. She drive in her car!”

“Have you seen her?”

“Indeed. I go there to the *Folies Bergères*. I see her in her dressing-room. *Nom de Dieu!* It is a garden with the flowers. I say: ‘Mademoiselle, you remember our engagement in the *Rue Berthe?*’ She look at me from the droop of her eye and she say: ‘Why should I forget it, M. Paurelle?’ Then I say to her there is some weeks yet that is due for her to dance for me, and she laugh. She laugh at me. Then she call the woman who dresses her and she get her bag and she give me some little payment.”

Whatever it was, it must have satisfied him, for he added: “That is all, monsieur. I do not see her again. But I hear them talk—the soldiers—everyone—oh, yes!”

George nodded his head. He asked no more questions. He said good night and went away. He felt even his speech to be arrested in him. He could not speak. He could not think. He was wondering what it meant to him and did not know.

There, alone in Paris, away from the trenches, he felt like an animal that has gnawed a limb away and got free from a trap.

He began to realise he felt like that now, since he had heard Liane was back in Paris. Up to that moment he had been merely dazed with the sensation of release from the shattering noise of the guns, the ineffable filth of the trenches.

Now the feeling of release had gone. The reaction from the first joys of freedom had suddenly set in. He was not free, only in the sense that for the moment he was out of the trap. But the knowledge that soon he would be driven back into it again, that its steel jaws would again close on him, was more repulsive than it had been when he was shut in, imprisoned with the others.

He wanted to get away, to escape recapture. There was nowhere to go.

He lay awake in his bed in the hotel, discovering that the only escape for his mind was with Liane. In those days in the studio she had been that. There had been nothing to escape from then. Only dreams to dream and Olympian visions to behold as he lay in her arms. Now he had something to forget, to obliterate from his memory, to shut out of his eyes. He knew of nowhere else to go but to her.

PARIS

§ 1

GEORGE roamed about Paris all day. A ghost haunting familiar places. The hours were stretched out with waiting till the theatres opened. He dined at that restaurant where he had dined with Liane the night he had given her the night-dress and put the ring on her finger.

He snatched the same table they had occupied. Refused every other till that was free. He was alive only in his memory and imagination. Much as a ghost is, with desperate functions of his mind, he was wrestling with himself to efface the man whose consciousness was clogged with mud and blood and whose whole being stank in his nostrils.

Whenever he saw his reflection in a mirror in those Tommy's clothes, with his clipped head and that overfed look of health the authorities boasted as a recommendation of a soldier's life, he turned away in disgust. He had been proud of it when first he had finished his training. His chest measurement had increased three inches. He had boasted of it to his mother.

She had looked at his eyes that were glazed with a sense of physical well-being and she had said:

"You look too robust to be human."

He had thought at the time that that was just her extravagance. He had laughed and she had laughed. Any mirror could tell him then what she meant. He so loathed the sight of himself that he began wondering

what Liane would think of him when she saw him again. He knew he was another man.

That thought stirred a sickening fear. Supposing she didn't want to see him. Supposing there were a change in her as well as in him. He knew he could no longer show her the man she had once told him came nearer to her ideals than any man she had ever known. What had happened to her in these years? What sort of a woman was she now? He clung to the memory of that story Paurelle had told him of her getting out her bag and paying him compensation for her broken engagement.

That gesture was still like her. She was still proud, still generous. He sat in his seat in the *Folies Bergères*, restless, seeing nothing. The performance was like a play of shadows till she appeared.

It was precisely the same act as she had given to them in the *Rue Berthe*, as that with which she had captured her audience at the *Bal Bouffons*. The snake, the gesture of supreme contempt, the nautch dance. She was no artist. He could see that now after these years. The dance itself was only a trick of posturing she had learnt in that Tamil temple. But there was something she had, in which none of those other professional artists could approach her. And none of it was lost. Indeed, in those years, whatever had happened to her, it was reinforced. She had in her the silent and mysterious call of life.

The moment he saw her again, George was aware of the embodiment of every vital desire that gave him consciousness of being. It was the effect she had on every other man about him. There it was in their faces. Not lust, but exhilaration. They were roused to exalted

visions of themselves. If it was a soldier, he could see himself fighting for her. The man next to George, middle-aged, with his daughter, sat more erect in his seat. Partly, no doubt, it was to get a better view of the stage, but partly because the voice of his youth had called back to him. For such a woman as that he could be young again. Again as he had been once, before the machinery of existence had stamped a pattern on his life.

And she knew it. He could see that in her. She knew she had that power. She had always known it, but never so consciously as now. George went round to the stage-door with all the apprehensive timidity of a young man making his first advance towards the acquaintance of a favourite.

He did not expect her to see him. He had lost confidence. The past was gone. He could not believe it was possible to be revived. Events as wonderful as those were not repeatable. Life hadn't that generosity. He knew well what life was like. For these last three months he had been confronted with it, a staring spectre of hideous realities.

When he gave in his name to the stage-door-keeper he even wondered whether it would ever reach her ears. And if it did, how soon the reply would return that she regretted she was too busy to see him then. That assurance of the artist who knows that his work can command respect had all left him. He had not touched a brush for six months. The little pencil sketches he had made on scraps of paper in the trenches had only been done in moments of desperate depression, to convince himself he was still what he had been. He believed there was no skill in them.

They were without inspiration. The bitter truth of their observation appeared to have no value to him then.

He was no longer an artist. He scarcely seemed any longer to be a man. Catching sight of himself again in the mirror that hung for the benefit of the lady artists in the stage-door-keeper's room, he asked himself how in the name of God she could want to see him now.

And then he heard an unbelievable voice saying:

"Passez par ici, s'il vous plaît."

He followed the voice. It was like following a light or a sound in a dream. In such a bewilderment of mind, a criminal walks those few steps from the condemned cell to the execution shed. He did not see where he was going. He went. A door was opened. There was a blaze of light. A smell of flowers, of scented grease-paint. There were mirrors, mirrors everywhere showing him that revolting reflection of himself. And then the rush of some bright thing, a human thing, a body with naked arms that were round his neck and a perfume that came from them filling his nostrils. It asphyxiated, annihilated all the filth he had been inhaling for a thousand years.

His lip was quivering. He felt a fool. When she leant back to look at him, his face was twisted. He was trying to screw his mouth into a grin. And in that short look she saw everything, the abasement of what he had been, the shame, the terror, the depths of himself in which he had been floundering. He looked back at her in silence, but as though he were begging her to hide his face from her again. And she hid it, held it against the breast he had kissed a thousand

times that night when they had last been together in the *Rue Lepic*.

It was then he heard her queer, foreign voice again. The first time he had heard it for four years. She was saying:

"You poor thing. You poor man. What have they done to you? *Mon Dieu!* But it is too cruel!"

And then she knew he was blubbing in her arms. She could feel the break in his shoulders, the wet streak of tears trickling on her breast, and she held him there, hidden from her but more from himself, till he drew a deep breath. Then she knew it was over. The man he had been had come back to him. The man they had made him was put away.

He stood away from her. He held her hands, filling his eyes with her, and he said:

"I'm not like this. Not really."

Then he could smile.

"Where have you come from?"

"The trenches."

"Where?"

"Fremelles."

"How long have you been there?"

"Three months."

"My God!"

"It's all right."

"Fighting all the time?"

"Most of it."

"And first you come and see me?"

"Who else?"

"You are not angry? You do not hate me?"

He looked at her unbelievably. Hate her! When she could hide him from himself. He couldn't reply. With

two slow steps he came close to her again. This time he took her in his arms. He kissed her till she begged for breath.

§ 2

GEORGE did not ask what had happened to her since that morning when she left the *Rue Lepic*. It was as though nothing had happened. Certainly to her, if not to him. It could seem like that with her. That night was not the first time he had been aware of it. She was herself. She belonged to no man. She had disappeared out of his life. Now she had come back. There was no barrier or estrangement between them. They might not have been parted more than a day.

Characteristically as always she spoke little of herself. But she wanted to know all about him. He told her everything. His picture of her in the Salon. His portrait of his mother in the Academy. The artist he had become. Become! He was actually beginning to talk like that again. For months the voluptuous joy of egoism had been denied him.

"You paint your mother?"

This was just a little bit extraordinary to her. She knew of his home, of course. She had heard of that mother. But a portrait of an old lady.

"Why not?"

"Oh, *certainement*. She is a nice lady. She send the money that buy my *peignoir*—eh?" She remembered what she had been told. She could laugh at that memory. "But she is not beautiful—no?"

George tried to explain. He used the word *personnalité*, but his meaning of it was not in her vocabulary. She thought he meant character. She could not realise

the difference between character that is within and that personality which can project character to those without. To convey character was no painter's job to her. There was only one thing she knew of for a painter to express. It was for his refusal to express it in her portrait that she had spat in Pinet's face.

And all the time while they talked, she was sitting before the mirror on her dressing-table, taking off her make-up. She had sent her dresser out of the room. When she had remade her face for the street, she stood up. There was no wantonness in her. There was too little calculation. There was none. She took off the warm, padded dressing-jacket she had been wearing. She was as she had been for her performance. She was naked to the waist.

Had he not seen her like that! *Mon Dieu!* He had painted her. He was an artist. Besides, those nights in the studio under the roof. What did it matter? Did she think whether it mattered at all?

And then she saw his face. It was probably one of the most sympathetic and understanding things she had done to him when she took up the jacket again and put it on.

Before he had quite realised what he had felt or what he had thought, he found her on her knees on the floor by the chair on which he was sitting.

"My dear—I didn't know. Believe me. It is four years. It was a surprise that you come here at all. That you did not hate me. I was so glad of that. Because we were not bad friends when I go away. I have thought of you. Oh, yes. Often I think. Sometimes I wonder the sort of woman you have in your arms. And I did not understand——"

"You thought I'd forgotten all about it?"

"But four years! One does not forget so soon—oh, no. That last night in the *Rue Lepic*. But it gets far away. It is like a ship that sails away, until it is just the speck you see. One moment you look somewhere else. And when you look back it is gone."

"P'raps it's like that to you."

"Do you want to be unkind?"

"No."

"But you feel it hurt—eh?"

"P'raps."

"So you say that for it to hurt me too."

"I don't flatter myself like that."

"But supposing it did, my dear."

"I can hardly believe that."

"You did not see your face just then."

"No."

"All that night in the *Rue Lepic* it come back to me then. Close, here, into this room."

George put his hand on to her shoulders. He stared unbelievably into her face.

"You mean that?"

She did not answer. She closed her eyes. He drew her body hard to him against his knees.

"Do you mean I can come back? Just these days."

"How long leave do you have?"

Her eyes were still closed.

"Four days."

"Just four days. Oh, it is cruel—this war."

Then she looked up at him. Her eyes were wide open. It was as though they were two doors she had flung open for him to enter. He leant down from his

chair and drew her up into his arms. He was muttering in her ear:

"I can't believe it. It couldn't be true. It's like—it's like escaping out of hell—trying to get back to the world again, and then suddenly finding you're in heaven. You dear, you sweet thing! Do you know what you're giving me?"

"Yes, I know."

"But I shall forget everything."

"Yes."

"The filth of it all."

"*Ah—mon pauvre!*"

"Just to touch you, to feel clean."

"I know. You remember that *peignoir*."

"Of course."

"When it touch my skin."

"God! What a damn fool I was!"

"You? But why?"

"I never realised that then."

"What?"

"The disgust of it—to you."

"What disgust?"

"I saw your room—after you'd gone."

"Ah—my *appartement!*"

"I knew then. When it was too late."

"What did you know?"

"How poor you were."

She drew away out of his arms. She was laughing. The murmured laughter of a person who is remembering little things.

"You knew that was why I go away?"

"Yes. I knew that if I'd had the sense to put some curtains on the windows or a carpet on your floor—if

I'd even had a stove put in your room, you might have stayed. I knew it even then. I know it still better now."

"How?"

"The way life can offend you."

"Ah-ha."

That same expression with its nasal note. Still mysterious in its meaning.

"Where is Aurore?"

"I put her in a convent in Brussels."

"They've got her then?"

She looked up with a moment's surprise.

"The Germans, I mean. She's all right, I suppose. But of course you can't see her."

"No—oh, no. I can't see her."

Her voice was a distance from him. Even with that promise she had made, he felt the eternal elusiveness about her still. In that distance of her voice she was gone away from him again. Some vague impression reached him that her mind was with von Kleingardt then. He had to exert an effort to call her back. He said, quite frankly:

"Anyhow, I suppose von Kleingardt would look after her."

She did look up at that. She came back.

"Oh, yes—yes."

And she sought his eyes.

"She is quite safe. I hear that."

"Do you? But how?"

She raised herself from the floor and went to the dressing-table. She was shrugging her shoulders as she casually regarded her reflection in the mirror.

"Oh, one hears, you know. It is not so cut off as all that. There are ways."

She gave him the impression that she knew people in high places. She made him very conscious of only being a soldier in the ranks. He had only to look round that room with its flowers and its decorations to realise that of course now she had the *entrée* to any world she liked. And she had made him that promise for these four days of his leave. It suddenly became unbelievable again. He stood up from his chair and walked across the room to her. She was brushing her eyebrows with a little brush.

"You meant what you said?"

She turned with a smile, somewhat of relief. As though he had rid their conversation of a topic that was distasteful to her. Kleingardt is finished, he thought. Well, of course. The War. That alone would have ended it. But so finished that she never wants to speak of him again.

"I suppose you doubt me now?"

He swore he did not.

"I couldn't doubt you. Whatever you did."

"Whatever?"

"Absolutely."

"Why not?"

"I don't know. There's something in you that's beyond doubt. If by doubt you mean distrust."

"Ah—yes. You trust me? Eh?"

"Of course I do."

"After that morning?"

"After everything."

"But why? Why?"

"Because I feel you belong to something outside yourself which is more responsible than you for the things you do."

She was a little mystified—but intrigued.

“I belong——? Say it again.”

“I mean you’re like a symbol of something bigger than yourself. Do you understand that?”

Still she shook her head doubtfully.

“Something that a man must come to—even against his will. And whatever you do doesn’t matter. He can’t fail to trust and believe in the thing you are.”

She smiled at him.

“Still you are the idealist—eh?”

“I can’t help that.”

“You do not believe in this war?”

“I hate it.”

“And do you not think it will be bigger, stronger than your ideals in the end?”

“Do you?”

“I do not know. I tell you before, I know men. I see what they are. And all the time, the things they believe—they are nothing when they stand in front of the things they want to get for themselves. Oh, yes. But you——”

She took his face in her hands and looked at it.

“I do not know. You look afraid.”

“I have been. I am.”

“Ah, yes. There is a lot of fear. I see it all the time. It is the one thing I am afraid of.”

“What?”

“Fear.”

“How do you mean?”

“I don’t know how I mean. Let us not talk like this any more. Please. I do not like it. You say you will forget. You will not forget if you talk like this, my dear. You go to the door and wait and ask if my car is

there. And then we go and have something to eat. I will be ready."

"I don't want any supper."

"But I must go. There is a restaurant always I go for supper."

"And then?"

"Then we go to my house in *Neuilly*."

It was true. She still meant it. He went out of the room with a singing in his ears. His head was throbbing. And he had thought there was no generosity in life. It was bewildering in its generosity. He could even go back to those trenches again. He could fight. He could fight for another hour of life with her.

§ 3

SHE took him to the *Tour d'Argent*. So emphatic and complete had been her capture of Paris that already M. Frédéric had a dish named after her. There was a *Timballe Mada Garass*.

If there had been any sensitiveness about him, because of a grotesque comparison—the supreme fashion of those clothes of hers and his Tommy's uniform out of the trenches—it was soon dispelled. He felt he had been a fool when he tried to persuade her not to go to a public restaurant. Anyhow it had had no effect. With a restive determination, she refused to listen to him. She would go. She had to go, she said. Monsieur Frédéric expected her. But who the hell, he had asked himself, was Monsieur Frédéric? Was she at the command of a restaurant proprietor? Even if he were a genius at his job!

He had had his education in an English public school.

There was an insular hatred at the back of his mind of appearing in fancy dress. Beside her, when she came out to her car in a cloak whose folds dropped like a waterfall from her shoulders, he imagined he looked a clown. He had forgotten the contrasts were not conspicuous in Paris. There was not the zoological interest in individuality you found in London.

Whatever he may have felt, she was not to be dissuaded from her purpose. They were to have supper together and at the *Tour d'Argent*. He was made conscious of the authority of her success. She was not accustomed to being thwarted.

"You remember that little restaurant you took me—that last night? *Eh, bien*, I take you now."

He told her he had dined there that very evening. The same place. The same table.

They were leaning back against the cushions of her car as it swung through dim streets to the *Quai de la Tournelle*. She turned slowly to look at him.

"You go there because of me?"

"Who else?"

Her hand emerged from out of the folds of her cloak to draw his beneath it.

"Did you mean it then, my dear, that night, do you remember, when you put the little ring on my finger?"

"My God! Did you ever think I didn't?"

"Ah—just then. Oh, yes, we love just then. But marriage is a long time. I know. You are the artist. You must always be—what shall I say?—touching the world you cannot hold. Once I hold you and you cannot get away! My dear—I know. Is it not so much better like this?"

He could not say anything to that. There was a

world's wisdom about her that was unanswerable. She had that quality commonly attributed to the Sphinx, a sort of ageless, a wise and incorruptible beauty. It was what she had said. He could touch her. He was touching her then. His hand was touching hers. Later again he was thinking it would be their lips. But he could not escape the knowledge that she was right. He could never hold her. She would escape him again. But he would not allow himself to think of that. Not for those three days. He had forgotten everything but her.

Even here, beside her, he could not feel that this possession made her his. There was a distraction about her manner when they reached the *Tour d'Argent*. He caught the impression that she was looking for someone. How could he expect it to be otherwise? He had appeared out of nowhere in the midst of her life. And it was a full life now. It was not difficult to realise that. Everywhere she went, she was known. Even from people in the street he heard the sibilant hiss of the last syllable of her name as they said it. *Regardez! Mada Garass*. Paurelle had not exaggerated it. *Quel succès!*

How could he have hoped to descend upon her like that and find her free? She was expecting some friend there at the restaurant. But of course! For a time at least he would have to share her with someone else. He felt and resented the imminence of that intrusion. Yet wasn't it miraculous enough, this generosity of fate, that he was to be with her these three days?

He saw her eyes searching the room as they passed down between the tables to the corner M. Frédéric always reserved for her. Nevertheless they sat down alone. Whoever it was she expected, they were not there.

There was still, however, this submerged preoccupation about her. He could not wholly engage her mind. But what justification had he for supposing that he could? He had never been wholly confident of himself with her that time in the *Rue Lepic*. Was there any confidence of life in him at all now? He was glad just to be near her, watching her face, admiring that dress of hers in the breast of which she was wearing a spray of purple orchids; to be hearing her voice with the old queer inflexions in it, even to be trying, as he was, to bring her mind to close quarters with his own. Had he ever hoped for so much when he came to Paris for those three days?

Even then, she would approach him, come near, listen to his account of his work in London, his mother, his new studio in Chelsea, but again, as the door opened at the far end of the room to admit one of M. Frédéric's patrons, her eyes would turn from his face. She was gone. Not only the direction of her eyes, but that of her voice, would leave him. When she spoke it was as though he heard her speaking in another room. Tantalisingly she was near, within communicating range. Yet there was a veil between them he could not penetrate. At last he said:

"You're expecting someone?"

How surprised she was for him to think that. She laughed. But how ridiculous. Why did he think it?

"Every time the door opens you look."

"*Ah, mais oui. C'est l'habitude d'habitué.* I sit here every night. One comes to look for faces."

"But I couldn't be surprised if you were."

She touched his hand and gave him the deep glow of her eyes.

"Do you think I should ask you, my dear, if——?"

"No; not that. But how could I hope to drop like this into your life and not find it occupied?"

"Ah-ha."

"You haven't told me anything about yourself."

"No."

There was the look in her face then, the sound in her voice, just as of any creature that has a shell into which it can retreat. It was impossible not to see that sudden drawing back, sensitive and then still. The stillness of an animal pretending it is dead. That one word as she said it was hardly alive. It scarcely moved to leave her lips.

He was afraid he had driven her away from him altogether. She had removed her hand. He took it back.

"I didn't mean that. I didn't want to know about you. Do you understand? I'd rather not know. To me you're just what you mean to me. All that you mean, for instance, to these crowds you dance to, that isn't really anything. Not to me. Of course I'm glad you've got this terrific success. But to me you're exactly the same as you were when you used to put on that old dressing-gown and those slippers and glide out of my room in the early morning."

"Those slippers! That dressing-gown! My God! Do not remind me of them!"

She seemed to emerge from that retreat of hers with her laughter. There was no restraint about her when he talked of those days in the *Rue Lepic*. She had forgotten nothing, not an incident, not a moment.

Was it that she allowed a tenderness to quicken her voice? He only realised that while she was talking of

those times, it was there. But still intermittently, still broken for an instant by the opening of the door at the far end of the room, by the slow look of her eye under that drooping lid, that was so slow in its movement yet quick in its response to the sudden sound of traffic out in the *Quai de la Tournelle*.

Why did she say she was not expecting anyone? It was so obvious she was. Was she afraid of being seen with him? An ordinary Tommy in the British ranks? He was sensitively inclined to believe that, but knew there was no truth in it. They were still glad in France, those days, of the sight of the British uniform. Tommy's popularity was still in the ascendant. They had just made an advance at *Fremelles*. They had won French land back again for France. There was no mistaking the look of gratitude in the faces of those he had passed in the streets. It was not that.

Suddenly it leapt at him with the quick smothering rush of conviction. She had a lover. Was he to suppose she had not? Might she not choose her lovers now, when and where she wished? Was there any woman in the world, and certainly in Paris, situated, free as she was, who would not have a lover?

Then why had she brought him there if she apprehended their meeting? And did it make any difference, this stolen favour of her generosity? He may have wondered that sentimentally for a moment, then knew, in purpose, it did not. It was what he had felt before. She did not belong to him. She did not belong to any man. That was the magic, the provocation, the spell of her. What was nearer the truth was that he felt the sensation of adventure, of conflict. He had won her for that night—those three nights. He still believed all she had said in

her dressing-room at the theatre. He trusted her emotion about him. Nothing, no one should take her from him now if he could prevent it. It annealed his determination to keep her. Deeper than he knew, it quickened his passion. The finer delicacy of his emotions was overridden by a stampede of jealous impulses and suspicions.

With her eyes, his own now sought the door, directly the sounds of the street outside brought a sudden crescendo and then closed to silence again on their ears. This one was it? Was it this one? He looked at each man who entered and then with a sharp side-glance to her face.

With none of them did she betray the illuminated look of recognition. First there came the slow turn of her head. It was always slow, though he realised her eyes were quick. For one moment they would rest on the newcomer, then she would return, pick up the mood of their conversation just as, for that one instant, she had left it.

At last a man entered the room. With her interest in him, George felt at last there was no immediate return of her mood. But still no look of personal recognition. He watched her. She did not take her eyes off him as he walked down between the tables. But it was only the casual, following glance.

For one moment George had thought: "Now—now." Every nerve in his body had braced for the encounter. It had not come.

The man walked past their table. He did not look at her. So indifferent were her eyes, that it might almost have been said she did not look at him, unless it were for his peculiarities. He was in mufti. He was not in the field blue that was to be seen everywhere. There

was an orchid in his buttonhole—an orchid much like the spray she wore on her breast. He was well dressed. Obviously, from his age, he had not been called up yet for military service. He was over fifty. There was nothing so extraordinary in his being in mufti. It was only, where khaki and field blue had become so much the cloth of every man, that he appeared conspicuous.

Still it was not he whom she was expecting. This was not his rival. Before he had reached their table, George was aware of that. It had only chanced that he had the more sharply arrested her attention than any of the officers who had entered before. It was only that in watching him her mood had been slower in its return to that intimacy with which she had intoxicated him from the first moment they had met.

After the collapse of that suspicion, George began to believe he was being fooled by his own sense of insecurity. She had told him the truth. She was not expecting anyone. Now she was back again with him, laughing, with the seduction of her laughter, giving him the full meaning of her eyes, and once a look that shook him with the promise of her lips.

It was presently, when he could scarcely believe it, that he heard the stillness of her voice saying:

“Would you like we go now?”

He looked up into her face. There was no meaning in her eyes that she was withholding from him. He had been a damned fool! He was as fidgety as a cat. The normal confidence of health had gone out of him. But now he would forget it all. He had been in hell, but she could make him forget everything.

“I’m ready,” he muttered. He tried to make his voice clear.

"Just a moment then. I shan't be long."

She rose and went down the room to the ladies' *cabinet de toilette*. The door of it was close to the table where the man in mufti was seated alone. He watched her then. Smiled at the thought of his suspicions. She never looked at the man. He did not look at her. Imagination had played tricks with him. He could have laughed.

She disappeared into the *cabinet de toilette*. Even the fact of her having dropped her glove and that man rising to pick it up had not attracted her attention. She had seen nothing. It was too late to offer it to her then. She was gone.

Only when she came out again did the man rise from his seat and with a bow—a common courtesy—elaborately offer it to her. Possibly he knew she was Mada Garass. Everyone knew. Probably he was proud of the honour of doing that small service for her. If he was, she gave him no encouragement. She took it with a smile. But that was all. She passed on down the room. She joined George at their table. They left the place together with her velvet cloak showering its folds over her shoulders, with M. Frédéric bowing his honoured obeisance, with a triumphant music trumpeting in George's ears.

§ 4

HER car sped silently, a bleak ghost in that war-time darkness, up the *Avenue des Champs Élysées* into the *Avenue de la Grande Armée*. She had said nothing since they left the *Tour d'Argent*. Her preoccupation was even more inscrutable than it had been in the restaurant.

George did not disturb her. In some manner he felt that self-absorption to be her privilege. It was as though she had retired into a sanctuary, inviolably her own. He would not invade it. It was enough just then to look, to anticipate, to dream.

So long as they had talked of those days in Paris before the War, there had been quick and lively points of contact. It was as though, in that subject, they had found a common denominator, solving the mathematical problems of unfamiliar conversation. He was aware of the difference in her life now. Now she was *une femme d'affaires*. There must be countless people she knew in Paris. Not only the theatrical people with whom she did her business.

Her courage in taking him back to that house in *Neuilly* had indeed somewhat astonished him. Nevertheless, he blindly accepted it. She was a free agent. Experience of her, if nothing else, had taught him that. She had always been a free agent in spirit, even in the *Montmartre* days when she was his mistress and no more than a servant of Paurelle's.

It was quite easy to inhibit any desire he might have to inquire how she came to be living in one of these elaborate mansions out at *Neuilly*. That was her affair. Not his. She did not belong to him. However emotional he may have been just then, he was not deceiving himself about that.

But the same passion was there. She could still be roused to response by the emotion in him. That had been plain enough in her dressing-room at the theatre. He still had that claim and was human enough to flatter himself that neither von Kleingardt nor any other of the men she had known before, perhaps not even those she had known since, could wholly share it with him.

This silence of hers was her own. He was content not to violate it. She needed it just then. Something may have happened that evening at the theatre. How could he tell? Perhaps it was someone connected with her business affairs she had expected to meet in the restaurant. He had not turned up. A hundred different things it might have been that had crossed her. He still felt the inferiority of a private in the ranks. He was no more than a slave in the presence of this Scheherazade. She was engrossed with some thoughts she had no desire to share with him. He left her alone. Just sat beside her, leaning back on the cushions amazed, bewildered, adoring her.

For she was far more fascinating now than in those days of the *Rue Lepic*. Success was becoming to her. She wore it with *elan*, like that cloak on her shoulders. It flowed from her. He could realise more clearly than ever the need there had been in her for the fineries of life. She carried them more inevitably than any woman he had ever known. She was the exact antithesis of his mother, who needed none. And she had always believed that about herself. How had he ever flattered himself with the hope that she would marry him! He could wonder at that now, sitting there in his private's uniform by the side of her. But when this damned war was over! She was rousing the adventure of ambition in him again. When it was over and he could get back once more to his work. How might he justify himself in her eyes then with his success!

He was dreaming. That was her power. She induced that. He was not thinking of marriage with her as a settlement of his life. No man could ever settle his life with her. Was it marriage he was actually thinking of at

all? He didn't want her children. He never thought of her bearing them. She was just the unattainable that spurred him to attain. So much had she made him forget the horror of war, that he felt he could go straight back into the trenches when they parted if only to fight his way to her again.

From the bottom of his heart he pitied the poor devils he knew who could not steal oblivion like that. Pitied them, as he would have pitied animals being driven to the slaughter-house every day. A pity that lasts as long as the passing thought that prompts it.

And still she was silent. And it was not fatigue. He could see in her eyes that her thoughts were still running. Would she tell him presently what she was thinking about? She saw him watching her, and smiled. She slipped her bare arm in his.

"All you have been through," she said—"it is terrible. But it improve you. That is the funny part of it all."

"How?"

"You have more understanding. You do not interrupt."

"I take it we don't make war on that account," he said. "I realised you had something to think about."

"But so many men, you must listen to them."

"I've got nothing to tell you."

"Nothing?"

He leant himself nearer to her face.

"Only that I love you—adore you. Thank you."

"Thank me?"

"Yes. For this. To-night. These next three nights."

"But you think I give it? Just for a gift?"

"Why then?"

"Do you think I have quite forgot? The little ring? My *chemise de nuit*? And that last night, eh? When you carry me up the stairs for the last time?"

His hands were restlessly touching her.

"It only makes it the more unbelievable. The more complete. I can't help thanking you. You don't know what it's been like. I'm not whining about it. I've got to go back. But that day at *Aubers* ridge, when we began our advance on *Fremelles*. I'm in one of the London Territorial regiments. We've lost half our strength. If those beggars knew how thin the line is just there——"

"I don't want to hear any of that!"

There was a strident note in her voice. He might almost have said something to offend, to annoy her.

"I wasn't going to tell you anything about the fighting."

"I did not think you were."

"I was only going to tell you about my regiment—what we——"

"But I don't want to hear! I don't want to hear anything! Every man he tells me. But I do not want to hear it from you. *Je suis ennuyée de cette guerre!* Believe me! If you had been in Paris these two years!"

There was something in her tone, in that sudden emotion of resentment, he could not understand. He did not try to understand it. He changed the subject. He asked her had she been there in Paris from the beginning.

"Indeed yes."

"When did you come back, then, from Berlin?"

"Who told you I was in Berlin?"

"That morning, after you'd gone, I went to the *Bal Bouffons*. I went everywhere I knew trying to find you. A

waiter there told me von Kleingardt had gone to Berlin. The *concierge* at the *Rue Lepic* described him waiting for you in the taxi. I knew you'd gone there."

"Ah, yes! But why do we talk about that!"

Again she was impatient. He had annoyed her. He was still annoying her. He could not help feeling he was in conflict with something in her below the visible surface of herself. It was as though he were trying to work with a cipher of which he did not possess the key. With a direct effort he set himself to recapture her mood.

"I don't want to talk about anything but us—now."

She allowed her smile to return. She was the same again. Mysteriously and swiftly like that. How could any man ever secure her?

The car had passed out of the *Avenue de Neuilly*. It had turned into the *Boulevard Inkerman*. Now it was in the *Rue Perronet*. It had stopped in front of one of the big houses. The chauffeur descended and opened the door. He followed her up the steps. More and more it was growing to be like one of the stories of the Thousand and One Nights. The filth of the dug-outs in the front lines! Then this! All in thirty-six hours! He followed her, bewildered, into the hall.

It was a mansion of a house. How in the name of heaven could she live there by herself? Was it that she entertained? Had she actually found a place for herself in Paris society as well as in the theatrical world?

A maid had come forward out of the shadows beneath a massive staircase. She had been sitting there—waiting. She was a middle-aged woman with a pale, impenetrable face. Quite expressionless. Sombre and solemn. She took Liane's cloak. She waited without any

liveliness of expectancy for orders. It was well after midnight, but she showed no signs of sleepiness or fatigue. Her face was blank like an unwritten memorandum page. It was ready—but only in that blankness—to take any message that was given it. George was conscious and a little astonished that she showed no surprise at seeing him there. She scarcely looked at him. A Tommy! In that uniform! She just waited with the cloak over her arm, standing at Liane's side, intimately, dressed in black, while she received her orders.

"Prepare the small room on the first floor for this gentleman. Put out some things. He has no luggage. But first bring coffee and brandy——?" She looked at him. He was indifferent. If she wished it. Anything she wished. "To my boudoir. When you have done these things, Marie, you can go to bed."

Expressed in that woman's eyes, these orders were just like writing appearing, supernaturally, spirit writing, on the unwritten page. They were recorded in her intelligence. They did not intrinsically alter the paper blankness of her face. She rearranged the cloak over her arm and took it away with her. Seeing George observing her departure, Liane said:

"The whole of my life here is made possible by that woman. I found her one time when I was in Switzerland."

It had the sound of an inevitable explanation. He could not have told why. Was that expressionless type of face peculiar to the Swiss people? He was no longer interested. She was leading the way across the hall to her boudoir. He was wondering what it would be like. When they had talked in her dressing-room and at the *Tour d'Argent* he had realised her life to be utterly

different. And yet not so different, so incompatible with the past as this. In the theatre she was the *Montmartre* dancer elevated by success to the *Boulevards*. It might happen to any girl. Paurrelle had predicted it. He had been afraid of it. But here, it was not only her life that was changed. It was she who, in some sense or other, was a different woman.

She opened the door of her room. He followed her. He was vaguely conscious of his first impression as he closed the door behind them. Was it true that she had ever lived in that *appartement* of hers in the *Rue Lepic*? That uncarpeted floor! Those bedraggled muslin curtains! Those discarded stockings that had outlived the healing service of thread! How could the salary she was receiving from the *Casino de Paris* support the opulence of this?

The room was not arrestful because of its size. For the spaciousness of the rest of the house it was intimate, even small. Yet a grand piano did not obtrude itself. It was the air of luxury, the suggestion of indulgence, that astonished him. The walls were black. They were not painted. They were neither hard nor funereal. He was in the room some time before he realised they were draped with a dim material of silk, so closely hung as to have a sense of solidity, yet they offered no immediate arrest to the eye. Obviously they had been suggested to her mind by the black velvet curtain that made a background to her performance on the stage. Evidently she saw herself in a dark setting, perhaps as a jeweller sees his gems and displays them on black velvet.

The ceiling was painted a deep midnight blue. The carpet completely covering the floor was a warm wine colour. George was conscious of none of these details

until the sense of comfort, retirement, almost a secrecy about her had penetrated itself into his mind.

She seated herself on a couch under the glow of a gold-shaded lamp. It flooded above her head and lighted round curves of her shoulders, but left her face in a warm shadow. A secretive shadow that seemed part of her. She sat there in silence for a moment watching him. She did not say: "Well, what do you think of this house of mine—of my room?" She volunteered no reminiscence of that *appartement* in the *Rue Lepic*. This was her real self—this magnificence. It had always been her real self. She had always known it and was not expecting him to be surprised at finding her there.

On the walls there were a few pictures in black Dutch frames. They lost their edges against the background. He was just aware that the pictures themselves were good. Well chosen, anyhow. Here and there about the room were personal belongings—*objets d'art*. Things that had been given her, betraying her taste. But it was by no means a collector's room. There was not that sense of a designed decoration about it as when one says: "Ah, that was a good idea!" It had grown to be as it was. And it was her room. She lived there. It was she, sitting on the couch under the light of the lamp, who gave it its meaning.

When he had looked about him, had come back again to this conception of its being her, the essential setting for that *flamme de la royauté*, he said:

"This is as miraculous to me as if I'd been transported on a magic carpet. Three days ago—less—I was living in mud, I can't quite get it out of my mind that I'm not fit to touch anything."

She made way on the couch for him to sit beside her.

It was as though she wished to smile rather than that the smile she did give him was involuntary. He asked her what had happened.

"How?"

"To you. Since I saw you in your dressing-room."

"What could have happened? What is the matter?"

"I can't get near you. When you said I might be with you to-night, it seemed exactly like it was years ago. You were the same Liane Sonrel. There might have been no years in between us, no war, nothing. Now, ever since we had supper, you're this—Mada Garass. I might never have known you. This might have been our first meeting. Have I said something, done anything, to offend you? I know you didn't like me talking about the war."

"Oh, my dear. It was not the war. Who talks of anything else? What else is there to talk about?"

"What was it then? Just now in the car?"

She made a restless movement.

"I did not want you to talk about yourself—where you were—what you were doing. I do not want to hear. Too much I hear what everyone is doing."

"What did you want then?"

"Is it impossible I should want to forget myself? And you would not let me. When we were at *Aubers* ridge! When we advance on *Fremelles*! *Oh, mon Dieu!* I hear all about that advance on *Fremelles*. I hear all the numbers that are killed. Now, when we come back here together, you and I, I want to forget it all."

"Do you mean I can do that for you, too?"

She spread her hands. It was as though she were showing him two perfect pieces of workmanship laid out on her lap.

"But, my dear, why else are you here? Have women nothing to forget?"

And that was with her voice again. The voice he had known always and had heard always—even in London long after.

A knock fell on the door, and then she laughed—delicious laughter. But for the interruption of that sound, she would have been in his arms. It had needed no detection. She had seen the leaping impulse in his eyes before it sprang. Why should she not laugh? They could wait.

"That knock," she said, tantalisingly—"it is always falling on the door of love."

She could make a phrase of it and it conveyed to him how many lovers there must have been in her life. Yet, just then, he didn't mind. He didn't care. He felt no jealousy about those other men. It was as though she belonged to the whole world and, in the spirit of that, achieved the very essence of her isolated self-possession. She belonged to him then. Doubtless as she had belonged to others. He neither looked backward nor forward. He was inclined to laugh with her when she said: "Come in," and that Swiss woman entered with the tray of coffee and the brandy in an exquisite decanter.

She did not look at them. She had that capacity for discretion which enters a room as though it were empty. There might have been the closest understanding between her and her mistress. There might have been a hatred of disapproval too profound for looks or words. Yet not a movement of her body or an expression of her face was critical. She came and went in silence. Her long black alpaca skirt rustled over the carpet and the

door closed. Up to the last moment George felt she must destroy that effect with some disturbing sound. The latch of the door would fall with a clack into its socket. She must have held the handle to the last before she let it go. There was no noise.

He turned to Liane while she was pouring out the coffee.

"How long has that woman been with you?"

"About three years."

"Before the war?"

"Oh, yes."

"She doesn't hate you then?"

"Hate! Oh, la-la! She would take the last drop of blood out of her body to make my lips red."

That might have been her extravagance, but it was not a boast. She just knew that. She might have expected it of anyone. She might even have accepted it. He knew quite well the quality of ruthlessness there was in her. She had been entirely ruthless in her departure from the *Rue Lepic*. He may have resented, but he had never hated her for it. No one could have hated her. She had the unquestionable right of her independence. And one needed the courage of one's own independence to love her. She would never belong to any man. It was a freed slavery they gave her. The only bondage she acknowledged was the bondage of those that needed her. And even from the story of her life, such as she had once told it to George, he knew why she had reason to be assured of that.

He put down his cup of coffee and took her hands.

"Have you any idea," he asked, "what it means to me, this coming here and being with you these three nights?"

She was smiling, almost softly, and at the same time she was nodding her head.

"That is what love is like," she said. "You forget, or you dream and then, just like it was now, there comes the knock on the door and you remember or you wake up. It is all the same."

"I shall forget everything."

"Just for this little while I shall forget myself."

"What have you to forget?"

She slowly drew her hands away. He remembered that look in her face. The same as when she had told him of the French *cure* in Batavia. As when she said just that one sentence: "He put the wafer on my tongue."

He knew he had started her on some train of thought, and it was not this memory he wanted. He did not even want to recall those days of their own in *Montmartre*. It was just this present moment with her, and he found now he was always saying the wrong thing.

He took her hands again. Took them away from her as it were and drew her into his arms.

"Why in the name of God do I go on talking like this?" he was muttering. "I don't want to think of anything but us here, now, with all there has been thrown away behind us. It's been like a living hell, and while I'm with you I shall begin to believe in things again. It isn't only forgetting. It's believing. Take that

look out of your face. I don't want to go back. I don't know why the devil I asked you that question. I haven't asked it. I love you. Listen to that. I don't want you to hear anything else!"

She was laughing again, softly, against his face. He could hear her saying:

"Now you are like yourself. You believe you can believe. It was what I like so much. It make me laugh, but I like it——"

And while she was saying that, the door had opened, swiftly, almost silently. He was not aware that he had actually heard anything, but all the sense of their security alone in that room had suddenly gone. They did not part from each other. They only looked. The maid was there. She had closed the door behind her. She was saying:

"Madame, madame!"

And the quickness in her voice was like an evil dream, unreal, incongruous till he saw that passive whiteness of her face.

§ 5

It was a mutual and simultaneous movement when they separated at the sound of that woman's voice. Liane was risen at once from the couch. She had crossed the room to the door where her maid was waiting. They were speaking in undertones. It was impossible for George to hear what they said, because he was not intended to hear nor did he exert his senses to listen.

But he was slowly standing to his feet as though

he realised this was no mere domestic interruption. With a consideration for her that was instinctive, he had turned away to the mantelpiece. His back was to them. This was no affair of his in her house. Something unfortunate had happened. With all the stillness of her face, that pale woman had at least conveyed so much. And their voices. There was no pause between them. They ran in murmurs from one into the other. It had nothing to do with him what they were saying, yet he felt an indescribable and involuntary sickness, not so much of fear as of anticipation.

In the reflection of a mirror over the mantelpiece, at an acute angle, he could see their heads close together. The sight of them, removed from him by the distance of that reflection, gave him an uneasiness of premonition. He felt an inferiority in himself, a sense that he was an intruder upon her privacy. He was conscious that he did not belong to them. The realisation that he had come from the mud of those trenches at *Fremelles* reinforced itself disturbingly. He had every right to be there, and yet at the same time he was aware that he had none. Those other fellows in the line, if they got a few days' leave, were not compensated with such luxury of oblivion as this. If they went to Paris, they forgot their horrors in the arms of paid women whose very faces they would be unable to remember in two days. It was not fair. That was what he was feeling—the inferiority of his right to be there at all.

Before, he had felt nothing but a passing pity for those poor devils. Now, in these few moments, ever since that

woman had entered the room, the superiority of pity had gone from him. The confidence of this miracle of fortune was running, leaking away in whispers of his conscience and mingling with the suppressed note of their voices across the room.

And all this had happened in a few seconds. The sense of miraculous transportation had vanished. He was conscious again of his private's uniform, of the sensation that after the mud of those trenches he was not fit to touch anything there.

And then Liane had turned sharply away from that woman in black. In that reflection of the mirror, he could see her sudden approach. It was, after all, something to do with him. The grasp of apprehension seized hold of him. He could not bring himself to turn round to meet that approach. She had her hand on his shoulder before he could look at her. And he knew what she was going to say. He could hear himself saying it more believably than he could hear her. She was speaking very quickly—still almost below her breath:

“My dear, I am so sorry——”

He did not ask what it was. He only stared at her, blankly, with his eyes dull.

“You cannot stay—not to-night.”

He could not have helped her, even if he had wanted to. She had to tell it alone, without his assistance.

“I live here alone, of course, but I am not the woman whose life is empty. You understand that.”

He nodded.

"There is a Monsieur de Laurent, he is *capitaine* in the *Service de l'Aviation*. You understand. He is at the front. When he come to Paris, he come and see me."

Still he was nodding his head. Automatically nodding it all the time.

"He has returned—unexpectedly. His car, it is outside now. He will come in. He has the key of the house. You understand, I give it him."

Oh, yes. He understood. This man had a key. In another minute he would be coming into that room where they had been so wonderfully and unbelievably alone. And she was his mistress. Of course, he quite understood that. It was so fatuous he should ever have thought for a moment that he could have come like that, out of nowhere, and found her life empty. It was more than fatuous. It was funny. In some indefinable distance he could hear himself laughing. A sudden laugh. He did not laugh again. This was the man she had been expecting at the *Tour d'Argent*. He said that, with his breath.

"Why didn't you tell me you were expecting him at the restaurant?"

"*Mon Dieu!* I was not!"

"But you were expecting someone."

"Should I have brought you there if I were?"

"But you kept on looking at the door. Every time it opened."

"Do you not believe me? *Georges!*"

There was that one moment in her face when he could see she was fighting for something. A possession—

almost a sacred possession. He felt if he defeated her with disbelief he would lose her for ever then. That would be their final parting—then, that instant. And he could not let her go. He could not go back again to those trenches with the knowledge he had lost her. It would be insupportable. He clung to her with belief, closer than he would have clung to life. It would have been self-extermination to part from her then. And there was no jealousy to trick him. He had no proprietary sense to suffer delusion by a passion like that. This was her escape from him, just as she had escaped in the *Rue Lepic*. Just now, believing she had played with him, he would never meet her again. And that was unthinkable.

More in despair than in hope, he responded to that sound of his name—the first time she had used it since they had met again that evening.

“All right—I believe,” he said desperately. “I’d seen you looking towards the door—that was all. And now this man coming.”

“But we shall meet again?”

“When?”

“To-morrow, perhaps.”

“To-morrow.” It sounded stale as he said it.

“I do not know how long he stay. I had thought he would not be back again in Paris for some weeks.”

It was like a conversation in a nightmare. There was a sickness in his voice. They seemed to be saying preposterous things, things no man would ever say out of sleep.

“You mean after he’s gone?”

He had not been aware that all this time that woman was waiting like a familiar cat in the room. He saw her then. She was standing at the door, listening. The sight of her made it suddenly all true. Surely enough there was the sound of footsteps coming across the marble floor of the hall outside. He could believe now they were coming towards that room. The door would open. It did open. An officer was standing there in the doorway. George was painfully aware that his own uniform was only that of a private of the line. He felt an automatic stiffening and attention of his muscles. He wanted to appear relaxed and at his ease. It was impossible. The herd instinct could not be suppressed like that. For months he had been responding involuntarily to the word of command. They had had French officers passing through their line. It had been an instinct as well as an order to salute them. The only remnant of his will lay in the determination that he would not salute this man. He just clung to that. Yet he knew he was standing more erect the moment that man in uniform had entered the room.

Like some fantastic play at a theatre, which he was watching from the height and distance of the gallery, he heard Liane's greeting and knew with an exultant triumph that behind the enthusiasm of her voice she passionately resented this intrusion.

He was listening instinctively, as an animal listens, to tones, not words. The fact that she kissed him on both cheeks meant nothing. That was the play he was watching from that distance of his remote participation. She did not care. Perhaps it was this very thing she had wanted to forget; that he would have helped her

to forget. With every impulse of his nature, he was struggling to keep inside himself a consciousness of pride. He was discarded. It was not to be that night. But it would be some time again. Not the next day. Even if that were possible. But soon, so long as he might some time realise in her the dignity of himself. And then he heard her saying:

"This is Monsieur Georges Le Mesurier. He is a painter. We are old friends. He is serving with the English army. He is just come back for a few days' leave from the advance on *Fremelles*."

He had heard his name. That uniform with its medals was there before him. The impulse of pride slipped away. It flowed away from him like water. At the sound of that presentation he was standing erect. He had saluted.

§ 6

It was about four miles from the *Rue Perronet* to the *Rue Lepic*. Liane had offered him her car. He was aware he had laughed without laughter when he said he was used to walking. There would have been something perhaps too ludicrous about it all if he had returned to his shabby hotel in that same vehicle that had brought them there. The transportation of the magic carpet allowed for certain humours, but nothing quite so ironical as that.

It was humorous enough as it was. A fantastic situation. So redolent of the dramatic and yet, in the development of its issue, so incomparably uneventful and dull. She had said he was an old friend. In the

short while he had remained in that room and they had all talked she had carried the situation with reminiscences of Pinet, Gregoire and those days in *Montmartre*. There was a smoothness and ease about her with which she did it. There was skill as well. Most women would have been flustered, panicked perhaps, like rabbits caught in a gin. It was an unexpected trap of circumstance, but she extricated herself from it apparently with no effort. It was as though she did not care whether de Laurent discovered the facts of the case or not.

Possibly that nonchalance of hers saved the situation from becoming violent. And that was the flat absurdity of it. That it did not develop into a spectacle of two men infuriated by a jealous sense of possession. The contemplation of killing this French officer was by no means an extraordinary thought to George. Standing there, listening to the easy flow of her conversation, he had given his mind to a consideration of how it could best be done. Killing a man was little or nothing. He remembered snatches from those lectures of the Scotch major on Salisbury Plain. He saw in pictures the things he had done himself in the trenches.

And most probably the French officer himself was thinking just the same as they stood nodding to the things she was saying, throwing in a word here and there in a polite response to her efforts to introduce and entertain them. It was quite likely they were both thinking how easily it could become a common fracas, a brawl, a mere exhibition of animal lusts and passions.

For they both knew. Any man would have known.

George himself had been told by Liane. She was this man's mistress. He had the key of the house. He could enter how and when he chose. And all these reminiscences she was talking about—they could mean only one thing to this de Laurent. He knew. Of course he knew. George was an old lover. Frenchmen were not slow at that kind of comprehension. And yet she averted the obvious *dénouement*.

George did not comprehend how she had done it. He only knew it was done. It might have been, so far as he was concerned, because in some way she conveyed to him that this man did not matter, that he was only a passing incident in her life. If there were any deception in the matter at all, it was de Laurent, he felt, who was being deceived. Not him. And yet there was no real deception. Somehow he could not admit that impression of her. However she may have left him that morning in the *Rue Lepic*, there had been no actual deceit about it. She had escaped. It was from that room of hers on the floor below, from the conditions that life itself was imposing upon her, that she had gone away. The night before she had not deceived him. That generosity of hers was an honest emotion. It was impossible to know her as he had done and not feel that about her.

She had been frank with him over this. She was frank then, as she talked to them, and entirely fearless. It was this that made it absurd. It shattered all his ideas of what should happen in such a situation. And he was accepting it—they were both accepting it—without question. He knew by the look in de Laurent's eyes what he was thinking. He was just waiting for

him to go. And George knew himself that he was going without retaliation for this irony of circumstance, partly out of regard for her, but mostly because fate itself had defeated him.

He had saluted this man who was to take his place. It had been an impulse—an instinct. He had lost again his consciousness of being himself. The war had absorbed him. He was crushed beneath the fatality of it. It was not that he had a sense of physical fear. He would have welcomed the issue, whatever it might be, of an actual conflict between them. In definite pictures, flashed upon his mind, he had seen it taking place, there and then in that room. It would have been extraordinarily easy, extremely simple. And yet at one moment he was thinking of her and at another that this was the comic intrusion of fate. He was not to forget. That oblivion for which he had pitied those other men who did not know its mercy was not to be his. It was like an order from a superior officer. He had lost the instinct of revolt. His individuality did not belong to him. It was hired out—conscripted. He had to obey.

She went with him to the door when he left. De Laurent remained in the room behind. She was murmuring things to him he could not hear as they crossed the hall. Or, if he did hear them, he did not try to understand. There was an extraordinary tenderness about her. But what did tenderness matter then? He was nodding his head to the things she was saying; replying with "yes" and "no," but assimilating none of the meaning of her words. In three days he was going back to the trenches and there was only a probability

that he would see her again before he left Paris. It gave him no hope. He knew he would not see her. How could he see her again after this night! It was not her fault. It was no one's fault. It was just the spirit of devilish irony that had taken possession of the whole world. He was an artist. He painted pictures. He created things according to his sense of beauty and it had become his job in life to kill, to destroy, and to do it with all the lowest instincts of his nature.

That was what he was feeling. That was what he knew, and the knowledge of it had defeated him. He was not destroyed, but it was as though he no longer existed in himself. He was one of that crowd of men he knew who lived beside him in the mud and vermin of the trenches. And there was an irony even in that, for in the moment of the employment of that force there was no companionship, no conscious strength of solidarity. Each man was alone.

This was all he could realise as she walked across the hall with him to the door into the street. He opened the door and she went out with him on to the steps. She had thrust her arm into his. He could feel her fingers tightening on his muscles. She was saying:

"My dear! You understand!"

And he said:

"Yes."

"I had never thought this could have happened."

"No."

"I had wanted to forget things—every bit perhaps as much as you."

"Yes, I know that."

"But it has been a long time since we met. My life it arranges itself."

"Of course."

"Would you like if I tell you something?"

"If you want to."

"There is no man, since I was that little girl in the convent in Batavia, I think of as I think of you."

"That's something to know, isn't it?"

"You laugh?"

"No."

"You do not care? It means nothing to you?"

"Oh, yes. I suppose it means a good deal. I can't just get hold of it now—that's all."

"Perhaps he will go to-morrow."

"Do you think that's likely?"

"You would not be glad?"

"There's to-night. In that hotel."

"Oh, my poor dear——"

She was actually crying. He heard it in the little whimper of her breath. And he didn't feel as if he could stand that. He had tumbled down the steps into the street. He had heard her voice calling his name:

"*Georges!*"

But he did not look round. And then the door had closed. He was alone in the *Rue Perronet*.

It was like a route march down the length of that *Avenue de Neuilly* past the *Porte Maillot* and on through the *Avenue de la Grande Armée*, by the *Arc de Triomphe*, and still on and on down the *Champs Élysées*. He knew

no shorter way to *Montmartre* than through the *Place de la Concorde*, up the *Rue Royale* and into the *Boulevard des Capucins*, and last of all up and up the hill to *Sacré Cœur*.

It was just like a route march. The dull, senseless fatigue of it. The sound of his feet on the pavements, treading the automatic measure of some mechanical function of his will. It was the only possession that was left him. The will. Not just to reach his destination, not merely to lie down in that bed in the shabby hotel in the *Rue Lepic*, but to go on, not to be utterly defeated, not to be wholly exterminated by this half-witted and comic jest of fate.

He had no hope. He was deluding himself with no dreams. He did not believe he would see her again, not certainly in Paris during his leave. He was walking back there, down those interminable roads, straight to the trenches, to the filth and beastliness of it all. There was nothing he could see to support or exalt his purpose. He did not know why he set one foot before another. It was just the sound of his boots on the pavement, the imagination of the sound of others at his side, tricking him into the involuntary determination to persist, not to fall out of the line, not to be abused, shamed, dishonoured by the crowd.

It was not himself that he knew. It was just this herd of humanity with some inherent nobility in it that could suffer the utmost degradations in silence and without revolt.

The silence of the mass of men was all about him. It was in the unlighted streets of the city. It was still like death in the sky above his head. There was no

wind. No rustle even amongst the trees in the *Champs Élysées*. And he was walking on and on through those dark, silent and empty streets just because that was all there was left in life to do—to walk away from that dream of his release, back again to where the voice of the herd was calling him.

ENGLAND

1917

ENGLAND

1871

FALMOUTH

THE s.s. *Gelria*, passenger steamer of one of the Dutch lines, put into Falmouth by Admiralty orders on May 16, 1916. She was bound for Rotterdam from the Port of Vigo, carrying a general cargo, and was examined by Admiralty authorities from deck to hold. Her fourteen passengers with their passports and personal accounts of themselves were subjected to a rigid scrutiny. None of them liked it. They resented this interference of the British navy with ships that were plying between one neutral port and another.

A representative of the biggest paper-mill in Vigo and another Spaniard, head of one of the petroleum refineries, both due in Rotterdam on business on May 18, cursed England and English arrogance. Fortunately for them their remarks were in Spanish. They conveyed little but impatience and indignation to the customs official who has the insular contempt for any other language but his own, and whose only respect for that is that he understands it.

There were five other Spaniards on board. All were concerned in trade with different business houses in Holland. There was one Portuguese, an orchestral player of the *cor anglais*, going to Amsterdam to take up an opera engagement at the *Palais von Volkslijt*.

He was an excitable little man, full of extravagant vituperations. Why should he be insulted with this exam-

ination when Portugal, his country, was fighting for the Allies on the battlefields of France! Had they not their own Portuguese warships to protect them from assaults of the enemy submarines? And was he not one of the best known players of the *cor anglais* in Europe! Had not Giuseppe Ferlendis of Bergamo instructed his grandfather in the use of that instrument in the year 1798, before he died in Lisbon. And had not his family, from Corrêa da Serra to him, Manoel, been masters of the oboe and the *cor anglais*!

To all of which the customs official, a bank clerk, passed B3 by the medical board because of weak feet, was totally unsympathetic and almost inattentive.

In addition to these there were four Dutch business men returning to Holland from trading affairs in Spain. One of them had brought his wife there early in 1915, before the submarine menace had assumed its full offensive. He was anxious to get her back again and not quite certain whether, as a Dutchman, he resented this interference of the sailings of Dutch ships, or as a husband was gratified with the sense of protection afforded him by the British navy. The fine distinctions he made were not observed by the customs officials. He had to turn out his pockets and his travelling cases with the rest.

The fourteenth passenger was a young and striking-looking woman of about twenty-eight. The others knew little or nothing about her. For the whole of the voyage from Port of Vigo to Falmouth she had kept to herself. The Spaniards had eyed her with no result. She was not to be eyed. Not, at least, by Spanish business men, the youngest of whom was in the late forties.

The bank clerk, who in civil life and times of peace

had entertained a passion for the theatre, producing plays for an amateur theatrical society in a small town in Kent, placed her as being an actress. It must be supposed he had an eye for these discriminations. But her passport did not refer to it. She was described as a private individual, a widow of the name of Sonrel—Liane Sonrel, of French and Dutch extraction, who, having been in Spain since early in 1916, was now anxious to visit Holland, where her child, Aurore, was being educated in a convent in Amsterdam.

With the aid of an interpreter, the bank clerk took some pains and no little interest in interrogating her. He had in fact been unable to take his eyes off her directly he had come on board. The moment he saw her he had mentally cast her for *Magda*, a play they had done with some success, though much local perturbation and criticism, in his town in Kent.

It had been a disappointment to find she had nothing to do with the stage. He asked her without device——

“Haven’t you ever been connected with the theatre?”

“No, monsieur.”

It did not need the interpreter to lend her conviction. The bank clerk smiled at her agreeably.

“Do you mean to say it’s never been suggested to you that you would make a fine appearance on the stage?”

The interpreter could not interpret his smile. She interpreted that for herself and returned it when she heard his question. It was a slow smile that lit her face with increasing animation, like the sun gradually emerging from a veil of cloud. The bank clerk was dazzled by it. He felt the discomfort of a man who is unexpectedly surprised

by the limitations of his profession. He was wishing there was no war and that he was not a married man, but was not aware of the wish.

"Before the war," he told her, "I had a little to do myself with the production of plays and I should have made certain you were connected with the theatre."

"Why, monsieur?"

"Oh, you've got that look, you know. The way you carry yourself." Damn that interpreter! Why had he never learnt French for himself! "And if I may say so—your—your—your face."

Again she smiled. He had no two opinions about her. She was a lovely woman! It was an interesting job, this customs business. Compared with the bank. Standing on one's legs all day long. Handing out money. Dealing with local accounts and seeing nothing but local faces. But he was not sorry he had weak feet.

"How long have you been in Spain?"

He had to get on with his job.

"About nine months, monsieur."

"And before then?"

"In Marseilles. In Paris. Every place."

He looked at the photograph on the passport and compared it with the original. It was not a very excellent portrait. He said that, but said it flatteringly. He smiled again. She laughed. Beautiful teeth she had. She opened her mouth generously when she did laugh. He could see her tongue—red—warm. He doubted whether he had ever seen a woman quite as lovely as she was. Well, not exactly lovely. But then he had never been one of those men who were attracted by perfection of features. What he liked was character, the suggestion of emotion, the

allure. And she had that. All that. He was swiftly becoming aware that he had never been so conscious of it in any woman before.

"Monsieur knows," she said, "what artists these photographers are who take the picture for the passport." The interpreter gave it him in the vernacular.

"Yes! Of course!"

He laughed heartily. It surely could not be just merely because he was a customs official that she was being so agreeable to him. For, after all, what had she to fear from a British customs official? It was not as if she were trying to smuggle anything into the country. And as for being a dangerous or suspicious person! If he had no other quality, at least he was a judge of character. The frank honesty of her face was one of its attractions. Here was a woman who could be a companion to a man. He let his mind dwell for an instant on a thought of her companionship and found his mental equilibrium a little unbalanced and slightly emotional at the consideration.

There was no doubt it was a bad photograph.

"I should hardly have recognised it," he said, with an effort to be official. "You see the eyes are wide apart. They don't show that peculiar, I should say rather effective, droop you have in the left eyelid."

She opened her eyes wide.

"Ah—yes—that's more like it."

Again they smiled at each other.

"And is that all, monsieur? Shall we soon be going on to Rotterdam?"

"Well, yes. Probably to-morrow morning."

The smile vanished from her face. She looked

annoyed. Yes—she had a temper. But then what woman who was worth anything had not? Had he been thinking of that companionship, it might have distressed him. As an official of the Admiralty in time of war, he was unperturbed by it.

“Why so long a delay as this, monsieur?”

“Oh, because we have to communicate our report to the Admiralty in London. It’ll be done by telephone. We shall probably know to-night whether the *Gelria* can proceed to-morrow morning.”

It was then he saw the potentialities of her emotion. She unsheathed her anger. She might have snatched out a dagger from her garter. She stamped her foot on the deck.

“Is it not enough!” she demanded—much as the others had done, but with a very different display—“Is it not enough that we are stopped in the voyage by the English people, when this is a Dutch ship! Is it not enough that we are insulted with this search, even to our very pockets! *Mon Dieu! Quel affront! C’est insupportable!*”

He did his best to apologise. He assured her it would be all right. He tried to explain the necessity of examining every ship that came from neutral ports. There was never any knowing who might be getting from one country to another. Spain was full of spies. They had to guard themselves against the obvious danger of enemy secret service. So far as she herself was concerned it was only a matter of a few hours’ delay. He offered her his most profound apologies. He was only an official in pursuit of his duties. She was appeased. But, my God, there was a woman who had a temper!

Later, on the telephone, he gave his report to a clerk in the Admiralty.

Everything was satisfactory on board the s.s. *Gelria*. He enumerated the passengers. Read out the details of their passports. Related their examinations.

"What about this Madame Sonrel?"

"Oh—all right."

"What's she been doing in Spain?"

"Oh—living in Madrid. Probably got private means."

"What's she want to go to Holland for?"

He gave all the particulars.

"Answer to all passport descriptions?"

"Yes. Not quite like the photograph. But near enough. You can see it is her."

"How not like?"

"Oh—she's got a funny droop of the left eyelid which doesn't appear in the photograph. But I think that's because she had her eyes wider open than usual when it was taken."

"What sort of a droop?"

"Just the left eyelid hangs down lower than the other. You don't notice it, except when she's in repose."

"Hold on a minute."

The bank clerk waited. He could hear the sound of footsteps approaching the telephone at the other end.

"Admiral Gawthorne speaking."

"Yes, sir."

"About how old is this woman?"

"Twenty-eight, sir."

"Good looking?"

"Yes, sir—very."

"About five foot eight?"

"About that, sir."

"And this droop of the eyelid?"

"Yes, sir."

"Left eyelid?"

"Yes, sir."

"Detain her."

"I beg pardon, sir."

"Detain her."

"Till when, sir?"

"Till someone comes down to-night from the Admiralty to fetch her up to London. Got that?"

"Yes, sir."

The tinkle of the bell rattled in his ear. He was disconnected.

LONDON

§ I

ROOM NUMBER X..... in the Admiralty looked over the gravelled square of the Horse Guards, beyond the little forest of Green Park to the campanile of the Pro-cathedral thrusting the sceptre of its tower above the trees. This room had, in fact, one of those prospects London is not given to boasting about, because so few will credit them. Paris has the *Champs Élysées* and the *Tuileries Gardens*. She wears them like jewels. The *Place de la Concorde* clasps them on her breast. But except for a glimpse through the arches of the Horse Guards, a stranger passing down Whitehall, between the Admiralty and the War Office, would never realise he was within a stone's-throw of one of those open spaces where there is room for a green thought in a green shade, where the

human ants have forsworn themselves the right to raise their human ant-hills.

At ten o'clock the next morning after the arrival of the s.s. *Gelria* in Falmouth, Admiral Gawthorne stood at the window of this room overlooking that view. For all he saw of it he might have been on the bridge of his ship in mid-ocean. He might have been in the stifling heart of Throgmorton Street.

With eyes fixed and sharpened under the shield of bushy eyebrows, he was looking across the square, across the trees, beyond the campanile into the deep space of clear blue sky. There was a newspaper cutting, a reproduction of a photograph, in his hand. It portrayed the head and shoulders of a woman. He lowered his eyes to look at it. It was printed on cheap paper. Somewhat blurred. He put on a pair of horn-rimmed spectacles and studied the woman's features. He took them off again and stared out into that space of sky. She might have been there in that blue void, wheeling indistinctly like a bird in mid-air. His eye roved as though it were following her. He put the slip of paper in his pocket, moved with a quick direction to his desk, and took the telephone receiver off its rest.

"Ring up the Criminal Investigation Department, Scotland Yard, and get me Sir Charles Ringland."

He waited, fixing his eyes on a circle in the design on the carpet. It was about the size of a human head. It was a head. A woman's head. He was closely watching the eyes.

"Hullo—that you, Charles? Yes." He allowed the usual greetings and then said—"I want you to let me examine a woman in your room to-day—half after four. I know. But we haven't got the facilities here. I want

her trunks searched. Thoroughly. Well, you've got experts for that job. Besides, you've probably got her dossier there. Lydia Hesse. At least, that's who I think it is. Lord, no! Sonrel—Madame Liane Sonrel on the passport. No. Can't be certain till I've seen her. Lifted her off the s.s. *Gelria* last night at Falmouth. Yes. One of my fellas telephoned through. No—but I've got a newspaper reproduction. Little indistinct. It ought to be good enough. We shall know when we see her. Oh, no, Charles. Sorry. She's my bird."

His eye glittered.

"Yes, I do want you. Badly. Two's always better than one. Flusters 'em. They can't tell where the next question's coming from. If it is the Hesse woman, she's been in Madrid since 1914. With von Lichtenstein. Yes—if it is her. Of course it was only over the telephone. One striking resemblance anyhow. A droop in the left eyelid. No—not good enough. But still."

He listened with patience up to a point on the difficulties of identification. Every man rode his own horse. It was always a treacherous mount to anyone else. Only the owner knew its tricks. The Admiral was smiling. Yes—yes—and yes. But whoever she was, she was a flying bird. A bird in mid-air. His bird.

"Passport to Rotterdam. Of course. Berlin, if she can get there. Any case, if there's nothing in it and I have to let her go through, I shall have her watched while she's in London. Yes—we'll have to put her up in one of your boarding-houses. Right you are. Then you'll have that dossier ready. Probably be lunching at the club if I get a chance. All right. Will if I can."

He hung up the receiver and sat with his lips set, staring again at that circle on the carpet. Then he rang a bell. His secretary entered at once from another room. He began his letters. They were short, abrupt. She had difficulty in keeping pace with him. He was not as sympathetic as usual that morning. Usually he waited for her. Repeated a sentence when he saw she was in trouble. She had never done secretarial work before. There was a war in Europe and she was having the time of her life. But something had happened. The Admiral was even inconsiderate. She did not know what it was. She did not know there was a lady travelling at that moment from Falmouth on the 11.35 train.

The Director of Naval Intelligence and the member of the Criminal Investigation Department met that day at lunch at their club. The Admiral arrived first. He sat at a long table with a crowd of men variously engaged in war activities. They talked the latest gossip about the war. Each man knew the secrets of his own particular department. There were some that bragged of their information. Some that said nothing at all. Some that behaved as nurses to puling infants of rumour, attendant at their birth, or dandling the half-weaned child in their arms, inviting inspection.

Amongst these the Admiral sat and conversed with a hawk's eyes darting to the door for the entrance of Charles Ringland. When he came in at last, they nodded. There was no room at that table for them to sit together. He lost sight of him, but knew he was there. He only wanted a word. He could wait.

There was a woman coming up in the train to London at that moment. Nothing could stop that. He laughed at a joke he heard across the table. At half-past

four she would be in his hands—a bird caught in mid-air. If she was the woman he wanted, he could slip a pin out of their machine, that would never run quite as smoothly again as long as the war lasted.

Had he heard that Anscombe was in the list of missing?

Poor beggar. Anscombe of all people. Damned sight sooner have been killed, if he'd had his choice.

That droop of the left eyelid. He asked a waiter to hurry up with his treacle-roll. Good stuff, treacle-roll. A droop of the left eyelid wasn't a common physical defect. It was a pity he hadn't got a proper photograph of her. Only that newspaper reproduction. Still it ought to be enough. The treacle-roll was off. Damn! Apple-tart then. Hot. With cream. There was no cream. Blast the war! But they'd said she was a good looker. Same height. Same coloured hair. Of course there were all sorts of dark browns. In the reproduction you couldn't tell whether it were black or what it was. Still, that name. Sonrel. Something tricky about it. Passport meant nothing. He had forged plenty of passports himself in the interests of Great Britain.

He went into the smoking-room. A crowd of men were drinking coffee, brandies, smoking and talking—talking at the top of their voices—talking in undertones—talking for the sake of talking. He was trying to work his way round to Charles.

"Hullo, Admiral—how's it going?"

"A1."

"Snatched anyone?"

"Always snatching."

"See that chap I sent along to you?"

"Yes. No good."

"Why?"

"No guts."

"I was afraid of that. Lost 'em at Ypres."

"I'll get him something in the decoding-room."

"Damn good of you, if you will."

Von Lichtenstein, that was a name that 'ud make her jump, if, indeed, she were Lydia Hesse. What a game! He muttered the name of von Lichtenstein under his breath behind his coffee-cup and shot his eyes at the back of a man in front of him. If that had been a woman's face, he would surely have seen the sudden twitch in her eyes.

Charles was just in front of him. He leant round the man's back and touched Ringland's arm.

"Hullo, Freddy."

They drew away into a corner.

"Have you got that?"

"Dossier?"

"Ah."

"They're going all through it now."

"Right—I'll come along about four. Want to have a look at it first."

"It'll be all ready."

He began to push his way out of the crowd.

"Admiral!"

"Hullo!"

"Have a rubber?"

"Can't."

"Just one. We've got three here."

"Can't."

There was a woman in a train. He could see her. See the droop in her left eyelid. He could see nothing else.

§ 2

THE Dossier of Lydia Hesse at Scotland Yard was disappointing. It contained certain details of her movements since the outbreak of war. Most of these, with the information of his agents, were already known to the Admiral. He snorted impatiently down his nostrils as he turned over the pages.

"I know all this."

Charles Ringland nodded. Probably. He ought to. She was his bird. He had not entirely forgotten the refusal of his offer to take this woman over himself. But he had put it aside. The Admiral had said she was his bird. Any accusation of a paltry jealousy would have astounded him. He looked at the clock.

"Twenty-five past four," he said.

There were a few more pages. The Admiral wetted his finger and turned them over. He didn't want to keep her waiting. It was always easiest when they were in a good humour. The sudden surprise, shot in the dark, but with just that one light of laughter on the face to see if it hit. He did not believe in putting them on the rack of authority. They hid. That was all they did.

Where she was born, education, who her parents were, these facts were of no use to him. If it were Lydia Hesse, he had reason to know she was living in England at the declaration of war, living with a man of whom the less said the better, from whom she had obtained information of the despatch of troops to France for communication to Berlin. There was more. None of it was in that dossier. Amongst his papers at the Admiralty he had enough to shoot her, only that women spies were not shot in Eng-

land. But he had enough to send her to France, where they had less delicacy about these matters and probably more sense. His eyes darted here and there over the papers. It was half-past four. The clock chimed. He said:

"Only one thing here any good."

"What's that?"

"She wears a bracelet up her left arm."

"Yes—so I see."

"D'you know who gave her that?"

"No."

"Ah—weil—I do. And they say women aren't romantic. Everyone's romantic. See this." He put his finger on a page. "Wears it always. Gold snake, coiled up the forearm to the elbow."

A bell rang. Sir Charles Ringland picked up the phone.

"All right."

He turned to the Admiral.

"You ready? She's here."

Admiral Gawthorne put the dossier away in a drawer of the desk. He nodded.

"All right. Show her in."

After Ringland's order on the phone, they both sat and waited with their eyes on the door. A moment later it opened.

The most assured of the three people in that room was the woman who entered it. For it was an entrance. She swept past the clerk who was holding the door open for her. Here was an indignant lady subjected to mol-estation, even to affront, at the hands of complete strangers. She was not used to this treatment from men. They must see that. They were intended to see it. They did

see it. If this were Lydia Hesse, then Lydia Hesse was a remarkable, fine-looking woman.

They had both risen to their feet when she came in. From the first moment the Admiral was conscious of a warm impulse of admiration for that entrance. Whoever she was, she must know she was up against it and it was damn fine. He knew no woman who could have done it better. This woman had fight. It was impossible not to like her for that. He was ready for a fight himself. He bowed. She stood well within the room, accepting that acknowledgment with a faint inclination of her head.

"Madame Sonrel."

"Yes, monsieur."

"I am Admiral Gawthorne. This is Sir Charles Ringland."

She gave the full direction of her eyes, first to one and then to the other. But where was that droop of the left eyelid? She was concealing it with the openness of her gaze. Good—damn good. Then she was already warned of that. He placed the most comfortable chair in the room in a position facing the light and invited her acceptance of it. Make her easy. Her eyes had the steadiness of eyes that see everything. She was as suspicious as a cat. Make her easy first.

"I'm extremely sorry," he began, "to have caused you all this inconvenience."

Was she going to refuse that chair? Clever if she did. Clever, if she insisted on standing there, half-turned from the window, her face in a partial shadow. He tested that. He prepared to move the chair.

"P'raps you don't like the light on your face," he suggested.

She came forward at once and sat down. True to their sex women were. She'd got a face she was not ashamed of. Why shouldn't they see it? Courage too. Good again. Splendid creature. But he felt no hesitation in the pursuit because she was a bird of plumage. She was still in mid-air. He made no mistake about that. There was the whole unsupported emptiness of space about her. But she could fly! He resumed his own chair. Ringland sat down.

"I hope you understand," continued the Admiral, "that it's only because of the war we have to take these precautions."

He was conciliatory. He was more. He was the soul of apology. And he spoke in excellent French.

"But what precautions, monsieur? I do not understand. I am travelling, a private passenger, like the gentlemen, like the other lady on that ship. My passport, you see that. I am Madame Sonrel. I have been staying in Madrid. I take the boat to Rotterdam to see my child who is in a convent in Amsterdam. If you doubt that, I can give you proof of it. Oh, yes. You can find out for yourselves. You probably know everything about everybody."

She was excited. She was beginning to talk. By all means. Presently she would say something. The Lydia Hesse would slip out. If she were Lydia Hesse. He was by no means certain yet. That picture was not good enough. There was a likeness. But he was not sure. By all means let her talk. He sat with steady eyes, leaning forward, with his face in the shadow, listening to her. There was a kindly attention and interest in his expression, but his eyes never moved from her own. She penetrated the shadow of his face and saw that. He was saying

nothing. He was just listening. She stopped abruptly and said no more. There was a silence.

"Where were you living in Madrid?"

Ringland's voice was too curt, too abrupt. That was rather their way in Scotland Yard. If she were anything, she was a spy. She was not a common criminal. Her resentment was instantaneous. Of course it was. She had turned at once to the Admiral.

"Am I here to be interrogated, monsieur?"

"Certainly not, madame. That's just as you like. You can refuse to answer any question at all. We have no means to compel you."

"I say nothing then?"

"Of course, if you wish."

She made a movement in her chair.

"Then you do not detain me any longer?"

"Well, not here."

None of the men who had served under the Admiral would have believed his voice was capable of quite so still a note as that. He sat with his body slightly leaning forward on the arms of his chair. He was even smiling. There was no movement. No expression of finality. They were three very ordinary words. He permitted them to pass from his lips. They left a silence in the room behind them.

"What do you mean, monsieur, when you say—not here?"

"Only that if you refuse to answer any questions, we can't fail to regard your presence on the *Gelria* with some suspicion."

"And what do you do then?"

"Well, you probably know there are places of internment in different parts of the country."

"Internment?"

"That is always the case in time of war. There are people who are suspected of sympathy with the enemy. They may not have done any harm, but—they have to be interned."

"You suspect me of sympathy with Germany?"

Splendid, that indignation. It was almost possible to feel they were insulting her.

"What can we think, at a time like this, if you won't say anything about yourself?"

"But I am French, monsieur! Sonrel! That is my name. It is on the passport."

Sir Charles interrupted.

"Cases have been known," he suggested ironically, "where passports are forged."

But what was irony to her? She whipped the document out of the breast of her dress and stood up, holding it out to them.

"Who do you think I am, messieurs, if I am not Madame Sonrel?"

The Admiral took no notice of the paper. In that instant, as she stood there, poised with indignation in front of them, he had seen that droop of the left eyelid. What a game! Had he got her then? Should he say—You might be Frau von Lichtenstein or you might be Lydia Hesse? Should he say that? Wasn't it a little too soon? She was still flying strong. If he swooped then, might he miss her? Later she might grow tired. She might become unwary. That droop of the eyelid was not enough.

She was standing. He rose himself from his chair. It was only courteous.

"We have not suggested for one moment," he said, "that you are not Madame Sonrel. Sir Charles only asked you where you lived in Madrid. You prefer not to answer that."

He laid the implied threat on velvet. It made no sound. She looked, and for the first time realised he had the eye of the hawk. It glittered and blinked as it looked back at her. She swerved. All that emptiness of space was about her. She was alone there with those two men. She returned to her chair and sat down.

"I have not the least objection to your knowing where I live in Madrid."

"Where?"

"My house it was in the *Paseo de Recoletos*. I take it from Señor Escortas for the year I was in Madrid."

"Then what harm was there in your telling us that?"

"I am sorry, monsieur. I was annoyed. This interruption of my journey—it upset me. My daughter, she expect me in a few days' time, and the boat has gone on to Rotterdam without me."

Was this better? Was she tiring? She was descending from those altitudes of indignation. This was appeal. She was playing for their sympathy. Let her keep on changing her flight. It was only a question of waiting. This was not his first bird. By no means. They all swerved—men as well as women. But he had seldom met one, man or woman, with a flight as bold as hers. Was she Lydia Hesse? Charles was right. Identification wasn't so easy. He was asking her then in that same sharp tone of the criminal investigator:

"You've been in Madrid then for nearly a year?"

"Yes, monsieur."

But she was not bridling now. The Admiral took out his cigarette-case. Now she was in the mood for these amenities. He offered her a cigarette. He leant forward from his chair to give it her, but not quite far enough. She stretched out with her left hand to reach it. He held it there till he could see her bare arm inside the sleeve of her coat. There was no bracelet. The arm was naked underneath the coat. Was the dossier wrong? Was she not a romantic after all?

"Please don't think," he said, "that these questions you are being asked are suggested by any doubt of the authority of your passport. Sir Charles Ringland didn't mean that, I'm sure. If we had any doubt about that, we could easily send over to the Spanish Embassy and make inquiries."

Would she know that was bluff? Would she know they could find out nothing? Perhaps she did. Perhaps she was a genuine passenger to Rotterdam. Or was she the most consummate actress he had ever met? Her eye never flickered. She took his cigarette with a smile. It was a peculiar smile. It had a peculiar quality about it. Almost as though she were concealing it for his especial benefit, giving it to him alone, though Ringland was there. Ringland could see. She had not hidden her face. Only her mind. It was just the charm she had, which she offered for his sole participation. And there was no doubt about it. She had charm all right.

In every secret intelligence service in the world, two sure ways are admitted, when you want to extract official information out of a man. If you can't get it with drink, your only hope is a woman. And if you don't

want to waste your opportunities, let it be the woman every time.

Never had the Admiral encountered one so well-equipped as she was for that service. He had engaged women himself on these missions. There was one at that moment on her way to America, with a man who possessed a secret he had worked for two years to discover. She was to make his acquaintance on board. The rest should be easy. Their cabins were alongside each other. The Admiral had seen to that. He had booked her passage for her. And yet he doubted the issue. But had it been this woman he could have been sure of his quarry then.

And who was she if not Lydia Hesse? He struck a match and held it to her cigarette.

"Probably," he said quietly, "as you've been in Madrid for a year, you'll have made the acquaintance of von Lichtenstein."

It was that chance shot he had thought of, with the light of the match to illuminate the hit or miss. The flare of it was glowing with a sharp point in her eyes. They met his tranquilly, without movement. The smile that was in them for his benefit was still there.

"You mean the councillor of the German Embassy?"

"You do know him?"

"No—we have never met. I hear his name. He goes about to many places in Madrid."

"Ah! You've moved about in those circles—you know the Embassies?"

This was Ringland again—very characteristic of him. But that tone would never get anywhere with her. She was not to be intimidated like that. He was a bully. You can know a man for years and not learn

that about him till one moment when you see him up against a woman of spirit. Probably he bullied the women he made love to. Not the way to make love to this one. He was fixing her with his eyes. As if a woman like her cared a damn for the fixing of any man's eyes. She looked round at his question and the next minute she was laughing.

"Might I ask monsieur who he does think I am?"

"Not much need to think, I can assure you."

What the deuce was he going to say next! The Admiral was restless in his chair. He was trying to catch Ringland's eye. It was too engrossed with her. That laughter had nettled him. He was stung.

"We have the dossier here and a photograph of Lydia Hesse," he said. "Do you want us to tell you any more than that?"

She laughed. She had beaten them. The moment when she laughed again, the Admiral knew that. Because it was true laughter, clear lifted as the free note of a bird.

She was not Lydia Hesse. He was certain of it then. There was no mimicry about that. She was not performing now. That was the laughter of escape. She had got away. Damn fine! Damn fine, that getting away! And that fool Ringland! He was not merely a bully. It was no more than pricked vanity when a man was stung like that.

The Admiral sat back in his chair. There was nothing more to be done. When she informed them that Lydia Hesse was at that moment in Madrid, as they might discover for themselves if they took a reasonable amount of trouble to find out—say from their Spanish Embassy or any of those sources of information from

which they acquired their intelligence—the Admiral had no comment to make. There was nothing to do but smile at her ridicule. Ringland sat glum and extremely silent. And she whipped the pair of them.

A tongue she had. Oh, yes. They had taken her off that ship! They had delayed her meeting with her little daughter—that poor child, Aurore—for two weeks and no means of communicating with her, unless they would allow her those facilities which kept them so admirably in touch with the whole world.

And was she to stay in London? And at whose expense? And did they happen to know when there would be another ship going to Rotterdam? Or must she obtain that information for herself?

She did it all extraordinarily well. The Admiral was listening, amused, admiring. Was she doing it too well? They had made such a hopeless blunder. Ringland had. It was too clumsy for words. Vanity pricked by a nettle. Who would have believed a big man could be as little as that! And she was so pleased, so elated. Why was she so elated? He still listened. He let her go on talking.

“Lydia Hesse!” It was a peal of laughter she gave them. “I see Lydia Hesse myself when I come on board the *Gelria*.”

The Admiral kept his face in shadow. Let her talk. He was a deeply religious man and seriously implored his Maker that Ringland might hold his tongue.

“She say good-bye to me before I leave Spain.”

“At Port of Vigo?” the Admiral suggested quietly.

“Oh, yes.”

“You mean she came to see you off?”

“Oh, no. But she was there.”

"And yet you don't know von Lichtenstein?"

If it was a recovery it was amazingly quick. She was saying what she had said before about the councillor of the German Embassy—saying it in emphasis that did not ring with the note of necessity when the telephone-bell rang. He took off the receiver.

"Yes. Not just at present. What? Where? Oh." The Admiral's voice did not appear to change. "Send a clerk in with it."

He replaced the receiver.

"Then of course we have to apologise," he said agreeably, "for a ridiculous but pardonable mistake. I'm extremely sorry you've been caused all this inconvenience. We did think you were Lydia Hesse."

She smiled again. Another smile. It was not for him merely this time. There was no need for it. Certainly it was not for Ringland. It was the smile of a virtuous woman for a whole world of accusers. She was secure in the triumph of her innocence now. He allowed her to see how pleased he was she had achieved that security. She was to feel he did not grudge it to her. She did feel that and, with a generosity he would have credited her with from the first moment she entered the room, she rose from her chair and offered her hand.

"Might I inquire why you thought I was Lydia Hesse?"

"Similarity of appearance."

"Oh, yes—but we are not really alike."

"No—I realise that. The photograph I have of her is really no good for identification. Nevertheless, there is one extraordinary resemblance."

"Oh, yes?"

"You both have that peculiar droop in the left eyelid."

Her eyes had flickered. Had she hoped that had escaped his notice? Did it mean anything when she passed over his observation without comment? Or was it that, just as a woman, she preferred to ignore a physical defect? Whichever it was, she was saying:

"And why is it you want Lydia Hesse, monsieur?"

"Because if it were the custom to shoot women spies in this country, we should want to shoot her."

He had dropped his voice for that to a quiet but very clear note. And it was not so much that he fixed his eyes on hers as that they happened to be upon them when he began his sentence and happened to remain there when he had done.

This was the moment for the sound of that clerk's knock to fall on the door. He wanted it—just then. The expert searchers had been through her trunks. They had found something. That was the telephone message. They were sending it in. Another moment and probably he would know who she was. He wanted that knock then. But either his Maker was sleeping or He was pursuing, for the appeal he made was unanswered. If she had lost her composure for an instant, she recovered it at once.

"And what do you do with a woman spy if you do not shoot her over here?"

"We can always send her over to France, madame. They aren't so sentimental over there as we are."

"Oh, yes! They have no respect for women in France! All they think of women in France—it is just one thing. That is all!"

She had flared up. Why had she flared up like that?

And then the expected knock fell on the door.

He turned away from her.

"Come in!"

She might suppose from his voice that he was annoyed at that interruption.

A clerk entered the room. He had an envelope in his hand. He brought it across to the Admiral, who took it and abruptly dismissed him.

"Excuse me."

It was necessary to move away from her, to get a steel envelope-opener that was lying on the desk. He cut the flap and took it over to the window before he extracted the contents. His back was turned to her. She was watching his head bent down over whatever the communication was that he held in his hand. She watched him beckon with his hand to Ringland. She heard him say:

"Have you got any particulars about this?"

Her eyes never left them while Ringland bent over the Admiral's shoulder. She heard him reply:

"Good God!" And then he said, "Enough for a volume. Ever since she first came to France."

The Admiral turned round. It was a sharp turn on the edge of his heel. He came back across the room to her. There was a picture postcard, a photograph, in his hand. He held it out under her eyes.

"This was found stitched in the lining of one of your corsets," he said. "Can you give us any explanation?"

She stared at it in silence. The trams were rolling along the Embankment. A pigeon seated on the window-sill outside was preening its sooty breast-feathers.

§ 3

THE picture was a portrait of a striking-looking woman dressed to the waist in the flimsy, trousered garment of the East. Above the waist to her throat she was naked, except for the body of a snake that coiled itself round her to her neck. Underneath the portrait was printed the name—Mada Garass. It was this picture the Admiral was holding out for Madame Sonrel's inspection. And she was gazing at it.

She was not seeing it. After that first glance, he was quite satisfied that the bent and arrested attitude of her head was not one of observation. She was thinking, and thinking quick.

It was a mere human impulse that he felt sorry for her. She had so nearly escaped them. So nearly Ringland had let her out. If they had found nothing in those trunks of hers, she would have got away. What was she going to say now? Obviously in that silence she was waiting—waiting for them to make the first move. He was reminded of a rabbit when the weasel comes up with it. She was hunched and still—frozen.

How much did they know? Undoubtedly that was the question she was asking herself. Her head was bent down over the picture so that they could see only the attitude, nothing of the expression on her face.

The Admiral was waiting with a slow smile for her to look up. He knew more than she probably even guessed at. The name of Mada Garass as a suspected spy in the pay of the German Government had been known to him ever since she had left Paris in 1915 and had gone to Madrid. For a twelvemonth he had

been tapping wireless messages to Berlin in which her name was mentioned. He had his own ideas about her activities, but had made no effort to get hold of her, since all her operations had been directed against France.

In only one event had he encountered her work where it had concerned a British interest. Since her arrival in Madrid she had been the mistress of von Tröhm, the German Naval *Attaché* at the Spanish Embassy. It was not common knowledge. Apparently the French were not suspicious of her. His agents had informed him of her intimacy with von Tröhm. They were not openly living together. It was quite true. She had her house on the *Paseo de Recoletos*. But early in 1916, the German submarines, making their way into the Mediterranean, had been hard put to it for oil. Von Tröhm had arranged for this. Tapping and decoding wireless messages to Berlin, the Admiral had learnt that seven hundred drums of lubricating oil, concealed in sugar-cases, were being despatched to Arosa Bay, where they were to be conveyed out to the submarines by night, lying off the coast. It needed careful arrangement, definite appointments. The messages that were picked up were decoded by the Admiralty staff and brought to him. He connected at once with his agents at Madrid. One night while the sugar-cases were lying on rail in a siding at Barcelona, the labels were changed from Arosa Bay to Valladolid.

There was a twinkle in his eye as he watched that stillness of her head bent over her portrait. It was a tempting humour of the game to ask her if they had ever found those sugar-cases after they left Barcelona. It passed like a half-remembered joke. He became aware

in that stillness of her head that she was beaten. She was waiting for them to speak first and they were saying nothing. Two hours they had been talking in that room. For two hours she had been eluding them, and in that last triumphant flight upwards had thought she was free. It was that sudden swing round of the wind in their favour that had defeated her. These people always gave in when it came to that. Some of them crumpled up altogether. She was not doing that. It was not her spirit. But the stillness and the silence. It was becoming painful. With the instinct of a common decency, he helped her out.

"I've never had the pleasure of seeing you dance in Paris," he said; "but judging by this photograph, I can realise what a pleasure I've missed."

She looked up. She was breathing very slowly, as though even the air she inhaled in that room might betray her.

"I suppose you knew from the beginning," she said deliberately—"I am not Lydia Hesse?"

"Of course we did."

He was not merely saving their face. This was a gambit. The game allowed of it. She shrugged her shoulders.

"You were just waiting for this."

"Just waiting for that."

A cruel business. He felt genuinely sorry for her. But there it was. It was not their move to let her know they had never seen a picture of her until that moment.

"Then why do you pretend?"

"Well—it was quite possible you might tell us more if you thought we were in the dark."

She could still laugh. She was not beaten so much as that. Looking at her then, with that throw-back of her head, the Admiral found himself questioning whether any man would ever wholly defeat her. She must know she was in peril of her life, and she could laugh. It was impossible to refuse her admiration.

"And I tell you nothing," she said.

"Ah, well, we know a good deal already."

"What do you know?"

"We know a great friend of yours."

"Of mine?"

"Captain von Tröhm."

He had seldom seen so dramatic a gesture of disgust.

"That man! You know he pester me—eh—when I was in Madrid. Always he was coming to my house. Is that what you know? You know he pester me with his attentions so much I come away!"

"Of course. But where do you go to?"

"I suppose you know that too, messieurs?"

"We do."

"Where?"

"Berlin."

"*Oh, mon Dieu! Ce n'est pas vrai!*"

It could take her breath away, so infamous and unwarranted an accusation. For a moment it was difficult for her to speak.

"I tell you I go to Rotterdam!" she exclaimed when she recovered. "My child is in a convent in Amsterdam. I am partly Dutch. I was born in Batavia. My father was French. Sonrel. That is my name. I do not forge my passport. Mada Garass, that is only the name I use on the stage. You know that, messieurs!"

Ringland intercepted. The sharp abruptness of his tone did not matter now. He remarked that she had omitted to describe herself as a dancer on her passport. He said:

"You call yourself a lady of private means."

"But why not, monsieur? I have made money. When I was in Paris, I live at Neuilly. I do not spend all I make."

"No. And dancing is not the only source from which you receive your money."

She looked at Ringland when he said that. The contempt of that glance was superb. She accused him of that vulgarity of insinuation for which a man irretrievably loses all respect in any woman's mind. From that look she turned to the Admiral.

"Has my private life anything to do with this, monsieur?"

She had done it so delicately. She had been insulted. She lowered her eyes. There were some things no gentleman had a right to refer to. She had believed she was talking to gentlemen. She still clung to that belief in the Admiral when she ignored Sir Charles and addressed herself to him. What had the frailties of her life to do with this? She was not a woman without emotion. They could see that for themselves. Even the Admiral was seduced by that appeal. He was concerned to put them right in that matter.

"I fancy Sir Charles Ringland was referring to the pay you receive from the German Government," he said.

He was not prepared for the fury of her response to that. Knowing what he knew, he could scarcely believe

she was still fighting. To the full height of her body she faced them both.

"You think I am a spy? You think I spy for Germany against this country?"

"No, madame."

"Ah!"

"Not against us."

"I do not understand."

"Against France."

"But you do not know anything I do!"

"Pardon me. We have your dossier here in Scotland Yard."

"Is it in Scotland Yard I am?"

"I'm sorry. I forgot you did not know that. This is Scotland Yard. Sir Charles Ringland is a member of the Criminal Investigation Department."

This was the first moment she had looked frightened. It was almost a pity to see her breaking up. She had stood so finely: she had been so splendid until then. He continued quietly, to give her time to recover:

"In your dossier we have particulars of your life ever since you first came to France. At the moment I can say nothing till I've seen through the papers. But I can tell you this, you can't go to Berlin."

"I swear I was not going to Berlin."

Was she so frightened after all? Her voice had risen to an instant's note of panic, but was she really afraid of anyone or anything?

"If you wish to put it that way," he said quietly, "then shall I say you cannot go to Rotterdam?"

Very slowly she sat down in the chair the Admiral had first offered her. He could have sworn that that was the gesture, the movement, of a beaten woman. She had

no fight left. She was not looking at either of them. Her voice was subdued when she said:

"What do you do with me then?"

"Well, either you'll be tried here in England, which would probably mean a long sentence of imprisonment, if it could be proved you had spied against this country, or I should send you back to Madrid."

She looked up. Was it quickly?

"Why back to Madrid, monsieur?"

It almost appeared as though she took courage from that. Her head was raised.

"It's a neutral country. You can't do much harm there."

"You will find nothing against me in your papers, monsieur. I am willing to go back to Madrid, if you feel suspicious about me, as you seem to do."

She met his eye. Her own did not flicker.

"We shall see," he said, and turned to Ringland. "If you'll send for that dossier, I'll take it back with me."

He wanted her to realise there was no bluff about this. He wanted her to see the package of papers that contained her secrets. Ringland went to the telephone.

She was standing again now. If that was the end of the interview, she was ready to go. She was breathing as though the room had no air. It was not surprising. She was near the end of her tether. He could see that. But she was still watching with her eyes. There was no doubt, even in his own mind, he felt sorry for her. She was a better loser than most women he had met.

"Now, if I do send you back to Madrid——" he said.

"Yes, monsieur."

He had paused. Was he really disposed to give her that chance? What was the meaning of that friendly look in his eye?

"Let me warn you of one thing."

"Yes, monsieur."

"Don't try and go back to France."

"Why, monsieur?"

"The moment you set your foot back in France you're a dead woman. Probably you know that."

Ringland was speaking into the telephone. They could hear him asking for the dossier of Mada Garass. She had raised her head and was looking at the Admiral. How much did he know? How much more would he know when he had read those papers?

"I do not understand why you say that, monsieur."

"Don't you? Well, possibly they don't know as much as I do. As Mada Garass, you're a popular favourite there. They may not have associated you yet with Madame Sonrel. But being a popular favourite wouldn't help you, if they knew of your association with von Tröhm. You realise that."

Her eyes had not moved from his. Even then, when the strain had all but beaten her, she was still imperturbable. She inclined her head in a silent acceptance of that last statement. That was all she did. He could see she was not able to last out much longer. He went to the door and opened it.

"You can go now, madame."

Her body was as straight as an arrow-shaft when she walked across the room. And to the last her voice was her own and her pride was there.

"Where do I go, monsieur?"

"The officer who brought you up from Falmouth will look after you. For the time being and while you're in London, you'll stay at a boarding-house in Torrington Square. I'm afraid it won't be quite what you're accustomed to, but the proprietress takes our guests from time to time, and she'll be told especially to look after you. None of the other people there will know anything about you. You will have to report yourself each morning at the nearest police station, and, of course, I warn you all your movements will be watched. So don't do anything foolish. In the meantime I shall go through this dossier we have and send for you again if I want you."

"And when do I go back to Madrid?"

"As soon as there's a boat, you'll be informed."

For the last time she gave him the full glance of her eyes. It was disconcerting. It excused him for all the indignity and discomfort to which he had subjected her. As the head of the Naval Intelligence Department, or had he been the executioner himself, it ignored him. It was just the look of a woman to a man, and for the moment he found his mind uncomfortably disordered by it. He could not continue to meet it. He bowed. She bowed herself, and then she went out. He closed the door. He assumed a jocular tone of voice. Ringland was laying down the telephone.

"Well—what do you make of that, Charles?"

"Damn good-looking woman!"

"Ah. And could you have stood that for two hours, not knowing from one minute to the next where you were going to find yourself?"

"Delicate, wasn't she, when she pretended I was talking about her lovers."

"And she's had some, too."

"Of course you're not going to send her back to Madrid."

"Why not? I think I am."

"But you're not going to chuck away a chance like this! We could get her in for the duration of the war."

"I don't chuck chances, Charles. We couldn't convict her. Besides, I like the lady."

"So would anyone."

"Yes—but I don't chuck chances—not even for her. I've been tapping wireless messages, Charles. I should like her to go back to Madrid again—bless her generous heart. If they're not interested in the lady in Paris, that's their look-out. I am. She's been quite useful to me."

§ 4

FOR two weeks Liane Sonrel was detained in London until the s.s. *Gelria*, calling at Falmouth, made her return voyage from Rotterdam to Port of Vigo.

The number of those premises of Mrs. Dewlands' in Torrington Square is immaterial and would serve no more than to whet the interest of the curious. Certainly none of the visitors in that highly respectable boarding establishment had the faintest suspicion of any compact between their devoutly religious proprietress and the Secret Intelligence Service of the British Government.

The appearance of a young, attractive and well-dressed woman in their midst might have surprised, but did not alarm them. Inevitably they were intrigued.

There was no ignoring the fatal air about her. That compelling consciousness of a fullness of life brought into this fortuitous contact with the drab emptiness of the lives of those impecunious *habitués* of the London boarding-house, only increased the contrast of remarkable personality. She enforced attention. The elderly ladies of unimpeachable morals could not take their eyes off her. They knew, without the support of circumstantial evidence—as unimpeachably moral women do know—that Liane had not lived as they had lived.

Constantly, during that fortnight, they asked the devout Mrs. Dewlands about her. But Mrs. Dewlands actually and ostensibly knew nothing. She was Madame Sonrel. They could see that for themselves in the visitors' book. French, of course. Probably they had gathered that. One of our Allies. But why was she alone in London and where was Monsieur Sonrel?

Mrs. Dewlands' smile to her visitors was similar to that she gave to friends when coming out of church immediately after taking the Holy Sacrament. It was reserved.

"Monsieur Sonrel," she said pacifically—"is probably where most Frenchmen are these days. Fighting for his country."

"If," said they with lifted eyebrows—"he's not been killed already."

The inference was vague. It was so subtle as to be almost incomprehensible. But they knew what they meant. A woman like that with those eyes and that mode of dress could not be formally attached. Widowhood was the utmost they could allow her. Even then, with an expectant watchfulness, they held themselves ready for the appearance of the inevitable male. In

their cotton night-dresses they lay awake at nights in those insecure iron bedsteads which Mrs. Dewlands supplied for the nocturnal retirement, if not composure, of her guests, imagining things about Madame Sonrel no one would believe possible in the minds of unimpeachably moral women.

At meal-times there was not a head unturned when Liane entered the room to take her place at the little table in the corner where she sat apart. Jaws, in the act of mastication, were arrested, giving extraordinary expressions of curiosity to faces that, in repose, had nothing to recommend them. Voices were dropped to sudden whispers that became almost furtive in their sibilance.

Seeing the countless pairs of eyes that had turned upon her in the theatre in Madrid and Paris, all this was not to be wondered at. But it was disconcerting to them that she appeared so oblivious of their interest. For, indeed, incarcerated there in that penitentiary of the impoverished middle-class, they could not even have begun to exist for her. She must have been like a lioness caged along with a lot of strayed and homeless dogs. She paced through the midst of them. They did no more than creep at her heels.

And the meals with which Mrs. Dewlands provided them for two guineas a week! The lounge of thread-bare green plush where the old gentlemen sat after dinner in the evenings and smoked their offensive pipes! The narrow bedroom where she slept at night! The rickety iron bed, the dingy towels, the half-used soap, the slovenly maid who on the first morning brought her lukewarm water into the room but never entered again!

Liane had sat up in bed, blinking her eyes and gazing at the tousled creature in her greasy cotton frock.

"What you do in my room!" she called out in broken but emphatic English. "Get out! Get out! Never come in my room again! I am sick with you!"

After Neuilly, after the *Paseo de Recoletos*, this may well have been like a paupers' prison. She had forgotten the sawdusted floor in the *café* on the *Quai du Monde* in Marseilles. It did not even recall to her that room under the slates in the *Rue Blanche*. Life had paid court to her since then, and now, in Mrs. Dewlands' boarding-house in Torrington Square, it was unwarrantably insulting her once more. It was beyond her nature to submit to it.

After five days, reporting herself every morning at the nearest police station, she went, spurred by indignation, to the Admiralty. It was the lion's den. She did not care. Even the fact that she realised a man in plain clothes was following her through the streets did not deter her. There was no room for fear in her mind. She did not believe that any man would subject her to such indignity if he knew. In a voice supreme with confidence, she sent her name up to the Director of Naval Intelligence.

Admiral Gawthorne was giving letters to his secretary. He glanced at the paper the clerk laid on his desk. His eyebrows lifted.

"She down in the hall?"

"Yes, sir."

He screwed up his eyes in cogitation. He was busy; yet might there be something here to be learned? An essential quality of his success in that department, so

remote from the high seas, was that he never failed to realise an opportunity. Charles Ringland had talked nonsense when he spoke of the Admiral chucking chances away. It was the chance of life continually that he could not resist. Was there one here? He sent his secretary away and told them to show Madame Sonrel up to his room.

Had he seen the outraged woman who had set out from Torrington Square that morning, he would not have known this pleasant and amenable lady who with apologies for her intrusion entered his room. During that brief period of waiting in the hall of the Admiralty, receiving quick and admiring glances from young men in naval uniform, the metamorphosis had taken place. It was not that she had forgotten the insult of Torrington Square. It was that the rapid glances of the young men had reassured her. Those five days in Mrs. Dewlands' boarding-house had been annihilation. Conversation about their ailments with elderly men smoking their dirty pipes was not an expression of life by which she could realise herself. It was not her *métier* to talk scandal with impoverished ladies of unimpeachable morals. Their purity outraged her. She had been suffocated by propriety. But in those few moments, while her name was being taken to the Admiral's room, the meaning of existence had reasserted itself.

He had expected a woman chafing under the fret of restraint. In that mood she might have spoken her mind. That dossier of hers had revealed nothing of importance. Her parentage, her marriage in India, these were mere facts without illuminating value. Between her leaving Pondichéry and her first appearance

in Paris as Mada Garass there was a gap of years. Then her movements since the beginning of the war were related in detail, but nothing was sufficiently incriminating to convict.

She had had lovers, but for a woman of her attractions what crime was that? That de Laurent, the commander of one of the aviation bases in France, from which the bombing expeditions had set out to attack German towns, had been shot by order of court-martial because of information that had reached Germany, was not ostensibly to be attributed to her. Apparently the French were incapable of suspecting their favourite *danseuse*. But Admiral Gawthorne had his own mind on that matter. Information from his agents had indirectly reached him that de Laurent had frequently stayed in her house at Neuilly in 1915. But this had been no affair of his. The French had their *Troisième Section*. He had more than enough business of his own to find time for interference with matters that only concerned them. They had shot de Laurent. No doubt they considered that that stopped the leak.

But when it came to her intimacy with von Tröhm in Madrid, and that little business of the drums of oil at Arosa Bay in which her name was decoded from the wireless message, there was sauce for his suspicion there. Nothing to convict her, but quite sufficient to arrest that projected journey under the unsuspecting name of Madame Sonrel to Rotterdam. He knew these people with aspirations to go to Holland and Belgium. Many a spy had slipped through his fingers that way.

In three years he had learnt too much to let her play

such tricks on him. It was an ingenious effort. For the dossier disclosed the actual existence of that child of hers in the convent in Amsterdam. There was no point at which he could catch her out, no definite evidence on which to proceed to drastic measures. That child, Aurore, had been well placed on the map of Europe. In the event of hostilities, she had proved a convenient excuse for a fond mother to travel from France to Holland on her unsuspected way to Berlin.

And as for von Tröhm himself in Madrid, who could prevent a popular dancer of the theatre from having her admirers? She lived alone in the *Paseo de Recoletos*. His agents had confirmed that. She had lived alone at Neuilly, and at every other place in Europe where she had pursued her successful career.

If he could have got her to talk of herself, there were doubtless many things she might let fall to be pieced with effect into that incompleted pattern of her life which the dossier at Scotland Yard had only partially revealed.

Once or twice during those five days she had been in London, the Admiral had thought of sending for her for a further interrogation. But what would have been the good of it? She was warned now and on her guard. That mistake about Lydia Hesse had cut away the ground from under their feet. She had had time to recover the impetus of her flight. Without doubt the discovery of her identity had frightened her. He was convinced she was hiding behind the name of Sonrel. But then the fact that she was entitled to it was disarming. After reading the dossier which Ringland had given him, he had come to the conclusion it was no good subjecting her to further interrogation. He had his men watching her. If she did

anything that was suspicious during that time she was in London, it would be reported to him at once. But no report had come in. And now, here she was, coming to see him herself of her own accord. An irate woman, no doubt, insulted by the restrictions that had been put upon her liberty.

He was jingling the keys in his pocket with satisfaction while he waited for her to come up. At last the door opened and there was this amenable creature, with a smile of unquestionable charm and full of apologies for this intrusion upon his time. He was at a loss to understand it.

"I am ashamed I should bother you," she began. And in English. Why in English? But not without its attraction, that broken way in which she spoke it. And she was diffident. The ladies in Torrington Square would scarcely have known her.

He invited her to take the most comfortable chair in the room.

"Do you want me to sit facing the light?"

There was a laugh she permitted no farther than the corner of her mouth.

He had had every intention of conducting this interview seriously, officially. She was not to be allowed to forget she was in the Admiralty. In that interval since their last meeting, she must realise he had read the dossier. But she was not to know what he had found there. It was a difficult matter just to assume enough, and yet not so much as might lead to the exposure of ignorance. But he liked these delicate matters. For a sailor he had quick subtleties of mind uncommon in his calling. Few realised how dangerous an opponent he could be in debate. He was prepared to use all his wits

at this unexpected encounter and here she was disarming him of his weapons with a display of badinage and a laugh at the corner of her mouth.

It would have been churlish not to give her the mood she asked for. He laughed out loud at that inquiry and said that, seeing it was she who had sought out the interview, she had better regard him as the victim and place him where she could best observe.

"But perhaps I trust you, monsieur, perhaps more than you do me."

This was her mood, was it? It was impossible for him to be official with that. And that was her intention. Not a doubt of it. The attraction about her was that she made no show to hide it. Without an effort he submitted, but was quite aware of her guile. It was her honesty that was dangerous. At Scotland Yard he had admired her courage. She had had to fight against the odds. Now she had regained her self-composure and was meeting him on even ground. It was the woman herself she was showing him. He found himself wishing he had her in his service. There were one or two little delicate matters which no one better than herself could have performed. The wish became an idea. She saw his eyes glitter with it. Whatever that sudden gleam may have meant, she was on her guard.

"Let's both trust each other," he said genially, and gave her a cigarette. "Now—what's the object of this visit?"

She told him about the boarding-house in Torrington Square. With flashes of native wit she painted an interior like a Sickert drawing that sent him into shouts of laughter.

"It is purgatory, monsieur," she concluded. "I am *femme du monde*. You have my dossier. You know all about me. Should I conceal it from you what you know? Your English soldier. Of course you know I am married. I can hide nothing from you. I marry in India and I leave him. My God! I think it was in a boarding-house in Torrington Square he was born as well. He smoke the pipe like those old gentlemen in the lounge. *C'est incroyable!* They talk to me of what they have in their stomachs! Am I a woman who can talk to a man of what he have in his stomach?"

"You mean the heart is more your province?"

"But of course. Your Sir Charles Ringland, he spoke to me rudely the other day. But do I deny it? Is it any shame? Love is only the improper thing to those ladies in Torrington Square. They are quite right. It would be offence to make love to them."

"You believe in love, madame?"

"Why not? I see so much of it. Is it my fault if men love me? That is their nature, monsieur."

"You think no man can resist it?"

"Not if the desire takes hold of him."

"He has no power to control it?"

"None."

"Honour?"

"There is no honour, monsieur, in men if they love."

"You've a poor opinion of us?"

She shrugged her shoulders. She smiled at him as though she were smiling at the irresistible wilfulness of a child.

"Oh, no, monsieur. I like men. They have been good to me. Some. Some have been bad. All of them

they have been the same in this. They have loved me. Why not? Do I look as if I were made to live in Torrington Square?"

The Admiral was too wise to take that seriously. Her presence in that room, to say the least of it, was incompatible with routine. It was difficult to believe with her there that a war was going on, that the aerals on the top of the Admiralty were receiving wireless messages at that moment from all parts of the world where men were leading men to death for an exalted idea of freedom which, with all the sacrifice of life, they were becoming almost too fatigued to grasp. He leant forward in his chair and made his eyes laugh at her. With an instinct of tenacity he clung fiercely to his purpose. He liked women. But he liked his purpose so much better. A little more of this intimacy of conversation and with what he recognised to be her endeavour to intrigue him, he might catch her off her guard.

"But why be so upset?" he said. "You're not going to live in Torrington Square."

"But this fortnight, monsieur. How can I bear it!"

"What do you suggest?"

"If I might have a small suite—in your Savoy Hotel—or——"

"Savoy's expensive. They can't compete with the prices in Torrington Square. I don't think the British Government could afford it." Did he expect her to believe that? His eyes were merry. She was wondering how to take him.

"But I have money, monsieur. I have plenty with me. I do not reckon on this hospitality of the British Government. I do not want it. All I ask is a little comfort—a clean plate for to eat my food—a bed to sleep in that

does not squeak and squeak and squeak, till I think I will go mad if it squeak again. And no more to see those gentlemen with their stomachs."

"A private suite in a comfortable hotel?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"So that you can"—he made a casual gesture with his hands—"entertain your friends."

"I have no friends here, monsieur. I do not know London. Always I have live in France—in Spain. If it is friendship to be polite, then monsieur is the only friend I have. I would be charmed to entertain monsieur in my little suite. Oh, yes."

Her eyes were as innocent as a young girl's. The only indication of what she meant was in her voice. With the slightest decline, it dropped to a faintly intimate note. It was as though she feared others might hear the delicacy of her meaning, as though in the centre of that building, humming with life, she were isolating them, locking the door of the room. He was to know he was alone with her. And he knew it quite well.

In the distance of the Horse Guards' Parade a band was playing a contingent of men off to the front. A fly was buzzing in the room. He was still leaning forward looking at her and she was looking at him. Behind the rising spirals of smoke from her cigarette there was the innocent invitation of her eyes and that faintly intimate note of her voice that lingered in delicate vibrations like the sustained note of a stringed instrument.

It would have helped if he could have laughed. But looking at her leaning there against the cushions of that chair, laughter was not possible. He kept his voice in tone with hers when he said:

"That all sounds very charming. But I fancy you

overrate my politeness. What else could one be to a lady whom one has inconvenienced as much as I have you?"

She did not move. Behind the smoke of her cigarette she said:

"Monsieur has no objection then to my moving to the Savoy Hotel?"

"I think it could be arranged, madame."

Could be arranged. Now she leant forward. He might have imagined her eagerness when she smiled.

"Monsieur is more than polite," she murmured.

He reminded her he had said "arranged."

She lifted her eyebrows to a question. He proceeded:

"There is an American gentleman staying at the Savoy Hotel just now. I have reason to think he is of German extraction. There are one or two things I should like to know about him. You say you have no friends in London. If you would like to stay at the Savoy, I've no doubt I can arrange an introduction. They tell me he is a charming companion."

"What is his name, monsieur?"

It was not that he fumbled. But her question was unexpected. He had paused before he told her that under the circumstances it was impossible to give the name until he knew whether she were willing to undertake his commission.

"I am to be a spy?" she said quietly.

He made a deprecatory gesture with his hands.

"But that is what I should be."

"To catch a spy, madame."

It was as though she had allowed that smile from the corner of her mouth to spread slowly about her face.

"Does monsieur think I am used to that kind of work?"

And there was no doubt about the finality of this so far as she was concerned. It was not with that kind of trap that he would catch her. There was nothing left for him to do but to rise from his chair and bow.

"I'm afraid then," he said, "it must be Torrington Square. I realise the irksomeness of it to a lady of your temperament, but it can't be helped. There are only eight more days. Can't you bear that?"

"But surely, monsieur, you have the authority. I am in your hands. You can do what you like with me."

"Can I?"

"Oh—but why not! You are the head of this *département*. Is it not so?"

"Oh, yes."

"And if you say I am to go to the Savoy Hotel, should I not be sent there with the policemen and the soldiers and——"

"If I said so. Undoubtedly."

"And if you wished to come to my suite and we would have dinner and you would talk to me politely as you always do talk, would you not just say: 'I am Admiral Gawthorne—let me pass,' and they let you pass?"

"Is that how they do things over there?"

"But everywhere, monsieur."

"That is your experience?"

"Oh, yes."

He bowed again.

"Madame—I would not deny your experience for the world. I am sure you are quite right. We men are like that. Leave us alone with an attractive woman and, as

you say, there is no power of resistance in us. We exonerate ourselves with the thought that we are human. But have you had no experience of the fact in these last three years that men are not alone in this business of war?"

She shook her head. She could not or she would not understand what he meant.

"Let me warn you then. I warned you the other day. I'm going to warn you again. Don't go back to France."

She was frowning.

"Why not?"

It was another woman. She might have entered the room at that moment. The diffident, the amenable, the seductive creature he had been talking with had gone. He met her imperturbably with the same politeness.

"Because, madame, the world is upside down. You must not count upon men being just men. It would be dangerous. I don't want to suggest that they're heroes, but they have got an idea in their heads. It is not safe. Believe me, in great respect for your courage, I say to you, do not go back to France. Spain is not at war. Stay there. I feel sure men are more reliable in Madrid."

"Is that all you have to say?"

"I regret it is. I'm one of those millions of men who has the idea in his head."

"I am to return to that awful house?"

"I'm afraid so."

She was trying to believe it. Her power had failed her. All the assurance those young men had given her as they passed her in the hall had disappeared. She felt

herself opposed to some force that was unyielding. It bewildered her. She went to the window and looked out. A company of soldiers were making formations on the Horse Guards' Parade. He observed her while she watched them. At the sharp word of command their bodies were arrested like cogs in a machine. As sharply she turned away. Her eyes were on the door. He crossed the room and opened it for her.

§ 5

It was a night in the month of August, a little more than three months later, that Admiral Gawthorne was dining at a house in Lowndes Square. One of those dinners towards the end of the war. An ingenious number of courses and little to eat.

Everyone was contemplating the approach of another winter. The one idea was imperceptibly wearing thin. There were some that openly shivered in it. The Admiral was one of those who still wore it with a gait and a gesture. His faith and his optimism were unassailable.

They were talking of young Le Mesurier's pictures of the war.

Someone said:

"There's a young man who knows what he's seen."

But who was the young man? A lady who was acquainted with Mrs. Le Mesurier in Edwardes Square found herself qualified to monopolise the conversation. Some had noticed his portrait of his mother in the Academy of 1913. It was news to all of them that he had served as a Tommy till 1915, had then received a

commission, and was wounded so seriously in 1916 as to be unfit for further service.

"So now they've sent him out to paint these pictures."

It became a discussion whether pictures of that kind were the sort of propaganda the Government wanted.

"You must believe in some sort of glory in war," said the hostess, "otherwise I don't see how you can go on with it. But this young man hates it. You can see that. Some of these pictures are terrible. I wonder the Government doesn't bring him home again."

"I don't think men pretend there's any glory in war," said the Admiral. "Certainly not when they're engaged in it. It only assumes a kind of glory to them when it's seen in the deceitful perspective of history."

"Then why go to war at all?"

The Admiral smiled at his hostess, who at least had racked her brains to give them an attractive dinner.

"Is it one of those things one chooses to do?" he asked. "Do you imagine that any one man left to himself would declare war?"

She had not considered that.

"Have you ever seen an emotional idea communicate itself to a crowd of people? Fear, for example. A fire in a theatre. There's scarcely a man or woman who, left to themselves, would not stand their ground with the knowledge that it was fatal to stampede. But communicate that idea to the crowd and it becomes irresistible. I've no doubt this young man took part in all the ghastly things he's now putting into his pictures. That one of the Tommy caught on the wire

entanglements, like a fly in a spider's web, you may be sure he saw little of the horror of that when he experienced it. But he's outside the crowd now. He's looking on. So far as it's possible to be outside the crowd. So far as it's possible to look on. We can none of us wholly achieve that. You're fighting and I'm fighting and so are all the men in the trenches. We've got the idea. Those pictures aren't bad propaganda. They keep the idea alive. And the people who can keep it alive longest 'll win the war."

The lady who had led the conversation was feeling the loss of the monopoly until someone supposed that Le Mesurier was a Frenchman. She was able to tell them that the Les Mesuriers were a Jersey family, and that George Le Mesurier's mother was as Irish as a Kerry cow.

"He studied in Paris," she informed them. "The picture he began to be known by was a portrait of Mada Garass—the nautch dancer. He painted her before she became famous in Paris. It was exhibited in the Salon in 1911."

The Admiral leant a little forward in his chair.

"Has he ever told you anything about her?"

"Not much. George is a reserved young man where his heart is concerned."

"You think his heart was concerned?"

"If she was anything like his portrait, I should think it most probable."

A man's voice from the other end of the table declared her to be a "strikin'-lookin' woman."

"When did you see her?" asked the Admiral.

"Last week."

"In Madrid?"

"No—Paris."

Probably the Admiral was the only man in the room who felt the pause. It was peculiar to himself.

"Did you meet her?" he inquired.

"No. Passed her in the street."

"What's she doing in Paris? Dancing?"

"She's not on at any of the theatres that I know of. At present she seems to be occupying her time with Laperque. They say he used to be a priest. Came from Batavia. Unfrocked. Now, of course, he's in the *Troisième Section*."

It became necessary to explain to his hostess that the *Troisième Section* corresponded to the Secret Intelligence Service.

"Laperque," he said, "is one of their dark horses. No one knows anything about him. I must admit he looks like a priest. Looks as if he could extract a confession out of anyone by the fear o' God."

"And what exactly do you mean," asked the Admiral quietly, "when you say this lady is occupying her time with him?"

"Well—how does a *première danseuse* occupy her time when she isn't dancing? I don't know. It's only what I was told."

The Admiral was too preoccupied during the rest of dinner to notice that he had had nothing to eat. As soon as they were finished, he excused himself. It was merely necessary to murmur—the Admiralty. He looked faintly mysterious and his hostess let him go.

"It wasn't that woman, was it?" she asked.

"What woman?"

"That dancer."

"Good heavens, no!"

What made her think that? How suspicious women were whenever another woman's name was mentioned. He laughed at her, patted her shoulder and went away.

Within half an hour he was talking by phone to one of his agents in Paris.

"That woman Mada Garass is in Paris."

"Yes."

"Is she dancing anywhere?"

"She's announced to appear next week."

"Have you heard anything about her?"

"Do you mean someone whose name begins with L?"

"Yes."

"Most of us have heard that."

"Is it true?"

"So far as I know. They're not actually living together. She's stopping at the Meurice."

"Book a room for me at the Chatham."

"When?"

"I shall be flying over to-morrow morning."

"Anything I can do?"

"Nothing."

He hung up the receiver. In Paris! The woman must be mad. And yet she had got away with it. An intimate friend of Laperque's! All the secrets of the *Troisième Section* at the tips of her fingers. Was there anything these Frenchmen wouldn't give a woman if she asked? But what a nerve! Did she think she was immune? What did she think? Still, he had warned her. He had let her fly. There was no alternative now.

He sat at his desk contemplating that chair she had occupied only three months before. A "strikin'-lookin'

woman." That was it. And it was no easy matter to think of that body of hers riddled with bullet wounds. He stared at the chair. He could see her sitting there, smiling behind the rising spirals from her cigarette.

The idea. She hadn't understood what he meant. Would she ever understand it? The massed mind of men. Would she realise it when she was faced at last by those twelve and knew that the appeal of her sex was of no account?

woman. That was it. And it was no easy matter to
 think of that body of hers riddled with bullet wounds.
 He stared at the scene. He could see her lying there
 motionless behind the glass walls of her apartment.
 The door. She hadn't understood what he meant.
 Would she understand it. The nearest friend of mine.
 Would she realize a word she was faced at last by those
 twelve and knew that the appeal of her sex was of no
 account?

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PARIS

1917

PARIS

1917

PARIS, 1917

§ I

THE trial of Mada Garass by court-martial in Paris in 1917 does no more than give the high light to this portrait of the woman Liane Sonrel. It provides that sharp fleck in the pupil of the eye by which the face looks out from the canvas and meets the world with such reality as the painter has given it.

The President of the War Council before whom she appeared could extract little evidence from her but that of the various sums of money she had received from time to time through enemy sources. In the investigations that had been made prior to her arrest, it had been found that at the opening of the war she had received thirty thousand marks from the prefect of police in Berlin. She admitted the fact with disarming candour.

"And why was that sum paid you?" said the President, "unless for your services as a spy which you were to perform directly you came to Paris in 1914?"

She shook her head. It almost appeared as though she were tired of these questions.

"In Germany," she said, "the police have the power to censor the costumes that are worn in the streets. The prefect of police had come to the conclusion that the costume in which I appeared was insufficient for the public." It seemed as though she smiled when she added: "That was the commencement of our friendship."

"And for the sum of thirty thousand marks you accepted a commission to go to Paris, and were in fact given a number by which you were known to the German Secret Service agents."

"Your facts are quite correct," she said pleasantly. "I was known by a number, but that was to enable me to correspond without difficulty with my friend in Berlin. The sum of money was paid to me for my favours. At that time I was the mistress of the prefect of police."

"Thirty thousand marks," repeated the President. "A little generous, wasn't it?"

With a gesture as she stood before the Council, she invited their full appreciation of her.

"If monsieur considers it generous," she said calmly, "I have nothing to say. But I have never received a lesser sum than this from any of my lovers."

"Not from von Tröhm?"

"Certainly not."

"You admit he was your lover?"

She nodded her head. To the names of all those they brought forward, de Laurent, Laperque and others, she admitted without concern the intimacy of her friendship. It was as though she believed this was her impregnable defence. Could they deny that men should love her? She was standing there before them. There was a conviction of power about her in this candid admission of her love-affairs. Phryne had appeared in such a manner before her judges. Baring her breast she had given them the sight of her beauty and been acquitted. And there is little doubt in her trial that took place in Paris in 1917.

that Liane Sonrel believed in the certainty of her own acquittal. They were men. She knew their kind. Once only in all her experience had they disappointed her. In London the Admiral had shaken her faith. But evidently she had soon recovered it when she returned to Madrid. Laperque, a vital pivot in the Secret Service of France from which she could learn so much, had surrendered to her. With the infatuated devotion of his protection she had defied the Admiral's warning and returned to Paris. She believed herself immune. And now she was facing her accusers with a calm assurance. Men had loved her. They could see, they knew in themselves, that she told the truth.

To all their questions as to her arrested visit to Holland in the earlier part of the year she answered as she had done at Scotland Yard in London. She had a daughter. They must understand. It was not because she had lovers that the affection of a mother was dead in her breast. She gave them the passionate note of that affection in her voice.

"And from all these lovers," asked the President imperturbably, "no doubt you have received the confidence of their affection?"

"No doubt."

"They have spoken to you of their services in the war?"

"Men are always ready to talk of their achievements to the women that they love."

"Perhaps you have extracted these confidences from them at times."

"Never. A man will boast. Often when he has nothing to boast about."

No doubt she was thinking of George Le Mesurier when she added:

"Sometimes, when it seemed to me they were talking of things I had no right to hear, I have refused to listen. What was it to me what was happening at the front? I am not a soldier. I do not love this war."

"Did de Laurent tell you of the air attacks that were to be made on Germany?"

"He may have done."

"Before they took place?"

"It is possible. A man will tell you many things when he is in your arms. He does not always think what he says. You do not always hear. You understand."

She knew quite well that they understood and must have believed through all that opening of her examination they had no proof with which to convict her. Even when they confronted her with the fact that de Laurent had been shot by court-martial for information that had leaked out to the German air defences, she betrayed no flaw in her composure.

"How did the Captain convey that information to the enemy?"

"I do not know."

"He was your lover."

"Oh, yes."

"He visited you when you lived at Neuilly."

"You know everything, messieurs."

"But he did not tell you of this when he was in your arms."

"A man does not tell his mistress everything, *Monsieur le Président*. If you have ever been in love, you will remember, he only tells those things of which he is proud."

"Would it not affect you at all if you were told that one of your lovers met his death with shame because of your betrayal of his confidence?"

"I am not responsible, messieurs, for the words a man says to me when he is in love. When you say I betray his confidence, that is what you are trying to prove and you cannot prove it."

She was calm, assured, triumphant even up to that point, and it was not until then, when the President had induced her to admit the confidences of her lovers, that he laid before her the proof she could not confute. Adjusting his pince-nez on his nose, he took up a piece of paper and read out a message from von Tröhm, the Naval *Attaché* at Madrid, to the German Government in Berlin. It asked for a sum of money to pay to Mada Garass for her return to Paris as the mistress of La-perque.

There was a deep silence in the room as the sound of his voice died away. He was looking over the top of his glasses at her. She did not speak. She did not move. Her eyes were set upon his.

Was she remembering, then, what the Admiral had said in London? "You must not count upon men being just men. It would be dangerous. I don't want to suggest that they're heroes, but they've got an idea in their heads." Was she beginning to realise at last the truth of that cryptic warning? Were these not merely men, but the voice of an idea more insistent, more importunate, than themselves? The President had waited. He was continuing after the pause of her silence and his voice was cold, remote. There was no trace of emotion in it. Not even of triumph.

"The sum, you will notice," he said, "is considerably less than the price your lovers were wont to give. The war had been in progress for more than three years, and doubtless the German Naval *Attaché* knew his Government was not feeling so generous as in 1914."

"It is a fabrication, that message!" she cried out. "You have invented it to try and make me afraid. I am not afraid, messieurs! It is a lie!"

"Messages that are intercepted in the air, madame, messages that are in code and have to be deciphered, are not usually lies. If this is false, you must blame your lover, von Tröhm. We cannot call his evidence to deny it."

It was difficult for her to believe. In a low voice she asked the President what he meant.

"I mean that we must act upon it."

"You believe I am a spy?"

"Unfortunately there is nothing else left for us to believe. Have you anything to say in your defence?"

Even then, though it must have been obvious to her that their minds were determined upon her destruction, she lost none of that confidence she had assumed throughout the two long hours of her examination. Claspng her hands firmly on the rail of the dock where she stood, she replied:

"Messieurs, I have nothing to say. If your minds are made up, I have no defence. My words are nothing. You do not believe them. It is waste of my time and yours if I speak. But whatever you have made up your minds to do you cannot deny my nationality."

The President frowned behind his glasses. His fingers

were playing with an ivory paper-cutter. He tapped it on the desk in front of him.

"What do you mean by that?"

"I am not French," she declared. "I am Dutch. I was born in Batavia. I have never been naturalised in France. My mother was Dutch. My father lived all his life in Java. I have every right to have friends in other countries, even those that are at war with France. If Herr von Tröhm sends to his Government for money, it is to pay me for my favours while I was his mistress. You cannot prove it was for any other purpose. We have parted. He knows I go to Paris with M. Laperque. It is the last settlement of our affair. You say it is a smaller sum of money than he has paid before. How do you know what he has paid me while I have been in Madrid? I am not French, messieurs. You cannot condemn me because I have loved and been loved. If that were a crime, then you must also condemn those who have loved me. But you do not. You are officers in the army of France, and I rely on your generosity."

Throughout the whole of her trial she had conducted her defence herself. Her advocate had said nothing. But it was undoubtedly he who had advised her in this last attempt to evade the prosecution. And in putting it forward herself, he must have reckoned upon the power and attraction of her personality.

Without the damning evidence of guilt, how could they destroy the beauty of that body which none of them, as she stood there, could deny?

To the last she spoke with courage, with conviction, and with all the assurance of her charm, and when they retired for their deliberation she sat down with a smile

on her face. Taking a little pencil from her bag, she rouged her lips.

In less than ten minutes the President returned. Liane stood up to hear his decision. There was still a smile on her reddened lips. Her eyes were set upon him, and in those few moments while he was speaking his own were coldly fixed on her.

"It is a terrible thing," he said, "to condemn so seductive and so intelligent a creature as yourself to death. But you have been the cause of the destruction of so many lives in the war that I would condemn you a dozen times if I could. At an hour to be appointed later, you will be shot."

"Judgment," said the Clerk of the Court, "in the name of the people of France."

"Present arms!" cried the Adjutant.

There was a rattle of rifles.

With a shrug of her shoulders, Liane looked at the President and smiled.

§ 2

It is difficult to convince oneself as to the explanation of those motives which led George Le Mesurier to visit Liane Sonrel while she was in the prison of Saint-Lazare. Could there have been anything more painful than such a meeting? How easy to have stopped away, not to have let her know that he was in Paris. Are there some situations in life which, because they are so poignant, compel us to experience them? Is it the horror to which we cannot close our eyes, the iron we must drive into our soul rather than lose the consciousness of sensation? Or

was there something in the natures of these two which brought them together and would allow of no voluntary parting till the end?

In order to pursue the work he had been commissioned to do by the War Office, George had taken a temporary studio in Paris, in *Montmartre*, in the midst of those memories of life before the war when he and she had lived together in the *Rue Lepic*.

The sudden announcement of her appearance at one of the theatres had quickened these memories to urgent anticipation. He forgot all time but the moment. The nightmare of that visit to her house in Neuilly had taken the place of a bad dream in his mind. Together with his experiences of the war in the trenches, it had relegated itself to those dim chambers of recollection where, with an everlasting mercy, the human brain contrives to hide what it can never forget.

The notice had been up on the hoardings some little time before he had seen it. It struck across his eyes one day on his way to the *Ministère de la Guerre*, where he was painting a portrait of one of the French generals. The name—Mada Garass—stood out alone as it might have been a voice shouting to him across the pandemonium of the street. He stopped, with the traffic and the pedestrians flowing by him. In the moment of being swept by, he was caught and held in the passage of the stream. The flow of people washed against him, but her name held him there. As suddenly it released him. He went hurriedly to his appointment and worked that morning much as a man walks in his sleep. Directly he had finished he had gone to the theatre and obtained the address of the hotel where she was staying. She was

due to appear the following week. She had been rehearsing that morning. She had passed through that door at the stage entrance only an hour ago. He was as conscious of her presence near about him as that. And yet he did not go at once to the Hôtel Meurice to see her.

The memory of that night at Neuilly two years before had returned ironically to mock him. He felt hot repressions of timidity. This was a legacy of the trenches—a wound of the mind, like a scar that might have been left on his body. He knew, now, he would not find her alone. There were no illusions left with him about her. She would never have been his, even if he had married her. He knew that quite well. She did not belong to any man in the sense that she belonged to all. Her body was, as it were, a symbol. The beauty of it was a symbolic beauty. Any man could win it who served it with complete homage. And there would always be those to serve. He did not even flatter himself now, as he had done that night at Neuilly, that he was favoured among the many. She favoured none, because she would have favoured all.

All the same, the very sight of her name on those hoardings had vibrated in his blood like a trumpet blowing. He had thought of her again with the same delirium of emotion as when he had carried her up the stairs in his arms at the *Rue Lepic*, as when he had driven back with her from the *Tour d'Argent* to her house at Neuilly. She had that quality, that power. Once he had known her caresses, a man could not put them out of his mind. They became vivid, insistent, stirring the blood. In an instant, the sight of her face,

the sound of her voice, even those letters of her name on a hoarding, could rouse that fever.

And yet for three days he did not go to the Hôtel Meurice. He was conscious of his reason for that delay. He was afraid. There would be some lover about her. He did not trust himself to another meeting such as he had had that night at Neuilly with de Laurent. And then the fourth morning, as he went to complete his portrait at the *Ministère de la Guerre*, the poster blazoning her appearance had gone. Another announcement was pasted over it. The engagement had been cancelled. He had no time to inquire at the theatre about it then. These generals had ideas about the value of their time. They were still imbued with the idea of the war. It was life to them. He was painting this portrait while the General was working at his desk. There were constant interruptions. As an artist he might consider himself lucky to be favoured so much as this.

And yet the General was very pleased to be having his portrait painted for propaganda. Frequently in the midst of his absorbing work he would cross the room to have a look at it, suggest a little more detail in the treatment of his medal ribbons, question the lighting on his face. Of course there was not the light of a studio in that room, but must an artist always paint things as he saw them?

"I don't know," said George, "of any other things an artist can paint."

The remark was lost upon the man of war. He went back to his desk and became once more immersed in his work.

That last morning there were more interruptions

than usual. Five times the General was called out of the room.

"I'm sorry for all this," he said. "I suppose it's annoying. What you want is a model who's got nothing to do but sit." A sardonic smile came over his face. "I can give you a model," he added—"fine model. She's got nothing to do but sit—sit and wait till the day after to-morrow. Great subject. Good propaganda. Teach 'em the meaning of war. Are you finishing this to-day?"

"Yes, sir."

"Like to paint a real beauty?"

"Who do you mean?"

"We've got a spy—a woman spy—in Saint-Lazare. Mind you, this is for yourself. You can't talk about it."

"You mean I can paint her?"

"If she doesn't mind. Judging by what I know of the lady she wouldn't. We shall have to get her permission, of course."

"Who is she? German?"

"Don't know that I'm entitled to say who she is. In the prison, of course, she's just known by a number."

"Do you mean she's being shot the day after to-morrow?"

"Vincennes. At dawn. Can't give you permission to make a sketch of that. But you can do a drawing of her in her cell if you like—supposing she doesn't object."

He had an air, a casual air, of patronage. He was pleased with his portrait and inclined to be generous. He spoke somewhat as though the body of this woman spy belonged to them—a perquisite of war. It was at his

disposal. This young artist could take it or leave it. It was just the amiable disposition of the General. That, at the moment, was his mood.

"I'll give you a letter, if you like, to the Governor and you can go there this afternoon. He'll send one of the Sisters down to her cell and find out whether she minds."

He took out a slip of official paper and began to write.

"I'd better tell him to mention your name. She's a lady of some discrimination. She might think it was merely a newspaper artist wanting a stunt."

George sat listening to the scratching of the General's pen on the paper. He had not said that he accepted this offer. He was not sure that he wanted to accept it. The General was taking the receipt of his generosity for granted. He would not have offered it to anyone. This young artist was painting his portrait for propaganda. He was disposed to be generous. But did George want to go and see a woman who was sitting and waiting for death? He had seen so much of death itself in the trenches. It was not any longer that death had terrors for him, but rather that it had an aspect of indecency, the same as birth might have to an outsider looking on at it. It was taking human beings at a disadvantage to see them dead. He had always covered the faces of dead men, friends or enemies, when he had found them lying out in the open. It was an instinct not to stare. Everyone had it more or less. There was something in the nature of peeping to look at a dead body, and this seeing of a fallen creature about to die, and die suddenly, in the midst of life, would be distressing, not so much

because you were sorry for her, as because there was a certain privacy about death which no outsider had the right to disturb.

"Do you mean to say she's taking this business quite calmly?" he asked, as the General folded up the paper. "Because I have no fancy for painting the portrait of an hysterical woman."

"Oh, she's calm enough. I tried the case the day before yesterday."

He spoke with the accustomed assurance of one in whose hands has grown light the power of life and death.

"Mind you, I don't think she believes she's going to be shot. She's confident that friends will intervene. She's a fine-looking woman and she doesn't believe that anybody would dream of riddling her body with rifle-bullets. Women don't understand war. They never will."

"And is there any possibility that friends will intervene?"

"My dear young man"—the General was smiling; "you've had two years at the front, haven't you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Have you ever known friendship, or any of those softer qualities, have any effect upon an issue when it has to be made up?"

"No."

"No. Of course she'll be shot. I'd shoot her myself ten times over, with the greatest of pleasure. She's done more harm than any spy we've had through our hands since the beginning of the war. You needn't make any mistake about that. If you do a sketch of her, it'll be the last picture she'll ever have painted this side of the grave,

I can promise you. Whether you artists go to heaven or not is a matter on which I'm not qualified to give an opinion."

He was quite light, humorous about it. In a generous mood it was his ambition to approach the qualities of wit. He had written too many orders for troops to be sent out upon forlorn encounters to be serious over this business of shooting a spy. He was a little surprised that this young man did not leap at the proposal.

"Feel a bit squeamish about it? You needn't accept the offer if you don't want to. Occurred to me it might be an interesting subject and a good bit of propaganda at the same time."

The letter was still in his hands. He took it in the tips of his fingers. It was obvious he was going to tear it up when George extended his hand. It passed from one to the other. It became his. He did not exactly know why. It was as though his courage had been tested and, just as it had been in the trenches, he was too afraid to show his fear. He was part of the herd and that word—squeamish—had roused the herd courage in him. In front of this man of medals and authority, he had not dared to display the revulsion of his feelings.

Taking the letter, he went out of the Ministry building.

It was like painting a starving woman, because she was starving—and giving her no food. It was like painting a woman in the agony of child-labour, just to reproduce the suffering in her face. It was a kind of sacrilege, and gradually as that word "squeamish" repeated itself in his mind, the mood of a profane curiosity took possession of him. He did not care. He

wanted to see her. This shooting of a woman spy in the cold blood of dawn was war. He was painting war. The beastliness, the squandering extravagance, the futile inconsequence of it had an ironical significance about it. By the time he reached the prison gates he was called back into the clamour of the herd. He was curious to see her, this woman who had violated the honour of war and was about to pay the penalty with bullet-wounds that would tear her body in pieces as he had seen hundreds of bodies torn and thrown away in the mud of the trenches.

Squeamish! It had stung him.

§ 3

THE forbidding walls of Saint-Lazare surrounded a building like a vast convent, abstracted, secretive, wrapped in silence.

The porter at the heavy gates told George to wait.

"I take your letter to *M. le Directeur*," he said when he had looked at it. He was offered a seat in the porter's lodge and the man went away. His footsteps echoed with a hollow beat across the courtyard against the high walls. In a few minutes he was back again. His voice was muffled like one telling a secret. It was as if those echoes in the place had accustomed him to speak upon his breath lest he should disturb the pervading silence. His mouth was similar to the jaws of a steel trap. It emitted the words, rather than spoke them, and sharply closed again.

"*M. le Directeur* will see you in his room," he said. George was taken across the courtyard to the main

building and given into the charge of a warder. As he passed through a doorway into the darkness, he felt himself to be disappearing. The warder closed the door. It seemed as if he had left the whole of the world behind him. The sounds of the street traffic were silent. It was dark. His feet on the stone passages made a reverberating noise. The door of the Director's room was opened by the warder. He entered a room that presented an air of unexpected comfort. There was colour in it. The furniture was a tone of green. It looked warm, habitable, even inviting after the stone walls in those passages outside. The Director was seated at a desk. He bowed and waited for the warder to close the door.

"This is a peculiar business," he began, "painting the portrait of a woman who is going to be shot in a couple of days. The General says you are doing propaganda work. What's the propaganda in the portrait of a woman spy? She's going to be shot the day after to-morrow. Isn't that enough?"

"It was the General's idea. He suggested it."

"Pride of the military, eh? Time of war. Power of courts-martial. Well, do you want to paint her portrait? Suppose you do, or you wouldn't have come here."

It was impossible for George to describe his state of mind. Whatever it had been, it had entirely altered since he had entered the walls of that building. He felt himself to be trapped. There was no communication between himself and the person he had been outside in the street a few moments ago. He had very little desire now to go any farther in the matter and yet he said nothing. The Director continued:

"Anyhow," he said, "I'll send your name in and tell her what you want to do. Do you know who she is?"

"Why should I?"

"You don't?"

"No."

The Director rose and rang a bell. The same warder came to the door. He might have been outside, listening.

"Who is in charge of sixty-one?"

"Sister Veronica."

"Send her here."

In charge of sixty-one. Were they animals in cages? This business of sketching her as she sat there waiting for the end was like vivisection. Once he had thought of it like that, he jumped to his feet.

"I don't particularly want to make this sketch," he said. "If you think she'd have any feelings about it, I'd much rather not. I haven't got any morbid curiosity to see a woman who's going to be shot."

The Director smiled at him.

"That's the effect of our stone passages," he said. "They chill the feet. However, I'd better send the General's letter in and see what she says. She may be glad of the diversion. She's a fine-looking woman. It may flatter her. I understand she's keeping her head up."

The door opened and a Sister of Mercy in her black voluminous gown with the white *cornette* crowning her face appeared at the door. The Director gave her the General's letter.

"Show this to sixty-one," he said. "And tell her that

this gentleman, whose name is mentioned in the letter, is waiting in my room to know whether she has any objections."

With a silence that seemed a part of the silence of the whole place, a silence that communicated itself even to the porter at the gate, the Sister went away again. The Director returned to the papers on his desk. He talked desultorily as he read them through and signed them, remarks that conveyed an indifference to his surroundings that was as cold as those stone walls and pavings in the passages outside. George sat listening, as he might have listened to the clanking wheels of a machine. It was metallic, repetitionary. The same sounds of passionless indifference appeared to reiterate themselves with automatic precision in every remark he made. Instinctively George felt himself looking for something more human when the Sister returned. At least there was a look of pity alive in her face. Her eyes were dumb eyes. They said nothing. They looked as though they were capable of suffering, as though she had a perpetual headache but had learnt not to complain.

"She will see the gentleman," she said.

The Director stood up, smiling sardonically.

"She didn't think she was compelled in any way?"

"No, *Monsieur le Directeur*."

It was as if he resented this interference of the military with his department; as though he would have been better pleased if she had refused and preferred the solitariness of her confinement in cell sixty-one.

"Women have no self-respect," he said. "You'd think if a woman was going to be shot in a couple of

days she'd resent anyone coming to have a look at her. Go on then. Make your sketch. How long do you want to be with her?"

"Two hours if I'm going to do anything."

"As long as you like. You understand you'll be under supervision. Sister Veronica will take you there."

The comfort of that room was an ironic contrast to the passages with their damp, sweating walls outside. Yet George was glad to be out of it and alone with the little Sister whose rosary beads and bunch of keys jangled beside him. Her footsteps were noiseless. She might have been wearing no shoes on her feet at all. The rustle of her voluminous serge skirt was only a faint whisper of sound. Sometimes she held the bunch of keys in her hand as she walked, and then her movements were almost silent. A faint ticking—the rattle of her beads—like a clock swinging its pendulum.

For the first few moments George followed her down the damp and darkened passages in silence. Sometimes as they passed a door the Sister stopped, lifted a hinged grating and peered through into the dark hollow space of the cell beyond. In his imagination he saw what she saw. There was no sound, no voice. They were animals in their cages. Hope had gone from them. They were no longer human. It was all strangely like what he had felt himself in the trenches. Their freedom had been wrested from them. They were mere living bodies at the mercy of the herd. Even this little Sister, with all the tenderness of her heart and the mercy of God in her soul, had no power to succour them. The pity in her eyes was a dumb pity. They looked through the iron gratings at

those huddled figures in the darkness, but they could say nothing. The milk of human kindness had been stolen from her breast. Even the mercy of God was dead. The only life there was was the life of the herd, and it knew no pity. It allowed of none in its members. Did she understand that? He said to her:

"Does it ever suggest itself to you to throw all these doors open and let them all out?"

She did not look at him when she answered. He could see nothing but the black veil covering her head as she walked a pace or two in front of him, and it was not until they had turned into another passage that she said:

"I am not anyone, monsieur. I do not think of such things."

She did not even think of it. So much a part of the machine had she become as that. It was not only her eyes that had been silenced. They had silenced her mind. She was a slave, a mute. They were all mutes.

"Does this woman in sixty-one know she is going to be shot the day after to-morrow?"

She stopped in the passage and looked round at him. It was as though she herself were hearing her own sentence. She was not afraid, but as though for the moment even the automatic will to move, to exercise the mere functions of her body, had been forcibly taken from her.

In the darkness of the passage she whispered back to him:

"It is to be the day after to-morrow?"

"Didn't you know?"

"We have not been told, monsieur. Naturally they

don't want her to know, and with a military case like this, possibly they don't trust us."

"But she knows she is sentenced to be shot?"

"Oh, yes, monsieur. But she does not believe it will be carried out."

"Why not? She's a spy."

"That is what they determined at the court-martial. It is not for me to say. But even if she has been a spy, she seems to think they will not shoot her. Certainly her confidence in that is not as strong as it was the first day she came into Saint-Lazare. Hope has not much to live on in this place, monsieur. But when I gave her the letter just now, her face was all lit up with hope. She cried out. She was full of joy."

"And do you think they won't shoot her?"

"I don't know, monsieur. I suppose—I don't know. It seems very terrible."

"Why? If she has been a spy she may have sacrificed the lives of hundreds of men."

"She may have."

"In any case, it's the penalty for being a spy, for getting information for the enemy in time of war. Why should she be an exception?"

He felt he was saying the things the General and the Director might have said. There was something this little Sister was thinking which, in some mechanical state of his mind, he was unable to think. He asked her again as they stood there in the passage what it was that made her say it was terrible for this woman to be shot.

"I don't know, monsieur. I cannot say it. You are

artist. Perhaps you will know what I mean when you see her."

She turned away. She did not want to talk about it any more. Down one more passage she led him till they came to a door on which the number sixty-one was painted in broad white letters. She did not open the grating. She found the key from amongst those in her bunch and she turned it in the lock. With the weight of her slight body, she leant against the heavy door. It opened. She went in. George followed her.

He was conscious first of a big room, far bigger than he had expected. There were three iron beds in it. There was an oil-stove. The floor was paved in square stone slabs, some of which were missing, leaving deep hollows in the floor where water had collected. A little window, grated with iron bars, admitted a thin stream of light. He could see the woman whose portrait he was to make for the purpose of propaganda, standing by one of the beds at the farther end of the room in the dim light. Before he could distinguish her features he heard her voice. It came to him quietly, with an extraordinary calm of possession, down the length of the room. She said:

"Don't appear as if you knew me. The Sister does not understand English."

§ 4

In some rare moments in the existence of even the most ordinary persons, there is permitted the mystery of revelation. Sometimes it is of subtle comprehension

amounting to intuition, sometimes an exaltation that is almost an inspired omniscience.

There may not have been inspiration in George's mind when he heard the sound of Liane's voice across the dim light of that cell in Saint-Lazare. But there was revelation of a kind. The sudden light of a perceptive understanding. He knew, not only that it must be true that she was a spy, but, with a flash of vivid memory, saw in its relation to that knowledge the night at the *Bal Bouffons*, when he had found her talking to von Kleingardt. He heard their conversation about war. Those broken sentences that meant so little then and now were charged with meaning. Never until that moment had he thought of it again. If as a witness he had been called upon to remember that conversation, it would probably have evaded him in its obscurity. What did she say to him? He could not have recalled it. On his oath, what did von Kleingardt say to her? It was too long ago. His memory might be playing tricks. But now, in this instant of revelation, it returned without summons, as though it had happened only the day before. He could hear the voice of von Kleingardt, remember the words he had said.

The effect of that request of hers in English was electrical. It passed through him. His muscles stiffened so that he stood as though both legs and arms were pinioned. He did not move, because he could not. She was bowing to him. He could just see that in a kind of bewilderment of his eyes across the dim light from the dirty window. And then the expectant eyes of Sister Veronica seemed to demand from him some kind of response. He bent his body, bowing in acknowledgment to Liane.

With that same calm of self-possession she had turned to the little Sister and said in French:

"Monsieur is English, Sister. It is amusing for me to speak English again. I have almost forgotten while I was in Madrid."

If there were any suspicion in the simple mind of Sister Veronica about that first remark in a foreign tongue, Liane had made haste to allay it. Making certain of that effect, she continued in French to George. Sitting down on the bed, which besides the other two beds was the only article of furniture in the room, she said:

"This is quite intriguing, monsieur, that you should want to do a picture of me. Do I sit or do I stand, and will you not want a chair to arrange yourself?"

It was impossible with this kind of conversation not to feel himself in an atmosphere of intrigue. She was inviting it. How could he refuse? And yet, in that air of secrecy, in the damp and dirt of that cell in Saint-Lazare, she was a stranger to him. This was a woman he might have met but had never known. He knew now it was the woman who had left him in the *Rue Lepic* and gone to Berlin. It was the same woman he had parted from in that spacious house at Neuilly, who had stayed behind with Captain de Laurent, the man they had shot for espionage. For this was in essence her quality of escape. Not so much that bodily she disappeared, as that she had more than one self. One or the other, she could assume them as she would have changed a garment. And this, the woman they were to shoot in two days' time, was one he had never known till then.

Apologising with a humorous smile for the lack of

accommodation in Saint-Lazare, she sent Sister Veronica for a chair for him to sit on while he made his sketch.

"We do not make a parade of hospitality in this place," she said in French.

But the moment the Sister had gone and the door had closed, her voice quickened and she spoke in English.

"George! I could have known it would be you to get in here to me. How did you manage it? Quickly! I must know that first, because——"

"I didn't manage it. I didn't know."

He did not intend the distant note in his voice. It was there. As she leant forward a little on the bed with the swift appeal of her eyes, he did not feel distant in his heart from her. This was the woman he had loved. Outwardly she was not changed. The same splendour was there about her as had been that night when she took him in her arms in her dressing-room at the *Folies Bergères*. That same perfume came through the air to his senses with its old intoxication of oblivion. Only now it did not intoxicate. It did not confuse him. He felt he was looking on at her beauty as he might have been looking at the beauty of a dead woman in the Morgue. He was no longer free to touch it with his mind. It did not belong to him any more. It was the property of others—the herd of men. It was forbidden.

Apparently her own senses were too absorbed in the immediate state of circumstance in which she found herself to notice fine shades in the tone of his voice. In that place, surrounded by all the impenetrable devices of justice, he was a friend. Her mind was too engaged to

recognise anything else just then. Even the knowledge that he had not contrived that visit to her cell only dismayed her in its coincidence for a moment. He was there. And in all this eagerness, George detected the betraying sounds of fear.

She was afraid. She was none too certain of the end of it all. To the General and every one of those who had dealt with her since she had fallen into their hands, she might have the air of holding up her head. But this woman he had known and held in his arms—the woman, perhaps, she really was—was afraid. And without his will, as he listened, he found that in some detached and impersonal function of his brain, this was damning her. She was convicting herself in his hearing. Whatever she might say, he knew she was a spy. She had committed sacrilege at the altar of sacrifice. And against all the appeal of her voice, her eye and that physical enchantment that for all those years had followed him closely in his memory, there was a voice in his consciousness that condemned her to the pitiless mercy of the law. It was not his own voice. It did not belong to him. It was the voice of all the men he had known and fought with in the trenches. They were shouting her condemnation and his voice was with theirs. He could not silence it.

She was learning from him how he had acquired that letter from the General, and inquiring whether there were anyone who could possibly discover they had known each other before the war, when Sister Veronica returned with a chair. At the sound of the key in the door, Liane's tone assumed the bantering note of one who either was laughing at her fate or refused to accept it. The signs of fear had vanished. There was no suggestion in her voice

or eye that there could anywhere exist the will to destroy her.

It was cold, that morning in November. In her cell, notwithstanding the immediate warmth of the little stove that was burning, the air was charged with a damp chill that was exuded from the walls and rose from the floor beneath their feet. She was wearing a luxurious coat of sables.

"You must make your drawing as I am, monsieur," she said in French. "The only hospitality of this place you bring with you. I could not sit without my coat."

He took the chair from Sister Veronica and began a sketch in line in a sketch-book. For a time the little Sister stood by, watching those movements of the pencil obedient to an automatic facility of his hand. Beyond that facility, he scarcely knew what he was doing. Every time he raised his head to look at her, he saw her face set in death: white, expressionless, still. Inevitably the fatality of that was making itself apparent in the drawing. It was what he had told the General. It was what he saw. The eyes were staring. The lips were parted in an appeal that would never be heard, never be answered.

As she watched it growing to life under his hand, the little Sister turned away. She could not look any longer. It was an expression of what she had but only vaguely felt. It was not her habit of mind to express anything. In those surroundings she did not dare to know what her feelings were, yet here was this artist with pencil and paper revealing them for her. He was destroying something she realised was beautiful with the wantonness of death. It was a portrait. It was Liane Sonrel, and yet that consciousness of the close proximity of

death was staring from her eyes in all the ugliness of its reality.

Sister Veronica turned away to the door, nervously twitching the beads of her rosary through her fingers.

"I must go away for a little while," she said, "but of course you understand you will be under supervision from the grating."

The door closed. The key turned in the lock. George felt a sudden sickness, a nausea, a revolt. It was as though he had been shut alone in a vault with the dead. He wanted to follow the little Sister, to beat with his hands on the door, to shout with his voice to be let out. And yet, in this pandemonium of his mind, as chaotic as had been that first charge in the German trenches at *Fremelles*, he obeyed an instinct to sit on quietly there doing his drawing and listening to the sound of Liane's voice. She was speaking again in English. He heard her say his name.

"George."

He looked up.

"They aren't going to shoot me. You know that, don't you? The General, he tell you that."

He heard his voice replying:

"The General didn't talk about you. He just gave me that letter. It was his own idea. He'd been sitting for his portrait. Every moment or so he was called away. He just said something about giving me a model who—who had nothing else to do but sit and wait."

"For what?"

"He didn't say."

She sat on the iron bedstead clasping her hands, and then she laughed.

"Men don't kill women like that," she said. "Not in cold blood. Only when their passions are roused. Oh, yes; I have seen them. When they are mad with jealousy. But, of course. They are wild beasts. You would have killed me once, George. You remember? That night at the *Bal Bouffons*. And for him. Von Kleingardt! My God!"

"Hadn't I some cause?"

"You? You think I love von Kleingardt?"

"You left me."

"Put down your paper and look at me."

It was against his will he put it down. He would have refused to look at her if he could. But there was a disturbing consciousness in his mind that he was sorry for her, as he would have felt pity for an animal that was going to the shambles. A pity that was no pity because he would not have interfered.

"Have you forgotten our last night in the *Rue Lepic*, when you carry me up the stairs—how long I lie in your arms? Have you forgotten it?"

She was stripping herself for him, just as she had done that first night when, under the shelter of his umbrella, she had returned with him to his studio from Paurelle's. In just that manner there was something wanton, without shame, in this effort she was making to recall the passionate intimacy of that memory. A shamelessness intended to seduce him, to intoxicate him with the promise of her response to his desire. And still somehow, with her, it was not harlotry. It was instinctive. Her faith.

George heard it, but he did not reply. He looked at her, saw all the beauty of her he had always seen, and

looked away. He was going on automatically with his drawing of her when she said:

"You—are you going to desert me too?"

"Who has deserted you?"

"Everyone. They all look at me, and no one sees me. It is like they have shot me already." And then she laughed again. "Perhaps they shoot Laperque with me. If they do that, I do not mind."

He had heard nothing of Laperque. She told him of the member of the *Troisième Section*.

"He was with me when they came to arrest," she said, still smiling after her laughter, as though that in itself were an incident scarcely worth mentioning.

"He was your lover?"

"Oh, yes. If that man could ever love anything."

"You loved him?"

"I?"

She appeared to be about to laugh again, and then the laughter fell like a mask from her face. He remembered the look of hatred it revealed. He was trying to recall what moment it was she had shown it him before. It was that night in the *Rue Lepic* when she had sketched him the story of her life.

"You remember the *cure* in Batavia—he put the wafer on my tongue—eh?" She began all this impulsively. She was telling herself as much as him. "We meet again in Madrid. Twenty years. They make a difference, do they not? This gentleman who has gone from the church, Monsieur Laperque of the *Troisième Section*, doing his sly business in Madrid, he does not remember the little postulant in the convent in Batavia. He has seen so many other women in twenty years. Oh, yes. Do you think I

could let the chance like that go by! These old men, when they come in sight of sixty years, they are so easy. I just look at him. He look at me. I drop my eyes. That was all. We come back to Paris together. Oh, yes. I know I take the risk. Your people in the Naval Intelligence Department in London, they tell me that. But in the lap of the *Troisième Section*—who would take me, unless they took Laperque as well? He tell me everything. They can talk, these old men. They flatter you with their secrets.”

For those few moments of confession, she appeared to have lost all regard for caution. She was admitting what she had done. Did she care? Was this the last and desperate phase of her mind? He asked her if she realised what she was saying.

“Yes, I know.”

“You have been a spy?”

She heard suddenly the dispassionate remoteness of his voice. He was accusing her as they had accused her at her trial. The words as he said them sounded like the words she had heard them say.

“If I had been,” she whispered, “wouldn’t you help me?”

“How could I?”

“Do you mean you would stand by and see them shoot me?”

“I could not interfere.”

“Interfere! You can help.”

“How?”

She mentioned the name of a high personage in Holland to whom she wished secretly to send a letter.

“I do not know how long they keep me here in this

awful place," she said, "but there must be time for him to receive a letter if it is quick, and he will know how to interfere. They cannot shoot me. They know that. I am not French."

She was pleading again her defence to him as she had pleaded it to those who conducted her trial. Again she was admitting her lovers and the presents they had given her. It was as though she could not realise that this would strip the last illusion from his eyes. There she was. He could see her. As beautiful as ever she had been. But it was like a voice lost in the distance of the past when he heard her saying:

"Do you remember that night in the *Rue Lepic*, when you put the ring on my finger and you ask me to marry you?"

"Is there any need to remember that?"

She rose from the bed and came across the broken floor of the cell to him. He was sitting still, pinioned on the chair that Sister Veronica had brought. He could not move. She stooped and put her arms about his neck. Her fingers were stroking his cheek.

"Why shouldn't you remember it?" she whispered. "I have had enough of this. I am sick of it. I try to breathe and it chokes me. I want a life that is quiet and safe. You believe that. You understand. I want a home and a child with a man I can love."

She was whispering it all against the side of his cheek. He could have believed that she meant it. He had heard that tenderness in her voice before, the night after he had come out of the trenches on the *Aubers* ridge. He remembered the ecstasy of oblivion there had been in the sound of it. But there was no oblivion it promised

him now. She was a spy. He could not forget it. He could not think of her for himself. She belonged to the authorities. Even her death belonged to them. Had she given him a knife and asked him to plunge it into her, he would have refused.

And upon this silence, that had become a protective thing he had buckled on himself like a gas-mask, she poured in pitiful whisperings the promise of that love he had asked from her.

"Take that letter for me," she pleaded. "You need do no more than that. He has been my friend. He will use his influence. They may keep me here until the war is over. But they will not shoot me. I know that. He has power. I am Dutch, not French. He will demand my freedom when the war is over. They will not dare. And then—my dear——"

At its softest, murmuring in his ear, her voice had suddenly become as silent as his own. She was looking at the drawing he had made. She was seeing what Sister Veronica had seen—the staring eyes, the fatal droop of the lips, the drawn and waiting look for death.

Leaning over his shoulder, she snatched it from his lap. She was exclaiming that it was not her.

"I do not look like that! It's a lie! How could I ever look like that?"

He said nothing and she was realising it was his condemnation, that, like those others at her trial, he too was sending her to her death. And then the bolt of the door was drawn. Sister Veronica had come in.

"The Director has sent word," she said, "that your picture must be finished now. He cannot allow any longer."

Liane handed the sketch-book back to him. She was smiling. He did not know her again. The air of her bravado had returned about her.

"It is not good, monsieur," she said. "I am sorry. I do not like it. It is not true. Perhaps when the war is over and they let me come away from here, I will give you another sitting and you will try again."

And then she bowed as though that were the formal conclusion of their formal meeting. She had failed with him. She was admitting that. But men were men. She was not distressed. She had known them too well. There was the full height and beauty of her body with her head held up. No one could have known. Her assurance was impenetrable. She was smiling at him as though he were a complete stranger. He bowed in response to that gesture, to the pose she gave him, and turned away.

Sister Veronica had closed the door behind them. The sound of the bolt shooting home and the rattle of her keys left a final silence in the darkness of the passage that seemed as though it would never be broken again. In that silence, George was knowing he had lost her.

He followed the little Sister of Mercy till they reached the door into the open courtyard. The sight of the sky came to his eyes with an unbelievable sense of space. He was standing an instant, quiet, still, looking up at it, when she said:

"You saw her dead already, monsieur."

"I suppose I did."

"That is what she will not believe."

"You mean she doesn't know?"

"She does not know they will come for her the morning after to-morrow. But it is more than that. She does not believe they will ever come. 'Men do not shoot women—not in cold blood.' That is what she says. She is always saying it."

"And what do you say?"

She shrugged her shoulders under her black cape.

"I do not know what men are like," she said. "I do not think. I have just my duty and my prayers. *Au 'voir, monsieur.*"

§ 5

BEFORE four o'clock on the morning of October 14th there was a score of newspaper reporters gathered like famished gutter dogs outside the prison of Saint-Lazare. In the darkness around the gates they clustered, snarling at each other, waiting with the irritable determination of scavengers not to be deprived of the refuse that might come their way.

The order of the President of the Republic had been received with official secrecy the night before. Liane Sonrel, the dancer, better known to Paris as Mada Garass, was to be shot at dawn. There is no receptacle that will hold these official secrets. Every vessel has its leak. Her advocate had waited all night and gone to the prison before there was a thought of dawn breaking. The newspaper reporters had seen him arrive. They had recognised him. It was the lawyer of the condemned. This was good enough to make it true. They had leapt upon him, yelping and barking in his face.

"Was it a fact she was to be shot that morning?"

Had she indeed been the mistress of Laperque of the *Troisième Section*? If it were true, was nothing to be done to him? How had she spent her time in that cell? Was it true she had given her nautch dance for the benefit of the Director? And had he become her lover in Saint-Lazare?

The lawyer flung them all aside and was admitted by the porter through the door. Had he had a whip in his hand, old man as he was, he would have beaten them back to their kennels. The door of the prison was shut against their searching eyes as he disappeared.

It was a story—that arrival of *Monsieur l'Avocat* at four o'clock in the morning. Notebooks were snatched out of pockets. Words were written down that he had said, interpreting his silence. After a time their snarling died away. They sat there on their haunches, waiting with their eyes on the door. He had gone in. He must come out again.

In the Director's room, the old lawyer, who had conducted all her affairs in the theatrical world since first she had made a name in Paris, was pleading the Penal Code to save her at the eleventh hour.

The Director, the doctor, the Adjutant who would be in charge of the firing-party and a member of the Council of War that had condemned her were arranging matters when he came in. He astounded them all by saying:

"Gentlemen, Mada Garass cannot be executed this morning. I oppose it formally and call your attention for my support to the first book and first chapter of the Penal Code, where in Article 27 you will read: 'If a woman condemned to death declares, and it is verified,

that she is with child, the execution cannot take place until after the child is born.”

There was a moment's silence in the room. The Director was the first to speak. His voice was irritable. He had been wakened by his servant at half-past three. He had only had four hours of sleep. Mada Garass was to be shot that morning by order of the President. He had the letter in his hand. This was rendering all purpose of his exertion of no account. If this were true, there had been no need for him to be called at half-past three. He had the temper of one who is not to be balked. It was ridiculous. He said so.

“Who is the father?” he demanded.

The lawyer looked at him and then dropped his eye.

“You infer that you are the father?”

He admitted it. The Director yawned.

“But you're over seventy years of age,” said the member of the Council. They were all annoyed—incredulous. The doctor who had visited her from time to time in her cell informed them he had observed no signs of pregnancy.

“You have allowed yourself to be influenced by the spell of this woman, monsieur,” said the Director sharply. “This is not the moment to be opposing the course of justice. If she is as you say, she would have told the doctor so. We are wasting our time. Gentlemen, I must ask you to come with me to her cell. It is close on five o'clock.” He rang a bell.

They walked in single file down the corridors. Sister Veronica was waiting at the door of cell sixty-one ready to admit them. She held a lantern in her hand. She unlocked the bolt. Her keys rattled on their chain

but did not waken Liane. She was lying asleep on the iron bed with a bare arm laid across her breast. The little sister held up the lantern to spread its pallid yellow beam as the Director crossed the cell to her. The other three men remained in the shadow by the door. The Adjutant, the member of the War Council and the doctor were watching the proceedings. The lawyer had turned his head away. With a strained preoccupation he was looking at a rat in a dark corner of the room. He was not astonished to see a rat there in the room where Liane was sleeping. He could only see it with his eyes. He could not relate it to anything. It was just a rat.

The Director was leaning over the bed and touching Liane's shoulder.

"Madame," he said.

She opened her eyes. Without raising her head she looked up and saw the Director. From his face her eyes turned to Sister Veronica holding out the lantern. Through the thin beam of light, she could see the shrouded figures of four men gathered by the door. She rose on her elbow. The silk nightgown she was wearing was falling loose from one shoulder. Her left breast was bare. No one except the little Sister seemed to notice it. She was holding the lantern. She looked at the bed and then shut her eyes.

"Madame, the President sent word last night. Your time has come. It is necessary you should dress yourself. Have courage."

She lay in the bed a moment, still leaning on her elbow, staring, as though she were gathering her mind to realise what he meant. She found it in his face. His

eyes were on her, her bare shoulder, her breast, as though they saw nothing. She wakened and sat up, drawing the garment over her shoulder to cover her.

"This is a trick to frighten me," she said.

"No, madame. I must ask you to get up at once."

She peered across the room, searching that group in the dark corner by the door. It was then that the old man, her lawyer, came out into the sickly yellow light of the lantern. He stumbled across the broken floor to her bed. He knelt down. He was whispering, pleading, imploring. They knew what he was saying and stood in silence looking on. The words *enceinte—laissez vous examiner*—escaped from the confused mumbling of his voice. The eyes of Sister Veronica were still closed. The light of the lantern was quivering with the trembling of her hand. The grotesque group of gigantic shadows on the ceiling oscillated with the swaying light. Life was terrible. The world was terrible. But Sister Veronica had never known it so terrible as this. Death was better. Only death would put an end to it. She felt a gratitude to God when she heard the voice of Liane call out:

"Non! Non! Je ne suis pas enceinte! Je ne veux pas recourir à ce subterfuge. Non! Il est inutile de m'examiner. Je vais me lever!"

She turned to the Director.

"If you will leave me, monsieur, I will get up at once. I shall not keep you waiting."

In the same voice, with no emotion, he informed her they could none of them leave the cell. She shrugged her shoulders.

"You will turn away then, messieurs. I have the right of privacy till you take it from me."

Did she believe even then her fate had come? She had refused her lawyer's loophole of escape. Certainly it was not escape she counted on. She must have known, after that space of her incarceration in Saint-Lazare, that it was not in this manner she would elude them. They would never shoot her. That was what she must have believed. And yet all the paraphernalia and officialdom of this early morning visit to her cell, the old lawyer's appeal to her to plead the Penal Code, could not but have shaken her faith. It did not, however, destroy it.

Retiring into the darkest corner of her cell, she made her preparation for that journey to Vincennes. At the farther end of the room, the four men stood near the door with their backs turned while she dressed. Such broken conversation as they made could not prevent them hearing the muttered whisperings of the two women across that space of darkness faintly tinted with the rays of the lamp in Sister Veronica's hand.

"Mais, madame!"

They heard that exclamation from the little nun.

Turning round, the Director asked what was the matter. It was Liane's voice that answered:

"Does it matter what I wear, monsieur?"

"No, madame."

There was silence then—only the rustle of garments.

In a few minutes she declared that she was ready. She had put on her sable coat. The collar was turned up about her neck, but she wore no hat.

The doctor ventured to suggest she would be cold.

"Not in this coat." She could smile. "Besides, what

does it matter? I could not wear a hat. It would be ridiculous."

She was considering her appearance then. There was something *comme il faut* about a woman's looks even at such a time as that. She had taken pains to arrange her hair. That was all. She might have been going to some entertainment.

The Director opened the door. Following the light of the Sister's lantern, they all passed out into what the prisoners at Saint-Lazare call the *Boulevard* of the cells.

By this time the dawn was nearing. It would be light at six. Down the corridors, past the cells of sleeping prisoners, they made their way in a silent procession to the door into the courtyard. Three motor-cars were waiting there. The three drivers in military uniform turned their heads to look at her as she came out.

In response to the indication of the Adjutant, who had opened the door of the first car, she stepped in. He took her arm as she did so. But she shook it off.

"Do not touch me!" she exclaimed. "I wish no one to touch me." But she held out her hand to the little Sister, who was behind her, and helped her in. What was she thinking then? What was this confidence in her voice, in that posture of her mind that made it seem as though it were she who still had the dispensation of circumstance in her hands?

When her lawyer and the Director were seated with her, the car turned towards the gate. The two others with their official occupants followed close behind. The gates were thrown open for them to pass out.

With a chorus of exclamatory voices the reporters greeted them. One of them jumped up on to the foot-board

and thrust his head in at the window. The Director thrust him off. They were all rushing to their cars and their motor-cycles. The drivers of the three cars accelerated their engines. They fled down the black, empty streets of Paris, through the *Place de la Nation* and on to the *Porte Daumesnil*. At their heels the pack was following them.

This was the journey of Liane Sonrel to *Vincennes*. Not a word was spoken. They clung to the sides of the car as it sped through the streets and swung round the narrow corners. Even the little Sister forgot her tears that had begun falling down her cheeks. It was a chase. The hounds were upon them.

Sweeping through the gates at *Vincennes*, they disappeared into the building of the fort on the outer walls. They had eluded the pursuit. The doors were closed behind them. The starving dogs were left howling in the darkness outside, showing their teeth, baulked of their prey.

It was past the hour of five. Paris was just turning in its sleep. The vegetable-carts were trundling into the city.

§ 6

AN act of courage often derives itself from a suspension, sometimes a complete absence, of the imagination. The mind loses its perceptive quality. Women are seldom blessed or afflicted with this loss. Mostly they see instantaneously and in vivid pictures what men arrive at only after a process of considered reason. If women, confronted suddenly with a violent death, are less prepared than men to meet their fate, it is because the whole terror

of it in all its details is in one moment photographed upon their minds. Courage with them, when and as so often they display it, is a real quality.

But was it a real quality that morning at *Vincennes* with Liane Sonrel? Did she see her body, as it was to be, bruised and bleeding with the scarring marks of the bullets in her flesh? For courage, in the face of what to all those present was the inevitable proximity of death, she certainly displayed.

When in the park, studded with trees and enclosed within the fort, she descended from the car, there was nothing in her manner, in the firmness of her step, the proud carriage of her, to indicate that it was she, amongst all those gathered there, who was about to suffer the sudden wrench of death.

The firing-party was there already upon the ground. They were standing in line some paces away from the small group of trees where the cars drew up. In that still dim and uncertain light that had not even yet begun to be diluted with the faint grey of dawn, she did not see them at first. And then, when at an order of the Adjutant in command she heard the quick clatter of their rifles as they saluted, she turned to look at them with the disturbing beauty of her smile. She might have been thanking them for their presence there. Was she thanking them? Was she glad the end of all that intrigue and treachery had come at last? Or did she still believe they would not shoot her even then? Was this merely a pride of vanity at the last honour they could pay her?

She must have known the moment, whatever it might be, had come at last. Her lawyer had put his arms about

her neck and kissed her with the trembling passion of an old man. The pastor of the Lutheran Church, to which in name she belonged, was taking her hands and murmuring the blessing of God. His voice, saying the words, had the mechanical intonation of the priest. And yet they were quivering through their mechanism with emotion. It was like the running of an engine that was out of tune. His voice thumped and throbbled. His lips could scarcely frame the words, yet they emerged from his mouth with automatic precision.

She took no notice. Sister Veronica was at her side, holding her hand with convulsive sobs that heaved beneath the black serge gown and shook the black veil over her shoulders. It was the emotion of this little Sister of Charity that seemed to concern Liane at that moment more than anything else. Taking her face in her hands, she raised it until her eyes, red with weeping, were looking at Liane. To this creature, as though it were a charm to use against the pain of life and all the terrors of death, she gave her smile again.

"Ne pleurez pas, Sœur Veronica. Ne pleurez pas! Soyez gaie comme moi."

And then, with a questioning glance at the Adjutant, she indicated that she was ready. He led her across the grass to where a stake was driven firmly into the ground. At that same stake Marguerite Francillard and La Tichelly, both spies in the war, had been held by the support of the ropes to meet their death. But when the Adjutant produced the rope to bind Liane, she shook her head.

"No, thank you, monsieur," she said quickly. "I am quite able. I prefer to stand alone."

He shrugged his shoulders. From an inner pocket of his uniform he then took out a kerchief to bind her eyes. But this she refused as well.

"It is better, madame, you will see nothing."

And she laughed. They all heard her laugh as she stood there some little distance away from them under the trees.

"Why should I not see, monsieur? Shall I see any the less with my eyes closed?"

He begged it of her. The poignancy, the emotion of these last moments was now touching him. And she could see that in his eyes. He was suffering, and more than from the mere discomfiture of that moment. In that slight distance which separated them from the rest of the company, they were alone. Man and woman. For that instant he was looking at the woman he could see. And with the eyes with which she had looked at so many men, she was gazing intently back at him.

"It is not an order, monsieur, that I should wear this bandage?"

"No, madame."

"Perhaps even if it were, you would grant me that last favour if I asked it?"

"I would, madame."

She could just hear his voice. It was thick in his throat. And to him as well she gave the gift of that smile. It is certain then again she must have felt her power and probably in that moment still believed she was immune.

"What is this delay?"

It was the sharp voice of the Director from that group of people waiting in the dissolving darkness.

With a quick turn on his heel, the Adjutant came away. She was standing there by herself, an intense solitude about her, under the trees. There was still a smile like a faint, pale light on her face as the member of the Council hurriedly read out the order of her sentence.

“By order of the Third Council of War, this woman, Sonrel, has been condemned to death for espionage.”

Her fingers were fumbling with the buttons of her sable coat as the firing-party were swiftly marched into line about twenty paces from where she stood.

Her eyes were scarcely regarding them. The smile had brightened to a clear light, a luminance, on her face. The dawn was just spreading to a warm tint of grey through the tangled net of the trees when the Adjutant, raising his sabre, called out:

“*Joue!*”

There was a rattle of sound like a door closing sharply as they brought their rifles to the shoulder. And then, before he could give the order to fire—was it a final gesture, the last assurance of her faith, or what was it?—she flung open the folds of that sable coat and her body was gleaming naked to receive their bullets in her flesh.

The immediate silence was sharp, painful. It was penetrating. It was louder than a sudden cry. As though he realised the danger of that moment and feared what in fact it might be that she counted on, the Adjutant waited not an instant, but shouted out his command:

“*Feu!*”

A single rifle sang out as though for one moment it might have been alone. The instant of time was scarcely perceptible as all the rest followed with a cracking, rip-

ping the air like close thunder. Against that post under the trees, the body of Liane Sonrel fell in her sable coat. It might have been the garment itself that had fallen from a peg and lay in the crumpled heap of its folds upon the ground.

At once the Adjutant crossed the space between them. There was no movement. He pulled out his service revolver. She was as still as a dead animal on the ground. The side of her face was exposed, surrounded in the collar of her coat. He fired a bullet into the ear. The head lifted to the shock and fell back. There was no more to do.

“*Pour défilér—En avant! Marche!*”

To the sound of the bugles the twelve men who had killed this woman marched away like a machine.

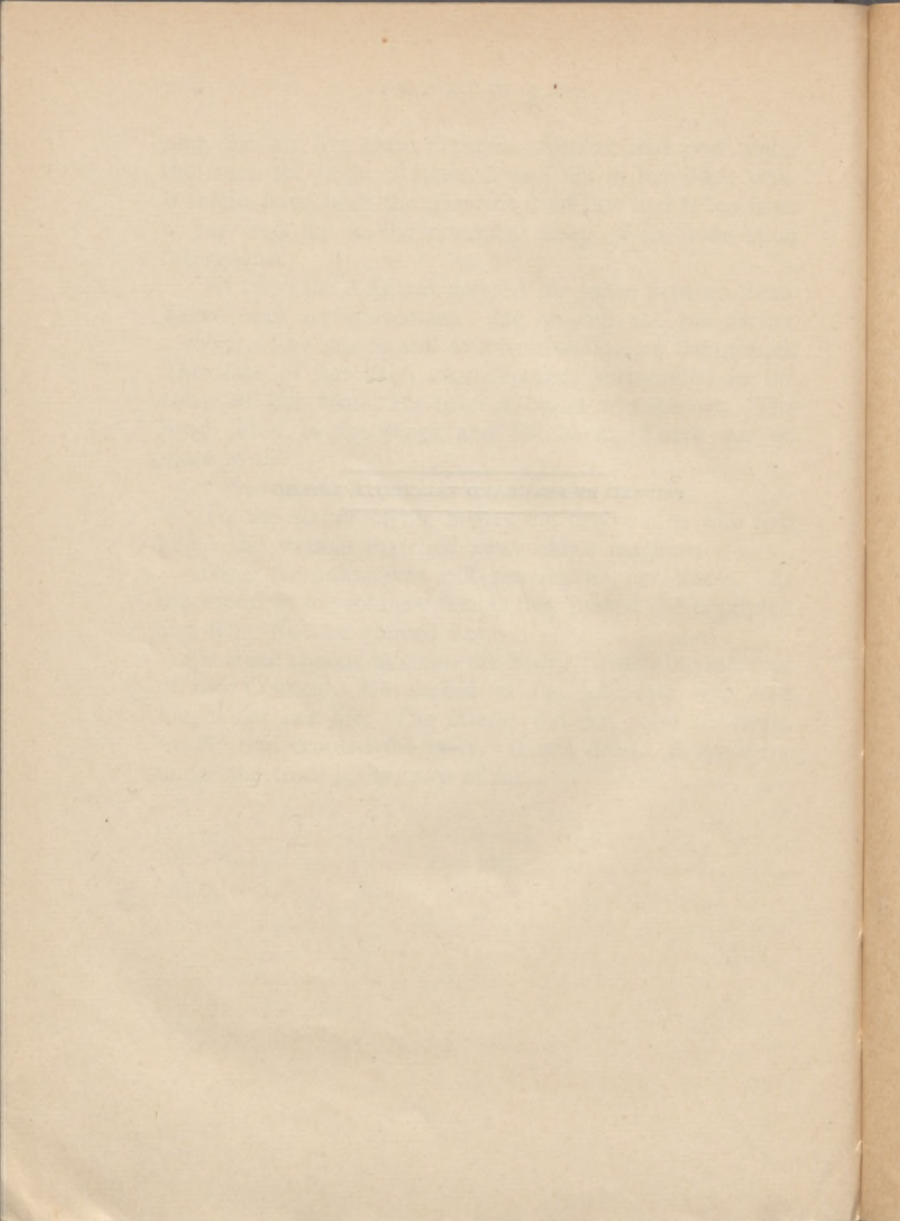
Sister Veronica was still praying on her knees. At the sound of the soldiers' feet as they passed she crumpled and fell. No one noticed her.

“Is there anyone to claim the body?” asked the member of the Council. He looked at the advocate who had fought for her life. The lawyer did not raise his head.

No one claimed the body. It was dead. It lay there under the trees in its heap of fur.

THE END

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- Helps, Sir Arthur, † 1875.
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- Hemans, Mrs. Felicia, † 1835.
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- Herbert, A. P.
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- Hewlett, Maurice.
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- Hichens, Robert.
Flames 2 v. — The Woman with the Fan 2 v. — The Garden of Allah 2 v. — The Black Spaniel, and Other Stories 1 v. — The Call of the Blood 2 v. — A Spirit in Prison 2 v. — Barbary Sheep 1 v. — Bella Donna 2 v. — The Spell of Egypt 1 v. — The Dweller on the Threshold 1 v. — The Londoners 1 v. — An Imaginative Man 1 v. — The Way of Ambition 2 v. — The Holy Land 1 v. — The Last Time, and Other Stories 1 v. — After the Verdict 2 v. — The God Within Him 2 v.
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- Hobbes, John Oliver (Mrs. Craigie) (Am.), † 1906.
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- Hoey, Mrs. Cashel.
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- Holdsworth, Annie E.
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- Hopkins, Tighe, † 1919.
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Mrs. Geoffrey 2 v. — Faith and Unfaith 2 v. — Loÿs, Lord Berresford, and other Tales 1 v. — Lord moyne 2 v. — A Maiden all Forlorn, etc. 1 v. — A Pasives Crime, and other Stories 1 v. — A Mental Struggle 2 v. — Her Week's Amusement, and Ugly Barrington 1 v. — Lady Valworth's Diamonds 1 v. — A Modern Circe 2 v. — Marvel 2 v. — Under-Currents 2 v. — In Durance Vile, etc. 1 v. — A Troublesome Girl, and other Stories 1 v. — A Life's Remorse 2 v. — A Born Coquette 2 v. — Lady Verner's Flight 1 v. — Nora Creina 2 v. — A Mad Prank, and other Stories 1 v. — The Hoyden 2 v. — A Tug of War 1 v. — The Professor's Experiment

2 v. — A Point of Conscience 2 v. — A Lonely Girl 1 v. — Lovice 1 v. — The Coming of Chloe 1 v.

Hunt, Mrs.: *vide* Beaumont.

Hunt, Violet.

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Inglis, the Hon. Lady.

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Ingram, John H.: *vide* Poe.

Iota: *vide* Mrs. Caffyn.

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Jacobs, W. W.

Many Cargoes 1 v. — The Skipper's Wooing, and The Brown Man's Servant 1 v. — Sea Urchins 1 v. — A Master of Craft 1 v. — Light Freights 1 v. — At Sun-
wich Port 1 v. — The Lady of the Barge 1 v. — Odd Craft 1 v. — Dialstone Lane 1 v. — Captains All 1 v. — Short Cruises 1 v. — Salthaven 1 v. — Sailors' Knots 1 v. — Ship's Company 1 v. — Sea Whispers 1 v. — The Castaways 1 v.

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James, G. P. R., † 1860.

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- James, Henry (Am.).
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- Jeaffreson, J. Cordy, † 1901
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- Jenkin, Mrs. Charles, † 1885.
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- Jenkins, Edward.
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vide B. H. Buxton.
- Jerome, Jerome K., † 1927.
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- Jerrold, Douglas, † 1857.
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- "John Halifax, Gentleman," Author of:
vide Mrs. Craik.
- Johnny Ludlow: *vide* Mrs. Henry Wood.
- Jolly, Emily.
Colonel Dacre 2 v.
- "Joshua Davidson," Author of: *vide* Mrs. E. Lynn Linton.
- Kavanagh, Miss Julia, † 1877.
Nathalie 2 v. — Daisy Burns 2 v. — Rachel Gray 1 v. — Adèle 3 v. — A Summer and Winter in the Two Sicilies 2 v. — Seven Years, and other Tales 2 v. — French Women of Letters 1 v. — English Women of Letters 1 v. — Queen
- Mab 2 v. — Beatrice 2 v. — Dora 2 v. — Silvia 2 v. — Bessie 2 v. — John Dorrien 3 v. — Two Lilies 2 v. — Forget-me-nots 2 v. (*vide* p. 27.)
- Kaye-Smith, Sheila.
The End of the House of Alard 1 v. — Iron and Smoke 1 v.
- Keary, Annie, † 1879.
Oldbury 2 v. — Castle Daly 2 v.
- Keary, C. F.
The Mount 1 v.
- Keeling, D'Esterre: *vide* Esterre.
- Kennedy, Margaret.
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- Kingsley, Henry, † 1876.
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- Kinross, Albert.
An Opera and Lady Grasmere 1 v.
- Kipling, Rudyard.
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- Laffan, May.
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Langdon, Mary (Am.).
Ida May 1 v.
- "Last of the Cavaliers, the," Author of (Miss Piddington).
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- Łaszowska, Mme de: *vide* E. Gerard.

- Laurence, George Alfred: *vide* "Guy Livingstone."
- Lawless, the Hon. Emily, † 1913.
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- Lawrence, D. H.
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- Mrs. Lean: *vide* Florence Marryat.
- "Leaves from the Journal of our Life in the Highlands": *vide* Victoria R. I.
- Lee, Holme: *vide* Harriet Parr.
- Lee, Vernon.
Pope Jacynth, etc. 1 v. — Hortus Vitae, and Limbo 1 v. — Vanitas 1 v. — Louis Norbert 1 v. — The Tower of the Mirrors 1 v. — The Golden Keys 1 v.
- Le Fanu, J. S., † 1873.
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- Lemon, Mark, † 1870.
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- Author of "Letters from a Self-Made Merchant to his Son": *vide* George Horace Lorimer.
- Author of "The Letters of Her Mother to Elizabeth": *vide* Trowbridge.
- Lever, Charles, † 1872.
The O'Donoghue 1 v. — The Knight of Gwynne 3 v. — Arthur O'Leary 2 v. — Harry Lorrequer 2 v. — Charles O'Malley 3 v. — Tom Burke of "Ours" 3 v. — Jack Hinton 2 v. — The Daltons 4 v. — The Dodd Family Abroad 3 v. — The Martins of Cro' Martin 3 v. — The Fortunes of Glencore 2 v. — Davenport Dunn 3 v. — Confessions of Con Gregan 2 v. — One of Them 2 v. — Maurice Tiernay 2 v. — Barrington 2 v. — A Day's Ride 2 v. — Luttrell of Arran 2 v. — Tony Butler 2 v. — Sir Brook Fossbrooke 2 v. — The Bramleighs of Bishop's Folly 2 v. — A Rent in a Cloud 1 v. — That Boy of Norcott's 1 v. — St. Patrick's Eve; Paul Gossett's Confessions 1 v. — Lord Kilgobbin 2 v.
- Levett-Yeats, S.
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- Lewes, G. H., † 1878.
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- Lewis, Sinclair. (Am.)
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- Linton, Mrs. E. Lynn, † 1898.
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- Loftus, Lord Augustus.
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- Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth (Am.), † 1882.
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- Lonsdale, Margaret.
Sister Dora 1 v.
- Loos, Anita (Am.).
"Gentlemen Prefer Blondes" 1 v.
- Lorimer, George Horace (Am.).
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- "Lost Battle, A" 2 v.
- Lowndes, Mrs. Belloc.
Studies in Wives 1 v. — The Lodger 1 v. — The End of her Honeymoon 1 v. — Why They Married 1 v. — The Terriford Mystery 1 v. — Some Men and Women 1 v. — Bread of Deceit 1 v. — What Really Happened 1 v. — "Thou Shalt Not Kill"

- 1 v. — The Story of Ivy 1 v. — Cressida: No Mystery 1 v.
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- Lyall, Edna**, † 1903.
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- Lytton, Lord**: *vide* E. Bulwer.
- Lytton, Robert Lord** (Owen Meredith), † 1891.
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- Maartens, Maarten**, † 1915
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- McAulay, Allan** (Am.): *vide* Kate Douglas Wiggin.
- Macaulay, Lord**, † 1859.
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- Macaulay, Rose**.
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- McCarthy, Justin**.
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- Mackarness, Mrs.**, † 1881.
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- Mackay, Eric**, † 1898.
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- Mackenzie, Compton**.
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- McKnight, Charles** (Am.), † 1881.
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- Maclaren, Ian**, † 1907.
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- Macleod, Norman**, † 1872.
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- Macquoid, Mrs.**
Patty 2 v. — Miriam's Marriage 2 v. — Pictures across the Channel 2 v. — My Story 2 v. — Diane 2 v. — Beside the River 2 v. — A Faithful Lover 2 v.
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- Maine, E. S.**
Scarscliff Rocks 2 v.
- Malet, Lucas** (Mrs. Mary St. Leger Harrison).
Colonel Enderby's Wife 2 v. — The History of Sir Richard Calmady 3 v. — The Far Horizon 2 v. — The Score 1 v. — Adrian Savage 2 v.
- Malmesbury, the Earl of**.
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- Mann, Mary E.**
A Winter's Tale 1 v. — The Cedar Star 1 v.
- Mansfield, Robert Blachford**.
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Marryat, Florence, † 1899.
 Love's Conflict 2 v. — The Confessions of Gerald Estcourt 2 v. — Nelly Brooke 2 v. — Véronique 2 v. — Petronel 2 v. — Her Lord and Master 2 v. — The Prey of the Gods 1 v. — Life and Letters of Captain Marryat 1 v. — Mad Dumaresq 2 v. — No Intentions 2 v. — Fighting the Air 2 v. — The Poison of Asps, and other Stories 1 v. — "My own Child" 2 v. — A Harvest of Wild Oats 2 v. — A Little Stepson 1 v. — Written in Fire 2 v. — Her World against a Lie 2 v. — The Root of all Evil 2 v. — The Fair-haired Alda 2 v. — With Cupid's Eyes 2 v. — My Sister the Actress 2 v. — Phyllida 2 v. — Facing the Footlights 2 v. — A Moment of Madness, and other Stories 1 v. — The Ghost of Charlotte Cray, and other Stories 1 v. — Peeress and Player 2 v. — Under the Lilies and Roses 2 v. — The Heart of Jane Warner 2 v. — The Heir Presumptive 2 v. — The Master Passion 2 v. — Spiders of Society 2 v. — Driven to Bay 2 v. — A Daughter of the Tropics 2 v. — Mount Eden. A Romance 2 v. — Blindfold 2 v. — A Bankrupt Heart 2 v. — The Beautiful Soul 1 v. — At Heart a Rake 2 v. — The Strange Transfiguration of Hannah Stubbs 1 v. — The Dream that Stayed 2 v. — A Passing Madness 1 v. — The Blood of the Vampire 1 v. — A Soul on Fire 1 v. — Iris the Avenger 1 v.

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Marshall, Mrs. Emma, † 1899
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Mason, A. E. W.
 The Broken Road 1 v. — At the Villa Rose 1 v. — The House of the Arrow 1 v. — The Winding Stair 1 v. — No Other Tiger 1 v.

Mathers, Helen (Mrs. Henry Reeves).
 "Cherry Ripe!" 2 v. — "Land o' the Leal" 1 v. — My Lady Green Sleeves 2 v. — As he comes up the Stair, etc. 1 v. — Sam's Sweetheart 2 v. — Eyre's Acquittal 2 v. — Found Out 1 v. — The Fashion of this World (80 Pf.) — Blind Justice, and "Who, being dead, yet Speaketh" 1 v. — What the Glass Told, and A Study of a Woman 1 v. — Bam Wildfire 2 v. — Becky 2 v. — "Honey" 1 v. — The New Lady Teazle, and Other Stories and Essays 1 v. — Tally Ho! 2 v. — Pigskin and Petticoat 2 v. — Gay Lawless 1 v.

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 The Balance of Military Power in Europe 1 v.

Maurier, George du, † 1896.
 Trilby 2 v. — The Martian 2 v.

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Maxwell, W. B.
 The Ragged Messenger 2 v. — In Cotton Wool 2 v. — The Day's Journey 1 v. — Children of the Night 1 v. — Fernande 1 v. — Spinster of this Parish 1 v. — The Case of Bevan Yorke 1 v. — Gabrielle 1 v. — We Forget Because We Must 1 v. — Like Shadows on the Wall 1 v.

"Mehalah": *vide* Baring-Gould.

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 Kate Coventry 1 v. — Digby Grand 1 v. — Good for Nothing 2 v. — The Queen's Maries 2 v. — The Gladiators 2 v. — The Brookes of Bridlemere 2 v. — Cerise 2 v. — The Interpreter 2 v. — The White Rose 2 v. — M. or N. 1 v. — Contraband 1 v. — Sarchedon 2 v. — Uncle John 2 v. — Katerfelto 1 v. — Sister Louise 1 v. — Rosine 1 v. — Roys' Wife 2 v. — Black but Comely 2 v.

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 In Defence of Women 1 v.

Meredith, George, † 1909.
 The Ordeal of Richard Feverel 2 v. — Beauchamp's Career 2 v. — The Tragic Comedians 1 v. — The Egoist 2 v. — Rhoda Fleming 2 v.

Meredith, Owen: *vide* Robert Lord Lytton.

Merrick, Hope.
 Mary-Girl 1 v.

Merrick, Leonard.
 Cynthia 1 v. — One Man's View 1 v. — The Worldlings 1 v. — When Love flies out o' the Window 1 v. — Whispers about Women 1 v. — The Man who Understood Women, etc. 1 v.

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Milne, James.
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Milton, John, † 1674.
 Poetical Works 1 v.

"Miss Molly," Author of.
 Geraldine Hawthorne 1 v.

"Molly Bawn," Author of: *vide* Mrs. Hungerford.

Montague, C. E.
 Rough Justice 1 v. — Right off the Map 1 v.

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 Misunderstood 1 v. — Thrown Together 2 v. — Wild Mike 1 v. — Colonel Norton 2 v.

Moore, Frank Frankfort.
 "I Forbid the Banns" 2 v. — One Fair Daughter 2 v. — Nell Gwyn — Comedian 1 v. — A Damsel or Two 1 v. — Castle Omeragh 2 v. — Shipmates in Sunshine 2 v. — The Original Woman 1 v. — The White Causeway 1 v. — The Artful Miss Dill 1 v. — The Marriage Lease 1 v. — An Amateur Adventuress 1 v. — Priscilla and Charybdis 2 v. — The Food of Love 1 v. — The Laird of Craig Athol 1 v.

Moore, George.
 The Untilled Field 1 v. — Confessions of a Young Man 1 v. — The Lake 1 v. — Muslin 2 v. — The Coming of Gabrielle 1 v. — Celibate Lives 1 v.

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 Memoirs 3 v.

Morrison, Arthur.
 A Child of the Jago 1 v. — To London Town 1 v. — Cunning Murrell 1 v. — The Hole in the Wall 1 v. — The Green Eye of Goona 1 v. — Divers Vanities 1 v. — Green Ginger 1 v.

Mulock, Miss: *vide* Mrs. Craik.

Murray, David Christie.
 Rainbow Gold 2 v.

Murray, Grenville: *vide* Grenville.
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 The Authorised English Version, with Introduction and Various Readings from the three most celebrated Manuscripts of the Original Text, by Constantine Tischendorf (vol. 1000, published 1869) 1 v.

Newby, Mrs. C. J.
 Common Sense 2 v.

Nicholls, Mrs.: *vide* Currer Bell.
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 No Church 2 v. — Owen: —a Waif 2 v.

Noel, Lady Augusta.
 Hithersea Mere 2 v.

Norris, W. E.
 A Bachelor's Blunder 2 v. — The Rogue 2 v. — Miss Shafto 2 v. — Mrs. Fenton 1 v.

— Misadventure 2 v. — Saint Ann's 1 v. — A Victim of Good Luck 1 v. — Clarissa Furiosa 2 v. — Marietta's Marriage 2 v. — The Fight for the Crown 1 v. — The Widower 1 v. — Giles Ingilby 1 v. — The Flower of the Flock 1 v. — His Own Father 1 v. — The Credit of the County 1 v. — Lord Leonard the Luckless 1 v. — Nature's Comedian 1 v. — Nigel's Vocation 1 v. — Barham of Beltana 1 v. — Harry and Ursula 1 v. — The Square Peg 1 v. — The Perjurer 1 v. — Not Guilty 1 v. — Paul's Paragon 1 v. — The Triumphs of Sara 1 v. — Tony the Exceptional 1 v.

Norton, Hon. Mrs., † 1877.

Stuart of Dunleath 2 v. — Old Sir Douglas 2 v.

"Not Easily Jealous," Author of (Miss Iza Hardy).
Not Easily Jealous 2 v.

"Novels and Tales": *vide* "Household Words."

"Nursery Rhymes." 1 v.

O'Connor Eccles, Charlotte (Hal Godfrey).
The Matrimonial Lottery 1 v.

Oldmeadow, Ernest.
Susan 1 v.

Oliphant, Laurence, † 1888.
Altiora Peto 2 v. — Masollam 2 v.

Oliphant, Mrs., † 1897.
The Last of the Mortimers 2 v. — Mrs. Margaret Maitland 1 v. — Agnes 2 v. — Madonna Mary 2 v. — The Minister's Wife 2 v. — The Rector and the Doctor's Family 1 v. — Salem Chapel 2 v. — The Perpetual Curate 2 v. — Miss Marjoribanks 2 v. — Ombrà 2 v. — Memoir of Count de Montalembert 2 v. — May 2 v. — Innocent 2 v. — For Love and Life 2 v. — The Story of Valentine and his Brother 2 v. — Whiteladies 2 v. — The Curate in Charge 1 v. — Phœbe, Junior 2 v. — Mrs. Arthur 2 v. — Carità 2 v. — Young Musgrave 2 v. — The Primrose Path 2 v. — Within the Precincts 3 v. — The Greatest Heiress in England 2 v. — He that will not when he may 2 v. — Harry Joscelyn 2 v. — In Trust 2 v. — It was a Lover and his Lass 3 v. — The Ladies Lindores 3 v. — Hester 3 v. — The Wizard's Son 3 v. — A Country Gentleman and his Family 2 v. —

Neighbours on the Green 1 v. — The Duke's Daughter 1 v. — The Fugitives 1 v. — Kirsteen 2 v. — Life of Laurence Oliphant and of Alice Oliphant, his Wife 2 v. — The Little Pilgrim in the Unseen 1 v. — The Heir Presumptive and the Heir Apparent 2 v. — The Sorceress 2 v. — Sir Robert's Fortune 2 v. — The Ways of Life 1 v. — Old Mr. Tredgold 2 v.

"One who has kept Diary": *vide*
George W. E. Russell.

Oppenheim, E. Phillips.
Prodigals of Monte Carlo 1 v.

Orczy, Baroness.
The Scarlet Pimpernel 1 v. — I will Repay 1 v. — The Elusive Pimpernel 1 v. — Eldorado 2 v. — Nicolette 1 v. — The Honourable Jim 1 v. — Pimpernel and Rosemary 1 v. — Unravell'd Knots 1 v. — The Celestial City 1 v. — Sir Percy Hits Back 1 v. — "Skin o' My Tooth" 1 v. — Adventures of the Scarlet Pimpernel 1 v. — Blue Eyes and Grey 1 v.

Osbourne, Lloyd (Am.).
Baby Bullet 1 v. — Harm's Way 1 v. — The Kingdoms of the World 1 v.

Ouida, † 1908.
Idalia 2 v. — Puck 2 v. — Folle-Farine 2 v. — Cecil Castlemaine's Gage, and other Novelettes 1 v. — Madame la Marquise, and other Novelettes 1 v. — Pas-carèl 2 v. — Two little Wooden Shoes 1 v. — Signa 3 v. — Ariadnè 2 v. — Friendship 2 v. — Moths 3 v. — A Village Commune 2 v. — In Maremma 3 v. — Wanda 3 v. — Frescoes and other Stories 1 v. — Othmar 3 v. — A Rainy June (60 Pf.). Don Gesualdo (60 Pf.). — A House Party 1 v. — Guilderoy 2 v. — Syrlin 3 v. — Santa Barbara, etc. 1 v. — Two Offenders 1 v. — The Silver Christ, etc. 1 v. — Le Selve, and Tonia 1 v. — An Altruist, and Four Essays 1 v. — Helianthus 2 v.

"Outcasts, the," Author of: *vide* "Roy Tellet."

Parker, Sir Gilbert.
The Battle of the Strong 2 v. — The Seats of the Mighty 2 v. — The Judgment House 2 v.

Parr, Harriet (Holme Lee), † 1900.
Basil Godfrey's Caprice 2 v. — For Richer, for Poorer 2 v. — The Beautiful Miss Bar-
rington 2 v. — Her Title of Honour 1 v. — Echoes of a Famous Year 1 v. — Katherine's Trial 1 v. — The Vicissitudes of

Bessie Fairfax 2 v. — Ben Milner's Wooing 1 v. — Straightforward 2 v. — Mrs. Denys of Cote 2 v. — A Poor Squire 1 v.

Parr, Mrs.

Dorothy Fox 1 v. — The Prescotts of Pamphillon 2 v. — The Gosau Smithy, etc. 1 v. — Robin 2 v. — Loyalty George 2 v.

Paston, George.

A Study in Prejudices 1 v. — A Fair Deceiver 1 v.

Pasture, Mrs. Henry de la.

Master Christopher 2 v.

Paul, Mrs.: vide "Still Waters."

"Paul Ferroll," Author of (Mrs. Caroline Clive), † 1873.

Paul Ferroll 1 v. — Year after Year 1 v. — Why Paul Ferroll killed his Wife 1 v.

Payn, James, † 1898.

Found Dead 1 v. — Gwendoline's Harvest 1 v. — Like Father, like Son 2 v. — Not Wooded, but Won 2 v. — Cecil's Tryst 1 v. — A Woman's Vengeance 2 v. — Murphy's Master 1 v. — In the Heart of a Hill, and other Stories 1 v. — At Her Mercy 2 v. — The Best of Husbands 2 v. — Walter's Word 2 v. — Halves 2 v. — Fallen Fortunes 2 v. — What He cost Her 2 v. — By Proxy 2 v. — Less Black than we're Painted 2 v. — Under one Roof 2 v. — High Spirits 1 v. — High Spirits (*Second Series*) 1 v. — A Confidential Agent 2 v. — From Exile 2 v. — A Grape from a Thorn 2 v. — Some Private Views 1 v. — For Cash Only 2 v. — Kit: A Memory 2 v. — The Canon's Ward (with Portrait) 2 v. — Some Literary Recollections 1 v. — The Talk of the Town 1 v. — The Luck of the Darrells 2 v. — The Heir of the Ages 2 v. — Holiday Tasks 1 v. — Glow-Worm Tales (*First Series*) 1 v. — A Prince of the Blood 2 v. — The Mystery of Mirbridge 2 v. — The Burnt Million 2 v. — The Word and the Will 2 v. — A Modern Dick Whittington 2 v. — A Stumble on the Threshold 2 v. — A Trying Patient 1 v. — Gleams of Memory, and The Eavesdropper 1 v. — In Market Overt 1 v. — Another's Burden etc. 1 v. — The Backwater of Life, or Essays of a Literary Veteran 1 v.

Peard, Frances Mary.

One Year 2 v. — The Rose-Garden 1 v. — Thorpe Regis 1 v. — A Winter Story 1 v.

— A Madrigal, and other Stories 1 v. — Cartouche 1 v. — Mother Molly 1 v. — Schloss and Town 2 v. — Contradictions 2 v. — Near Neighbours 1 v. — Alicia Tennant 1 v. — Madame's Granddaughter 1 v. — Number One and Number Two 1 v. — The Ring from Jaipur 1 v. — The Flying Months 1 v.

Pemberton, Max.

A Woman of Kronstadt 1 v. — The Garden of Swords 1 v. — The Footsteps of a Throne 1 v. — The Giant's Gate 2 v. — I crown thee King 1 v. — Red Morn 1 v. — Mid the Thick Arrows 2 v. — My Sword for Lafayette 1 v. — The Lodestar 1 v. — Love the Harvester 1 v.

Percy, Bishop Thomas, † 1811.

Reliques of Ancient English Poetry 3 v.

Perrin, Alice.

Government House 1 v. — Rough Passages 1 v.

Phillips, F. C.

The Dean and his Daughter 1 v. — Lucy Smith 1 v. — A Lucky Young Woman 1 v. — Jack and Three Jills 1 v. — Young Mr. Ainslie's Courtship 1 v. — Extenuating Circumstances, and A French Marriage 1 v. — More Social Vicissitudes 1 v. — Constance 2 v. — That Wicked Mad'moiselle, etc. 1 v. — A Doctor in Difficulties, etc. 1 v. — "One Never Knows" 2 v. — Of Course 1 v. — Miss Ormerod's Protégé 1 v. — My little Husband 1 v. — Mrs. Bouverie 1 v. — A Question of Colour, and other Stories 1 v. — A Devil in Nun's Veiling 1 v. — A Full Confession, and other Stories 1 v. — The Luckiest of Three 1 v. — Poor Little Bella 1 v. — Eliza Clarke, Governess, and Other Stories 1 v. — Schoolgirls of To-day, etc. 1 v. — If Only, etc. 1 v. — An Unfortunate Blend 1 v. — A Barrister's Courtship 1 v.

Phillips, F. C., & Percy Fendan.

Margaret Byng 1 v. — Disciples of Plato 1 v.

Phillips, F. C., & C. J. Wills.

The Fatal Phryne 1 v. — The Scudamores 1 v. — A Maiden Fair to See 1 v. — Sybil Ross's Marriage 1 v.

Phillpotts, Eden.

Lying Prophets 2 v. — The Human Boy 1 v. — Sons of the Morning 2 v. — The

Good Red Earth 1 v. — The Striking Hours 1 v. — The Farm of the Dagger 1 v. — The Whirlwind 2 v. — The Human Boy Again 1 v. — From the Angle of Seventeen 1 v. — The Bronze Venus 1 v. — The Grey Room 1 v. — The Red Redmaynes 1 v. — A Human Boy's Diary 1 v. — Cheat-the-Boys 1 v. — A Voice from the Dark 1 v. — The Marylebone Miser 1 v. — The Jury 1 v.

Phillpotts, E., & Arnold Bennett.
The Sinews of War 1 v. — The Statue 1 v.

Piddington, Miss: *vide* Author of "The Last of the Cavaliers."

Poe, Edgar Allan (Am.), † 1849.
Poems and Essays, edited with a new Memoir by John H. Ingram 1 v. — Tales, edited by John H. Ingram 1 v. — Fantastic Tales 1 v.

Pope, Alexander, † 1744.
Select Poetical Works 1 v.

Poynter, Miss E. Frances.
My Little Lady 2 v. — Ersilia 2 v. — Among the Hills 1 v.

Præd, Mrs. Campbell.
Affinities 1 v. — The Head Station 2 v.

Prentiss, Mrs. E. (Am.), † 1878.
Stepping Heavenward 1 v.

Prince Consort, the, † 1861.
Speeches and Addresses 1 v.

Pryce, Richard.
Miss Maxwell's Affections 1 v. — The Quiet Mrs. Fleming 1 v. — Time and the Woman 1 v.

Pym, H. N.: *vide* Caroline Fox.

Quilter-Couch, Sir A. T. ("Q").
I Saw Three Ships 1 v. — Dead Man's Rock 1 v. — Ia and other Tales 1 v. — The Ship of Stars 1 v. — Fort Amity 1 v. — Shakespeare's Christmas, and Other Stories 1 v. — The Mayor of Troy 1 v. — Merry-Garden, and Other Stories 1 v. — Brother Copas 1 v.

Quincey: *vide* De Quincey.

Rae, W. Fraser, † 1905.
Westward by Rail 1 v. — Miss Bayle's Romance 2 v. — The Business of Travel 1 v.

Raimond, C. E.: *vide* Elizabeth Robins (Am.).

"Rajah's Heir, the." 2 v.

Reade, Charles, † 1884.
Hard Cash 3 v. — Put Yourself in his Place 2 v. — A Terrible Temptation 2 v. — Christie Johnstone 1 v. — A Simpleton 2 v. — The Wandering Heir 1 v. — Readiana 1 v.

"Recommended to Mercy," Author of (Mrs. Houstoun).
Zoe's "Brand" 2 v.

Reeves, Mrs.: *vide* Helen Mathers.

Rhys, Grace.
Mary Dominic 1 v. — The Wooing of Sheila 1 v. — About many Things 1 v.

Rice, James: *vide* Walter Besant.

Richards, Alfred Bate, † 1876.
So very Human 3 v.

Richardson, S., † 1761.
Clarissa Harlowe 4 v.

Riddell, Mrs. (F. G. Trafford).
George Geith of Fen Court 2 v. — Maxwell Drewitt 2 v. — The Race for Wealth 2 v. — The Earl's Promise 2 v. — Mortmoley's Estate 2 v.

Ridge, W. Pett.
Name of Garland 1 v. — Thanks to Sander-son 1 v. — Miss Mannering 1 v. — The Lunch Basket 1 v. — Just like Aunt Bertha 1 v.

"Rita."
Souls 1 v. — The Jesters 1 v. — The Masqueraders 2 v. — Queer Lady Judas 2 v. — Prince Charming 1 v. — The Pointing Finger 1 v. — A Man of no Importance 1 v. — Calvary 2 v. — That is to say— 1 v.

Ritchie, Mrs. Anne Thackeray: *vide* Miss Thackeray.

Roberts, Miss: *vide* Author of "Made-moiselle Mori."

Elizabeth Robins (C. E. Raimond) (Am.).
The Open Question 2 v. — The Magnetic North 2 v. — A Dark Lantern 2 v. — The Convert 2 v. — The Florentine Frame 1 v. — Way Stations 1 v. — The Secret That Was Kept 1 v.

Robinson, F.: *vide* "No Church."

Ross, Charles H.
The Pretty Widow 1 v. — A London Romance 2 v.

Ross, Martin: *vide* Somerville.

"Roy Tellet."

The Outcasts 1 v. — A Draught of Lethe 1 v. — Pastor and Prelate 2 v.

Ruck, Berta.

Sir or Madam? 1 v. — The Dancing Star 1 v. — Lucky in Love 1 v. — The Clouded Pearl 1 v. — The Immortal Girl 1 v. — Kneel to the Prettiest 1 v. — The Pearl Thief 1 v. — Her Pirate Partner 1 v. — Money for One 1 v. — The Youngest Venus 1 v. — One of the Chorus 1 v.

Ruffini, J., † 1881.

Lavinia 2 v. — Doctor Antonio 1 v. — Vincenzo 2 v. — A Quiet Nook in the Jura 1 v.

Ruskin, John, * 1819, † 1900.

Sesame and Lilies 1 v. — The Stones of Venice (with Illustrations) 2 v. — Unto this Last and Munera Pulveris 1 v. — The Seven Lamps of Architecture (with 14 Illustrations) 1 v. — Mornings in Florence 1 v. — St. Mark's Rest 1 v.

Russell, W. Clark, † 1911.

A Sailor's Sweetheart 2 v. — The "Lady Maud" 2 v. — A Sea Queen 2 v.

Russell, George W. E.

Collections and Recollections. By One who has kept a Diary 2 v. — A Londoner's Log-Book 1 v.

"Ruth and her Friends": *vide* p. 27.

Sala, George Augustus, † 1895.

The Seven Sons of Mammon 2 v.

Saunders, John.

Israel Mort, Overman 2 v. — The Shipowner's Daughter 2 v. — A Noble Wife 2 v.

Saunders, Katherine (Mrs. Cooper).

Joan Merryweather, and other Tales 1 v. — Gideon's Rock, and other Tales 1 v. — The High Mills 2 v. — Sebastian 1 v.

Savage, Richard Henry (Am.), † 1903.

My Official Wife 1 v. — The Little Lady of Lagunitas 2 v. — Prince Schamyl's Wooing 1 v. — The Masked Venus 2 v. — Delilah of Harlem 2 v. — A Daughter of Judas 1 v. — Miss Devereux of the Mariquita 2 v. — Checked Through 2 v. — A Modern Corsair 2 v. — In the Swim 2 v. — In the House of

His Friends 2 v. — The Mystery of a Shipyard 2 v.

Scott, Sir Walter, † 1832.

Waverley 2 v. — Ivanhoe 2 v. — Kenilworth 2 v. — Quentin Durward 2 v.

Seeley, Prof. J. R., † 1895.

Life and Times of Stein 4 v. — The Expansion of England 1 v.

Sewell, Elizabeth, † 1906.

Amy Herbert 2 v. — Ursula 2 v. — A Glimpse of the World 2 v. — The Journal of a Home Life 2 v. — After Life 2 v. — The Experience of Life 2 v.

Shakespeare, William, † 1616.

Plays and Poems (*Second Edition*) 7 v.

Shakespeare's Plays may also be had in 37 numbers, each number sold separately.

Sharp, William, † 1905: *vide* Miss Howard, Fiona Macleod and Swinburne.

Shaw, Bernard.

Man and Superman 1 v. — The Perfect Wagnerite 1 v. — Cashel Byron's Profession 1 v. — Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant (The Three Unpleasant Plays 1 v. — The Four Pleasant Plays 1 v.) — Getting Married & The Shewing-up of Blanco Posnet 1 v. — The Doctor's Dilemma & The Dark Lady of the Sonnets 1 v. — Three Plays for Puritans 1 v. — John Bull's Other Island etc. 1 v. — Androcles and the Lion; Pygmalion 1 v. — Misalliance 1 v. — Fanny's First Play, etc. 1 v. — Heartbreak House, etc. 1 v. — Back to Methuselah 1 v. — Saint Joan 1 v.

Shelley, Percy Bysshe, † 1822.

A Selection from his Poems 1 v.

Sheppard, Nathan (Am.), † 1888.

Shut up in Paris 1 v.

Sheridan, R. B., † 1816.

The Dramatic Works 1 v.

Shorthouse, J. Henry, † 1903.

John Inglesant 2 v. — Blanche, Lady Falaise 1 v.

Sidgwick, Mrs. Alfred.

The Lantern Bearers 1 v. — Anthea's Guest 1 v.

May Sinclair.

Anne Severn and the Fieldings 1 v. — Uncanny Stories 1 v. — A Cure of Souls 1 v. — Arnold Waterlow: a Life 1 v. — The Rector of Wyck 1 v. — Far End 1 v. — The Allinghames 1 v. — History of Anthony Waring 1 v.

- Snaith, J. C.**
An Affair of State 1 v. — Time and Tide 1 v. — Thus Far 1 v.
- "Society in London," Author of.
Society in London. By a Foreign Resident 1 v.
- Somerville, E. G., & M. Ross.**
Naboth's Vineyard 1 v. — Dan Russel the Fox 1 v.
- "Spanish Brothers, the." 2 v.
- Stanhope, Earl (Lord Mahon), † 1875.**
Reign of Queen Anne 2 v.
- Steel, Flora Annie.**
The Hosts of the Lord 2 v.
- Sterne, Laurence, † 1768.**
Tristram Shandy 2 v. — A Sentimental Journey 1 v.
- Stevenson, Robert Louis, † 1894.**
Treasure Island 1 v. — Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, and An Inland Voyage 1 v. — Kidnapped 1 v. — The Black Arrow 1 v. — The Master of Ballantrae 1 v. — The Merry Men, etc. 1 v. — Across the Plains, etc. 1 v. — Island Nights' Entertainments 1 v. — Catriona 1 v. — In the South Seas 2 v. — Tales and Fantasies 1 v.
- "Still Waters," Author of (Mrs. Paul).
Still Waters 1 v. — Dorothy 1 v. — De Cressy 1 v. — Uncle Ralph 1 v. — Maiden Sisters 1 v. — Martha Brown 1 v. — Vanessa 1 v.
- Stirling, M. C.: vide G. M. Craik.**
- Stockton, Frank R. (Am.), † 1902.**
The House of Martha 1 v.
- "Story of a Penitent Soul, the." 1 v.
- "Story of Elizabeth, the," Author of:
vide Miss Thackeray.
- Stowe, Mrs. Harriet Beecher (Am.), † 1896.**
Uncle Tom's Cabin 2 v. — A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin 2 v. — Oldtown Folks 2 v.
- "Sunbeam Stories," Author of: *vide* Mrs. Mackarness.
- Swift, Jonathan (Dean Swift), † 1745.**
Gulliver's Travels 1 v.
- Swinburne, Algernon Charles, † 1909.**
Atalanta in Calydon: and Lyrical Poems selected, with an Introduction, by William Sharp) 1 v. — Love's Cross-Currents 1 v. — Chastelard and Mary Stuart 1 v.
- Swinnerton, Frank.**
The Three Lovers 1 v. — The Elder Sister 1 v. — Summer Storm 1 v. — Tokefield Papers 1 v.
- Symonds, John Addington, † 1893.**
Sketches in Italy 1 v. — New Italian Sketches 1 v.
- Syngé, John M., † 1909.**
Plays 1 v. — The Aran Islands 1 v.
- Tagore, Rabindranath.**
The Home and the World 1 v. — The Gardener 1 v. — Sādhanā 1 v. — The Wreck 1 v. — Gitanjali; Fruit-Gathering 1 v.
- Tallentyre, S. G.: vide H. S. Merriman.**
- Tarkington, Booth (Am.).**
Women 1 v. — The Plutocrat 1 v. — Claire Ambler 1 v. — The World Does Move 1 v.
- Tasma.**
Uncle Piper of Piper's Hill 2 v.
- Tautphoeus, Baroness, † 1893.**
Cyrilla 2 v. — Quits 2 v.
- Taylor, Col. Meadows, † 1876.**
Tara; a Mahratta Tale 3 v.
- Tellet: vide "Roy Tellet."**
- Templeton: vide** Author of "Horace Templeton."
- Tennyson, Alfred (Lord), † 1892.**
Poetical Works vol. 5, 8. — Locksley Hall, sixty Years after; The Promise of May; Tiresias and other Poems 1 v. — A Memoir. By His Son 4 v.
- Testament the New: vide** New.
- Thackeray, William Makepeace, † 1863.**
Vanity Fair 3 v. — Miscellanies Vol. 2, 3, 5. — The Newcomes 4 v. — The Virginians vol. 1, 2. — The Adventures of Philip 2 v. — Roundabout Papers 2 v. — The Paris Sketch Book 2 v.
- Thackeray, Miss (Lady Ritchie).**
Old Kensington 2 v. — Bluebeard's Keys, and other Stories 1 v. — Five Old Friends 1 v. — Miss Angel 1 v. — Fulham Lawn, and other Tales 1 v. — From an Island. A Story and some Essays 1 v. — Da Capo, and other Tales 1 v. — Madame de Sévigné; From a Stage Box; Miss Williamson's Divagations 1 v. — A Book of Sibyls 1 v. — Mrs. Dymond 2 v. — Chapters from some Memoirs 1 v.

Thomas, A. (Mrs. Pender Cudlip).
 Denis Donne 2 v. — On Guard 2 v. —
 Walter Goring 2 v. — Played Out 2 v. —
 Called to Account 2 v. — Only herself
 2 v. — A Narrow Escape 2 v.

Thomson, James, † 1748.
 Poetical Works 1 v.

"Thoth," Author of.
 Thoth 1 v.

Thurston, E. Temple.
 The Greatest Wish in the World 1 v. —
 Mirage 1 v. — The City of Beautiful Non-
 sense 1 v. — The Garden of Resurrection 1 v.
 — The Apple of Eden 1 v. — The Antago-
 nists 1 v. — The Open Window 1 v. —
 Richard Furlong 1 v. — The Eye of the Wolf
 1 v. — Achievement 1 v. — May Eve 1 v.
 — The Green Bough 1 v. — Charmeuse 1 v.
 — Mr. Bottleby Does Something 1 v. —
 Jane Carroll 1 v. — The King's Candle
 1 v. — Portrait of a Spy 1 v.

Tischendorf Constantine: *v.* New Testa-
 ment.

Tomlinson, H. M.
 Gallions Reach 1 v.

Trafford, F. G.: *vide* Mrs. Riddell.

Trois-Etoiles: *vide* Grenville.

Trollope, Anthony, † 1882.
 Doctor Thorne 2 v. — The Bertrams
 2 v. — The Warden 1 v. — Barchester
 Towers 2 v. — Castle Richmond 2 v. —
 Framley Parsonage 2 v. — North America
 3 v. — Orley Farm 3 v. — The Belton
 Estate 2 v. — Nina Balatka 1 v. — The
 Last Chronicle of Barset 3 v. — Phineas
 Finn 3 v. — Ralph the Heir 2 v. —
 Australia and New Zealand 3 v. —
 Lady Anna 2 v. — Harry Heathcote
 of Gangoil 1 v. — The Way we live
 now 4 v. — The Prime Minister 4 v. —
 South Africa 2 v. — An Eye for an Eye 1 v.
 — John Caldgate 3 v. — The Duke's
 Children 3 v. — Dr. Wortle's School 1 v. —
 The Fixed Period 1 v. — Marion Fay 2 v. —
 Alice Dugdale, and other Stories 1 v. —
 La Mère Bauche, and other Stories 1 v. —
 The Mistletoe Bough, and other Stories
 1 v. — An Autobiography 1 v. — An Old
 Man's Love 1 v.

Trollope, T. Adolphus, † 1892.
 The Garstangs of Garstang Grange 2 v.
 — A Siren 2 v.

Trowbridge, W. R. H.
 The Letters of Her Mother to Elizabeth
 1 v. — That Little Marquis of Branden-

burg 1 v. — A Dazzling Reprobate 1 v.
 — The White Hope 1 v.

Twain, Mark (Samuel L. Clemens)
 (Am.), † 1910.

The Adventures of Tom Sawyer 1 v. —
 The Innocents Abroad; or, The New
 Pilgrims' Progress 2 v. — A Tramp Abroad
 2 v. — "Roughing it" 1 v. — The In-
 nocents at Home 1 v. — The Prince and
 the Pauper 2 v. — The Stolen White
 Elephant, etc. 1 v. — Life on the Mis-
 sissippi 2 v. — Sketches 1 v. — Huckle-
 berry Finn 2 v. — Selections from American
 Humour 1 v. — The American
 Claimant 1 v. — The £ 1000000 Bank-
 Note and other new Stories 1 v. — Tom
 Sawyer Abroad 1 v. — Pudd'nhead Wil-
 son 1 v. — Tom Sawyer, Detective, and
 other Tales 1 v. — More Tramps Abroad
 2 v. — A Double-Barrelled Detective
 Story, etc. 1 v. — The \$30,000 Bequest,
 and Other Stories 1 v. — Christian Science
 1 v. — Captain Stormfield's Visit to
 Heaven & Is Shakespeare Dead? 1 v.

"Two Cosmos, the." 1 v.

Vachell, Horace Annesley.
 Teh Hill 1 v. — An Impending Sword 1 v.
 — Quinneys' 1 v. — Change Partners 1 v.
 — The Yard 1 v. — Quinney's Adventures
 1 v. — Watling's for Worth 1 v. — A
 Woman in Exile 1 v. — Dew of the Sea,
 and Other Stories 1 v. — Miss Torrobin's
 Experiment 1 v.

Vachten, Carl van (Am.).
 Nigger Heaven 1 v. — Spider Boy 1 v.

"Venus and Cupid." 1 v.

"Véra," Author of.
 Véra 1 v. — The Hôtel du Petit St.
 Jean 1 v. — Blue Roses 2 v. — Within
 Sound of the Sea 2 v. — Ninette 1 v.

Victoria R. I. † 1901.
 Leaves from the Journal of our Life in
 the Highlands from 1848 to 1861 1 v. —
 More Leaves, etc. from 1862 to 1882 1 v.
 "Virginia." 1 v.

Vizetelly, Ernest Alfred.
 With Zola in England 1 v.

Walford, L. B.
 Mr. Smith 2 v. — Pauline 2 v. — Cousins
 2 v. — Troublesome Daughters 2 v. —
 Leddy Marget 1 v.

Wallace, Edgar.
 The Book of All-Power 1 v. — The Valley
 of Ghosts 1 v. — Chick 1 v. — Captains of

Souls 1 v. — The Missing Million 1 v. — The Face in the Night 1 v. — The Door with Seven Locks 1 v. — The Avenger 1 v. — Terror Keep 1 v. — The Traitor's Gate 1 v. — The Feathered Serpent 1 v. — The Ringer 1 v. — The Squeaker 1 v.

Wallace, Lew. (Am.), † 1905.
Ben-Hur 2 v.

Walpole, Hugh.
Jeremy and Hamlet 1 v. — The Old Ladies 1 v. — Portrait of a Man with Red Hair 1 v. — Harmer John 1 v. — Jeremy at Crale 1 v. — Wintersmoon 2 v. — The Silver Thorn 1 v.

Walpole, Hugh and Priestley, J. P.
Farthing Hall 1 v.

Warburton, Eliot, † 1852. Darien 2 v.
Ward, Mrs. Humphry, † 1920.
Miss Bretherton 1 v. — Marcella 3 v. — Bessie Costrell 1 v. — Fenwick's Career 2 v. — Diana Mallory 2 v. — Daphne; or, "Marriage à la Mode" 1 v. — The Case of Richard Meynell 2 v.

Warner, Susan: *vide* Wetherell.
Warren, Samuel, † 1877.
Diary of a late Physician 2 v. — Ten Thousand a-Year 3 v. — Now and Then 1 v. — The Lily and the Bee 1 v.

"Waterdale Neighbours, the," Author of: *vide* Justin McCarthy.

Watson, H. B. Marriott.
The Excelsior 1 v.

Watts-Dunton, Theodore, † 1914.
Aylwin 2 v.

Wells, H. G.
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