Our Wonderful Selves

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OUR WONDERFUL SELVES

"*Of making many books there is no end:*
and much study is a weariness of the flesh."
ECCLESIASTES XII, 12.

OUR WONDERFUL SELVES

BY
ROLAND PERTWEE

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To
AVICE

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PART I
A QUESTION MARK IN SUBURBIA

I

Wynne Rendall was a seven months' child; the fact is significant of a personality seeking premature prominence upon this planet. He spent the first weeks of his infancy wrapped in cotton wool and placed in a basket as near the fire as safety allowed. He scaled precisely two pounds fifteen ounces, and the doctor, who manipulated the weights and was interested in mathematics, placed two pounds fifteen ounces over seven months and shook his head forebodingly at the result.

"If he lives he will be a sickly child, nurse."

This opinion the nurse heartily endorsed, and added, in tribute to the kindliness of her disposition:

"Poor little thing!"

Mrs. Rendall did not show great concern at the untimely arrival of her offspring. She accepted it, as she accepted all things, with phlegmatical calm. A great deal was required to still Mrs. Rendall's emotions, so much, in fact, that it was not within the recollection of any of her intimates that they ever had been stirred. It did not occur to her that the birth of a child, mature or premature, was a matter of moment. If it lived, well and good, and the best must be done for it. If it died, the occurrence must be regarded as sad and an occasion for shedding a given number of tears. It was clearly useless to foreshadow either event, since one was as likely as the other and could be as readily treated with when the time arose.

It must not be thought that Mrs. Rendall's calm was the result of philosophy. That would be far from the truth. It occurred simply and solely from a vacant mind—a mind nourished by the dead-sea fruit of its own vacuity. She lacked impulse and intelligence, and was, indeed, no more than a lifeless canal along which the barges of domesticity were drearily towed. Her ideas were other people's, and valueless at that; her conversation was a mere repetition of things she had said before.

When the doctor, rubbing his hands to lend an air of cheerful optimism to a cheerless situation, declared, "We shall pull that youngster through, see if we don't," she responded, "Oh, yes," with a falling inflexion. If he had

said the opposite, her reply would have been the same—delivered in the same manner.

In some cases heredity ignores personalities, and this, in the instance of Wynne Rendall, was hardly difficult of achievement. From his mother he took nothing, unless it were a measure of her fragility, which was perhaps the only circumstance about her to justify attention. The characteristics that he did not bring into the world with himself he inherited from his grandfather, *via* his own sire.

The grandfather was certainly the more notable of the two gentlemen, and had achieved some astonishing ideals on canvas, very heartily disapproved of by the early Victorian era, and some memorable passages of wit which had heightened his unpopularity. He was an artist who went for his object with truly remarkable energy. To seek a parallel among modern men, his work possessed some of the qualities of Aubrey Beardsley's, combined with the vigour of John S. Sargent. But the world was not ready for such productions, and, casting its eyes upward in pious horror, hurried from the walls on which they were exhibited. Old Edward Tyler Rendall scorned them as they departed, but he understood the situation notwithstanding.

"I've come too soon," he mused, "too soon by a generation or more."

His belief in his art was so great that he determined to sacrifice his liberty and get married, in the hope that he might have a son who would carry on the work for the benefit of a world enlightened by broader-minded civilization.

In due course the son was born, and when he reached an age of understanding, the reason of his being was dinned into his ears.

"Get away from old traditions; build something new, dextrous, adroit, understanding. See what I mean, Robert boy? Be plucky—plucky in line, composition, subject. Always have a purpose before you; don't mind how offensive it is—no one cares for that if you've the courage to declare your meaning in honest black and white."

The result of this intensive artistic culture was that Robert Everett Rendall, at the age of sixteen and a half, ran away from home and took a position as office boy in a large firm of tea-tasters in the City.

This case presents unusual features, being in itself an inversion of the usual procedure.

Old Rendall made one heroic effort to win him back, and stormed the City citadel to that end; but here he encountered from Robert a metropolitan manner so paralysing that he fled the office in wholesome disgust.

Ever courageous, he urged his wife to labour anew, and was rewarded by a daughter who unhappily perished. The disappointment was acute, and when some three years later a son was born his energies had so far abated that he made no further effort to inculcate the spirit of artistry which had been the essence of his being.

Meanwhile Robert Everett Rendall lived a sober and honourable life in the City, and heartily abused all matters pertaining to art. Nothing infuriated him more than to find himself drawing, with an odd facility, strange little designs on the corners of his blotting paper while engaged in thinking out the intricacies connected with the tasting of tea.

The suppression of a natural ability sometimes produces peculiar results and the deliberate smothering of all he had been taught or had inherited from his father brought about in Robert Everett Rendall a deplorable irritability and high temper. This he was discreet enough to keep in hand during City hours, but in his own home he allowed it full sway.

At such times his actions were abnormal. He would pick up any object convenient to hand and throw it with surprising accuracy of aim at one or another of the highly respectable water-colour paintings which adorned the walls of his abode.

But even in this matter his City training stood him in good stead, for there was very little spontaneity in the act. According to the degree of his ill-humour, so was the target chosen. If he were in a towering rage the 20x30 drawing of Clovelly would be bound to have it; and so down the scale of anger to the 10x7 of Beachy Head. It made no difference whether the picture were large or small, his projectile struck it with never-failing precision. The tinkle and crash of the falling glass seemed to restore his calm, for when the blow had been struck he returned to more normal habits.

Had Mrs. Rendall been gifted with observation she would have known exactly, according to his mood, which picture would fall, and would thus have saved herself much ducking over the dining-room table. Such conclusions, however, were beyond the reach of her unsubtle soul.

In connection with this matter she produced, and that unintentionally, one of her only flights of humour:

“If you would throw your serviette ring, Robert, it would not matter so much, but the salt-cellar makes it so uncomfortable for every one else.”

II

The news of Wynne's birth was conveyed to Mr. Rendall on his doorstep at an inopportune moment. He had pinched his fingers in the front gate, and followed this misfortune with the discovery that his latchkey had been left in another pair of trousers. Few things irritate a man more than ringing his own door bell, and Mr. Rendall was no exception to the rule. In common with the general view, he conceived that the parlour-maid kept him waiting unduly.

"I cannot think what you girls do all day long," he said sharply, when the door opened.

To this Lorna replied:

"Oh, sir, if you please, the baby has come."

"Well, that won't alter the price of bacon," ejaculated Mr. Rendall, and pushed past her into the hall.

But notwithstanding this attitude of *nonchaloir*, he was genuinely put about by the news. He did not admit the right of babies to take liberties with their time-sheets. To do so was an impertinent indiscretion. The other two children had not behaved in this manner, and he saw no reason why a special latitude should be extended to the new arrival. Already he had made preparations for being from home when this troublesome period arrived, and now, by a caprice of nature, he was involved in all the discomfort that falls to the lot of a husband at such a time. It was not part of his nature to take a secondary place in his own household, and he esteemed that to do so was derogatory to his position.

Throwing his hat on the hall chair he entered the drawing-room, where he received a rude surprise. It was his habit, before setting out to the City, to finish his breakfast coffee by the drawing-room fire. To his disgust and irritation he found the empty cup, a crumpled newspaper, and his soft slippers just as he had left them that morning. Mightily angered, Mr. Rendall moved toward the bell, when his eye fell upon a basket in the grate. With the intention of throwing cup, newspaper, shoes and basket into the garden, he crossed the room, but as he stooped to carry out his resolve, a faint, flickering wail came to his ears. The contents of the basket moved ever so slightly—a fold of blanket turned outward, and the thin, elfin face of his youngest son was revealed.

At that moment the nurse came into the room. She hesitated at the sight of Mr. Rendall, then stepped forward with,

"Oh, it's you, sir. Hush, that's the baby."

“D’you imagine I thought it was a packet of envelopes?” retorted Mr. Rendall. “But why not put him in the nursery?”

“The other children have only just been sent to their aunt’s, sir, and the nursery isn’t quite ready. Poor little thing’s very weakly, and has to be near a good fire.”

“H’m,” said Mr. Rendall. “I see! Boy, eh? Not much good—weakly boys!”

“Oh, but he’ll soon strengthen up.”

“Hope so. Yes. Doctor’s bills—no good! Mrs. Rendall all right?”

“Going along very nicely, I’m glad to say.”

“H’m. Yes. When did all this happen?”

“About three o’clock.”

“Not much of a chance to clear up, eh? Cups and things lying about! Well, I suppose I may as well go upstairs.”

The interview between husband and wife does not affect our narrative and may well be omitted.

III

Despite adverse conditions, Wynne Rendall survived the perils of infancy. He was, however, a fragile child, susceptible to chills and fever, and ailments the flesh is heir to. In appearance he in no way resembled his brother or sister—healthy children both, with large appetites and stupid, expressionless faces. He had a broad brow, which overcast the slender lower portions of his face and accentuated the narrowness of his shoulders. His eyes were restless and very bright; they flickered inquiry at every object which passed before their focal plane. His attention was readily attracted to anything unusual even in his early pram days. On one occasion he saw a balloon floating over the houses at a low altitude, and his perambulator never passed the spot above which he had seen it, without his eyes lifting toward the skies in anxious search. Wynne’s nurse was a conscientious little being, and took a fierce pride in the prowess of her charge.

“The way ’e notices, you know. Never forgets so much as anything,” she would confide to other nurses as they pursued their way toward the gardens. “Knows ’is own mind, ’e does, and isn’t afraid to let you know it, either.”

Certainly Wynne held ideas regarding the proper conduct of babies and did not hesitate to raise his voice in displeasure when occasion demanded. In this, however, he showed a logical disposition, for he never cried for the

sake of crying. Of toys he very soon tired, and signified lack of interest by throwing them from his pram at moments when his actions were unobserved. As a rule he showed some enthusiasm with the arrival of a new toy, and cherished it dearly for two or three days, but directly the novelty had worn off he lost no time in ridding himself of its society. If he were caught in the act, and the toy restored to him, he would cry very heartily, bite his hands, and kick his feet.

Unlike most children, his first adventures with talking did not consist in repetition of the words "mummie" and "daddy." The nurse did her best to persuade him, but he was obdurate, and declined to accept the view that they should take precedence in forming a vocabulary. Trees, sky and water he articulated, almost perfectly, before bothering about nouns defining mere mortals.

IV

At the age of four and a half he was sent to a kindergarten, where he found many things to wonder about. He spent a year or more wondering. He wondered about the ribbons that tied little girls' hair, and why hair need be tied, since it was pleasanter to look upon in riot. He wondered why the lady who kept the school had a chain to her eye-glasses, since they gripped her nose so securely that the danger of their falling off was negligible. He wondered why A was A, and not for example S, and would not accept it as being so without a reason being furnished. Also he wondered why he should be set tasks involving the plaiting of coloured strips of paper, which were tiresome to perform and unsightly when finished.

"Why need I?" he asked petulantly. "Grown-ups don't. They are ugly and silly."

"You mustn't say that, Wynne," reproved the mistress. "Besides it isn't true. Doesn't your mother do pretty embroidery? I am sure she does."

The logic of the reply pleased him, but it also set him speculating why his mother devoted her time to such profitless employment. The designs she worked were stereotyped and geometrical. It seemed impossible any one could wish to be associated with such productions, and yet, when he came to reflect upon the matter, he realized that most of her time was spent stitching at them.

At the first opportunity he said:

"Mummie, why do you do that?"

"Because it is pretty," she replied.

There must be something wrong then, he decided. Either she had used the wrong word, or the natural forms which he had decided were "pretty" were not pretty at all. The train of thought was a little complex, so he questioned afresh:

"What are they for when you've done?"

"Antimacassars."

"What's antercassars?"

"It means something you put over the back of a chair to prevent the grease from people's hair spoiling the coverings." Mrs. Rendall's grandmother had provided her with this valuable piece of knowledge.

"Oh," said Wynne.

His eyes roamed round the precise semi-circle of small drawing-room chairs, each complete with its detachable antimacassar. As he looked it struck him that the backs of these chairs were so low that no grown-up person could bring his head into contact with them unless he sat upon the floor. Wherefore it was clear that his mother was making provision against a danger which did not exist.

With this discovery awoke the impression that she could hardly be a lady of sound intelligence. Rather fearfully he advanced the theory that her labours were in vain.

"Don't bother your head about these things," said Mrs. Rendall. "Plenty of time to think of them when you are grown up." And she threaded her needle with a strand of crimson silk.

Wynne passed from the room disturbed by many doubts. To the best of his ability he had proved to his mother that antimacassars in no sense were antimacassars, and, in defiance of his logic, she continued to produce them. Moreover, she had said they were pretty, and they were *not* pretty—she had said they were antimacassars and they were *not* antimacassars. Could her word, therefore, be relied upon in other matters? For instance, when she announced at table, "You have had quite enough;" or at night, "It is time to go to bed," might it not, in reality, be an occasion for a "second helping" or another hour at play? It was reasonable to suppose so.

He decided it would be expedient to keep his eyes open and watch the habits of grown-ups more closely in the future.

V

The next serious impression on Wynne's susceptible brain was the discovery of routine, and he conceived for it an instant dislike. To him it

appeared a grievous state of affairs that nearly all matters were guided by the clock rather than by circumstance. One had one's breakfast not because one was hungry, but because it was half-past eight, and so on with a mass of other details, great and small, throughout the day. That people should wilfully enslave themselves to a mere mechanical contrivance, instead of rising superior to the calls of time and place, was incomprehensible to Wynne. He could not appreciate how regularity and repetition in any sense benefited the individual. He observed how a breakdown in the time-table of events was a sure signal for high words from his father, and an aggravated sense of calamity which ran through every department of the house. True, a late breakfast presaged the loss of a train, and so much time less at the office, but surely this was no matter for melancholy? It argued a poor spirit that could not rejoice at an extra quarter of an hour in bed, or delaying the pursuit of irksome duties.

Wynne had never seen his father's office, but at the age of seven he had already formed very pronounced and unfavourable views regarding it. To his mind the office and the City were one—a place which swallowed up mankind in the morning and disgorged them at night. The process of digestion through which they appeared to have passed produced characteristics of a distressing order.

A child judges men by his father, and women by his mother. From this standard Wynne judged that men might be tolerable were it not for the City. The City was responsible for his father's ill-humours at night—the city inspired home criticism and such observations as:

"I come back tired out and find——" etc.

Wynne had a very wholesome distaste for recurrent sentiments; he liked people to say new things that were interesting. The repetition of ready-made phrases was lazy and dull—the very routine of speech. It were better, surely, to say nothing at all than have catch-phrases for ever on one's lips.

From this point his thoughts turned to inanimate objects, and subconsciously he realized how routine affected their arrangement as inevitably as it affected human beings. Look where you would, there was always a hat-rack in the hall, a church almanack in the lavatory, and a clock on the dining-room mantelpiece. Why?

There was a certain rough justice in the position of the hat-rack, assuming that one admitted the law which discouraged the wearing of hats in the house, but why should one desire to study saints' days while washing one's hands? A clock, too, would be none the less serviceable if standing on

a cabinet. Who, then, was responsible for dictating such laws? he asked himself. Clearly these were matters for investigation.

An opportunity to investigate arose a few days later. There was a new housemaid, and after her first effort to turn out the drawing-room Mrs. Rendall summoned her to explain that the chairs and tables had not been put back in their proper places.

"Your master would be most annoyed if he saw this, Emily. It is very careless indeed. These chairs must go like this"—and the old order was restored.

"Why do they have to go like that, Mummie?" demanded Wynne, when the maid had departed.

"Because they always have," replied Mrs. Rendall, with great finality.

He was too young to understand the meaning of a vicious circle or he might have recognized its rotations in her reply. So everything must be done again because it has been done before. Seemingly that was the law governing the universe.

Speaking almost to himself he mused:

"I think it would be nice to do things because they *never* have been done before."

To which Mrs. Rendall very promptly replied:

"Don't be silly."

"That isn't silly," said Wynne. "Why is it silly?"

"If you say another word you will go straight to bed."

The remark was as surely in place as the clock which stood on the dead centre of the mantelpiece.

VI

Middle class suburban prosperity was not the atmosphere to produce the best results from Wynne Rendall's active, sensitive brain. He could not understand his parents, and they did not attempt to understand him. His elder brother and sister, being three and four years his senior, left him outside their reckoning. They played sedate games, in which he was never invited to take part. To tell the truth, he had little enough inclination, for most of their ideas of entertainment revolved round commercial enterprise, which he cordially disliked. His brother would build a shop with the towel-horse, stock it with nursery rubbish, and sell the goods, after much ill-humoured bartering, to his sister. She, poor child, in spite of frequent importunities, never once was

allowed to play the rôle of shopkeeper, but continued as a permanent customer until the game had lost its relish.

Thus Wynne was thrown very much on his own resources. He read voraciously whatever books he could procure, and spent a deal of time working out his own intricate little thoughts.

Somewhere at the back of his head was a strong conviction that the world held finer things than those surrounding him. To strengthen this belief were certain passages in the books he read. On the whole, however, he was rather disappointed with reading. This in itself was not surprising, in view of the quality of the books to which he had access. It seemed to him that a man might very easily devise more romantic imaginings than any with which he had come into contact.

To test the truth of this theory, he took a pencil stump and some paper into the garden and tried to write about pleasing things. But the words he desired were hard to find, hard to spell, and difficult to string together. So, instead, he decided to draw the little Princess who was the heroine of his unwritten tale. In this he was more successful and achieved a dainty little figure with an agreeable smile. To some extent this pleased him, but not altogether. He was painfully conscious that her feet were clumsy, and her eyes ill drawn, and that the picture did not express half he desired to express. A picture was stationary, and lacked the movement and variety of words. Words could describe the picture, but the picture could not speak the words. Thus his first artistic experiment was fraught with disappointment. As luck would have it, his father chanced by and flicked the paper from his fingers.

"What's this, eh?" he demanded. "Wasting your time drawing! Why aren't you at play?"

"I'm 'musing myself," replied Wynne, sulkily.

"You amuse yourself with a ball, then, like anybody else."

It is curious how closely a ball is associated with amusement. The average man is incapable of realizing entertainment that does not include the use of a ball. Reputations have been made and lost through ability or inability to handle it in the proper manner. A man is considered a very poor sort of fellow if he expresses disdain and contempt for the ball. Conceive the catastrophic consequences that would result if a law were passed forbidding the manufacture of balls? A shudder runs through the healthy-minded at the bare thought of such a thing.

Mr. Rendall's anger can readily be appreciated, then, when his son made answer:

"There isn't any fun in that."

“No fun?” roared Mr. Rendall. “Time you got some proper ideas into your head, young fellow. Be ashamed of yourself! Fetch a ball from the nursery at once, and let me see you enjoying yourself with it, or you’ll hear something. Understand this, too—there’s not going to be any drawing in this household, or a lot of damn high-falutin artistic business either. Get that into your head as soon as you can. Be off.”

Ten minutes later, in a white heat of fury, Wynne was savagely kicking a silly woollen ball from one end of the grass patch to the other.

“That’s not the way,” said his father.

“Damn the ball,” screamed Wynne, and made his first acquaintance with a willow twig across the back.

VII

It is a matter for speculation as to what extent environment can smother natural impulses. Surrounded on all sides by convention and routine, the spark of originality is in a fair way to become dampened or altogether extinguished.

Such was the case with Wynne Rendall. He was half confident that many existing ideals were not ideals at all, and that much that was desirable to develop was wilfully undeveloped; but weighing in the balance against this view were the actions and opinions of those with whom he came into contact. Was it, then, he who was at fault? A glance to the right and left seemed to point to that conclusion. And yet there was nature to support his view: nature with its thousand intricate moods of growth and illumination—nature who pranked the water to laughing wavelets and tasselled the sky with changing clouds—nature who made night a castle of mystery where invisible kings held court, and mischievous hobgoblins gobbled at the fairies’ toes as they tripped it beneath the laurel bushes in the garden. Surely, surely these things mattered more greatly than half-past eight breakfast, and the 9:15 to town? Surely there was greater happiness to be found thinking of these than in flinging a ball at ninepins or kicking it through a goal?

And yet his father beat him because he drew a fairy, and his mother threatened him with an early bed when he desired to do as others had never done before.

His brother and sister played at “shop,” and comforted their parents exceedingly by so doing. They never asked “silly questions,” he was constantly told. They were all right, and only he was wrong.

VIII

It is hard indeed to preserve faith with so great a consensus of opinion against one, and it is probable Wynne Rendall would have dulled into a very ordinary lad had it not been for a chance visit from his father's brother. Wynne had often heard his parents speak of Clem Rendall. They referred to him as a "ne'er-do-well," a term which Wynne took to imply a person who did not go to the City in the morning.

"Idle and good for nothing," said his father—"never do anything useful in this world."

If by doing anything useful he implied the achievement of business success his remarks were certainly true, and yet there were features in Clementine Rendall which called for and deserved a kindlier mention.

He was born, it will be remembered, at a time when his father's virility had to some extent abated. He was, in a way, an old man's child, free from all ambitions toward personal advancement. Heredity had endowed him with imagination, appreciation, a charming exterior, a fascinating address, and an infinite capacity for doing nothing. At the clubs—and he was a member of many—his appearance was always greeted with enthusiasm. Few men could claim a greater popularity with both men and women, and his generosity was as unfailing as his good humour.

There was no real occasion for Clementine Rendall to work, for he had inherited what little money his father had to leave, and a comfortable fortune from his mother, which he made no effort to enlarge.

Wynne's father, who had not profited by the decease of either of his parents, did not love his brother Clementine any the better in consequence. He was a man who liked money and desired it greatly. He was fond of its appearance, its power, and the pleasing sounds it gave when jingled in the pocket.

At the reading of the will there had been something of a scene on account of a piece of posthumous fun from the late Edward's pen:

"To my son Clementine I will and bequeath my entire fortune and estate, real and personal." And written in pencil at the foot of the page—"To that pillar of commerce, Robert Everett Rendall, who was once my son, I bequeath a quarter of a pound of China tea, to be chosen according to his taste."

It was on a bright Sunday morning that Clem Rendall appeared at "The Cedars," and his visit was entirely unexpected.

“Morning,” he greeted the maid who opened the door. “Family at home?”

Wynne’s father came out into the hall to see who the visitor might be.

“Hullo, Robert,” said Clem, “coming for a walk?”

Nearly ten years had elapsed since their last meeting, and Mr. Rendall, senior, conceived that the tone of his brother’s address lacked propriety.

“This is a surprise, Clem,” he observed, soberly enough. His eyes travelled disapprovingly over his brother’s loose tweed suit, yellow-spotted necktie, and soft felt hat.

“Such a lovely day, I took a train to Wimbledon and determined to walk over to Richmond Park. Passing your house reminded me. Are you coming?”

“I don’t go for walks on Sunday, Clem.”

“Do you not?”

It was at this point that Wynne, who was coming down the stairs, halted and noted with admiration and surprise the bluff, hearty figure of the strange visitor, who wore no gloves and carried no cane, and whose clothes seemed to breathe contempt for Sabbatical traditions.

“Do you not? Why not?”

“Some of us go to church on Sunday.”

“Do you go because you want to go or because it’s Sunday?”

Wynne’s heart almost stopped beating. Those were his feelings about half-past eight breakfast expressed in words. Apparently Clem neither desired nor expected a reply, for he put another question:

“How’s tea, Robert? ’Strordinary thing, here are you—most respectable fellow living—deliberately supplying a beverage that causes more scandal among its consumers than any other in the world. Opium’s a joke to it. Ever thought of that?”

“No, and don’t intend to.”

“Ha, well—it’s worth while. Hullo! Who’s this?” His eye fell upon Wynne.

“This is my younger son. Wynne—come along, my boy—gaping there! Shake hands with your Uncle Clementine.”

Wynne did not require a second invitation, but descended the stairs two at a time.

“Frail little devil, aren’t you?” said Clem, enveloping the small hand of his nephew. “Jove! Robert, but there’s a bit of the old man in him—notice

it? Something about the eyes—and mouth. How old are you, youngster?"

"I'm nine," said Wynne.

"Nine, eh! Fine age. Just beginning to break the bud and feel the sun. Wish I were nine, and all to make. Don't you wish you were nine, Robert?"

"I do not."

" 'Course you do. If you were breaking the bud at nine you wouldn't graft the stem with a tea-plant. Would he, youngster? Not on purpose. He'd pitch it a bit higher than that—see himself a larkspur or a foxglove before he'd be satisfied. Well, what about this walk? Bring the youngster too."

"I think his mother has already arranged—"

"Nonsense! If you don't care to come he and I'll go together. Get your hat, son."

For the first time in memory Wynne was grateful for the hat-rack being in the hall. He snatched his cap from a peg and ran into the front garden before his father had time to say no.

Apparently Clem realized that an embargo would in all probability be placed on the expedition, for he only waited long enough to say:

"Expect us when you see us," and followed Wynne, closing the front door behind him.

"Come on, youngster," he ordered; "we must sprint the first mile or they'll put bloodhounds on our track."

He gripped Wynne's hand and raced him down the road. At the corner a fly was standing, with the driver dozing upon the box.

"Jump in," shouted Uncle Clem. Then "Drive like the devil, Jehu. We've broken into the Bank of England and Bow Street runners are after us."

The driver was a cheerful soul, and he whipped up the horse to a galumphing canter.

Wynne was quite speechless from laughter and excitement. When at last he recovered his voice it was to say:

"But you haven't told him where to go, Uncle."

"Wouldn't be half such fun if we knew. Besides, he's a fellow with imagination—he knows what to do. He'll take us to a secret place in the heart of the country where we can bury the treasure. I wouldn't be a bit surprised if he took us to Richmond Park."

He spoke loud enough for the driver to hear, and was rewarded for his subtlety by an almost imperceptible inclination of the shiny black hat, and

the cab took a sharp turn to the left along a road leading over the common in the direction of Sheen Gate.

Uncle Clem preserved the hunted attitude until they had covered the best part of a mile; then he leant back with a sigh of relief.

"I believe we have shaken off our pursuers," he declared, "and can breathe easily once more. Hullo!" pointing to the sky, "that's a hawk—see him? Wonderful fellows, hawks! Always up in the clouds rushing through space, and only coming to earth to snatch at a bit of food. That's the right idea, y'know. Never do any good if you stick to the ground all the while. 'Course he's a nasty-tempered fellow, and a bit of a buccaneer, but there's a good deal to be said in favour of him."

The look of admiration on Wynne's face made him smile and shake his head.

"No, you are wrong in thinking that, youngster. There's nothing of the hawk about me. I lack the energy that compels his headlong flights. One might say that I was a bit of a lark, for I enjoy a flutter in the blue, and I can't help lifting a song of praise when I get there."

Wynne did not dare to open his lips, lest he should stay the course of this wonderful being's reflections. It was almost too good to be true to find himself actually in contact with some one who spoke with such glorious enthusiasm and spirit about these delightful unearthly matters, and whose conversation seemed to bear no relation to time-tables and ordinary concerns of life. So he nodded very gravely and edged a little nearer the big man in the rough tweed suit.

Uncle Clem understood the impulse, and slipped his hand through his little nephew's arm. He took possession of Wynne's hand and raised it in his palm.

"All of us have five fingers and five senses, and most of us use none of them. Yes, most of us are like mussels on a rock, who do no more than open their shells for the tide to drift victuals into their mouths. That's the thing to avoid, y'know—molluscry. What are you going to do with your five fingers and your five senses, youngster?"

"I—I don't quite know what I will do with them, Uncle," Wynne replied, hesitatingly. Then, with more assurance—"But I know what I shan't do with them."

"Yes?"

"I shan't do things because they always have been done before."

Clementine laughed. “Not a bad beginning,” he said; “but you want to be very sure of the alternative. No good pushing over a house if you can’t build a better. You didn’t know your grandfather—no end of a fine fellow he was—used his brain and his hands to some effect. He was an artist.”

“Oh, was he?” said Wynne, with a shade of disappointment. He had never been told before.

“Doesn’t that please you?”

“I don’t know, Uncle. I think it would be nice to be an artist, but—”

“Yes?”

“We’ve got some pictures at home, and they don’t seem very nice.”

“Ah, they wouldn’t. But there are all sorts of pictures, and perhaps yours are the wrong sort. Now, your grandfather painted the right sort. Here, wait a minute.” He fumbled in his pocket and produced a letter-case. “There!” taking a photograph from one compartment. “This is a copy of one of his pictures. Look at it. A faun playing his pipe to stupid villagers. D’you see the expression on his face? He looks very serious, doesn’t he, and yet you and I know that he’s laughing. Can you guess why he’s laughing?”

Wynne took the photograph and studied it carefully. At length he said:

“He’s laughing because they can’t understand the tune he’s playing.”

“Bravo!” cried Uncle Clem, and clapped him on the back. “Any more?”

Wynne turned to the picture again.

“Some of them aren’t paying attention. Look at that one—he’s cutting a piece of stick to amuse himself. And this—he looks just like his father does when he’s wondering if he has time to catch the train.”

“Oh, excellent! That’s precisely what he is doing. If he had been born in a later age he’d have been looking at his watch—as it is he is telling the time by the sun—see it falling there between the trees?—and he seems to be saying, ‘If this fellow goes on much longer I shall miss my tea.’ Don’t you think that picture was worth painting?”

“Yes,” said Wynne; “but I’ve never seen a picture like that before. Ours are all lighthouses and things. What is the name of the man who is playing the pipe?”

“He’s a faun—or, as some people would say—a satyr.”

“I’d like to be a faun,” said Wynne, “but if I were I should get into a fearful temper with the people who didn’t like my tunes. I should hit them over the head with my pipe.”

“You’d cease to be a satyr if you did that. To be a proper satyr you must smile and go on playing until at last they do understand. That’s the artist’s job in this world, and it is a job too—a job and a fearful responsibility.”

“Why is it?”

“Because at heart the villagers don’t want to understand, and if you feel it’s your duty to make them—your duty to stir their souls with music—then you must be doubly sure that you give them the right music. A mistake in a row of figures doesn’t matter—any one can alter that—but a false note of music—a false word upon the page—a false brush-mark upon a canvas stands for all time.”

“I see,” breathed Wynne. “I hadn’t thought of that. I’d only thought it mattered to make people believe something different.”

“Hullo! We’re through the gates,” exclaimed Uncle Clem. “Drive on somewhere near the ponds, Jehu, and deposit us there. Ever been in the Royal Park of Richmond before, young fellow?”

Wynne shook his head. His mind did not switch over to a new train of thought as rapidly as his uncle’s, and it still hovered over the subject of the picture, which he kept in his hand.

“Keep it if you like,” said Uncle Clem, following the train of his nephew’s thoughts. “Keep it and think about it.”

“Oh, may I really? It would be lovely if I might.” His eyes feasted on his new possession. “Uncle, there are two of the villagers who seem to understand, aren’t there? These two, holding hands.”

“Ah, to be sure they do. That’s because they are lovers.”

“Lovers?”

“Yes, lovers understand all manner of things that other people don’t. In fact, only a lover can properly understand. But I’ll tell you all about that later on.”

“Later on” is so much kindlier a phrase than “When you are old enough.”

“There, put it in your pocket. What—afraid of crumpling it? Half a minute, then; I’ll turn out the letter-case and you can have that too.”

And so Wynne came to possess a most marvellous picture and a crocodile case, bearing in silver letters “C. R.”

“I think,” said Clem to the driver, as they descended by the rhododendrons near the ponds, “it would be a good idea if you drove to Kingston and bought us a lunch. You know the sort of thing—meat pies, jam

tarts, ginger beer, fairy cakes—anything you can think of. We'll meet you here in an hour and a half."

He gave the driver a five-pound note and smiled him farewell.

It was very splendid to be associated with a man who would trust a stranger with so huge a fortune without so much as taking the number of the cab. Wynne could not help recalling the precautions his father had taken when once he had despatched a messenger to collect a parcel from the chemist's. The comparison was greatly to the detriment of Mr. Rendall, senior.

"This is one of the wildest parts of the park," announced Uncle Clem. "If we go hushily we shall see rabbits before they see us, and perhaps almost get within touch of a deer."

"What, real deer—stags?"

"Any amount of them. They bell in the mating season, and have battles royal on the mossy sward."

"And can you get near enough to touch one?"

"Not quite. You think you will, and tiptoe toward him with your hand outstretched, and then, just as you almost feel the warmth of him at the tips of your fingers—hey presto! Zing! he's gone, and divots of earth are flying round your ears. That's why the stag is the ideal beast—because he's elusive."

"You could shoot him," suggested Wynne.

"Yes, you can kill an ideal, and a lot of good may it do you dead. Shooting is no good, but if you run after him, as like as not he'll lead you through lovely, unheard-of places. Here's an umbrageous oak. We'll spread ourselves out beneath it and praise God for the sunshine that makes us appreciate the shade."

He threw himself luxuriously on the soft green carpet, and felt in his pocket for a pipe. It was not until he had carefully filled it that he found he had no matches.

"This," he said, "is really terrible. What is to be done?"

"I'll run off and find some one," exclaimed Wynne, enthusiastic at the chance of rendering a service. But Uncle Clem restrained him.

"No, no," he said, "we must think of more ingenious methods than that. You and I are alone on a desert island, but we possess a watch. Casting our eyes around we discover a rotten bough. Look!" He broke a little fallen branch that lay in the grass beside his hand. "The inside you see is mere tinder. Now we will roll out into the sun and operate."

It was some while before the concentrated ray from the watch-glass produced a spark upon the wood.

"Blow for all you are worth," cried Uncle Clem. "Splendid—it is beginning to catch! Oh! blow again, Friday—see it smoulders! One more blow—a gale this time. Oh, excellent Man Friday!—what a lucky fellow Robinson Crusoe is!"

He dropped the ember into his pipe and sucked furiously. At last tiny puffs of rewarding smoke began to emerge from his lips. His features relaxed and he grinned.

"We have conquered," he declared—"earned the reward for our labours! But the odd thing is that now the pipe is alight I am not at all sure if I really want it."

Every boy must possess a hero—it is the lodestar of his being. He can lie awake at night, happy in the mere reflection of that wonderful being's prowess. In imagination, enemies, one by one, are arraigned before the protecting hero, who, with the justice of gods admixed with a finely-tempered satire, judges their sins and sends them forth repentant. But this is not all. He can lift the soul to empiric heights, and open at a touch new and wonderful doors of thought and action. He can enthuse, inspire, illumine, refresh old ideals—inspirit new—make dark become light, and light so brilliant that the eyes are dazzled by the whiteness thereof.

The hero occurs by circumstance or deed, and his responsibility is boundless. He must think as a king thinks when the eyes of the nation rest upon him—he must tread all ways with a sure foot and proud bearing—chest out and head high. He must not slip upon the peel that lies in the highway, nor turn aside to escape its menace; he must crush it beneath his heel as he strides along, a smile upon his lips, his cane swinging—the veriest picture of majesty and resource.

Wynne Rendall found his hero that Sunday in Richmond Park, and worshipped him with the intense devotion of which only a boy is capable. God, he conceived, must have had some very personal handiwork in the fashioning of Uncle Clem. He saw him as a man possessed of every possible charm and virtue, without one single unpleasing factor to offset them. It is not unnatural, therefore, that Wynne should have fallen down and worshipped, and not unnatural that there should have been a dry ache in his throat as, in the lavender twilight, the cab turned the corner of their street and slackened speed.

"Let's say good-night outside, Uncle," he suggested, huskily.

Perhaps he hoped his uncle would give him a kiss, but Clementine had something far better in store. He threw an arm round the narrow little shoulders and gave Wynne a combined pat and hug. The broad comradeship of the action was fine—magnificent. Pals both! One good man to another! it seemed to say. Stanley and Livingstone must have met and parted in suchwise.

"A capital day," said Uncle Clem. "We must repeat it—you and I. Better wait, Jehu, for I shan't be long."

The atmosphere of the drawing-room struck a chill as they entered. From the reserve displayed it was clear that Wynne's parents had been discussing the expedition adversely.

"Go and change your boots, Wynne," said his mother.

It was a cold welcome, he reflected, as he departed in obedience to the command.

"That's a good boy," remarked Uncle Clem.

"I hope he will prove so," said Mr. Rendall, devoutly, as befitted a Sunday evening.

Mrs. Rendall said nothing. She had nothing to say. Granted the necessary degree of courage she would have been glad to ask Clem to change his boots, but circumstances being as they were she was denied the privilege, and kept silent.

"Yes, there's a lot in him. You'll have to go to work pretty carefully to bring it out. A rare bulb with delicate shoots. Touch 'em the wrong way and they'll wither, but with the right amount of nursing and the right degree of temperature there are illimitable possibilities. Interesting thing education!"

"Yes," concurred Mr. Rendall. "A sound business education fits a boy for after life."

"Business! H'm! Think he suggests a likely subject for business, Robert? I fancy, when the time comes, the boy's bent may lie in other directions."

"The boy will do as he is told, Clem."

Clem smiled, looked at the ceiling, and shook his head.

"Which of us do?" he said. "Never even the likely ones. You may bend a twig, but it springs straight again when your hand is removed. Seems to me our first duty toward our children is to encourage their mental direction and not deflect it. Don't you agree, Mrs. Rendall?"

"Oh, yes," replied that lady, with her inevitable falling inflection.

“No, you don’t,” snapped her husband, “so why say you do? No reason at all! In the matter of educating children, Clem, I cannot see you are qualified to hold an opinion. The first duty of a parent is to instil in the child a sense of duty to its parent.”

“Oh, bosh!” said Clem, pleasantly. “Absolute bosh. Respect and duty are not a matter of convention or of heredity, they must be inspired.”

“We are not likely to agree, so why proceed?”

“If we only proceeded on lines of agreement we should come to an immediate standstill. Let’s thrash out the matter. To my thinking, the father should respect the child more than the child should respect the father. It must be so. The poor little devil comes into the world through no impulse of its own. It had no choice in the matter. Its coming is impressed—it is conscripted into being—that’s indisputable. Then, surely to goodness, it is up to us to give it, as it were, the Freedom of the City—the freedom of the fields, and every possible latitude for expansion and self-expression. To do less were an intolerable injustice. Our only excuse for producing life is that we may admire its beauty—not that it may admire ours.”

“This is wild talk,” began Mr. Rendall. But Clem was too advanced to heed interruption.

“The most degrading thing you can hear a man say to his child is, ‘After all I’ve done for you.’ It should be, ‘Have I done enough for you? Have I made good?’ That is the straightforward attitude; but to bring a child into the world against its will and to force it along lines that lead away from its own inclination is dastardly.” He turned suddenly to Mrs. Rendall. “It must be so wonderful to be a mother, so glorious to have accepted that mighty responsibility.”

Mrs. Rendall fumbled at the threading of her silk and dropped her scissors to the floor. As he stooped to pick them up Clem continued:

“To know that within oneself there lies the power to fashion a body for those tiny souls that flicker out there in the beyond.”

“Clem!” Mr. Rendall tapped his foot warningly.

“Ah, Robert, we know nothing of these matters—they are beyond our ken.”

“A very good reason for not discussing them. The subject seems to be rather—”

“Rather what?”

“Distasteful.”

“Is it? Good God! And yet we discuss our colds in the most polite society, and bear witness to their intensity by quoting the number of handkerchiefs we’ve used. We have no shame in trumpeting our petty thoughts of the day, but that faint bugle-call that sounds in the night and summons us—”

“I think supper is waiting,” said Mrs. Rendall, rising to her feet. “I suppose you will be staying.”

“Delighted,” said Clem, affably. “And I’ll bring the bugle-call with me.”

“I trust you won’t forget that servants will be in the room,” remarked Mr. Rendall.

“We can send ’em out to ask my cabby to wait.”

Clem did not delay his departure over long. His conversational tide was somewhat dammed by the cold mutton and cold potatoes that formed the basis of his brother’s hospitality.

He allowed Mr. Rendall to do the talking, and was oppressed by a great pity for his little nephew, who had to listen to such irritable and melancholy matter at every meal.

Wallace and Eva, the two elder children, behaved with precision and did not open their lips, save for the reception of food. Wynne was discouraged on the few occasions he spoke, and was the recipient of injunctions not to “crumble his bread,” and to “sit up properly.” These recurred with a clockwork regularity that deprived them of the essence of command.

The result was to make Clem feel very dejected and forlorn.

He said good-bye on the doorstep and walked, alone as he thought, to the front gate. Arrived there he said in a very heartfelt manner:

“God! What a night!” and was not a little taken aback when his brother, who had followed, in soft shoes, demanded:

“I beg your pardon?”

Clem recovered himself a little too intensely.

“All these damn stars,” he replied, with a broad gesture.

“H’m!” said Mr. Rendall. Then: “I hope you haven’t been putting ideas into that boy’s head, Clem.”

“They are there already,” came the response. “Take care of them, Robert.”

He jumped into the cab and drove away.

IX

A fall of rain and a little sunshine make a magic difference to a garden bed. The petals of flowers unfold—colours clear and intensify—white buds glisten beneath their tight-drawn casings.

"We can do with a lot of this," the flowers seemed to say. "Treat us aright and there is no limit to our beauty and fragrance."

But our English climate is not always amenable. Sometimes it replies through the mouth of a nipping norther, or by the hard, white hands of frost, and down go the flowers, one by one, till only the sturdiest remain standing.

It would be no exaggeration to say that Wynne Rendall's soul had been opened out, in that one day with his uncle, from forty-five to ninety degrees. So many things he had doubted had been made sure, and so many fears had been swept aside, to be replaced by finer understandings.

Through Uncle Clem the world had become a new place for him. It was no longer a public park, with railings and finger-boards pointing the directions in which one might or might not proceed. He did not quite know what sort of place it had become, but he was radiantly confident of glorious possibilities. Clearly it would be the duty of all who had eyes to see, and ears to hear, to perform something in praise of this marvellous planet, and the wonderful people (*vide* Uncle Clem) who walked upon it.

He, Wynne, would do something—he felt the immediate need to do something—he would do something great. People, beholding what he had done, would exclaim, "This is marvellous! Why have we not been shown these wonders before?" Then they would feel for him the same admiration he felt for Uncle Clem.

In the midst of these rapturous reflections came the thought that perhaps he was a little young to become the leader of a new movement. This, however, in no wise oppressed him. The younger the better. The distillations of his soul would be none the less rare for being contained in a small vessel. He would play upon a pipe to foolish villagers. There were foolish villagers around him in abundance. He knew of two in their own kitchen—hide-bound creatures who excused themselves from doing anything he asked on the grounds of suffering from "bones in their legs." Were there not others, beside, with whom he sat daily at table? Charity should begin at home (there was a motto to that effect hanging on the wall in the spare bedroom), it should therefore begin with the lowest storey and work up to the highest. These people were of proven folly—that much he knew from personal investigation; it was his duty to pipe them to a better understanding. And then arrived a really disturbing thought. He possessed no pipe, nor any skill

to play upon it had he possessed one. From exaltation his spirits fell to despair. Was the world to be denied enlightenment for so poor a reason? Such a pass would be unendurable.

Wynne Rendall was nothing if not courageous. If he felt an impulse of sufficient force he would accept any hazard to give it expression. His bodily frailty and susceptibility to pain were no deterrents. He decided, therefore, while the spirit moved him the supreme moment must not be lost. He would have to rely upon circumstance and the fertility of his imagination in carrying out the campaign, and not allow his thoughts to be damped by knowledge of their unpreparedness. He recalled how yesterday the sweet environment had lent colour to much that his uncle had said, and reflected it would be well to profit by that lesson, and set the scene for his new teachings in a fashion calculated to promote a sympathetic atmosphere. To speak to his parents of a freer life and purer outlook in their drawing-room, as they had arranged it, would be to court failure. His father was at the City, his mother was out—this, then, was the ideal moment to strike a blow against symmetry and in favour of æsthetics.

With heart sledge-hammering against his ribs, Wynne descended the stairs and entered the drawing-room. With disfavour his eyes roamed over the accustomed arrangements. Balance was the inspiring motive which had dominated the Rendalls' mind when they set out their ornaments and hung their pictures, and balance was the motive which Wynne determined to destroy.

Beginning with his old enemy, the mantelpiece, he cleared everything from it. None of these detested examples of art should remain, he decided. The marble clock, ticking menacingly, was crammed into the cabinet, where it was speedily followed by the equestrian bronzes and the wrought-iron candlesticks.

Wynne gasped with ecstasy as he viewed the straight marble line denuded of these ancient eyesores. He had decided that this should be the abiding place for a china bowl containing tulips, a flat silver box and some books. They should repose there in natural positions as though set down by a thoughtless hand. He tried the effect, and was disappointed; it lacked the spirit of negligé he had designed. Then came an inspiration—of course, it looked wrong because of the mirrors of the overmantel. These immoral reflectors were at the desperate work of duplication, and were forcing symmetry and balance despite his precautions.

This being the case, but one course of action was open—the overmantel would have to go. It was a massive affair, securely fastened to the wall with

large brass-headed nails, and Wynne was a very small person to undertake its removal. To his credit it stands that he did not wilt before the task. He climbed upon a table and shook it to and fro until the nails worked loose, then, exerting all his strength he heaved mightily. For awhile it defied his efforts, but just as he was beginning to despair the plaster gave way and the mighty mass of wood and mirrors tilted forward. Nothing but the presence of two little legs in front which supported a pair of flimsy shelves prevented Wynne from being telescoped in the subsequent collapse. He had just time to spring to the floor and hand it off as the legs broke and the whole affair slithered to the hearthrug. The fine swept top broke like a carrot, and two of the side mirrors cracked from end to end. Wynne lay under the debris breathing very hard, and wondering if the crash had been loud enough to reach the ears of the servants below. Fortunately for him the kitchen was at the other end of the house, and there came no rush of feet from that direction. He waited a few terribly anxious moments, then crawled out and surveyed his handiwork.

No great revolution appears at its best in the initial stages, and certainly this was a case in point. Balance he had destroyed beyond all dispute, but in its place had arisen chaos. Large patches of plaster littered the carpet, and the grate was filled with pieces of wood and wreckage. Where once the overmantel had covered its surface, the wallpaper, in contradistinction to the faded colours surrounding, showed bright and new. It seemed as though the spook of the detestable affair still haunted the spot, and would continue to do so down all the ages.

In that moment of extreme desolation Wynne experienced the sensations which possess a pioneer when he doubts if he has the strength to cross the ranges. He had, however, already committed himself too deeply to hang back, and so, with feverish energy, he began to drag the remains into a corner of the room. As he did so he overset an occasional table bearing a potted fern and some china knick-knacks, all of which were smashed to atoms.

With this calamity Wynne Rendall lost control of himself. The mainspring of his idea snapped, and he became merely a whirlwind of senseless activity. He dragged pictures from the walls and thrust them beneath tables, he wrenched the green plush curtains from the lacquered pole and cast them anyhow—over chairs and sofas—the straight-laid rugs he pulled askew, he flung an armful of books haphazard on the top of the piano—he set fire to the crinkly paper in the grate and threw two aspidistras into the garden. An insane humour seizing him, he brought in the hat-rack from the hall, and hung coloured plates on all its pegs.

At the end of an hour the effect he had produced could have been more simply arrived at, and with less destruction to property, if some expert from Barcelona had exploded a bomb in the apartment.

Wynne's clothing was awry, his fingers cut and bleeding, and his face covered with dust and perspiration, when his father, followed by his mother, opened the door and stood spellbound upon the threshold.

With eyes glittering like diamonds he turned and faced them. The long pause before any word was spoken was the hardest persecution he had to bear. Then came the inevitable:

"What the devil is the meaning of this?"

"It means—" he began, but the words stuck in his throat.

"Are you responsible for this?" Mr. Rendall took a step toward him.

Wynne nodded. "Yes-s," he breathed.

"Is he mad?" Mr. Rendall appealed to his wife, but she was too flabbergasted to utter a sound. "Are you mad?"

"No," said Wynne. He knew he must speak. His whole being called on him to speak, and yet, try as he would, the words refused to come. Oh, why, why wasn't Uncle Clem present to say the things he could not express? If he failed to establish his position there and then the chance would be gone for ever.

"You had better speak," said his father, "better explain the meaning of this—and explain quick." The last part of the sentence rose to a shout.

"I did it—I did it because you are all wrong—that's why—all wrong."

"Wrong! What about?"

"Oh, everything. It's—y-you can see, now, you were wr-wrong—c-can't you? Now that I've—oh, you were so wrong—"

"There won't be much wrong with what I intend doing to you, my boy."

A hand fell heavily on his shoulder, but he did not wince.

"Won't make any difference."

"We'll see about that."

"Uncle Clem said they didn't want to understand—but you just have to make them understand, and go on until they do."

"Did he? Well, you're on the point of understanding something you've never properly appreciated before. Out of the way, Mary."

Mr. Rendall selected a cane from the umbrella stand, as he thrust Wynne down the hall to the dining-room. Over the arm of the leather saddlebag

chair he bent the supple little body, and in the course of the half minute which followed he performed an ancient ritual which even Mr. Squeers would have found it difficult to improve upon.

When it was over he threw the cane upon the table and folded his hands behind his back.

"Had enough?" he interrogated.

The poor little faun twisted and straightened himself. His face was paper-white, and his breath came short and gasping, one of his hands fumbled on the chair-back for support, and his head worked from side to side.

As a man Mr. Rendall found the sight unpleasant to look upon, but as a father he felt the need to carry the matter through to its lawful conclusion.

"If you've had enough say you are sorry. I want no explanations."

Wynne forced himself to concentrate his thoughts away from bodily anguish.

"I've had enough—but it doesn't mean that I'm sorry."

"Silence!" roared his father.

"I'm not sorry—not a bit sorry."

"D'you intend to do this kind of thing again, then?"

"No. I shan't do it again—not yet."

"Then get out of the room—get to bed at once."

Uncle Clem knew. The villagers do not want to understand. Wynne groped his way from the room and up the stairs. The world was not such a wonderful place after all.

Meanwhile Mrs. Rendall had been taking an inventory of the disaster in the drawing-room. She sought her husband with details of the result.

"The overmantel is quite ruined," she announced.

"Damn the overmantel!" he retorted.

"Did Wynne say he was sorry?"

"Sorry—no—he's not sorry."

"Then I cannot think what he did it for," she remarked illogically.

"Oh, don't talk like a fool," he implored.

"Two of the aspidistras have been thrown into the garden," said she.

Actions resulting from mental suggestion are sometimes immediate. Mr. Rendall caught up the sugar-castor and sent it hurtling through the air, and once more "Clovelly" faced the world without a glass.

“Oh dear!” lamented Mrs. Rendall, “there seems such a lot of smashing going on today, one can’t keep pace with it all.”

X

Next morning found Wynne ill and feverish. The mental excitement and bodily pain of the previous day had proved more than his constitution could endure. Wherefore he tossed in bed, lying chiefly on his side for obvious reasons. Mr. Rendall was thorough, of that there was no question. Wynne was able to reassure himself of his father’s thoroughness when he touched his small flank with tentative finger-tips.

As the fever burnt within him he felt mightily sorry for himself. The world had used him hardly when he sought to offer rare and wonderful gifts. That this should be so was a great tragedy—and a great mystery—also it was infinitely sad. The sadness appealed to him most, and he wept. He wept very copiously and for a long time. The weeping was a pleasant relief and a compensation for misery. He felt, if the world could behold his tears, they would assemble about his bedside and realize the injustice wrought by their deafness and stupidity—they would be compassionate and anxious to atone. Then, maybe, the great god of expression would provide him with the words to make his meaning clear. With this conviction he wept the louder, hoping to attract attention, but none came nigh him. Accordingly he wept afresh, and this time from disappointment. In the midst of this final mood of tears his brother, Wallace, came into the room.

Wallace had been privileged to see the state of the drawing-room, and although he knew Wynne’s features well enough, he felt the need to scrutinize afresh the appearance of one who had wilfully produced such havoc. The characteristic is common to humanity—a man’s deeds create a revival of interest in his externals, hence the success of Madame Tussaud’s and the halfpenny illustrated press.

At the sight of his brother, Wynne stopped crying, and composed himself to the best of his ability.

“What do you want?” he asked.

Wallace found some difficulty in replying. No one cares to admit they are visiting the Chamber of Horrors for pleasure, although that is the true explanation of their presence. At length he said:

“Shut up—” and added in support of his command, “you silly fool.”

“You needn’t stare at me if I’m a silly fool,” said Wynne.

“A cat may look at a king,” was Wallace’s considered retort.

"Well, I'd rather a cat looked at me than you did," said Wynne, feeling he had nearly brought off something very telling.

Wallace's intention had not been to excite an argument on reciprocal lines. He desired to get at his brother's reasons for the wholesale smash-up downstairs, consequently he allowed the remark to pass unchallenged.

"Why did you break the overmantel and all those vases?" he demanded.

"Because they were beastly and ugly."

"Beastly and ugly?"

"Yes, horrid—and there were *two* of each of them."

Wallace began to feel out of his depth.

"But they were in *the drawing-room*," he said.

Since the drawing-room in every house is, or should be, the abode of art, it was obviously absurd to say that the appointments thereof were beastly or ugly.

Wynne did not answer, so Wallace fell back on his beginnings.

"You *must* be a fool. Father gave you a good hiding, didn't he?"

"Yes."

"Did it hurt?"

"Yes."

"I've never had a hiding." There was rich pride in the avowal.

"You've never done anything worth getting one for."

"Haven't I? 'Tany rate, I bet you don't behave like this again."

"I bet I do," said Wynne.

"When will you?" exclaimed Wallace, conscious of great excitement, and hoping that on the next occasion he might be privileged to witness the work of destruction in full swing.

"Not yet."

Wallace hesitated. "What room will you smash up next time?" he asked.

"Oh, it isn't for that," cried Wynne, "you can't see—nobody understands—"

"Then shut up," said Wallace, and departed.

Strange as it may seem, this interview had great results in moulding Wynne Rendall's character. From his brother's obvious inability to realize any motive in his action, other than a wilful desire to destroy, he turned to an active consideration of what his motives had been.

What was this message he had wished to convey to the world, and had stumbled so hopelessly in endeavouring to express? It was the first time he had put the question directly to himself. He knew he had had a quarrel with many existing matters, but in what manner did he propose to better them? And the answer came that he did not know.

He had committed the very error against which Uncle Clem had warned him—the error of breaking down an old régime before he was able to supply an agreeable alternative. Small wonder, then, if his actions had savoured of lunacy to those who had beheld them. In imagination he pictured the drawing-room as it appeared after he had dealt with it, and was bound to confess that his labours had rendered no service to the shrine of comfort, art or beauty. Had he himself come suddenly upon such a room he would have been disgusted by its foolish and wanton disorder.

The revolution had been a failure—complete and utter. Sobriety had been dragged from his throne, and havoc and ruin reigned instead. Havoc and Ruin—deplorable monarchs both, of senseless countenance and destructive hands. Small wonder if their subjects struck at them with sticks and staves. Small wonder if they could not see the ideals that lay hidden behind the wreckage of the great upheaval.

The fact stood out clearly that his talents were not ripe. The time had not come when his song should thrill the world. But come it should, some day. To that end all his energies should be conserved. Yes, he would make the world a listener, but he would give it full measure for its attention, and even though each note should cut them as a knife—it should not be the gross stab of a maniac lurking in a dark doorway, but as the cut of a surgeon's scalpel, who cuts to cure.

Wynne sat up in bed, although to do so caused him pain, and registered a vow that he would learn all there was to learn, whereby in the end he might teach the more.

PART TWO
THE PURPLE PATCH

I

A man with a call is a very estimable fellow, but is apt to prove tiresome to his companions. The same might truthfully be said to apply to a child, although cases of a call in a child's disposition are fortunately not of very frequent occurrence.

After this one excess Wynne's behaviour provided his parents with little reason for complaint. He developed a strange amenity to domestic discipline—he went to bed when he was told, and did not pursue his old habits of asking "stupid questions." But there was about him a certain secretiveness at once perplexing and irritating. He obeyed readily, and accepted correction in good part, but there hovered round the corners of his mouth a queer and cynical smile. His expression seemed to say, "You are in command, and what you say I must do I will do, but of course your rulings are quite absurd."

Mr. Rendall endured this inexplicable attitude for several months, but finally was so annoyed that he wrote the master of the day-school of which Wynne was a member, and asked him to investigate the matter and inflict what punishments might seem adequate. To this letter he received a reply to the effect that as Wynne was showing such astonishing diligence at his books he deemed it advisable to ignore an offence which, at most, was somewhat hypothetical.

Mr. Rendall was by no means satisfied of the advisability of taking so lenient a course. He considered it pointed to a lack of authority which might well prove fatal in the moulding of character. He decided, therefore, to tackle Wynne himself upon the subject, and did so in his accustomed style.

Wynne was working at Latin declensions in the morning-room when his father entered.

"Proper time for everything," he said. "Put away that book and go out for a walk—plenty of time for book reading in school hours."

"All right," said Wynne, with resignation. As he walked toward the door the smile curled the corners of his mouth.

“Here! come back,” ordered Mr. Rendall. “Now then what are you smiling at?”

Wynne thought for a moment, then he answered, “I shan’t tell you.”

“Oh, you won’t!”

“No. I obey what you tell me to do, and without any fuss, but I shan’t tell you why I smile.”

“We’ll see about that. P’r’aps I can find a way to stop it.”

“You couldn’t.”

“Oho! couldn’t I?”

“No, because I couldn’t stop it myself,” said Wynne, and walked from the room.

He had learnt the value of a Parthian arrow. To remain after the discharge of a shaft was to court painful consequences. It was therefore his habit, after once unmasking his batteries, to withdraw them speedily to new emplacements. This was not cowardice, but diplomacy, for there was no value in risking chastisement which might be avoided.

The chief point of difference between Wynne and his father was that, whereas Wynne only cared to inquire into matters of which he had no knowledge, Mr. Rendall resented inquiring into concerns of which he was not already thoroughly conversant. A man, woman or child whose thoughts ran on different lines to his own became automatically perverse and troublesome—a person to avoid where possible, or, if impossible, to be forcibly cowed into subservience to his rulings. As in America a Standard automobile is forced upon the public, so in his own home Mr. Rendall strove to standardize mental outlook and opinion. Hitherto, at the expenditure of a very slight amount of authority, his efforts had been rewarded with some success, but in Wynne he perceived the task was one which bade fair to stretch his patience to the breaking point.

Wynne obeyed his rulings with submission, but it was clearly evident his acceptance of them was purely superficial. In no case was it apparent that his son was satisfied either of their justice or value. Such a state of affairs was intolerable. Thoughts of it invaded the privacy of his mind during the sacred hours spent at the City. Something would have to be done—stringent reforms—penalties—hours spent in the bedroom—bread and water. These and many other corrective measures occurred to Mr. Rendall as he sat behind his paper in the suburban train. And yet the whole thing was a confounded nuisance. He didn’t want to be bothered—that was the truth of the matter. Life had come to a pretty pass if, after fifteen years of

comparative matrimonial quietude, a man had to worry his head about the conduct of the people who dwelt beneath his roof.

Had Mr. Rendall compiled a dictionary some of his definitions would have been as under:—

Home.—A point of departure and return, costing more in upkeep than it should. A place for the exercise of criticism—a place from which a man draws his views on the injustice of local taxation—a spot where a man desires a little peace and doesn't get it.

Wife.—A person who is always a trifle disappointing—a woman who does not understand the value of money—a woman who asks silly questions about meals and fails to provide the dishes a man naturally desires. Some one who may be trusted to say the wrong thing, who lacks proper authority over the servants and children, and who does not appreciate all that has been done for her.

Child.—A being who makes a noise about the house, the proper recipient of corrections, the abiding place of "don'ts." A being who occasionally accompanies a man for a short walk, and is precluded from doing so again on account of ill-behaviour. A creature with irritating habits, unlikely to repay all that has been spent upon it in doctor's bills and education.

These instances should give a clearer understanding of Mr. Rendall's outlook. They may serve also to enlist our sympathies on his behalf in the unhappy possession of such a son as Wynne.

Mr. Rendall conceived that a subject that could not be understood should be immediately dismissed, and he applied the same theory to human beings. Taking this into consideration it is surprising that he did not pack Wynne off to a boarding-school and so rid himself of the source of his irritation. But Mr. Rendall, however, was not prepared to take risks where money was concerned. Rather than squander large sums upon education, the benefits of which his son might prove too young to appreciate, he determined that his own convenience must be sacrificed. He seriously considered the idea of sending Wynne to a cheaper school than Wyckley, but abandoned the project as being too hazardous.

Wyckley was not a first-class school, but it had the reputation of providing boys with an excellent business education. To send Wynne to a cheaper might result in equipping him less well to earn his own livelihood.

He therefore endured the inconvenience of Wynne's society until he had celebrated his twelfth birthday, and then with a feeling of consummate relief

dispatched him to Wyckley complete with an ironbound wooden box and a deplorably weak constitution.

II

On the day before Wynne's departure Clementine Rendall paid a surprise visit. Wynne had not seen him since the day in Richmond Park, three years before, for his parents had discouraged their intimacy, but Uncle Clem still lived in his mind as a very romantic figure.

Wynne had been buying some of the kit required for his school equipment, and on his return he found his father and Uncle Clem in the morning-room. His heart leapt at the sight of the big man, still splendid as of yore, but the three years of suppression through which he had passed had chilled the old impulse of enthusiasm which had brought him down the stairs three at a time on their first meeting.

"Hullo, youngster!" came the cheery voice.

"Good afternoon, Uncle Clem," said Wynne, extending his thin white hand.

"Looks ill!" observed Clem to his brother.

Mr. Rendall raised his shoulders.

"Boy's disposition is unhealthy," he remarked, "which naturally reacts on his physique."

Clem flashed a glance from the speaker to the subject, and noted how the corners of Wynne's mouth curled down as much as to say, "You see what I am up against."

"You're hard to please. Boy's all right! Aren't you, youngster?"

"The boy is far from all right, Clem. He appears to lead a double life with some private joke of his own."

"I'll ask him," said Clem.

"What father says is true. I have a private joke, uncle."

"Then get it off your chest, youngster. A joke is like a drink, and must not be taken alone."

Wynne pondered awhile before replying, then he produced his first epigram.

"Yes, but you can't share a drink with a teetotaler."

The subtlety of the phrase pleased him inordinately, and he was surprised to see that it produced nothing but a frown from Uncle Clem.

“Robert, the youngster and I will take a turn in the garden.”

Mr. Rendall demurred, but Clem waved the objection aside and led the way down the openwork iron stairs to the lawn.

“Now then,” he said. “What’s the trouble with you? Didn’t like that calculating remark of yours one bit.”

“I’m sorry,” said Wynne, “but why should I tell them my joke, they couldn’t see it.”

“Then keep it for the dark, old fellow, or conceal it altogether. The I-know-more-than-you-but-I-won’t-say-what-it-is attitude does no one any good.”

Wynne jerked his head petulantly.

“The faun was laughing in grandfather’s painting.”

“Oho! So that’s it? But the villagers didn’t know he was laughing.”

“You and I did.”

“Perhaps. But we shouldn’t be so unsubtle as to tell them so. Consider a minute. Suppose we thought lots of people were very wrong, and their wrongness tickled our humour, d’you think the best way of putting ’em right would be to laugh at ’em? Take it from me it isn’t. If you laugh at a dog he’ll bite you, but pat him and, in time, he’ll jump through hoops, walk on his hind legs, and be tricksy as you want.”

“They always frown at me.”

“Maybe they wouldn’t if you didn’t smile at them. Just what is it you are trying to get at?”

Wynne hesitated.

“You don’t know.”

“No, I don’t know yet—but some day I shall, and then won’t I let them have it!”

He closed his mouth tight, and there was a fierce resolve in his eyes.

“Then here’s a bit of advice for you. Don’t start quarrelling with the world you hope to reform. Remember other people must build the pulpit you hope to preach from. If you get their backs up before you’ve learnt your sermon no one but yourself will ever hear it. Lie low and gather all you can from the plains before you seek the Purple Patch on the hill top.”

“Purple Patch,” repeated Wynne.

“Yes. Every artist builds his tower on a Purple Patch, and in his early working days he sees it shining gloriously through the morning mists. There is honey heather there, larkspur and crimson asters, and all the air is brittle

with new-born, virgin thoughts. I tell you, old son, that purple patch is worth making for, and it's good to reflect when you have got there that you came by a gentleman's way. There are some may call it Success, but I like the Purple Patch better. Success may be achieved at such a dirty price and the climber's boots may be fouled with trodden flesh. Stick to the Purple Patch, Wynne, and you'll be a man before you become a ghost."

Before taking his leave Clem gave Wynne a five-pound note.

"It is a sad thing," he said, "but a new boy with a five-pound note is far more popular at school than one without. If I were you I should blow a part of it at the tuck-shop and do your pals a midnight feast." Privately he remarked to Mr. Rendall, "That boy is woefully fragile. I have some doubt as to whether you are wise in sending him to a boarding school. You should drop the headmaster a line saying he'll want special care."

"I have already done so," remarked Mr. Rendall, with a somewhat sardonic smile. "If you are passing the box you might post a letter for me."

Clem took the letter and said good-bye. He was about to drop it in the pillar-box when a curious doubt assailed him. Therefore, although to do so was entirely foreign to his nature, he broke the seal and scanned the contents.

"Oh, no, Robert," he observed to himself, "most emphatically not. We'll give the boy a fair chance by your leave."

And accordingly he posted the letter, torn in many pieces, through the grating of a convenient sewer.

III

Wynne arrived at Wyckley in all the rush and turmoil of a new term. The boys had so many confidences to impart regarding their holiday exploits, that his presence was not observed until after tea. Consequently he had leisure to dispose his belongings and take a walk round the schoolrooms and playgrounds.

What he saw was new and interesting. The high bookcases, crammed with scholastic literature, impressed him with the majesty of learning. The laboratory with its glass retorts and shelves of chemical compounds bespoke the infinite latitude of science. Least of all did he care for the studio, in which the drawing classes were held. The cubes, pyramids, cones and spheres did not appear to bear any relation to art as he saw it. His being craved for something more organic, and was not satisfied even by the bas-reliefs of ivy and hedge-roses. To him these were trivial matters of little

concern which might well be omitted from an educational program. The main hall, with its platform and organ, its sombre lighting and heavily trussed roof, gave him far greater satisfaction. In such semi-dark surroundings he felt that an eager soul might well acquire illumination.

The terraces outside were correct and ordinary, the yellow gravel and the deep green grass were too familiar to attract attention; accordingly he passed to the rear of the building and explored what lay beyond. Here he discovered many fives courts—some football grounds, complete with nasty little pavilions, and a swimming bath. Further investigation disclosed a fowl-run and some pigs grunting contentedly in a well-kept sty. Wynne found these far more to his liking, and was further interested to learn that a pig will devour a piece of brick, with apparent relish, provided it has been given to him by the hand of man.

From this circumstance he was about to draw some interesting theories on life, and probably would have done so had it not been for the compelling note of a bell. This bell betokened the arrival of tea, some one had warned him of that; they had also warned him on no account to be late, so he made his way, hands in pockets, toward the big dining-room. A large number of eyes assessed him as he entered, and he bore their scrutiny without flinching. Oddly enough he was aware of an agreeable satisfaction arising from their attention, and returned stare for stare in excellent good part. Presently some one directed him to a place at the table where he found himself with other fresh arrivals.

The inclination to converse is never very marked on the part of *nouveaux*, and for the major part the meal proceeded in silence. Then presently his left-hand neighbour, a little boy with a round face and sad blue eyes, said:

"D'you like jam?"

"I like it to eat," said Wynne, "but it isn't much good to talk about."

This was discouraging, as the small boy felt, but he continued bravely:

"I don't want to talk about it, but I want to talk to some one, and I thought that would be an easy way. I haven't made a friend yet, and I thought if you'd like to be a friend I could give you some jam mother gave me to bring."

Before Wynne had time to reply to this sweet overture one of the older boys approached the table.

"All you chaps will go to the gym, when tea is over," he announced. "In fact you had better go now. Come on." So saying he herded them down a long corridor to the far end of the building.

“Wait in the dressing-room,” he said. “The Council hasn’t turned up yet. You’ll be called one by one, and you’d better be jolly careful how you answer.”

The door was shut and they found themselves packed closely in a small room full of lockers. With a curious sense of impending evil they waited, and presently a name was called out, and the first sufferer went forth to face the dread ordeal of the Council Chamber.

It was nervy work waiting, since none who went forth returned to bear witness to what was taking place. Hours seemed to pass before Wynne’s name was given by a boy with a low, threatening voice. He stepped bravely from his confinement, and, hands in pockets, walked into the centre of the gymnasium.

Seated on a high horizontal bar, at the far end, sat the four members who composed the Council. Beneath them, gathered in rough formations, were other boys whose duty it was to carry out the Council’s awards. These were the executioneers, and each was skilled in his craft. Whether the decree went forth in favour of scragging, knee jarring, or wrist-twisting there was an expert to conduct it upon orthodox lines. The faces of the Council, though not remarkable, were stern and resolute, and bespoke a proper appreciation for the dignity of office.

“Bring him forward,” said a very plain lad, who wore round pebble spectacles, and appeared to be leader of the movement.

With no great courtesy Wynne was thrust forward to a chalk circle in the centre of the floor.

“You mustn’t come out of the circle until you have permission,” was a further instruction received. The escort drew away and stood with folded arms as befitted a stern occasion.

“What is your name?” said he of the spectacles.

“Wynne Rendall.”

“Wynne Rendall?”

“Yes.”

“Gentlemen, you heard! Can we permit the name of Wynne? Does it belong to the same category of nomenclature as Eric, Archibald and Desmond, which we have already black-listed?”

There followed a murmur of assent.

“I thought as much. By my troth, it is a sorry name, and makes the gorge rise in disgust and abhorrence.”

The magnificence of this language created a profound impression in which even Wynne himself participated. He was not, however, prepared to allow the speaker to have it all his own way, since he felt, if it came to the turning of a phrase, he might show them some skill. Accordingly he said:

"The name was in no wise my own choice, so I can take neither blame nor credit for it."

"Be silent or be scragged, Wynne Rendall."

"Well, what is your name, anyway?"

The speaker turned his eyes heavenward as though seeking fresh tolerance from the high gods.

"Know," he said, "that by no means shall you ask us to betray our cognomens. We are the Council and known only by our might. If you are curious, Sir Paulus Pry, you shall ask some of these others how we are called —but at another time."

This Wynne conceived to be highly proper and in every sense an example of the splendid isolation of the Ruler. No sane individual would ask a king his name, but would address the question to a chamberlain.

The only fly in the amber was the appearance of the Chief of Council, who went on to say:

"For the name Wynne punishment of the second order shall be inflicted. Is it met?"

"It is met," droned the Council, with solemn intonation.

"Let us proceed then. What manner of man is thy father, O Wynne Rendall? Speak us fair, and do not seek to hide his calling."

"I have not yet found out what manner of man he is," replied Wynne, lightning quick to pick up the pedantry of his interrogator, "but it beseems me he is a fellow of heavy wit, who bears always a befrowning countenance. As to his calling he doth trade of import with our brothers of the Ind for the dried leaf of the tea plant."

This speech composed and delivered with ceremony created something of an uproar. Cries were raised that the penalty of the parallel bars should be summarily inflicted. In the midst of a chaos of many voices the Chief of Council held up his hand for silence.

"Look here, young Rendall," he said, "you'd better jolly chuck cheeking, or it will be the worse for you. You answer properly if you don't want a putrid licking—which you'll get anyway."

"Then go on," said Wynne, who was enjoying himself immensely. It was a new and delightful experience being the centre of attraction, and he felt he had the situation well in hand.

"Shall I proceed, gentlemen?"

"Go forward," crooned the Council.

"Are you a gamesman or a swotter? Ponder well before replying, for much depends upon this."

"I am not a gamesman."

"Mark his utterance, O men. Thou art, then, a swotter."

"I didn't say so. Don't even know what a swotter is."

"Explain," said the Chief. And one of the four, a freckled lad with red hair and a big healthy body, announced:

"A swotter is the sort of ass who mugs at lessons and thinks more of books than footer."

"The Council will sing the Song of the Swotter," said the Chief.

So the Council sang—

"The swotter is a rotter,
And we always make it hotter
For the swotter who's a rotter—
Yes, we do."

"Yes, we do," was repeated by all present.

When this impressive rendering was over, Wynne replied:

"I think I am a swotter all right."

"Be it remembered," said the Chief. "Little remains to be said. The C. I. D. will now report on this miscreant's behaviour since arrival."

Whereupon a foxy little boy came forward from one of the groups, and after making a profound obeisance to the Council began:

"He has worn his cap on the back of his head and put his hands in his trousers' pocket. I have been to his bedder, and he wears a woollen nightshirt and combinations instead of pants and vest."

Wynne felt himself flush with hot anger and resentment, and heard an expression of disgust from all present.

"Are these things true, O most wretched Wynne Rendall?"

"Yes, they are, but how dared that beastly little swine touch my box?"

"Be silent—scrag him—scrag the swotter," came from all sides.

“I don’t care—he’s a dirty little—”

“Pin him,” ordered the Chief, with a gesture so commanding that he all but fell from his perch.

Very adroitly two volunteers stepped forward and twisted Wynne’s wrists under his shoulder blades, while a third, with a skill which would have defied the ingenuity of the Davenport Brothers, made fast his hands with a knotted kerchief.

The work accomplished they stood aside and refolded their arms.

“Pass judgment,” they demanded.

“Judgment shall be passed,” said the Chief. “You, Wynne Rendall, have been given fair and lawful trial, and are found guilty on several counts. First, you bear a name that is unpleasant to the tooth, and for this nose-pressure shall be inflicted.” (The presser of noses girt his loins for battle, and examined a row of shiny knuckles to see that all was in order.) “Second, your reply when asked of your father’s doings was too cheeky by a long chalk, and for this two circuits of the frog-march shall be administered.” (The frog-marcher-extraordinary made no movement, but he smiled as one who knew full well his own potentiality.) “Third, and methinks the gravest charge of all, it is established that thou art a swotter, and for this the ordeal of the parallel bars must and shall befall you.” Eight boys stepped forward, but the Chief shook his head. “Three a side will suffice,” he said. “That much mercy will I grant thee on account of your miserable size. The punishment for the nightshirt and the combinations will be the shame of wearing them, but I put it forward that they may help us in deciding a proper nickname for you. After the punishments have been inflicted you will step once more into the circle and declare you will not attempt to use your trousers’ pockets until the beginning of your second term. This you will swear most solemnly by the Goal-post and the Fives Ball. O men! has the word gone forth?”

“It has.”

“Do the punishments meet?”

“They meet.”

“Let them go forward.”

Wynne had scarcely time to appreciate the anguish inflicted by the nose-twister before he found himself ignominiously drummed round the gymnasium at the knee of the frog-marcher. It was a jarring and painful means of progression, and almost he welcomed the narrow invitation of the parallel bars which loomed before him at the close of the second circuit.

The variety offered, however, was far from consoling, and during the few moments' pressure in that inhospitable spot he feared his last hour had come. He was made to form a buffer in the middle, while three boys on either side, bracing their legs against the upright supports, pushed toward the centre with their united strength. He could feel his ribs caving inward and the breath was forced from his lungs. Respite came not a moment too soon, and when they drew away he hung over the bar in an ecstasy of exhaustion and nausea.

It was not until he heard the voice of the Chief announcing that he had borne the ordeal in honourable silence that he was aware he had forborne to scream.

"Help him to the circle," came from a far-off voice, but he shook aside the proffered assistance and tottered to the circle unaided.

"Your bearing has been creditable," said the Chief, "and that inclines us to leniency. Speak by the Goal-post and Fives Ball that the word may be fulfilled."

Then said Wynne, with a somewhat hysterical catch in his voice:

"I swear by the Goal-post and the Fives Ball that to save myself the pain of offending you fools I'll keep my hands out of my pockets for as long as you stupidly want."

And the world became singularly black, the sky full of crimson stars, and he sat down awkwardly upon the floor with his head between his knees.

IV

It would be far from the truth to state that Wynne Rendall was popular at school. On account of the readiness of his wit and an adroit, if somewhat embittered, knack of turning a phrase, he achieved a kind of notoriety.

Mentally he was always more of a match for his physical superiors, as those who came up against him in differences of any kind were compelled to testify. There was a quality of courage about him that at once perplexed and irritated. The threat of a licking was of no avail in turning his point of view, and he would stand up courageously to a battery of blows which on some occasions, by pure vital energy, he would return with interest. But in the main his companions avoided offering him offence, since to do so was generally the occasion of their own downfall. He possessed a faculty, somewhat rare in the infant outfit, of being able to follow his opponent's mental processes, and this, coupled with a ready power of expression, gave him an instant ascendancy. Intuitively he knew the very thing they were least

likely to desire to hear, and although he was not of a naturally caustic bent, he would not hesitate to employ it if the situation demanded. Very early he made the discovery that loud-voiced, broad-shouldered fellows were by no means invulnerable, and indeed might very well prove cowards at heart.

The type he found greatest difficulty in dealing with was the muscular and sheep-minded lad who from sheer natural stupidity was insensible to verbal attacks. This type was represented by a fairly large section, and, on account of their bulk, could not with impunity be ignored. They were a piratical band of burly buccaneers, who would undertake any dirty work if the premium offered were sufficiently tempting. They hired themselves out to smaller boys who desired the "licking" of some one they were unable to vanquish themselves, and for the service rendered would exact a very heavy toll in stationery or delicacies from the tuck-shop. Being impervious to conscience, they were only accessible by other means.

Two days after his arrival Wynne had his first experience of the workings of this band.

He was walking by the Fives Court with Cedric Allen, the small boy who had offered jam and friendship, when the foxy youth, who had borne witness to his possession of a nightshirt, hailed and bade them stop. Lipchitty, for so he was named, addressed them in tones of authority.

"I'm going to speak to this kid, but you can stop, young Rendall. Now then, kiddie Allen, I want your Swedish knife."

Cedric quailed before these dread tidings. The knife was a most important affair, and boasted a handle of bird's-eye maple of unequalled loveliness. It was reputed that this knife would kill a man, and its possession had excited an interest in Cedric that might well dissipate with its passing. Wherefore, in a trembling fashion, he replied:

"My sister gave it to me."

Lipchitty was very properly disgusted.

"The sort of soppy thing she would do," he replied, and brought a flush of resentment to Cedric's round little face. " 'Tany rate, I'm going to have it."

"You aren't. You shan't."

"If you don't give it to me there'll be a jolly fine licking for you."

Cedric weighed his chances before replying.

"You're not much bigger than me; p'r'aps you'd get licked if you tried."

"Don't mean to try," responded the base Lipchitty; "I shall get Monkton major to do it for me, and he'll half kill you."

Monkton major was no idle threat—a fellow of vast proportions with a gross and sullen countenance.

In imagination Cedric saw his beloved possession float over the horizon, but he made one final effort.

"Why should he lick me? I haven't done anything."

"I shall give him some silkworms to do it," announced Lipchitty.

The system was exposed. Terrorism at a price. Wynne Rendall's quick brain seized on the flaw, and was away with it in a second.

"Right!" he interrupted, "then I'll give him a fountain pen not to do it."

"You shut up," warned Lipchitty, but there was alarm in his voice.

"I shall."

"You'd better not. If you do I'll give him a Brownie to lick you."

Wynne laughed. "Then," he said, "I'll give him five and six to lick you."

Lipchitty trembled, for the price was rising out of all expectation. Dared he bounce it another sixpence and overthrow his opponent? The risk was great, so he temporized with—

"How much have you got? I warn you I've ten bob, so you'd better look out!"

Ten bob! The game was in Wynne's hands. With cruel leisure Wynne produced his adored letter-case and took out the five-pound note.

"That's done you," he cried.

The sight of so much wealth staggered Master Lipchitty, who with a mumbled unpleasantry started to move away. But the spirit of reprisals was upon Wynne, and he called on him to stop.

"Look here, Lipchitty, I haven't done with you. You started this business, and now you are going to finish it. It was you who made me out a fool before the Council by sneaking into my box. Very well, you've jolly well got to swop a pair of pyjamas for one of my nightshirts or I'll give Monkton major ten and six to lick you silly."

That night Wynne slept very honourably in a coat and trousers of delicate striped taffeta, while Lipchitty mumbled in his sleep and dreamed lurid dreams of knife-thrusts in dark corridors, and enemies cast unsuspectingly into the yawning shaft of the *oubliette*.

V

The prediction that Wynne Rendall would prove a swotter was more than amply borne out by his conduct in the class-room.

In most branches of education he displayed voracity for learning to an unusual extent. Latin and Greek delighted his soul, and his form-master, who was not a man of great erudition, was sorely put to it to keep pace with the extraordinary rapidity with which he acquired a knowledge of these dead tongues. His translations were admirable, and he seemed capable of reproducing the original spirit and lilt of the lines into English prose. Horace, Virgil, Homer were more than mere tasks to Wynne; they were delights which breathed of the splendid freedom in thought and action of the old periods which had passed away.

To a very large degree he possessed appreciation for what Ruskin so happily terms "the aristocracy of words." He realized how one word allied to another made for dignity or degradation, and he strove never to commit himself to an expression in writing that did not bear the stamp of honourable currency.

From the school library he acquired his taste for the poets—one or another of which he carried with him on all his wanderings and greedily assimilated. Unlike most early readers he did not pin allegiance to any particular writer, but pored over all with equal concentration, carrying away the best from each in his remarkably retentive memory.

But for his incurable stupidity in regard to mathematics, it is probable at the age of sixteen he would have been head of the school, but mathematics defeated him at every turn. He hated figures, and it was characteristic that he would never attempt to acquire a better liking for the things he hated. He ignored and passed them over, admitting neither the interest nor the logic that lay in the science of figures.

"It is a great pity, Rendall, that you will not concentrate on these matters," said the Head. "You display ready enough intelligence in other directions."

Wynne shook his head.

"I am sorry, sir," he said, "but I find no satisfaction in mathematics."

"You should feel the satisfaction of doing a thing right."

"The reward doesn't tempt me, sir. Given that the answer to a most intricate problem proves to be .03885—what has been achieved beyond a row of figures? In after years none will look back and say, 'He was the man who found this answer,' for the reason that there is no charm or beauty in his

findings. To the eye of the onlooker, sir, .04996 would be none the less pleasing."

"But it would be wrong," urged the Head.

"Nero was wrong in setting fire to Rome, yet people still speak of that."

"They speak in horror, Rendall."

"And a certain amount of admiration, sir. He was artist enough to play upon a harp while the roof beams crackled and fell."

"I am afraid your instance suggests a certain laxity of moral outlook, Rendall, which one can only deplore."

Wynne looked up at the ceiling and smiled.

"He created a stir, sir—that is what I am getting at. Good may have resulted too. Possibly a deal of pestilence was scorched out of the city in that mighty fire."

The Head eyed him seriously.

"Let me see, Rendall," he said, "how old are you?"

"Sixteen, sir."

"Sixteen. You are a precocious boy. You have revolutionary qualities that do not altogether please me. You are far too introspective, and introspection is a dangerous thing in unskilled hands. It is a pity you do not cultivate a greater taste for outdoor games."

"Thank you, sir, but I don't want to shine in after life as a cup-tie footballer or a Rugby international."

"Possibly not, but healthy exercise promotes a healthy mind, my boy."

"I believe, sir, that is the general opinion."

"You venture to doubt it?"

"Well, sir, I would not attach much value to a champion heavyweight's views on a matter of æsthetics."

"Æsthetics are beside the point altogether. Too much æsthetics is quite as bad as—as—"

"Too much football, sir?"

"You are disposed to be impertinent, Rendall; I have no desire to staunch the flowings of your brain, but I would remind you that God equipped mankind with legs and arms, and it was clearly not the intention that we should allow them to stagnate from disuse. That is a piece of wisdom you would do well in taking to heart. A brain that is overworked will conduct its owner unworthily, therefore I should tonic yours with a little exercise."

Wynne had never held a very high opinion of the Head since the day he had been informed of the mysteries of perpetuating the species. On that occasion the Head had fallen very considerably in his esteem.

He had floundered sorrowfully in his logic, had shown embarrassment, and made a muddle of what he had to say.

For some reason the good man had confused the subject with the commandment, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," and as his exposition was by no means clear on either count Wynne had been greatly perplexed. He was informed of certain consequences of sex and at the same time warned that indulgence was forbidden. When it was over he felt he had been told of something which by holy law was impossible of achievement. He left the study far more uncertain as to how the race was perpetuated than he had been on entering. Incidentally he felt rather sick, and in the privacy of his little den he had thrown his books about and stared at himself in the glass with a new and half-fledged understanding.

He was, however, a singularly sexless boy, and the effect produced was of no very enduring character. Sex curiosity had no abiding place in his disposition, and he entirely failed to understand the impulse which compelled some of the older boys to bring opera glasses to bear on the windows of the servants' quarters in the hope that some disrobing act might be espied and magnified. He would take no part in the whispered conversation that forms part of a nightly program in practically every school, and found no reason to reverence those scions of adventure who, with a wealth of imagination, drew pictures of their conquests over undefended citadels.

For this reserve he was almost unanimously dubbed a prig, but with little enough justice. Wynne possessed no great distaste for wrong as being wrong; indeed, in many cases, wrong appealed to him more generously than the accepted view of right.

It was the schoolboy form of especial backstairs carnalism that provoked in him the greatest distaste. There was, he thought, something sordid and paltry about an enterprise that could only be referred to in half-tones. If one sinned one should sin openly as Nero had done, and play upon a lyre while the smoke of one's sinning columned to the sky.

There is in the make-up of most growing boys a substratum of nastiness, and it may well prove to be an act of divine providence that this should be so. By the great Law of Contrast our judgments are made. They are made in contrast to the error of our earlier ways. From the lowest stage we step to higher planes and look back with timid disgust on thoughts and actions we

have left behind. It is seldom enough, thank God, we consider our vulgar embryonic excesses in any other light than that of a degrading folly which, by the grace of better understanding, we have filtered from our systems. It is seldom enough that the most perverted boy carries out into the world the brand of his unmoral beginnings. There should be comfort in this for the parent whose son returns from school before the holidays begin.

Wynne was coldly unmoved by the most lurid imaginings of sex. He would merely shrug his shoulder and go elsewhere. Yet mentally he was every kind of sensualist. The music of words stirred him illimitably—it would quicken his pulses and shorten his breath as no bold appeal from the eyes could have done. He could recognize love in the grand periods of the poets, and gasp with emotion at the splendour and passion it bespoke; but to associate love with the individual, or to consider himself in the light of a possible lover, never entered his mind.

And so he passed over his period of first knowledge and learnt nothing from the lesson.

VI

Wynne Rendall returned home for the summer vacation in his seventeenth year. He was heavily laden with prizes and lightly poised with enthusiasm. In every department of learning, save only mathematics, had he borne himself with honourable success. It was not unnatural, therefore, he should have looked for some expression of rejoicing from his parents, but herein he was destined to be disappointed.

His father had not returned from the City when he arrived, but he found his mother in the drawing-room. Her old allegiance to embroidering antimacassars had by no means abated with years, and as Wynne entered she was still mismating her coloured silks with the afore-time guarantee of hideousness. But even this circumstance would not staunch the enthusiasm Wynne felt in his own prowess. The desire to impart the news of his successes was perhaps the youngest trait in his character, so when the greeting was over he broke out:

“I’ve done simply splendidly, mother. I’ve simply walked away with all the prizes, and the classic master says my Greek verses are the best the school has ever produced.”

His eyes sparkled as though to say, “There, what do you think of that?”

Had Mrs. Rendall known it she would have recognized that here was a moment to win a large measure of her son’s affection. Encouragement given

at the right time is the surest road to the heart. But hers, alas! was not an analytic mind. All she contrived to say was:

"Oh, yes. Well, that's quite nice, isn't it?"

"Oh!" exclaimed Wynne. "You're hopeless." And that is a very dreadful thing for a boy to say to his mother—and a more dreadful thing for him to feel.

Mrs. Rendall laid aside her work, and remarked, "I am sure I don't know why you should say that."

"Well, it is so—so deplorable."

"What is?"

"I don't know. Doesn't matter."

"I said nothing at all."

"That's true—that's just it."

"What did I say? I said it was quite nice."

"Yes. You did. But don't let's talk any more about it."

"And you replied that I was hopeless. You must have had some reason for saying that?"

"No, none at all."

"It would have been different if I had said it wasn't nice, but I said the right thing and you were rude."

Wynne did not reply, but he breathed despairfully.

"It is a great pity to be rude, Wynne, and you should try to guard against it. You will never get on if your manners are not nice. Your Great-uncle Bryan" (he was a deceased relation on her side of the family who had made a nice little income as a chemist) "attributed his success entirely to the possession of an agreeable counter-manner."

"Preserve me from that," cried Wynne, and fled from the room.

When his father returned from the City the scene in many respects was re-enacted. Mr. Rendall senior ignored his son's classical and literary successes, and focused his attention upon the absence of any achievement on mathematical lines.

"Lot of use Socrates and all these other Latin chaps are if you can't cast up a row of figures!"

Wynne smiled.

"I fancy that Socrates was a Greek," he replied.

“I’m not going to quibble about that. He could have been an Esquimaux for all the good he’ll do you in the City.”

Wynne had been expecting this for some time, and he replied with a steady voice,

“I shan’t take him to the City, father.”

“Better not. Better forget all about him and fix your mind on things that matter. How did you do with book-keeping?”

“I did nothing. I wish to make books, not to keep them.”

“Don’t want any racecourse jargon here, please.”

“You misunderstand me. I ought to have said write books.”

“There are plenty of books without your writing them.”

“What a good thing Shakespeare’s father didn’t think so!” mused Wynne.

Mr. Rendall ignored the interruption.

“I’m giving you one more term at school, so make the best use of it. You are not by any means a fool, and what your brother Wallace could do you should be able to do.”

Wallace was already established in a clerkship whither he daily proceeded in a silk hat. Being drawn into the conversation he felt it incumbent upon himself to offer a contribution.

“You will find in the City, Wynne, people are not inclined to put up with a lot of nonsense.”

“I think it unlikely I shall find out anything of the kind,” replied Wynne.

“I say you will,” retorted his brother.

“And I repeat I think it is unlikely.”

“Your brother Wallace knows what he’s talking about,” said Mr. Rendall.

“That’s it!” exclaimed Wynne, jumping to his feet; “he knows what he is talking about, and that is all he ever can or ever will know.”

“Will you sit down at table!” ordered Mr. Rendall. “I never saw such an exhibition.”

“It is terrible,” lamented Mrs. Rendall.

“You listen to what your elders have to say, and don’t talk so much yourself. Your brother Wallace is making thirty-five shillings a week.”

“O most wonderful Wallace!” cried Wynne. “Villon starved in a gaol and wrote exquisite verses, but he could not earn so much as brother Wallace.”

“Look here, young Wynne,” exclaimed his brother, “you had better shut up if you don’t want me to punch your head.”

“ ‘Scots wha hae wi’ Wallace bled,’ ” chanted Wynne irrepressibly.

“Father! Can’t you speak to him?”

“Speak to him be damned!” said Mr. Rendall, for no particular reason. “He’s got to toe the line, that’s what it amounts to—toe the line.”

“And when I’ve toed the line, what then?” demanded Wynne; but none seemed able to supply the answer, and the advice to “shut up about it” could hardly be regarded as illuminating.

The argument concluded with the brief comment from his father:

“I’ll talk to you in the morning.”

VII

The matter was not broached again until after breakfast on the following day, when Wynne and his father were left alone over the empty cups and dishes.

“Discuss your future!” announced Mr. Rendall. He rose and placed a lump of sugar between the bars of the canary’s cage. The canary chirruped to signify gratitude for the gift.

“Seems to me there is no advantage keeping you at school any longer. Bit of practical experience in life will lick you into shape quicker than anything else.”

“One minute,” said Wynne, “I believe I could get a University scholarship if you gave me another term.”

“Scholarship be damned! I never went to a University; no reason why you should go. Not going anyway—”

“Yes, but—”

“Quiet. D’y’hear! There can be altogether too much of a good thing—too much altogether. I have my own plans for you.”

“And so have I,” said Wynne.

“Then you’ll make them fit in with mine—got that?”

Wynne’s foot began to tap on the ground and his mouth straightened thinly.

“Go on.”

“I’ll go on in my own damned time. A little hard discipline is what you want and it’s what you’ll get.”

"Well?"

"I spoke to Kessles on the 'phone last night about putting you there."

"Kessles?"

"The warehouse people—don't you know that?"

"No."

"What do you know? Nothing."

"A bit hard on Mr. Kessles then."

"Quiet. He's prepared to give you an opening, and I've accepted it."

"That's just as well, because I certainly shouldn't have done so."

"I'm not putting up with any argument. You can have a couple of weeks holiday, then go up to the City like any one else."

Wynne shook his head resolutely.

"There is no question about the matter, my boy, it is a case of 'having to.' High time you began to make a way in the world."

"Yes," said Wynne. "I'll make a way in the world—I want to and I shall—but it will be *my* way, not yours."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean that I am not going to the City—I absolutely refuse—absolutely."

"Continue like that and I won't be answerable for my actions," cried Mr. Rendall.

"And you shan't be for mine."

The determination in Wynne's tone was extraordinary considering his age and fragility. Without raising his voice he dominated his father by every means of expression. Mr. Rendall felt this to be so, and the shame of it scarleted his features.

"Since you were born," he shouted, "you have been perverse and maddening—ever since the day you were born!"

"Never once since the day I was born have you tried to see how my mind worked," came the retort. "You have done no more than force your mental workings on me. All I know or shall know will be in spite of you."

"Have you no proper feelings?"

"No, not as you read the word. Proper feelings are free feelings, new thoughts and fresh touches of all that is wonderful and unexplored. You think in a circle—an inner circle that constricts everything worth while like

the coils of a snake. And now I've had enough of it—enough of you—more than enough."

"Enough!"

"Yes, I'm going—I'm going to clear out and find some atmosphere where I can breathe."

"D'you dare to suggest running away?"

"Yes, I'm clearing out."

Some half-formed thought drove Mr. Rendall to seize the handle and put his back against the door.

"That won't stop me," said Wynne. "It isn't a race for the front door, which I lose if you're quick enough to stop me."

"Very well," conceded Mr. Rendall. "Very well—and how the devil do you think you'd live! Hey?"

"I shall manage."

"Manage be damned! Not a penny shall you have from me—not a farthing—not a bean."

"Then take back what I have already."

Wynne's hands dived into his trousers' pockets and pulled out the linings. Two or three florins and a few odd pence tumbled to the floor and circled in all directions.

Something in the action deprived Mr. Rendall of the last of his self-control. Seizing the silver entrée dish he sent it hurtling through the lower pane of the dining-room window. It was the first time his temper had risen to such heights.

"Let in the air," cried Wynne, with a note of hysteria, and picking up the pair of candlesticks from the mantelshelf he flung first one then the other through the remaining panes.

The south-west wind bellied the Nottingham lace curtains and stirred the feathers in the canary's back.

"Twirrup," he chirped, and hopping to the upper perch broke into a fine song of the palms that bow so statelily in the islands of the south.

"Get out!" said Mr. Rendall. "I've done with you—get out!"

VIII

Wynne packed a suit case in his own time. He was not fastidious in the matter of clothes, and books were the chief things he took. Oddly enough he

had no fear in facing the world alone. Possibly through inexperience the problem presented no alarming features. He did not imagine he was stepping out to meet an immediate fortune—education and added years had taught him that his singing days were still far ahead. He was confidently sure he would arrive eventually, but in the meantime the world lay before him—a mighty class-room through which he must pass before setting foot upon the Purple Patch. Bearing the bag in his hand he descended the stairs.

In the hall he hesitated. Should he or should he not seek his mother and risk the possibility of a further scene. The problem was solved by her sudden appearance at the door of the drawing-room. In some respects her face had lost its wonted stolidity. She seemed as one perplexed by vague understandings. Cain might have looked so when he saw death for the first time in the fall of his brother, and wondered stupidly what manner of thing it might be.

"So you are going away, Wynne," she said.

"Yes, mother."

"I see." But she did not see very clearly, as her next remark betokened. "Have you packed your clean things?"

For some human reason Wynne had no inclination to smile at this. It struck him as being somewhat pathetic.

"I think so," he replied.

"That's right. Did you ask cook to cut you some sandwiches?"

"No, mother. I—I don't think you quite understand. I'm not going away just for the day—I'm going for good."

"For good!" repeated Mrs. Rendall, in an expressionless voice. "Really? Yes, well that does seem a pity. Your father had a nice opening for you with Mr. Kessles."

"I don't think I should have flourished in an office, mother. I want to do and do and do."

"You might have gone to the office in the day-time and done a little writing in the evening. I am sure your father wouldn't have objected to that."

Wynne shook his head. "Wouldn't work," he said.

"Oh, I don't know. Your brother Wallace finds time for chip-carving after city hours. He made me such a nice blotter last month—very pretty it was."

" 'Tisn't quite the same, is it?"

"Well, I don't know, one hobby is very like another."

“I’m sorry,” said Wynne, “but I’ll have to go.”

“Where will you go to?”

“No idea.”

“How very extraordinary! But you might turn up anywhere?”

“Yes.” He fidgeted. It was hard to find anything to say. “I’d better be off.”

“Have you any money?”

“No. But I want none of father’s—I’ll take none of that.”

“You would take some of mine?”

“Why should I?”

“Because you can’t go away to nowhere without any money. Wait a minute.”

He demurred, but she took no notice, and went upstairs to her room. When she returned she gave him two ten-pound notes.

“I should have given you these on your eighteenth birthday, Wynne, so you may as well have them now. I did the same for Wallace when he was eighteen.”

It was the old symmetry coming out again—a clock in the middle, and a candlestick on either side.

“Thanks awfully much,” said Wynne.

“It is part of what I inherited from your Great-uncle Bryan.”

Uncle Clem had spoken the truth when he said, “Others will build the pulpit from which you hope to preach.” Wynne was going out to face the world on the reflected gilt of an agreeable counter-manner!

“Good-bye, mother.”

“Good-bye, Wynne.”

It was surprising when he kissed her she should have said,

“I think I am going to cry.”

He answered quickly,

“I shouldn’t—really I shouldn’t.”

Crying is so infectious.

“Perhaps I needn’t—but I could—I—I’m not sure I shan’t have to.”

“It’s quite all right,” said Wynne. He kissed her again and hurried down the steps.

The wind blowing through the broken window slammed the front door noisily. It occurred to Mrs. Rendall that the curtains might knock over the palm pedestal. Following the direction of her thoughts she moved to the dining-room to take steps. Her husband had said Wynne would return —"would crawl back on hands and knees"—and suppose he did not return? Well, then he wouldn't.

Hers was the kind of concentration that attaches more importance to airing a person's sheets than to the person himself. Crying was of little service, and the impulse had lessened with the peril of the palm pedestal to be considered.

IX

Many courageous people are nervous to a fault in certain directions.

Wynne Rendall possessed the pluck of the devil where his point of view or ideals were at stake, but in the performance of simple everyday affairs he was afflicted with a great shyness.

He hovered fearfully before the portals of several small hotels in the Strand district before summoning up courage to enter and take a room. It seemed to him the proprietors of these places would refuse and ridicule him —that they would tax him with his youth, and query if he had ever used a razor. Yet men great and small, of important or insignificant appearance, passed in and out of the swinging doors with the smallest concern imaginable. They dropped their baggage in the hall, and conversed with the clerks about rooms as he might have helped himself to salt at the table.

In all his life Wynne had never stopped at an hotel, and had no experience from which to adjust his actions. He realized, however, that to delay the ordeal indefinitely would serve no useful purpose. An hotel attracted his attention on the opposite side of the road, and squaring his shoulders he boldly approached it. His shame was boundless when he walked deliberately past the open doors and down once more to the Strand.

"That's the most cowardly thing I have ever done," he rated himself.

In Villers Street he espied an eating-house with an uncooked sirloin, embellished with parsley and tomatoes, standing on a silver salver in the window. He halted and read the various legends pasted to the inner surface of the plate glass. "A good dinner for 1s. 6d." "Steaks and onions." "Stewed tripe." "Bed and breakfast, 3s." Without waiting for his courage to ebb he walked inside. A dirty Swiss waiter pulled a chair from a small table and flicked the seat invitingly with a napkin.

"I want—that is, would you be good enough to let me a room. I was recommended to come here—at least I think—"

"A room—sartainly—one minute," he called a name through an open door, and a stout lady entered. "A room for zis gentleman. You will go wiz her."

As he mounted the stairs Wynne reflected that there was nothing in it after all. It was the simplest matter. He wished he had omitted the legend about having been recommended to the place; clearly there was no occasion for anything beyond a simple expression of one's needs. He had not thought to learn anything from a Swiss waiter in a Villers Street hotel, yet a new department of learning had been opened for him from which he might profit in the future.

The room to which he was shown was very ordinary, and made little impression upon him. He threw his bag to the bed and seated himself easily beside it.

The landlady lingered by the door, and he ventured a remark to her:

"I suppose you let quite a number of rooms?"

"It would be," she answered, "a bad thing for us if we didn't."

As there appeared to be nothing further to contribute to that line of inquiry, he nodded and remained silent.

"You'll want a bit of dinner, I suppose."

"Oh, yes, thank you—thanks."

"If you was to order it now it would be ready when you come down."

"All right," he said. Then, as she still lingered: "I think I'll wash my hands if you don't mind."

"What'll you have to eat?"

Of course! It was so obvious—he ought to have thought of that. What could he have? It would betray inexperience to ask what there was—a man of the world would know in an instant what his appetite desired. Wynne had often pictured himself ordering a dinner, but now the time had come he felt strangely unable to do so. His memory served him with a picture of the uncooked sirloin and the tomatoes, but it was unlikely they would oven this on his behalf.

The need to answer being imperative, he ordered "A chop, please, and some potatoes." After the departure of the landlady he cursed his woeful lack of imagination. He had dreamed to feast, as the old emperors, upon ortolans and the brains of peacocks, and instead he had ordered the very dish

which, in the ordinary rotation of the home-menu, would have appeared on his father's table that night.

Before going downstairs Wynne decided very firmly what he would say when asked as to his choice of drink. He would order shandy-gaff, and he would name it familiarly as "shandy."

This resolve completed, he opened his suit case and set out his belongings in careless disorder. Beyond doubt it was very fine to be a free-lance and possess a room of one's own in the heart of London. He took a pace or two up and down the floor and filled his lungs with air. The rumble of traffic and the long-sustained London note, made up of thousands of fine particles of sound, drifted to his ears.

"Something like!" said Wynne. "This is something like!"

He put his head out of the window and spoke again:

"You silly old crowds, all hurrying along. You don't know me—but one day you shall. Yes, I shall find out all your secrets, and you will come to me to disclose them. Oh! you silly, busy, hurrying old crowds, I'm getting ready for you. Why don't you look up and see me? Don't you want to? There's no charge yet. Look while you have the chance, for later on I shall tip up your chins and hold your eyes whether you want me to or not."

But none was disposed to glance his way. The day's work was done, and London emptying itself homeward. There were dinners, warm fires, and welcomes awaiting them, why should they waste a glance upon the white face of an anæmic boy who hung out over the sill of a three-shilling bedroom and blathered his foolish thoughts to the night.

Wynne ordered "shandy" with an air of some importance: by sheer bad luck the Swiss waiter's vocabulary was deficient of this word. He asked Wynne to repeat it, and, still failing to understand, further asked how the beverage was concocted. This threw Wynne into a blushing difficulty, since he himself was doubtful as to the ingredients used. Accordingly he revoked the order and asked for some ale, and since he stated no particular quantity he was saddled with a bottle of the largest size, which greatly taxed his powers of consumption. He struggled bravely, however, and the good malt fluid gave tone to his being and warmed his imagination.

He rose from the table with the pleasant confidence that he had left much of his awkwardness behind. He had thought to spend the evening considering his future, but in his rosy mood he decided a theatre would prove a more agreeable form of entertainment.

Hitherto his playgoing had been confined to a yearly visit to the local pantomime, a performance which had made no special appeal to him. As

master of his own choice he repaired to Shakespeare's Henry VIII., and was vastly impressed by the splendour of it all. Here and there he found himself at variance with the actors' renderings of certain passages, and during the intervals ruminated upon alternative readings. On the whole, however, the experience was delightful.

At the conclusion he emerged from the theatre in a state of artistic intoxication. He longed for a companion to whom he could express the views which the play had set in motion—any one would do so long as he might speak his thoughts aloud. With all these jostling crowds it was absurd that any one should be denied an audience. Surely some one would be glad to lend an ear. There must be some companionable soul in this great city with a thirst for knowledge and enlightenment.

"The clouds that gather round the setting sun." Wolsey had been wrong to betray so much emotion in delivering that speech. A man like Wolsey would see grim humour in his own downfall. It was contrary to the character, as he saw it, to stress the emotions of such a coming to pass. Wynne knew the speech intimately, and felt a great desire to repeat it aloud in the way it should be repeated. The Haymarket was hardly a place for such a recital, so he turned into Orange Street and the narrow thoroughfares adjoining. Here in a shadow he began the lines, but had hardly uttered a sound before a step caused him to stop. Looking round he saw a girl walking slowly toward him. A fur swung from her shoulders and a bag dangled in her hand. The white of her boots seemed phosphorescent in the half-light. As she came abreast of him their eyes met. Hers were bold and black-lashed, and the lids drooped in lazy insolence.

"Kiddie," she said, "coming home?"

And Wynne was startled into replying:

"Why, do you want a friend too?"

She curled her scarlet lips into a smile.

"I always want a friend," she answered.

"I don't," he said; "only sometimes! Sometimes one feels one must confide. I feel like that tonight."

"Confide in me, then. What's to stop you?"

"I think I will. You're frank—unconventional; some one like you I've been looking for. I couldn't sleep tonight—couldn't go to bed."

The smile came again—went—and was replaced by an expression of perplexity. It was not the conversational formula to which she was accustomed.

“Well, don’t let’s hang about, anyway,” she said. “There’s sure to be a cab in Waterloo Place. Come on.”

“D’you live far from here, then? It would be jollier to walk, don’t you think?”

She had heard that phrase before, on the lips of economists, and the business side of her nature sprang to action.

“If you’ve no money—better say so.”

“I’ve plenty of money.”

“What do you call plenty?”

“Don’t let’s talk money. People never speak of anything else.”

“I’m beginning to think you know a thing or two.”

“Perhaps I do.” The suggestion flattered him.

“So do I, and I’d like to know what I’m standing for, too. I’m too fly to bounce, kiddie. Get me?”

“No,” he replied. “I don’t understand what you’re talking about.” He hated confessing this, but it was no less than the truth.

“Of—course—not,” she drawled the syllables, and leaned against his shoulder with fingers that travelled caressingly over his wrist and palm.

“O God!” exclaimed Wynne. “I see.” A kind of fear possessed him and he backed a pace.

“What’s the matter now?”

“Only—only that I’m a fool. I must be. You’re Adventure, aren’t you? Commercial Adventure?”

“Now then! Who are you calling names?”

“I must be a fool.”

This concerned him most, and provided him with courage.

“All boys are fools—men too, for that matter. Come along if you’re coming.”

“But I’m not,” said Wynne.

“Why not?”

“I made a mistake.”

“A mistake, eh? You’re a cheeky little devil. Who are you to speak to a girl? I should like to ask?”

“I didn’t recognize you, that’s all. I’ve never met you before. Another time I shall know. Good-night.”

He turned quickly and walked away.

"Silly little kid!" murmured the girl, and fell into her roving pace once more.

"I wish I had told her how rotten I thought she was," mused Wynne, as he pulled off his boots before getting to bed. "I might have gone home with her!" He tried to picture such a happening, but it brought nothing to his imagination. There was not the slightest tremble of passion to weigh against his satisfaction at having avoided the offered temptation.

"Fools men must be to yield to that sort. I never should. I think I got out of it all right after the first mistake. Original sin!" He fell to quoting Swinburne, a poet who had pleased his ear alone.

> "What sterile growth of sexless root or Epicene,
> What flower of kisses without fruit of love, Faustine."

"She was very pretty—pretty figure—and her hands and feet were small. Yes, all the temptation was there, and I didn't yield. Glad I met her. It's helped me to know myself. I'm all right."

As he drew the blanket under his chin Wynne felt unduly self-satisfied—he forgot, perhaps, that it is easy to resist when there is no impulse to sin.

X

At the National Gallery on the following morning Wynne fell into conversation with an old man. The old man wore an Inverness cape and a wide-brimmed felt hat, he had shaggy eyebrows, a wispy moustache, and his cheeks were seamed and furrowed with wrinkles. He muttered to himself and seemed in a fine rage. Sometimes he rattled his umbrella and scowled at the passers-by, and sometimes he tossed his head and laughed shortly. Scarcely a soul came nigh him that he did not scrutinize closely and disapprovingly. Before him was Leonardo's "Virgin of the Rocks," and by his mutterings and rattles he kept the space before the picture clear of other humanity, as a sheep-dog rings his flock.

As Wynne approached he came under the influence of the old gentleman's inflamed stare, which, being in no wise alarmed, he returned with interest.

"Keep your eyes for the pictures," rapped out this peculiar individual.

"So I would," returned Wynne, "if it were not that you disturbed them."

"Ha! You're like all the rest. You'd run from your own bridal altar to see a cab-horse jump the area railings. I know the breed—I know 'em."

"Concentration is easily dislocated," said Wynne, choosing his words carefully, "attention is dependent upon circumstance and atmosphere."

"Good, enough, O most wise Telemachus," came the answer, with a mixture of agreement and cynicism, "the very reason for *my* invitation. How the devil shall a man keep his mind on this" (he nodded at the picture) "while this herd is using the Gallery as a shelter from the rain?"

Wynne laughed. An attack on the people always gave him pleasure.

"That's a fair statement of the case. The sun'll be out in a minute," he cocked his eye to the sky-light. "Then we shall have the place to ourselves. Mark my words."

"They've no artistic appreciation," said Wynne, feeling on safe ground. "A very bovine race, the English."

"Tommy rot!" said the old gentleman, unexpectedly; "don't talk drivelling nonsense. Best race in the world, the English, but they won't let 'emselves go."

"Well, doesn't that amount to—"

"No, it don't. You can't judge the speed of a racehorse while he is munching oats in a stable."

"No, sir; but presumably the people should come here to appreciate. They can do their munching at home."

"Rubbish! English folk are too shy to express appreciation. That's the trouble with 'em—shyness. National code! They keep away from all matters likely to excite 'em artistically for fear of being startled into expressing their true feelings. Englishmen's idea of bad form, expression! Damn fine people! Bovine? Not a bit of it!"

Seemingly, to be consistent was not a characteristic of the old gentleman, a circumstance which rendered argument difficult. Wynne fell back on:

"After all, it was you who attacked them first."

"Know I did. Good reason too. A lot of clattering feet thumping past my Leonardo! Scattering my thoughts. 'Taint right—'taint reverent. If I'd my way I'd allow no one to enter here who hadn't graduated to a degree in the arts—or respect for the arts. 'Tisn't decent for people to use as a waiting-room a gallery holding some of the world's greatest achievements on canvas. It's degrading and disgraceful. Why aren't we taught to respect art from infancy, hey? And pay it proper compliments, too. We have to take our hats off in a twopenny tin chapel, and are thought blackguards and infidels if

we keep 'em on, but do we ever touch a forelock to a masterpiece in paint, and does any one think any the worse of us however idiotically we behave before it? No! Then I say that we are no better than hooligans and savages, and have no right of contact with the glorious emblems of what a man's hand and a man's head can achieve."

This speech he delivered with enthusiasm and a profusion of gesture. Wynne was properly impressed, and hoped the old gentleman would proceed, which he readily did.

"Good Gad a'mighty!" he ejaculated, pointing a claw-like forefinger at Leonardo's Virgin. "Whenever I doubt the Scriptures I look at her and the doubt passes. Da Vinci *saw* her. *Saw* her, and he painted what he saw—the flesh and the spirit. See the eyelids, they tremble—don't they? They are never at rest. That's the woman essence—the mother essence—eyes trembling over the soul of her child. And the hands! Don't you feel at any second they may move? One might come tomorrow and find them any-other-where. Motion—touch—a quickening sense of protection. Use the place as a shelter against the rain! Damnable! There's just the same amazing mobility in the expression of La Jaconde—at the Louvre, but with this difference. The Virgin"—he pointed again at the picture—"and Monna Lisa, the woman who saw the world through eyes of understanding which curled her lips to humour. A courtesan some folks say she was—not unlikely—inevitable almost! Takes a courtesan to contrive a measured expression like that. Lord! if a good woman could understand as a courtesan *must* understand, what a superwoman she would be! Intellect springs from knowledge of the flesh, and is sunk in it too—more often the latter. The revelation of one sex to another is the well-head of all learning. Passion of the soul is the reaction of bodily passion—must be—*is*. What is it Pater says about Monna Lisa?—'Represents what, in a thousand years, man had come to desire.' True too! Even a fool would admit that. There's a fleeting look in the eyes and the mouth that adjusts itself to every line of thought—gives an answer to every question—a compassion for every sin—an impetus to all betterment. Been to the Louvre? Know the picture?"

"No," said Wynne, rather ruefully.

"Good Gad a'mighty! then you've plenty to learn, and the sooner you start the better. What are you—art student or what?"

"I am going to be a writer."

"How old?"

"Seventeen and a bit."

“Then learn to paint first. There are no schools for writers, and painting’ll teach you more than all the libraries in the world. Teach you values—that’s the hinge of all learning in art—values! Relative values. The worth of this as compared with that. Teach you line—the infinite variety of line—the tremendous responsibility of line—the humour—the severity of line. Teach you nature—the goddess from whom all beauty is drawn, and whose lightest touch has more mystery in it than all the creations of man. That’s what you want to do. No good trying to write till you’re nearing thirty—abouts. Learn on canvas how to ink your paper thoughts. Pack your bag and go to Paris.”

“I believe I will,” exclaimed Wynne. “Where—where should I go when I get there?”

“Anywhere—Julian—Calarossi. The Quartier is full of ’em. Make for the Boule Miche, and stop the first boy with a beard. He’ll tell you where to go.”

PART THREE
PARIS

I

At nine o'clock next evening a slightly confused Wynne Rendall was seeking a cab midst the din and clatter of the Gare St. Lazare. He had escaped the escort of several insidious gentlemen who offered their services as "Guides," and spoke suggestively of Corybantine revels they were prepared to exhibit. Wynne had been warned by an amiable Customs official to have nothing to do with "zes blerdy scoundrills," so he was able to reply to their English solicitations, "Pas ce soir, merci," and move on in the press of crowds.

He succeeded in attracting the attention of a very aged cab-driver, who controlled two white steeds, of even greater age, with a pair of scarlet reins. Him he addressed in his best school French:

"Je desire trouver un hotel très petit et pas trop cher," he said.

The driver seemed at some difficulty to understand, but when finally he succeeded in doing so he bade Wynne climb inside, and, gathering up his reins, shouted a frenzied command to the horses. Seemingly these beasts were unaffected by his cries, for they moved away in the stateliest fashion; whereupon the driver rose to his feet and laid about him with a whip like any Roman charioteer. This produced the desired result, and the vehicle, swaying perilously, thundered over the cobbles of the station yard and out into the night.

"This is magnificent," said Wynne. "Oh, gorgeous!"

His eyes feasted on the broad boulevards—the *cafés*, with their little tables set upon the pavement beneath the gay striped awning—the unfamiliar cosmopolitan crowds who jostled along or sat sipping their syros and bocks at pleasant ease. Also it was very wonderful to be driving on the wrong side of the road and apparently ignoring all traffic laws. Once a gendarme with a long, clattering sword held up his hand to bid them stop, but him the driver ignored, beyond a sharp rattle of criticism as they brushed by.

At the corner of the Rue St. Honoré a *fiacre* in front knocked a man off his bicycle, and proceeded as though nothing had happened. The unfortunate

cyclist picked himself up and started in pursuit, leaving his bicycle lying in the highway. A motor bus, considering such an obstacle unworthy of changing its course to avoid, ran over it, crushing the frame and rims, and Wynne's cab, following behind, did likewise.

Nobody seemed to care. Passers-by scarcely wasted a glance over the affair. A desire to cheer possessed Wynne. It seemed he had arrived at the City of Harlequinade, where the wildest follies were counted to be wise.

Further down the road a fight was in progress. No blows were exchanged, but the disputants grabbed and clawed at each other's clothing. They ripped out neckties and tore the buttons from waistcoats. They stamped upon and kicked each other's hats—pockets were wrenched from coats, and shirt-tails sprang unexpectedly to view.

Wynne could not help thinking how funny it would be if Wallace were to appear in Wimbledon High Street with a battered silk hat and his shirt-tail flapping over his breeches. There was humour in this fight which seemed to justify it—not blood and staggering figures, such as one saw outside the publichouses at home on a Saturday night.

Wynne blessed the old gentleman of the National Gallery who had inspired him to come to Paris.

They passed a great *magasin* with blazed arch lights, and turned up a tiny street to the left. Wynne caught a glimpse of its name as the cab turned the corner. "Rue Croix des Petits Champs." Then the vehicle stopped abruptly—so abruptly that the nearside horse fell to his knees and nearly dragged the driver from the box, who marked his disapproval by liberal use of the whip. Order being restored, he pointed to a big arched doorway and cried:

"Voilà! Voilà!"

So Wynne alighted and demanded:

"Comme bien?"

"Cinq francs quatre-vingt-cinq."

Wynne was unaccustomed to French money, and the centimes conveyed nothing to him. He proffered four francs and was amazed at the flow of incomprehensible invective which followed. It was impossible to argue at anything approaching that speed, so he held up his palm with some silver in it and said:

"Alors prenez ce que vous voulez."

The driver accordingly appropriated eight francs, and with a cry of " 'Voir et merci," whipped up his horses and vanished into the night.

Wynne subsequently learned that the fare should have been about one shilling and threepence.

He entered the arched gates and found himself in a small courtyard with a lighted door at the further end. Above this was written, “Hotel du Monde et Madagascar.”

The idea of referring to Madagascar as though it were a satellite of the world pleased his sense of humour and warmed his heart toward the new abode.

The foyer at the hotel was quite small, and there was a little office, on the immediate right of the entrance, in which sat a sweet-looking old lady dressed in black, and wearing a beautifully laundered cap.

Wynne gave her good evening, stated that he wanted a room, “très bon marché,” and told her his name.

“Et moi je suis Rosalie,” returned the little concierge, with the sweetest smile imaginable.

Certainly he could have a room—it was on the fifth floor, and cost but twenty francs a month. That he would like it she was sure, since it was “clair, propre et tout ce qu’il faut.” She would ring for Benoit, who was “un garçon bien gentil,” although suffering from “mal é la poitrine,” which would carry him off all too soon. “Qui, c’est triste!”

Benoit’s appearance, when eventually he arrived, did not give rise to any immediate anxiety regarding his health. He was a big and cheerful man, beside whom Wynne felt painfully insignificant. Taking possession of the bag, Benoit led the way up many flights of stairs, until at last they arrived at the fifth floor. Here he threw open a door and said:

“Voilà! N’est-ce pas?”

Wynne’s reply, “C’est de luxe,” amused Benoit greatly, who sat on the bed to enjoy a hearty laugh.

While the bag was being unpacked, Benoit supplied information regarding Parisian life. Thus Wynne learnt that the average boarder in small French hotels went out for his meals and his bath. By this means either one or the other could be taken at the convenience of the individual, who was therefore in no way constrained to be at a certain place at any specified hour. Wynne inquired how far it was to the Quartier Latin, and was greatly delighted to learn that ten minutes’ walk would land him there.

Many students from the ateliers lodged at the hotel, he discovered, some of whom were “bien gentil,” and others “méchant.”

“Aprés le Bal Quatres Arts! O c’était terrible!” He, Benoit, was constrained to prevent a certain young Englishman, who habitually was “tout à fait milord,” from importing to his apartment a lady dressed as Britannia, whom he claimed as his bride. It was undoubtedly very droll, and he was sympathetic, but the good name of the house came first, and since no marriage lines were available, husband and wife were forced to celebrate their nuptials apart. Doubtless the young man was carried away by patriotism, but if the excellent “Madame” had heard of such goings on she would have been in a fine rage.

Further advices were given as to where Wynne would do well to seek his food. He would find excellent hospitality “chez Bouillon Aristide” at the corner, and a little further down the Rue St. Honoré was a creamery whose chocolate and croissons would compare with those set upon the table of the President.

He urged Wynne to avoid sliding on the polished floor of his bedroom, since the practice provided him with additional labour in the mornings. Also he volunteered the remark that the room was popular because it was very amusing.

Wynne liked the room, but could not at the time comprehend in what sense the word amusing could be associated with it. When he awoke the following morning an explanation arose, for his ears were filled with the sound of girls’ voices singing a merry song.

Opening his eyes he observed through the window an apartment some twenty feet away on the other side of the courtyard. Herein sat perhaps a dozen little workgirls, plaiting and combing long switches of false hair. They were employés of a perruquier, and cheerful, light-hearted souls they appeared to be. When he sat up in bed they greeted him with the friendliest gaiety, giving thanks that their fears that he might be dead were not realized.

Wynne felt a little embarrassed having to make his toilet in these circumstances. He remained between the sheets indecisively until forced to rise by the friendly chaffery from opposite. Then he grabbed his clothes from the chair and ran the gauntlet to the corner of the room, where he might dress without being observed.

This manœuvre excited gusts of merriment, in which he found himself joining very heartily.

After all, why should one mind dressing before an audience? It was ridiculous to be super-modest over such trifles. He realized with a start that his own stock of unconventionalism was thoroughly outclassed by these

simple little midinettes, and this being so, he at once conceived for them a very profound esteem.

Accordingly, with a hairbrush in one hand and his braces trailing behind him, he stepped upon the tiny balcony and said:

"Bon jour. Je pense que vous êtes très, très douce les toutes."

The cordial reception accorded to this sentiment encouraged him to further efforts. He found, however, that his stock of French was insufficient for the needs of the occasion. After a laborious endeavour to express appreciation for their sunny broad-minded temperaments and to include a few words stating that his mission in life was to inculcate a similar breadth of mind to the hide-bound pedants who infested the world, he was compelled to stop for lack of the material to proceed.

His merry audience, in spite of having failed to understand a single word, cheered the speech very generously, and blew him a cloud of aerial kisses.

II

Wynne Rendall took his chocolate and immersed his roll therein with all the skill of a Parisian, and later, in a very rapturous frame of mind, crossed the Seine by the Pont des Arts and made his way to the Rue du Dragon. He had no difficulty in discovering the Atelier Julien, and addressing himself to a bearded and aproned old gentleman who sat on a high stool in a very small office.

He had feared there might be difficulty in gaining admission, since he could claim no previous experience of the plastic arts, but in this his misgivings proved groundless. It was merely a matter of paying one's fee—a small fee at that—and taking one's place.

Asked if he had any choice of masters, he shook his head. He was placed therefore under the guardianship of Le Maître Jean Paul Laurens, a man "both strong and brilliant," whose studio was on the first floor.

Since he desired to spend the day seeing Paris, and purchasing colours and canvas, Wynne decided he would not start work until the morrow.

"Bien; demain matin à huit heures! Très bien. Au 'voir."

III

It was splendid to reflect that he was a full-blown student of the Quartier, thought Wynne, as with ringing steps he swung along the narrow

thoroughfares. He wished Uncle Clem had been there to witness his glory. Never before had he felt so confident of his own personality. Rivulets of water danced and chattered along the gutters reflecting the gladness of his mood—the sun shone gloriously on the tall white houses. Quaint old men with baskets of merchandise piped beseechingly on tiny horns. Thousands of purple-dyed eggs filled the shop windows, and the wonderful, everchanging, raffish, homely crowds chattered, gesticulated and hurried along in ceaseless streams.

Wynne was possessed with a foolish desire to shake hands with every one he met, and tell them all about himself; to explain why he had come, and to give them a glimpse of the workings of his many-sided nature. A measure of common sense dissuaded him from so doing, but he sang as he walked, and expanded his narrow chest to its fullest capacity. Presently he found himself by the riverside, and hovered awhile over the book-sellers' stalls perched on the stone copings of the embankment. At one of these he bought a translation of Shakespeare's works, an old volume of Balzac, and some paper-bound copies of the plays of Molière. It was the first time he had rummaged among books, and the experience was delightful. The mere touch of them sent a thrill of learning through his being.

For awhile he hovered by the riverside watching the energetic steamboats—the sober barges—and the great floating warehouses moored by the tow-path. Everywhere were people sketching—placid and preoccupied. No crowds of curious urchins jostled around them with stupid comments, as was always the case at home when any one had the temerity to bring their colour-box into the open day.

Paris respected its artists, and gave them as great seclusion out of doors as in their own studios. Sombre sportsmen, rodded and camp-stooled, lined the banks and strove to catch the elusive gudgeon. It seemed as though their attention was centred anywhere but upon the float. Their eyes rested dreamily on the spanned arches of Pont Neuf or the flying buttresses of Notre Dame, while invisible fish in the green waters beneath worried the bait from the hook with perfect immunity from danger.

To the island of Notre Dame Wynne directed his steps, and spent an hour of sheer delight with imagination let loose. Romance breathed in the air around him, and memory of dead things sprang to life. He pictured himself back in Dumas' days—with king's men and cardinals—swashbuckling on the footway—with masked ladies flitting into dark doorways, and the tinkle of blade against blade from some courtyard near at hand.

Chance led him to enter a low, stone building by one of the bridges. All manner of men and women passed in and out of this place, and Wynne followed the general lead. There was a glass compartment across the far side of the hall, before which a large crowd was assembled. A nursemaid wheeling a perambulator, and a group of blue-smocked, pipe-smoking ouvriers hid from view what the case contained.

The exhibits, whatever they might be, were clearly very popular. Wynne reflected that probably they were Napoleonic relics, or maybe the crown jewels, when a rift in the crowd betrayed the fact that the case was full of dead men. With heads tilted at shy and foolish angles, with bodies lolling limply against the sloped marble slabs, the corpses of the Seine bleared stupidly at the quick.

It was the first time Wynne had looked on the face of the dead, and the sight chilled him with a faint, freezing sickness.

"Oh, God, how awful!" he muttered, and turned to go, but the way before him was barred by fresh arrivals. "I want to get out," he cried, but no one heeded him. He began to struggle, when a firm hand fell on his shoulder, and a voice, speaking with a Southern American accent, said:

"Calm down, son. What's the trouble?"

Wynne looked up and saw a tall, broad-shouldered man smiling upon him. He wore a blue serge shirt, a pair of sailor's breeches, and no hat. His black, sleek hair hung loosely over his left temple.

"It's horrible," said Wynne. "I want to get away."

"Yer wrong," came the answer. "Yer wan' to stop. The spirit of Paris abides in this place. There's no intensive life without an intensive death. Only when they come here do they realize how very much alive they are. Sometimes I believe the Morgue is the greatest tonic in this city. Now jest pull up and we'll step round the cases together."

Wynne shook his head.

"Yer not afraid?"

"No, but—it seems so callous, and—I want to live—and do great things —wonders. I don't want to stare at a row of corpses."

"There's a fellow there"—he nodded his head toward the case—"who was an artist. He wanted to live and perform wonders too. Then he found out that he couldn't—found out that a dozen idle, do-nothing fellows could outclass him at every turn. What happens? He puts a brick in pocket and jumps. Seems to me, with your ideas, you might learn something from the page of those cold features."

"All right," said Wynne; "lead away."

They joined the crowd that slowly filed past the silent watchers.

"I'm glad I saw them," he said, as they turned once more toward the door. "I never realized before what full-stop meant. It makes one feel the need to get on—and on. Death is so horribly conclusive."

He drew a breath of air gratefully as they came into the sunlight.

"A cure for slackers, eh?" said the American.

"Yes—rather."

He was a pleasant fellow, the American, and volunteered to share a table at lunch.

"Painting student?" he asked.

"I'm making a start tomorrow at Julien's."

"Then pay for your drink when the Massier introduces himself, and if you know a rorty song sing it for all you're worth."

After lunch he helped Wynne buy colours, brushes, and a beautiful walnut palette, then wished him luck and departed.

They never met again. Paris is the place of quick friendships and equally quick partings. Races lose their characteristic shyness under the Paris sun. Strangers accost each other and join in day-long or night-long festivities, exchange their most intimate thoughts, and finally go their ways without even so much as asking each other's names.

IV

Wynne arrived at the Atelier Jean Paul Laurens at a quarter to the hour of eight A. M. He was the first comer, and had a moment's leisure to survey his surroundings. The studio itself was not large, and as high as the arm could reach the walls were plastered, generations deep, with palette scrapings. Above in great profusion were studies from the nude, heads and charcoal drawings in every possible mood of form and light. To Wynne, hitherto accustomed to regard paintings as pictures, these canvases struck a note of brutal coarseness, offending his æsthetic sensibilities. They seemed no more than men and women stripped of their clothing and indecently exposed.

"God! I won't paint like that," he thought.

From a great pile of easels in the corner he selected one and disposed it a few feet away from the model's throne; which done, he set his palette with

an infinite number of small dabs of colour. He thrust a few brushes through the thumb-hole, and was ready to make a start when the time arrived.

Presently a little Italian girl, with heavy gold rings in her ears, and a coloured kerchief over her head, came in and nodded a greeting.

"Nouveau?" she inquired.

"Oui," replied Wynne.

She smiled agreeably, and seating herself on the throne kicked her shoes behind a screen and pulled off her stockings.

"O-ooo!" she shivered, "c'est pas chaud."

She nodded toward the stove, and Wynne was glad of the opportunity to put on some coal, since he was conscious of some small uneasiness, alone and unoccupied while the maiden disrobed. He took as long as possible, and when he had finished discovered that she had finished too, and was calling upon him to provide her with a "couverture." This he sought and handed to her, not entirely without embarrassment.

"Merci, Bébé," said the Italian, and draped the old curtain around herself.

From the passage outside came the sound of many footsteps—a clamour of voices, and a moment later some twenty students clattered into the studio, with others at their heels. They were men of all ages and every nationality—some dressed as typical art students, others as conventionally attired as any young gentleman from Bond Street. An impulse which they shared in common was to make a noise, and in this they achieved a very high standard of perfection. A great variety of sounds were produced, mostly patterned from the fowl-run or the asses' stall. One serious-minded and bearded boy devoted his ingenuity to reproducing the noise of a motor horn; while another, leaping to the model's throne, hailed the dawn like any chanticleer. Espying Wynne's beautifully white canvas perched upon its easel, a red-headed Alsatian flung a tabouret which swept all before it, and sent the new palette planing to the floor.

"What the devil do you mean by that?" cried Wynne, and was told to "Shut up, you silly ass. Don't ask for trouble," by an English voice at the back of the crowd.

At this moment a very precise little Frenchman stepped forward and made a bow.

"Moi je suis le Massier," he announced, and asked if Wynne were prepared to stand a drink to the students. Twelve francs was the sum required—payable in advance.

The money was produced, whereat every one, including the model, who had borrowed a long painter's coat for the occasion, rushed from the studio. Half the crowd became wedged in the doorway, and the other half fell down the stairs *en masse*. Wynne was swept along by the tidal wave at the rear, and trod on many prostrate pioneers before swinging out into the Rue du Dragon. There was a small café fifty yards distant, and thither they raced, sweeping every one from the pavements as they ran. Further jostling ensued at the doors of the café, but finally every one struggled through and found accommodation.

A chair was set upon a table and Wynne invited to occupy it. This he did with very great satisfaction and a kingly feeling. Busy waiters below hurried round with trays, bearing glasses of black coffee, and a very innocuous fluid known as "grog Americaine."

When all had been served the Massier called upon the "nouveau" to give a song, and reminded him that failure to do so might result in unhappy consequences.

So Wynne stood upon the chair, with his head touching the ceiling, and sang several questionable limericks at the top of his voice. Hardly a soul understood the words, but from the spirit of their delivery they judged them to be indecent and bawdy, and as such very acceptable to hear. Moreover, there was a refrain in which all were able to join, and this in itself readily popularized the effort.

The Massier personally complimented the vocalist, and suggested that the occasion was almost sufficient to justify a barricade.

Cries were raised that nothing short of the barricade could be contemplated, and in an instant all the chairs and tables from the café were cast outside into the street. Skilled at their work, the barricaders set one table against the other with chairs before them. The company then seated itself and began to sing. Ladies from adjoining houses leaned out and threw smiles of encouragement, and the traffic in both directions ceased to flow.

Many and strange were the songs sung, and they dealt with life and adventure of a coarse but frisky kind.

Thus the passers-by learned what befell an officer who came across the Rhine, a sturdy fellow with an eye for a maid, and a compelling way with him to wit. Some there were who glowered disapprovingly at this morning madness, but more generally the audience were sympathetic, and yielded to the student the right of levity.

All would have gone well but for a surly dray-driver, who, wearying of the hold-up, urged his hairies into the midmost table with a view to breaking

the barricade. This churlish act excited the liveliest activity. The horses were drawn from the shafts and led forthwith into a small greengrocer's shop, where they feasted royally upon the carrots and swedes basketed in abundance about them. The owner of the shop and the driver raised their voices in protest, and their cries attracted the attention of the patron of the café. This good man, supported by three waiters, came forth and argued that the jest had gone far enough.

In so doing he was ill-advised, for in Paris a kill-joy invariably prejudices his own popularity. Some of the students formed a cordon about the good man and his staff, while others seized the chairs and tables and piled them on the tops of the waiting vehicles. This done they started the horses with cries and blows, and a moment later the furniture was careering up the street in all directions.

"C'est fini," said the Massier.

The cordon broke, Monsieur le Patron and his garçons were away in pursuit, and the students, headed by the bare-footed Italian girl in her paint-smeared jacket, turned once more to their labours.

Wynne was almost exhausted with laughter. It seemed impossible such revels could be conducted by perfectly sober men before half-past eight in the morning. Perhaps strangest of all was the suddenness with which the robes of gaiety were discarded, for ten minutes later each man was at his easel setting out his palette as soberly as a city clerk plays dominoes during the luncheon hour.

V

It should be stated that Wynne Rendall showed small skill as a painter. He approached the task with a pleasant conviction that he would at least rival if not excel the ordinary run of students. At school he had been able to achieve clever little caricatures of masters and boys, and he had thought to draw from life would be a simpler matter altogether. To his chagrin he discovered that he was not able even to place the figure roughly upon a canvas. He realized the intention of the pose, but his efforts to convey it were futile and grotesque.

With jealous irritation he observed how the other students dashed in the rough constructive features of a figure with sure sense of proportion and animation.

"Wha' are ye trying to do?" inquired a Scotch lad, who had abandoned his work for the pleasure of watching Wynne's confusion. "Mon, it's awfu'. Have ye no drawn from the antique?"

Wynne was not disposed to give himself away, although the words made him hot with shame.

"Every one has his own method," he retorted.

"A'mitted, but there's no meethod in yon. Stand awa' a meenit." And before Wynne had time to protest he struck a dozen red lines upon the canvas which gave an almost instantaneous likeness to the subject.

"Leave it alone," said Wynne. "It isn't yours."

"I need hairdly say I'm glad. Now look ye here. Ye know naything, and a leetle ceevil attention will profit ye."

He did not pay the slightest heed to Wynne's sulky rejoinder, but, sucking at his pipe, continued to work on the canvas with great dexterity and skill. Presently he wearied of the occupation, and Wynne came back to his own with a somewhat chastened spirit.

It is an understood thing in the ateliers that every one criticizes every one else, and supports his theories by painting on the canvas he may be discussing. Before the day was out half a dozen different men left their mark on Wynne's study. The most irritating feature about this practice was the coincidence that they always obliterated some little passage with which he was pleased. To quote one instance, he had succeeded rather happily in the treatment of an eye, imparting to it a sparkle and lustre that gave him profound satisfaction. He could have screamed with rage when the red-headed Alsatian, dipping his thumb in some raw umber, blotted it out, saying sweetly:

"It is not that it is an eye—it is a shadow that it should be."

A similar experience occurred when, a week later, the great Jean Paul Laurens halted in amazement and disgust before his performance.

"This," said he, "is a series of trivial incidents, of disjointed details! To we artists the human figure is a mass of light and shade. It is not made up of legs and hands, and breasts, and ears and teeth. No—by the good God, no!"

With which he seized a brush and scrabbled a quantity of flake white over the entire surface.

"Good!" he said. "It is finished." And passed on to the next.

Thinking the matter over in bed that night Wynne realized he had learnt a great and valuable lesson: breadth of view—visualizing life as a whole. It was knowledge that could be applied to almost everything. Detail merely existed as part of the whole, but the whole was not arrived at by assembling detail.

The same would apply, he perceived, to every art, to business, too, and to life in general. He began to understand how it was possible for people like Wallace and his father to have their place in the scheme of things. They ceased to exist as individual items, brought into undue prominence by enforced propinquity, but became parts of a great machinery whose functions were too mighty to comprehend. These were the shadows which gave tone-value to the high-lights. They were vital and essential, and without them there would be no contrast, no variety, nothing but flat levels —dull and marshy—and never a hill on the horizon showing purple in the morning sun.

"I must learn this trade of painting," said Wynne, "it's the short road to all knowledge."

He flung himself into the work with an energy truly remarkable. From early morning till midnight he battled with the craft, and thought and talked of nothing else. In the cafés, where students met and thrashed out their thousand ideas, Wynne was well bethought, for although his skill with a brush was small he could advance and support a theory with the liveliest talker in the Quartier. His success in argument was, perhaps, not altogether of advantage to his immortal soul, since it led him to cultivate a cynical attitude toward most affairs. He very readily became conversant with the works of the Masters, old and new, and praised or attacked them with great impartiality. Preferably he would detract from accepted geniuses, and deliver the most scathing criticisms against pictures before which mankind had prostrated itself for centuries. One day he would admit of the value of no artist save Manet, and another would accuse him of possessing neither skill nor artistry, but merely "a singularly adroit knack of expressing vulgarity."

He did not attempt to be honest in regard to his points of view, being perfectly satisfied so long as he could hold a controversial opinion.

Not infrequently high words would result from these discussions, and on one occasion a table was overset, glasses smashed, and a chair flung. Police arrived on the scene, and Wynne and three companions spent the night in a lockup. This he did not mind in the least, and continued to air his views in the small hours of the morning until threatened with solitary confinement unless he desisted.

VI

On the tenth week after his arrival in Paris, Wynne's money gave out. He had not bothered to consider what he should do when this happened, and as a result poverty seized him unprepared.

To do him justice he did not bother in the least as to the future of his bodily welfare, but was distressed beyond expression at the thought of abandoning his studies.

A wild idea possessed him to sell some of his future years for a few more terms at the studio. He even went to the length of discussing the project with the Massier. This gentleman, however, shook his head dubiously.

"Impossible," he said.

"Why?" said Wynne. "I'll give two-thirds of all I earn for the next three years to any one who'll finance me now."

"No doubt; but, monsieur, philanthropists are few in the Quartier—and your painting!" He made an expressive gesture. "Your paintings will never be sold. He who gave the money would see it again—never! I am sorry—it is sad—but what would you?"

Wynne turned away heavy at heart and angry, and next morning his place before the throne was vacant.

VII

Of all cities in the world Paris is the least hospitable to a bankrupt. It does not ask a man to be rich, and it does not mind if he be poor, for the great Parisian heart is warm to either state, but for the man who is destitute there is no place in its affections.

Your Quartier art student is an easy-going fellow in most directions, who will share his wine and his love with amiable impartiality, but he is proof against the borrower's craft, and will do anything rather than lend money.

Of this circumstance Wynne was already aware, and in a sense was glad that it should be so. He was not of the kind who borrow, but had it been easy to negotiate a loan his awkward plight might have weighed against the maintenance of his ideals.

As he walked up the Rue Buonaparte, his colour-box swinging in his hand, he reflected that the moment had come to prove his fibre. Between himself and starvation was a sum amounting to one franc fifty centimes, barely enough to purchase a couple of modest meals.

"This time the day after tomorrow I shall be very hungry," he said.

He was not alarmed at the prospect—and, indeed, he regarded it with a queer sense of excitement. By some twist of imagination he conceived that an adventurous credit was reflected upon himself by the very emptiness of his pockets. Tradition showed that most of the world's great artists had

passed through straitened circumstances, wherefore it was only right and proper he should do otherwise. Certainly there was no very manifest advantage in starving, but it would be pleasant to reflect that one *had* starved. Almost he wished he could banish the still haunting flavour of the chocolate he had drunk at his *petit déjeuner*, and feel the pangs of hunger tormenting his vitals. He consoled himself with the thought that these would occur soon enough. In the meantime it would be well to consider what line of action he proposed to take. The impulse to do a sketch and carry it to market he dismissed at once. The schools had taught him that whatever virtues his artistry might possess, they were not of a saleable kind. It was therefore folly to waste his money in buying a good canvas which would undoubtedly be spoilt.

"No good," he argued. "No good at all. I must do something that I can do."

On the embankment he was accosted by the keeper of a bookstall which of late he had patronized freely.

"I have here a copy of the verses of Sully Prudhomme," said the man, "and the price is but one franc. Such a chance will scarcely arrive again."

It was sheer bravado, but Wynne bought the little volume without so much as an attempt to beat down the price. He felt no end of a fine fellow as he pocketed it and strolled away. Yet, curiously enough, he had not gone far before a panic seized him and he longed to rush back and beg for his money to be returned.

"That's silly," he told himself—"cowardly." His hand stole to his pocket and took comfort from the feel of the fifty centime piece which remained.

"If I were really a man I'd spend that too."

And spend it he did, but on a long loaf of stale bread which he brought back with him to the hotel.

He found Benoit at his interminable occupation of polishing the bedroom floor. This duty was performed by means of a flat brush strapped to the sole of the boot. The excellent fellow, while so employed, resembled a chicken scratching in straw for oats. Polishing had become a second nature to Benoit. He polished while he made beds, he polished while he emptied slops, he polished while he indulged in his not infrequent spells of religious rumination.

It was in this latter state of mind Wynne found him, and for want of a better confidant explained his unfortunate predicament.

"Benoit," he said, "I am ruined—utterly ruined and penniless."

“That,” replied the garçon, “is a pity, since I had had in mind that on the morrow you would be giving me five francs.”

It is the custom to give five francs to the garçon at the beginning of each month.

“Your chances of getting it, Benoit, are very remote.”

“It is to be hoped you will, then, be able to give me ten in the month which follows.”

“I pray that it may be so. In the meantime what am I to do that I may subsist?”

“That is a matter which rests with the good God.”

“Suing your pardon, I prefer to believe that it rests with me, Benoit.”

“It is inferior! I remark that you already possess bread.”

“It is the smaller part of my possessions.”

“And the larger, m’sieur?”

“Brains, Benoit—brains.”

“For myself I had rather have of the bread, believing it to be the more substantial blessing.”

“Which proves, Benoit, that you speak without consideration. A fool and his loaf are soon parted, but a wise man has that within his head which will stock a bakery.”

“May it prove so with you, m’sieur.”

“A thousand thanks. But, to return to our muttons, how am I to use my brains to best advantage?”

“By considering the lives of the saints, m’sieur.”

“A pious answer, Benoit, but I seek to use them to more profitable account. When I am relieved of the immediate anxiety of prematurely meeting these personages, I shall doubtless be better able to direct my thoughts toward them.”

“I can only repeat, m’sieur, that in divine consideration lies the province of the brain. If it be the body you desire to profit, then, beyond doubt, it is your hands must seek employment.”

“But I have no skill of the hands, Benoit.”

“There is no great skill required, m’sieur, to carry a basket at Les Arles.”[1]

“I urge you, Benoit, to avoid words of folly. Am I of the fibre to lift crates from a market cart? And if I were, do you suppose I could adjust my

intellect to so clumsy a calling?"

"It is better, m'sieur, to engage upon a humble task than to wallow with the gudgeon of the Seine."

"Pooh! Benoit, am I a likely suicide?"

"Given no meat, a man will drink betimes over-deeply of the water."

The answer and memory of a certain grotesque figure in the Morgue gave Wynne to pause.

"You are a cold comforter," he said. "Have you no happier suggestion to offer?"

"I speak from knowledge, m'sieur. If you are destitute you must be content with the smallest blessings."

"But I have intellect, Benoit, in larger measure than most. Is there no market for intellect in this city of Paris?"

"There will be better intellects than yours that sleep without a roof in Paris tonight. Why should you, a stranger, look to France to buy your thoughts?"

"Because France alone, of all countries, holds out the hand of welcome to Art."

"It may be so—and it may be in so doing she fills her own coffers. These are matters which I do not understand, but I know well, and well enough, that the stranger may learn an art in this city, but he cannot sell it here. M'sieur, when your bread is eaten I would advise that you go to Les Arles and offer your hands. There is always a value for hands, even though it be but very small, and maybe, by using them, you would in the end find profit for the brain."

"Hum!" said Wynne despondently, "of all men you are the most cheerless."

"But indeed no. If my mind was melancholy it was but to suit an occasion of some sadness. Let us, if you will, speak of lighter affairs."

But since that line of conversation inevitably led to descriptions of *jeunes filles* who at one time or another had confided their affections over-deeply to Benoit's keeping, Wynne declined the invitation, and, picking up his cap, descended the stairs and walked towards the Louvre.

The discussion had done little to brighten his horizon, and he was oppressed with misgivings as he passed through the streets. Obviously it was absurd to attach importance to the words of an ignorant *valet de chambre*.

On the other hand, there was a degree of probability in what he had said which could not be lightly dismissed.

Suddenly an idea possessed him, and his spirits rose with a leap. It occurred from the memory of a remark made by the patron of a *brasserie* in the Boule Miche.

"Ah, monsieur," he had said, "it is long since we entertained a customer who spoke with such inspiration on so many subjects."

The remark had been made after a long sitting in which Wynne had held the attention of a dozen students for several hours while he threw off his red-hot views on art and life in general. As a result the little absorbent mats, upon which the glasses stand, and which mark the number of drinks each man has taken, had piled high.

"I measure the value of conversation," the patron had continued, "by the amount of bock which is consumed, and tonight has surpassed all previous records. I trust m'sieur will return many times, and place me even more deeply in his debt."

"By Heaven," thought Wynne, "I believe he'd pay me a salary to talk."

So greatly did the belief take hold of him that, unthinkingly, he sprang upon a tram, only to spring off again with the recollection that he had not the wherewithal to pay the fare.

M. le Patron greeted Wynne with amiable courtesy, and invited him to be seated, asking at the same time what manner of drink would be agreeable to his taste.

"I want nothing," said Wynne, "but the privilege of a few moments' conversation."

"That will be delightful; then we will sit together."

"I do not know if you remember an evening a short while ago when I was here."

"It is, indeed, one of my pleasantest recollections."

"On that occasion you were good enough to observe that my conversation resulted in a marked increase in your sales of liquor."

"And indeed, m'sieur, it was no less than the truth. The nimbleness of m'sieur's wit, the charm of his address, and the adroitness of his argument are only comparable to those of that most admirable Bohemian, Monsieur Robinson, who, I have no doubt, is well known in England."

"Probably," said Wynne, "although I have never heard of him. But to return. I have come here today to make you a business proposition."

“It is very kind.”

“Not at all. I am obliged to do something of the sort owing to financial difficulties which have suddenly arisen.”

“Tch-tch-tch! How very provoking.”

It was noticeable, however, that the brow of M. le Patron had clouded, and his sympathy was not wholly genuine. Wynne, however, was paying more attention to himself than to the attitude of his hearer.

“What I was about to suggest is this. Encouraged by your words of a month ago, I am willing to occupy a table at your café each night, and to discourse upon all the burning questions of the day. In return for this small service and the undoubted credit it will bring to the establishment, I put forward that you should offer me the hospitality of free meals and a trifle of twenty francs a week for my expenses.”

He delivered the speech with an air of cordiality and condescension designed to introduce the offer in the most favourable light. Hearing his words as he spoke them there remained small doubt in his mind that the astute Frenchman would embrace the opportunity with gratitude. In this, however, he was sadly at fault.

“M’sieur is an original,” came the answer; “but he can hardly be serious.”

“I am entirely serious.”

“Then I fear that, with due regret, I must decline.”

“Decline? But—but the notion was originally your own. I should not have suggested it had it not been that you—”

“Pardon, m’sieur, I see the fault was mine, and my words evidently placed m’sieur under a misapprehension. He will readily perceive, however, that, as patron, it is my duty to be affable, and, although it desolates me to confess so much, it has been my long habit to express to all my more loquacious guests precisely the same sentiments which I addressed to m’sieur on the evening of which he spoke.”

“Oh! has it?” said Wynne, rather dully. “Then there’s no more to be said.”

“Alas! no. It is sad, but what would you? Au revoir, m’sieur.”

“Au ’voir.” He moved a pace away, then turned. “I suppose you haven’t any sort of job you could offer me?”

“Unhappily!” said the patron, and turned to welcome a new arrival.

"I shan't give up," muttered Wynne, as he walked moodily down the busy boulevard. "After all, it was only a first attempt."

But he did not sleep very easily that night. He lay with his eyes open in the dark and wondered what would befall him—where he would be in a week's time—if what Benoit had said were true. These and a thousand perplexing fears and fancies raced and jostled through his brain. Presently one big thought rose and dominated all the rest.

"I mustn't forget any of this. It is all valuable—all part of the lesson—part of the training—part of the price which a climber has to pay."

Then he thought of The Cedars, and of Wallace setting forth to the City after a "good" breakfast.

Wallace would have "sensible" boots, and would carry an umbrella. Wallace would exchange views on the subject of politics or chip-carving with other folk as sober as himself. Wallace would smirk at his employer, and would eat a Cambridge sausage for his lunch. Wallace would go to bed at 10.30 P. M. that he might be ready to do these things again on the morrow. With this reflection there came to Wynne a very glorious satisfaction.

"I wouldn't change with you," he said, and turning on his side fell into a comfortable and easy sleep.

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[1] The Covent Gardens of Paris.

VIII

The sun was shining brightly when he awoke, and all the little midinettes were in full song.

Wynne sat up in bed and ate a piece of his bread and drank a glass of water. Asked why he did so, he cheerfully replied,

"Moi, je suis ruiné."

Whereupon the maidens laughed very heartily and said he was a droll.

Wynne had become quite used to the little audience across the way and scarcely took them into consideration. Women, as such, made little or no impression upon him. He liked them well enough, but never cared to better his knowledge or acquaintance with any with whom he had come into contact. Physically they made not the slightest appeal to him—his senses were inert toward the impulse of sex, and he was given to criticize

contemptuously those of his companions who staked their emotions in the ways of passion.

"Do not imagine I suffer from moral convictions," he would say; "but, according to my views, you attach an importance to these matters out of all relation to their value."

The sentence had inflamed to a very high degree the student to whom it was addressed.

"Fool! Fish!" he had shouted, by way of argument; and again, "Fish! Fish!"

To a running fire of semi-serious sympathy Wynne dressed himself and went out. In a sense he was a little distressed to sacrifice his accustomed cup of early morning chocolate—but this, he argued, was a matter of small concern. A plethora of victuals stagnates the mind, and on this day he had every reason to desire a clear head.

In the Elysée Gardens he found a bench and contracted his brow in meditation. What, he ruminated, were the essentials required to gain a livelihood? Obviously there was a place for every one in this world, or mankind would not survive the ordeal of birth. There was a place for people of every kind of intelligence—a glance at the passers-by proved it, and proved that even the stupid may sometimes prosper. This being so, it was obvious that the wise must prosper even more greatly.

"What have I got to sell?" he asked himself. "What have I got that these other people desire? What can I do that other people can't do?"

But though he racked his brain he could find no answer to the questions.

After a while he rose and started to walk. He walked fast, as if to escape from his own thoughts, and Fear, so it seemed, walked by his side.

"Nothing," said Fear—"you have nothing to sell. Nobody wants you—nobody will care if you starve."

"Go away," said Wynne. "I tell you I am wanted. I say I shan't starve."

"Little idiot! What have you learnt to do but sneer at the real worker? There is no market price for sneers. Sneerers starve—starve! Who are you to laugh at the honest people of the world?"

"I didn't laugh. I only pitied."

"How dared you pity—you, who have achieved nothing? Even that small errand boy yonder is a worthier citizen than you—he at least earns his ten francs a week. What have you earned? Only the wage-slave deserves to be a freeman. What is the value of all this trash of art and æsthetics? These

are only accessories of life—life itself must be learnt before you can deal in these."

"But I don't want to be a wage-slave. I want to be a king."

"Kingdoms are not won by desire. You must be a subject first."

"I will be a king—a ruler."

"A beggar in a week. Come off the heights, little idiot; come down into the plains and lay a road."

Wynne stopped suddenly in the great quadrangle of the Louvre.

"Right," he said. "I'll be content with small beginnings, but show me the way to find them."

And looking across the cobbled yard he saw three people. They were quite ordinary, and obviously English. There was a middle-aged man with a disposition toward side-whiskers. He carried an umbrella, and wore a severe bowler hat. His clothes spoke of prosperity coupled with a due regard for quiet colours. By his side walked a stout lady, in a tailor-made dress of suburban cut. Upon her head reposed an example of Paris millinery, and consciousness of its beauty gave her face an added tendency to perspire. It was a new hat, and did not seem to have sympathetic relations with her boots. People who go abroad for the first time are apt to overestimate the probable amount of wear their shoe-leather is likely to incur, and guard against walking barefoot by donning boots whose sturdiness would defeat the depredations of a Matterhorn climb.

By the lady's side was a youth—a very unprepossessing youth too. His face was blotchy, almost as blotchy as his tie. His waistcoat was double-breasted and of a violent grey. He carried a vulgar little cane in his yellow-gloved hand.

That the trio were strangers to the city was indisputably betrayed by the consciousness of their manner and the elaborate precautions they were at to look at everything. The elder man drew attention to a sewer grating in the middle of the quadrangle, and pointed with his umbrella at the pigeons.

Presently they came to a halt, and produced a Baedeker, which provided them with small enlightenment.

"You are supposed to know French," Wynne heard the elder man say, "then why not ask some one how we get into the place."

"I can't," replied the son.

"Well, all I can say is it seems a very funny thing."

While conversing they failed to observe the approach of an official guide, who, complete with ingratiating smile and a parchment of credentials, offered to pilot them round the galleries.

At this they at once took flight, with much head-shaking and confusion, and had the misfortune to run into the arms of two more of the fraternity. These two importuned them afresh.

"Certainly not," said the paterfamilias, as though he had been asked to participate in some very disgraceful orgy.

An Englishman always runs away from a guide, although sooner or later he becomes a victim.

Being aware of this fact, one, more assiduous than the rest, followed them closely with invitations and beseechings, and headed them toward the spot where Wynne was standing. It was clear that the unhappy people were greatly unnerved, and equally clear that in a moment they would cease to retreat, and surrender.

Perceiving this, Wynne was conceived of an idea, and as they came abreast he brought to bear upon the guide with a quick barrage of Paris invective. In effect his words were: "These people are my friends—get out," although he coloured up the phrase with some generosity. The victory was instantaneous, and a moment later he had raised his hat and was saying:

"I don't think you will be bothered any more."

"Very kind of you—very kind," said the father, mopping his brow. "Great nuisance, these people." And the lady favoured Wynne with a grateful smile.

"You were about to visit the galleries?"

"Well, we thought we'd take a look round, you know. The thing to do!"

"Oh, quite. Are you familiar with the Louvre?"

"Er, no—no. Can't say we are—no."

"H'm. I was wondering if I should offer to conduct you."

"Hey? Well. Ho! I see! Not a bad idea! What do you say, Ada?"

"It would be very nice."

"You do this job, then?"

"Occasionally. Not regularly."

"Well, I don't mind. Got to see the things, I s'pose."

"It is customary, isn't it?" smiled Wynne.

"Hum. How long will it take to do the place?"

“Five years—perhaps a little less.”

The joke was not well received, so Wynne modified it.

“I could show you the more vital points of interest in a couple of hours.”

“Two hours, eh? And you’d want how much an hour?”

Wynne considered. “Should we say five francs?” he suggested.

“Jolly sight too much, I call it,” observed the blotchy youth, whose name was Vincent. “Get a seat at a café chantong for that.”

“Well, what do you say?” said the father.

“I am silent, like the ‘G’ in *chantong*,” replied Wynne. He had begun to feel the spice of adventure in bartering, and would not give ground.

“We mustn’t forget we are on a holiday,” the mother reminded them.

“Let it go,” said the father; “and I only hope it will be worth it.”

“I can promise you it will be more than worth it,” said Wynne, and led the way to the entrance.

As they mounted the stairs, blotchy Vincent plucked at his sleeve and asked, *sotto voce*:

“I say, do you know Paris well?”

“Intimately. Why?”

“I only wondered.”

He nodded toward his parents and shook his head mysteriously.

Wynne was not entirely easy with his conscience at having accepted the post of guide, and determined to justify himself by a great liberality of artistic expression. He therefore began to talk with exceeding rapidity the moment they entered the first gallery.

“This collection is more or less mediocre, although one or two examples are worthy of attention. This Cupid and Psyche, for instance, may at first strike you as insipid, but it presents interesting features. You observe how there is a far greater similarity between the sexes than we find in nature. It is almost as though, by combining the two, the artist sought to arrive at the ideal human form.”

“Dare say he did,” admitted the father, rather uncomfortably, while the mother looked with eyes that saw nothing. Blotchy Vincent, on the other hand, pricked up his ears at the word “sex.”

“One might sum up this school by saying they were inspired by an hermaphroditic tendency.”

"M'yes. Well, I don't think we need inquire into that. It's—hardly—er—"

"The same spirit is prevalent in modern French sculpture."

"I think we will have a look at something else."

"That's a nice picture," said Mrs. Johns—for Johns was the name of the family. "Very nice, I call that—quiet!"

She directed their attention toward a large canvas depicting a lady sitting upon a couch with her legs resting straightly on its flat surface.

"Ah, that *is* a nice picture," agreed Mr. Johns.

Vincent, however, lingered before Cupid and Psyche. It did not compare with sundry picture postcards he had seen, but it held greater attractions than the portrait of Madame Récamier.

"I consider the colour is disappointing," observed Wynne —"disappointing and improbable. When one comes to consider that Madame Récamier held in her day the most popular Salon in Paris, and reflects that to do so she must inevitably have been demimondaine of the demimondaine, one is justified in expecting an added brilliance to the cheeks and an added scarlet to the lips."

Hereupon Mr. Johns favoured Wynne with a warning look, which he was pleased to ignore.

"This particular canvas is illustrative of what somebody—I think Samuel Butler—said, that a portrait is never so much of the sitter as of the artist. Shall we take some of the older masters next?"

He led the way to an inner gallery, the Johns family trooping behind him. As they passed through the arched doorway Mr. and Mrs. Johns exchanged glances as though to say:

"I think we have made a great mistake introducing this young man into our God-fearing midst!"

Before the canvases of the Old Masters Wynne expanded his views with great liberality. Correggio and Botticelli were favoured with a kindly mention, Rembrandt was patted on the back, and Raphael severely criticized. An ill-advised appreciation of a canvas by Jordeans brought upon Mr. Johns a vigorous attack:

"Oh, believe me, very second-rate indeed. A mere copyist of Rubens, who, himself, in no way justified the position of being a target at which a self-respecting artist should aim. Here is a Titian now—"

"Oh, really!" said Mrs. Johns. "I've often heard of Titian red. Do you see, father, that's a Titian."

"Oh yes," said Mr. Johns, consulting his catalogue. "So it is. Seems good!"

"Very wonderful how the colours last so long. Isn't it pretty, Vincent?"

"I don't know," said Vincent, who was very bored. "Dare say it's all right."

"I wonder," remarked Wynne, "if you can detect the fault in that picture."

Mr. and Mrs. Johns half closed their eyes, by which means they fondly believed faults were more easily detected. After much consideration they produced the joint statement that it looked "a little funny—I don't know!"

"The fault lies in the fact that there are no faults—which, to my way of thinking, is very heinous."

"That sounds nonsense to me," said Mr. Johns, who was getting heartily sick of the whole exposition.

"Not at all. There must be impurity to emphasize purity. Where would the Church be were it not for sinners? What would be the worth of virtue if there were no vice? Therefore I contend that nothing is so imperfect as perfection."

Carried away by his own arguments, Wynne hurried his charges along to Leonardo's "Baptist."

Here he drew breath and started to speak afresh.

"An amazingly happy performance—instinct with life, saturated with humour. You notice the same classic tendency towards sexlessness? In my opinion this is all a painting should be. There is something astonishingly compelling in every line of the form and features."

"She is certainly very pleasant-looking," said Mrs. Johns. "Who was the young lady?"

"John the Baptist, madam."

At this Mr. Johns very properly interposed with:

"I don't tolerate jokes about the Bible, young man."

Even Vincent looked as though he expected Wynne to be struck down by some divine and correcting hand. Mrs. Johns was frankly horrified.

"Look at your catalogue," said Wynne.

This advice Mr. Johns accepted, but even the printed words failed to convince him.

"If that's John the Baptist," he remarked, "all I can say is that it's not *my* idea of John the Baptist."

"What is your idea, sir."

"An elderly gentleman with a beard."

"With all respect, I think Leonardo's is preferable. Youth is more appealing than middle age. These half humorous, wholly inspired features would lose the greater measure of their attraction if the lower part of the face were covered with hair."

"I don't agree with you, and I don't consider the subject at all a proper one," said Mr. Johns sternly. "As for that picture, I am very sorry I've seen it."

It is probable Wynne would have answered hotly had not Vincent advanced a suggestion:

"Why don't you and the mater sit down for ten minutes," he said. "This Mr.—er—can take me round for a bit."

"I'd like to rest my feet," admitted Mrs. Johns; "the leather has begun to draw."

So Wynne and Vincent entered the next gallery together.

"My people are all right, you know," said Vincent; "but they are a bit off in Paris, you know."

"Oh, really."

"Yes. *You* know! Isn't there anything a bit more lively we can see? I don't think a lot of these Old Masters—damned if I do."

Wynne had to bear in mind that he was the servant of these people, and accordingly he replied, civilly enough:

"Perhaps you'd like the more modern school better."

"I thought French painting was a bit livelier, but it seems about as dud as the Liverpool Art Gallery. Aren't there any more of those figure pictures?"

"Nudes?"

"That what you call 'em?"

"That is what they are called."

"Let's have a look at some, anyway."

"We'll go through here, then, and I'll show you 'La Source.' It is considered remarkable flesh painting, although I don't care for it very particularly."

As they turned to the modern side, Vincent dropped his voice, and said:

"Pretty hot, Paris, isn't it?"

"I've never been here in the summer," replied Wynne, an answer which made his companion laugh very heartily.

"You are not giving much away, are you?" he mocked.

"There," said Wynne; "this is 'La Source.' "

He halted before Ingres' masterpiece—the slim figure of a naked girl, a tilted pitcher on her shoulder, from which flows a fall of greeny-white water.

"Remarkable, perhaps, but not art."

"No," said Vincent, "I don't like it either, you know. I see what you mean—it isn't spicy enough, is it?"

"Spicy?"

"Yes—you know. Look here, I was wanting a chance to speak to you alone. I've got a bit of money."

"You are more fortunate than I."

"I don't mind you having a bit of it."

"Oh."

"The mater and pater get to bed by 10 o'clock, and I could easily slip out after that."

"It ought not to be difficult."

"We could meet, I thought, and you could show me round a bit. See what I'm driving at?"

"No. What *are* you driving at?"

"I want to see a bit of life, and you're the chap to show it me."

And suddenly Wynne became very angry, so angry that his face went pink and white in turns.

"What the hell do you mean?" he exploded. "Do you take me for a disorderly house tout?"

"Shut up—don't shout."

"You dirty, pimply— Good God!"

"If you call me names you won't get your money."

"Money!" cried Wynne. "D'you think I'd take money from any one who begat a thing like you. Clear out, get away, and tell your father, when next he thinks he'd like a son, to blow out his brains instead."

Thrusting his hands in his empty pockets, and tossing his head from side to side, Wynne stamped furiously from the gallery and down the steps to the

courtyard below.

It was two hours before he recovered an even temper, and then he surprised many passers-by by stopping in the middle of the Rue de Rivoli and shouting with laughter.

"One up to my immortal soul," he cried. "And now for Les Arles!"

IX

For well-nigh eighteen months Wynne Rendall, seeker of eminence, destroyer of symmetry, professor of æsthetic thought, worked with his hands in little byways of the unfriendly city.

He had come to look on Paris as the unfriendly city, for very shabbily she served him after his money gave out. They laughed at his frail stature and careful, elegant speech when he sought work in the Covent Garden of the French capital, and it was a desperately gaunt and hungry boy who at last found employment in a small *pâtisserie* somewhere in the neighbourhood of Boulevard Magenta. Things had gone so ill with him that he was rocking on his heels, staring greedily at the cakes in the pastry-cook's window like any starving urchin. He did not notice the printed card, "Youth wanted," which stood among the trays. A stout woman behind the counter saw and beckoned him to enter.

"You look hungry," she said.

"I am."

Even short sentences were difficult.

"D'you want work?"

"I want to eat."

"Eating is for people who work. Would you care for a place here, delivering bread? I need some one."

"I could not be trusted with a loaf," he said, and fainted.

The stout lady was comparatively kind. She threw water over his face, and when he came to, gave him coffee, a piece of sausage, and some bread. She allowed him to finish, and then told him very plainly he might express gratitude by accepting the post of errand boy at a small wage.

To Wynne it seemed that any wage was acceptable which could be earned in an atmosphere so rich in odours of cooked corn. He said "Yes" almost before she had framed the offer. Later he repented, for the hours of labour were incessant, the food scarce, and the room in which he slept was dirty, damp, and ill-ventilated. Of his weekly earnings, when he had bought

himself cigarettes and paid back a certain proportion for lodging, there remained little or nothing. Books, which had hitherto been the breath of life to him, were of necessity denied. Very occasionally he scraped together a few coppers and bought some dusty, broken-backed volume which he scarcely ever found leisure to read. He was too physically fatigued at night for reading, and during the day was kept continually on the run.

He did not stay with the stout lady for long, but the changes he made were rarely of great advantage. Once he found employment at a small stationer's, which bade fair to prove pleasanter, but from here he fled precipitately on account of the amorous importunities of the stationer's younger daughter. She, poor child, had lost the affections of a certain artisan, who lodged in the same house, and sought to regain them by exciting jealousy. In the pursuance of this time-worn device she proposed to sacrifice Wynne, and was prepared to go to no mean lengths in order to give the affair a colourable pretence of reality. Wherefore Wynne ran, not so much from the probable fury of the artisan as from a vague fear which he did not entirely understand.

After this episode he became a waiter—or, to be exact, a wine boy. In this branch of employment he was rather happier, although much of it proved irksome and distasteful. He found that a waiter is allowed, and even encouraged, to possess a personality. In the other callings in which he had worked personality was condemned, but customers welcome an individual note in a waiter. It helps them to identify him among his similarly arrayed companions, and affords them opportunity for a lavish expenditure of wit and sarcasm not always in the best taste.

For the first time Wynne was able to save a little money, which he put by towards paying the price of a passage to England. He had decided to leave Paris as soon as he had accumulated enough to pay the cost of travel. In this matter, however, a certain inconsistency forced him to remain. He would save the best part of the two pounds required, and, a day or so before departure, would yield to an irresistible impulse and spend several francs on the purchase of a book. He did this about a dozen times altogether, and although the habit formed the nucleus of a library, it postponed his departure indefinitely.

At last he had in his possession the required sum, and determined to leave Paris at the close of the week, but certain pneumonic cocci floating in the atmosphere and seeking a human abiding place, had other plans for him, and by the Sunday morning, high-temperatured and semi-conscious, he lay in his bed with a perilously slender hold upon life.

M. le Patron had been aware of Wynne's intention to depart, and had been wishful of retaining his services. Without Wynne it would be impossible for an honest man to display in his window the legend "English spoken," an announcement which stimulated trade among foreigners.

Accordingly he put himself to the trouble of engaging a doctor, whose injunctions in regard to the treatment of the invalid he very faithfully followed. It should be stated that he was no less faithful in recording the out-of-pocket expenses incurred, which at the close of a six weeks' illness were presented to Wynne in the manner of a debt.

"It will now be necessary that you shall remain until this sum is restored to me," he said. "I am generous not to have increased the liability, for times were many when it seemed that I had incurred upon myself the cost of a burial."

Wynne reckoned that the least time in which he could reasonably hope to clear the score would be from three to four months, and raised his voice in protest.

"But my career, monsieur—what will become of my career?"

Money is one of the few things a Frenchman takes seriously; in nearly all other matters he is possessed of an enchanting elasticity. Wynne's lamentations were heard without sympathy.

"The debt must be discharged," said M. le Patron.

So once more Wynne donned his evening clothes with the break of day, once more a serviette swung from the bend of his arm.

Strange to say menial service did not break his spirit or lessen his conceit. There are certain compensations in the life of a waiter if he be an observant fellow. Many and various are the types in which he comes into contact, and there is no surer way of fathoming the character of man than is afforded by watching him at his meat.

To a certain extent Wynne took a pride in his waiting, and made an especial study of the craft. It amused him to "bank" his corners perilously with a pile of plates on his hand; it amused him to whip off the cover of an omelette and introduce it most exquisitely to its future consumer; it amused him to theorise on a customer's likely choice of wine, and to suggest the vintage as he handed the card. But most of all it amused him to reflect that he, Wynne Rendall, was a waiter. Not for an instant did it occur to him that, up to this point, his achievements had not merited his occupation of a more illustrious position. In the back of his head was a comfortable assurance that he was a very important and valuable person, and this being so, that it was exceedingly droll for him to minister to the wants of the vulgar-minded.

He acquired the habit of jotting down his daily thoughts on odd scraps of paper as he lay in bed at night, and some of these would have made good reading had they been preserved. Also they would have served to show very clearly the streak of egoism which outcropped his entire personality. Occasionally he flew to verse of a style and metre very much his own.

Here is an example:

> "Garçon!"
> In black and white I serve their bellies' need,
> Paid with a frown, a curse, a penny in the franc.
> Will they thank
> Me with a smile, when, playing on my reed,
> I bid them hear, and from my cathedra
> Their silly loves and lusts, dull thoughts and empty creed,
> In black and white I show them as they are?

The verse in itself has few merits, but it afforded him a sense of luxury to produce such lines. He felt as a king might feel who lay hidden in a hovel, conscious of greatness in little places.

To his brother waiters Wynne was ever remote and a shade cynical. He laughed at, but never with them, and affected a tolerant attitude which they found far from endearing. Occasionally one of the sturdier would attempt to bully him, but in this would seldom prosper. A Frenchman, as a rule, bullies with his tongue rather than his hands, and Wynne's tongue was ever ready with a lightning counterstroke. These passages were in some respects a repetition of the old schoolday affairs, and since he never forgot a lesson he was well armed to defend himself.

And so the weeks dragged into months and the debt gradually diminished.

X

One bright spring morning, some two years after his arrival in Paris, Wynne received a surprise. A broad-shouldered figure came under the shadow of the awning and seated himself at one of the small round tables.

"It's Uncle Clem!" gasped Wynne to himself. He straightened his waistcoat and went outside.

"M'sieur!" he said.

"Un bock," came the reply.

Unrecognized, Wynne retired and returned a moment later with a glass tankard which he set upon the table.

"Beau temps, m'sieur!"

"Ah, oui!"

"Just such another day as the one we spent in Richmond Park together."

The big Englishman turned his head and raised his eyes sharply.

"Good Gad! It's the Seeker!" he exclaimed. His hand shot out, enveloped Wynne's, and wrung it furiously. "Sit down! What the devil are you up to?"

"Waiting," Wynne smiled; "but I haven't given up hope."

"Splendid—and this is fine"—he tweaked the apron. "Serious?"

"Oh, very."

"A man now, eh?"

"Something of the kind."

"Fine! though why the hell you couldn't let us know what had become of you—"

"Touch of pride, Uncle Clem. I neither wanted to please my people nor disappoint you."

"Ah, now, now, now! None of that—none of it. They wouldn't gloat and I might have helped."

Wynne seated himself thoughtfully.

"Yes, I think that's true; but I wonder if you believe me when I say that never once has it crossed my mind as a way out of the difficulty. When I left home I left finally, not experimentally. If my father were to see me as I am now he would say I had slipped down hill, but I haven't—I haven't. Downhill I may have gone with a bit of rush, but I'm gathering impetus all the time, getting up weigh for the climb ahead. You see that, don't you? This is all to the good, isn't it?"

There was an honest, genuine sincerity in the way he spoke.

"Every time. All to the good. I should say it is. Hullo! who the devil is this?"

"This" was M. le Patron, highly incensed at the sight of one of his waiters sitting at a table.

"Ça fait rien," began Uncle Clem. Then to Wynne, "Oh, you tell him it's all right; tell him I'm your uncle—say you're coming out for the afternoon.

Here's ten francs. Get your hat, and shove that damned dicky in your pocket. Tell the old fool he's a good fellah and to go to the devil."

A certain amount of foregoing advices were translated, and M. le Patron, placated by the ten-franc note, granted Wynne leave of absence and conversed affably with Uncle Clem while Wynne mounted the stairs and changed his coat.

"Come on," said Uncle Clem. "Let's get somewhere where we can talk."

He hailed a fiacre and they drove to the Bois de Boulogne. Here they alighted, and sprawled upon the grass beneath a tree.

"Now let's have the story from the word Go."

So Wynne wound himself up and reeled off all his experiences in the unfriendly city. Once or twice during the recital Uncle Clem frowned, and once or twice looked at his nephew in some perplexity, but in the main he nodded encouragement or gave little ejaculations of praise.

"Plucky enough," he remarked at the close.

"I wonder sometimes. Is it plucky merely to fight for existence?"

"Did you merely fight for existence—was there no impulse behind it all?"

"Yes, the impulse to do and to know has helped me over the stonier parts."

"The painting was not a success, eh?"

"It isn't my medium."

"Have you found out what is?"

The question was hard to answer. It would sound futile to reply, "Writing," when one had but a few occasional jottings on the back of envelopes to substantiate the claim.

"I haven't had much time," said Wynne, ruefully.

"Of course not. After all, the medium doesn't matter—it's the motive that counts. Have you determined on your motive?"

"I have learnt enough to show people what they are."

"Then don't. That's a cynic's task, not an artist's."

"Sometimes I think that one is but another name for the other."

"Not it. An artist shows people what they might be."

"Yet many have climbed to the peaks" (he was too self-conscious and diffident, with added years, to say the Purple Patch) "by holding up a mirror."

Uncle Clem shook his head.

"A mirror should only reflect beautiful folk," he replied. "There are better things than to be a man with a camera."

"I sometimes wonder if there are."

"Don't wonder. Beauty is not to be found by sorting out dustbins. Beauty is in the woods, Wynne. Listen! You can hear the leaves in the tree above us whispering of her, and the little waves in the pool yonder, are leaping up lest they should miss her as she passes by. Can't you feel the wonder of her everywhere, now in the spring, when she leaps splendid from her winter hiding? D'y'know, when April's here I throw open my window and look up into the blue and then I see her riding on a cloud. You know the kind of cloud—the great white sort, which brings the summer from the seas. Ha! Yes, and I shout my homage as I brush my hair, and sometimes my poor man Parsons thinks I'm cracked. But what's the matter if she smiles—for she's a smiling lady if ever there was one, and her breath is like a breeze which is filtered through a copse of violets."

"Oh Lord, you are just the same old Uncle Clem as ever," laughed Wynne.

"Damn your eyes," came the colloquial rejoinder—"if you're not patronizing me!"

"Not I. Believe me, I wouldn't have you different, but perhaps I've changed a bit, and these dream pictures aren't so real as they were."

"Then make 'em real—they're worth it."

Wynne hesitated, then said:

"I'm beginning to see the world as it is, and it doesn't look like that any longer. I see it as a vast machine built up of cranks and gears, and bolts and cogs—some odd, but mostly even. A thing of wheels and reciprocal activity, for ever revolving and for ever returning to the point from which it started. It's hard to believe in fairies when one thinks like that."

"Then don't think like that, or, if you do, think of the energy that moves the machine—that's where the mystery and the essence lie. The wheels are nothing—it is the power which drives 'em that counts. Why, heavens above! that should be the task for you, and such as you—to find and refine the essence, to know and increase the power. For God's sake don't scorn a thing because it goes round, but give it a push that it may revolve faster. That's the job! and a fine job too. It's easy to acquire cheap fame by jeering at a man because he goes to bed at night and gets up in the morning—easy—but no

good. Give him something to get up early for and sleep the better for; that's the way to earn your own repose."

"And you were the man who first showed me a satyr," said Wynne.

"And I was the man who told you of the Purple Patch," came the reply.

"I know, and I shall get there in the end."

"But not by being of the clever ones. They sit on the lower slopes. They bark—they don't sing."

"Up against intellect now?"

"I'm against obvious intellect all the time, because it's perishable. Look here, I may not make myself clear, but of this I am sure—a great man is not great because he is clever, but he is clever because he is great. The cleverness of the clever is merely an irritant. For a season it may tickle the public palate, but it will never endure."

"And how does a man become great?"

"By the strength of his ideals. Ideals never perish because they are never wholly realized—besides, they spring from other causes."

"And what is the fountain of ideals?"

"Feeling—human feeling. Don't you know that—yet?" He turned a penetrating glance on his nephew. "Never been in love?"

Wynne coloured slightly.

"No," he replied, "I've never been in love."

"Then be in love."

"But that's rather—"

"No it ain't. You must be in love—it's God's great education to mankind. A man knows nothing of himself, or of anything else, unless he is a lover. Happy—wretched—sacred or profane—love is the mighty teacher. What the devil d'you mean by never having been in love?"

Wynne laughed. "Couldn't I ask the same question of you?" he asked.

"No, you couldn't, for I always am. Ah, I may not be married—and that is a great blessing for some poor dear unknown—but I'm always in love. Sometimes it's a girl with whom I have never exchanged a word, sometimes a dead queen or a goddess of ancient times, and sometimes in silly, sordid ways which lonely men will follow. But the spark of love that is, or the spark of a love that was, I keep for ever burning. What sort of life do you imagine mine would be without it?"

"Isn't there a difference," said Wynne. "You're not a striver—you are content—"

“Yes, I’m a loafer—a dilettante—who whistles his song of praise in the country lanes—but—”

“The country lanes are the lover’s lanes; there is no time for love in the great highways. How does the line go? ‘He travels fastest who travels alone.’ ”

Uncle Clem rose and, stretching out a hand, pulled Wynne to his feet.

“He may travel fast,” he said, “but he don’t get so far. Come on! What do you think—lunch chez Fouquet?”

They made a very excellent déjeuner at the pleasant little restaurant under the shadow of the Arc de Triomphe, and when it was over, and Uncle Clem had produced two delicate Havana cheroots, the conversation turned to Wynne’s future.

“You’ve done enough of this waiting business,” he said. “Better come back with me at the end of the week.”

“Sorry,” said Wynne, “but it won’t run to it yet.”

“Well, I’m your uncle—so that’s that, ain’t it?”

“It’s that as far as the relationship goes, but no farther.”

“D’you mean you won’t be helped?”

“Yes, but it doesn’t mean I’m not grateful.”

“But look here—”

“Don’t make me,” pleaded Wynne. “It would be so easy that way.”

“But it’s all nonsense. You’ve proved your mettle—no harm relaxing a trifle.”

“I have proved my mettle to the extent of being a waiter,” said Wynne, “and that isn’t as far as I want my mettle to carry me.”

“You might be here for years.”

“Perhaps. It will be my fault if I am. I have to prove my right to climb. Help would disprove it.”

“ ’Pon my soul I admire your pluck.”

“It’s all you do admire, isn’t it?”

“Ah, get away with you! I talk a lot, that’s all; but I’ve a mighty strong conviction that you’ll do.”

“I’ll do *and* do,” said Wynne. “Maybe you won’t approve, but I hope you will.”

“I hope so, and believe so—for the elements are yours—but I shan’t tell you so if I don’t.”

With which somewhat cryptic remark they parted. Wynne had not gone very far down the street, however, before he was overtaken by a somewhat breathless Uncle Clem, who said:

"But, for God's sake, fall in love if you can."

PART FOUR
THE PEN AND THE BOARDS

I

The manner of Wynne's return to England was fortuitous. It resulted from the remark of a chance customer at the little restaurant.

"I wish to heaven you'd come right down to one of my rehearsals, young man, and show the Gordam idiot I've engaged how a waiter waits."

The speaker was a Cockney impresario who had come to Paris to collect a few French revue artistes for a scene in a London production.

"I'll come and play the part if you like," replied Wynne.

The little man scrutinized him closely.

"Some idea!" he ejaculated (he had a habit of employing American expressions). "But could you realize your own personality?—that's the point."

"Good God! you don't imagine this is my personality," came the reply. "This is as much a performance as any of Sarah Bernhardt's."

"Durn me, but I believe you."

As a result Wynne took the evening off without permission, and made his first acquaintance with the histrionic art. Being in no way affected with nervousness he did not attempt to do otherwise than portray a waiter as a waiter actually is. The producer acclaimed the performance with delight. He sacked the other probationer, and gave Wynne a contract for two months at a salary of two pounds five shillings a week.

"If I am to come with you I shall want five pounds down to discharge a debt," said Wynne.

The impresario grumbled somewhat, but since he was paying thirty shillings a week less than he had anticipated, and was getting a vastly superior article, he finally agreed.

So Wynne signed the contract, pocketed the notes, and went to break the news to his employer.

M. le Patron was not stinting in the matter of abuse. He condemned Wynne very heartily for lack of devotion to his welfare, upbraided himself for misplaced generosity, offered him an increased wage to remain, and

finally—protest proving useless—shook hands and wished him every kind of good fortune.

Four days later found the little company of players waiting for the outgoing train at the Gare du Nord. To Wynne there was something tremendously portentous in the moment. To find seclusion for his thoughts he walked to the extreme end of the platform, where it sloped down to the line, and here, to the unlistening ears of a great hanging water-pipe, he bade farewell to the Unfriendly City.

"One of these days I shall return," he spoke aloud; "one of these days you will stretch out your hands to welcome me."

And the little Cockney impresario who had followed him, fearful lest he should try to escape with the five pounds, touched his shoulder, and said:

"Studying your part, son?"

"Always," came the answer.

II

They arrived in London about half-past six the same evening, and Wynne could not help smiling as he noticed how all the good people were hurrying homeward from their work as though their lives depended upon expedition. As he came from the station he observed how they fought for places on the omnibuses, and jostled down the steps to the tube stations.

In Paris one is never conscious of that soundless siren which bids mankind close the ledger and lock the office door. The Parisian does not appear to be in any immediate hurry when work is over. He stays awhile to converse with a friend, or takes his *petit verre* under the shade of a café awning.

Wynne reflected that the English must be a very virtuous race to exert so much energy to arrive home. He recognized that the old goddess of punctuality was still at work, and that the popular craving to be at a certain place at a certain time, which had galled him so much as a boy, was no false imagination.

"They are still in a hurry—still tugged along by their watch-springs," he thought.

As he watched the tide of hastening humanity he became suddenly aware that he was glad that it should be so—glad for a personal reason.

Routine which formed so national a characteristic argued a nation whose opinions, once formed, would endure.

To be accepted by such a people would mean to inherit an imperishable greatness.

"Presently," he thought, "these people will accept me as essential to their lives. I shall be as necessary to them as the 8.40 from Sydenham. They will no more miss me than they would miss their breakfasts."

At this point the little impresario once more broke in upon his reflections.

"Ten o'clock rehearsal tomorrow," he said. Then with severity, slightly diluted with humour, "No slipping off, mind. Feel I ought to keep an eye on you till that debt's wiped off."

It is hard for any one to maintain glorious views as to the future while the present holds a doubt as to his probity in the matter of a five-pound note.

For the second time in his life Wynne occupied the bedroom in the little Villers Street hotel. The good lady proprietress said she really did not remember if he had stayed there before or not, but she "dared say" he had. It was the sight of apparently the same uncooked sirloin surrounded by apparently the same tomatoes which had lured Wynne back to the little eating-house.

At dinner he conversed with the waiter upon technical subjects, and gave his views upon perfection in the art of waiting. The worthy fellow to whom these were addressed was not greatly interested however. He was glad to converse with any one skilled in his native tongue, but a long sojourn in the British Isles had given him taste for a meatier conversational diet, and he preferred the remarks of two men at another table who exchanged views relative to Aston Villa's chances in the Cup Tie.

In consequence Wynne was left to his own thoughts, which, on this particular night, he found both pleasant and companionable. It was good to feel that at last he would be earning a livelihood by means of an Art, and a good Art too. Not so good, perhaps, but that it might not be a great deal better. In the few rehearsals he had already attended he had noted some glaring conventions and very grave stupidities, which he vowed in the future he would eradicate. The position of producer—a calling of which hitherto he had hardly been aware—suggested, of a sudden, illimitable possibilities.

The producer was the man with the palette and brushes, and the artistes were merely tubes of colour, to be applied how and where they would give the best result. There was no end to what a producer might achieve, and perhaps no better medium for conveying ideas to the public mind than through the stage.

And just as Wynne had said, nearly two years before, “I must learn this trade of painting,” he now determined to master the art of acting in all its variations.

“But I must write, too,” he thought, “and read and work all the time.”

He passed a hand across his forehead and exhaled noisily. Great are the responsibilities which a man will take upon his shoulders!

III

At the outset of his career as an actor Wynne found much to disappoint him. He learnt that brains and application do not necessarily result in stage success.

Among all the actors he met it was all too often the case that the most intelligent were the least successful. Personality and notoriety outweighed intellect. Even the most egregious ass, provided he was representative of a certain type, prospered exceedingly, while the really clever ones languished in the understudy room or formed unspeaking props to hang clothes upon.

A man needs to be on the stage some while before he can appreciate that casting and the box office are the chief considerations in a producer’s mind. It is easier and more satisfactory to engage a fool to play a fool than to ask a wise man to turn his wisdom to folly. Also it is a shrewd business stroke to give the public some very rapturous feminine vision to behold rather than give the part to some lady whose brain has a greater claim to admiration than her features. The world forgives stupidity when offset by loveliness—or even by a hint of subtle scandal—but a very high standard of intellectual perfection is required before the world will ignore a youth which has passed.

Taking these matters into consideration, Wynne was constrained to believe that if theatre-goers were blind, and men gave up talking of matters which concerned them not, there would be an immediate demand for a class of actors, and particularly actresses, of a far higher mental quality than heretofore.

Regarding acting as an Art he had more admiration for the surviving members of the old school, who handed over their lines with an assumption of great importance, than he entertained for the scions of the new.

“You, at least, do something,” he observed to one old fellow, in a drama company of which he had become a member. “You do something, and do it deliberately.”

“That’s so, my boy—that’s so,” came the mightily satisfied endorsement.

“These moderns do nothing but realize their own ineffability.”

“It’s true—it’s too true!”

“And of course the worst of it is what you do is utterly useless—utterly false—and utterly wrong—”

“Eh?” A stick of grease-paint fell to the floor.

“Whereas what they fail to do is, in the general sense, absolutely right.”

Remarks of this kind do not make for popularity. This, however, did not concern Wynne in the least. He had acquired the habit of talking rather less than he was used to do. The thoughts and convictions which at one time had bubbled to the surface he now mentally noted and preserved. He felt, in the pride of his egoism, that it was not wise to give away his ideas in conversation to the more or less trivial people with whom he came into touch.

It was otherwise when one of the more successful members of the company deigned to exchange a few remarks, for then he would bring all his mental batteries to work with a view to prove to them how vastly inferior they actually were.

One or two engagements were lost through the exercise of this habit, and several straitened and penniless periods resulted. Twice in three years Wynne left the stage, but from circumstance or inclination gravitated back again. He was always able to earn two pounds to two pounds ten a week playing small character parts, and if his attitude had been a shade more congenial it is probable he would have done still better.

As a character actor he was singularly faultless and singularly conscientious. He possessed a remarkable facility for submerging his own personality and throwing off tiny portraits of different types, which were recognizable to the minutest detail. In the performance of these he took special pride, but if the producer interfered or made any suggestions he was truculent to a degree, and fought for his rendering with tiresome constancy.

“It isn’t as if your suggestion would be in the least improving, and—good God!—if I am not to be trusted alone with eight lines, why on earth engage me?”

This remark was fired at a super-eminent producer before an entire West End company, and brought back from the black void of the auditorium:

“Would you please draw a fortnight’s salary from the business manager, Mr. Rendall, and return your contract?”

He left the theatre straight away, and did not attempt to draw the salary. In the sunshine outside he was overtaken with a masterful desire to cry:

“They shan’t lead me—they shan’t! they shan’t!”

It was the wail of a little boy rather than of a man who fain would be a king.

He returned to his room in Endell Street and flung himself face downward on the bed, where he lay with heaving shoulders for a long, long while. Presently he turned round and sat bolt upright.

"Everybody is against me, and I'm against everybody."

On the table before him was a heap of books and a pile of papers, odd jottings, queer little articles, scraps of poetry written in the after-theatre hours. With a sudden fury he kicked at the table-leg and sent them tumbling and fluttering to the floor.

"Why do I hate the world when I want to exalt it? Oh, God—God—God! Damn this room! Oh, I'm lonely, I am so—so horribly lonely!"

He went and stood in the corner, rested his head on the faded wallpaper, and sniffed:

"I'm lonely—lonely—lonely—lonely—lonely! I don't think I'm very strong—I think I'm ill—ill and lonely—lonely and ill—very ill, and very lonely!"

Then suddenly he burst out laughing:

"Fool!—idiot!—I'm all right! Papers all over the place. Pick 'em up. What's all this rot about?" He read a few lines in his own handwriting: "A good sort is the type of man with whom we trust our sisters—a bad sort is the type of man with whom our sisters trust themselves!' Epigram! Too long! 'A sport is a man who says Cherio, and carries his brains in a cigarette case.' Necktie would be better. Oh! what's the good of writing this rubbish? What am I going to do now?"

He snatched a hat and went out. Presently he found himself in Pen and Ink Square, with the ceaseless grumble of the news-producing engines throbbing in the air. Before him was a doorway over which was written "*The Oracle*." He knew "*The Oracle*" for a democratic organ which shrieked obscenely at the politics and morals of the country—under the guise of seeking to purify, it contrived to include in its columns some very prurient matter, without which its sales would have been even smaller than they were.

Wynne walked straight in, mounted some stairs, and beholding a door labelled "Editor—Private," entered without knocking.

"Who the devil are you?" said a stout man sitting before a roll-top desk.

"You wouldn't know if I told you," replied Wynne. "I'm nobody yet."

"What d'you want?"

“Thought I’d write some articles for you.”

“Think again—outside!”

“Might not get in so easily another time.”

“Well, get out now, then.”

“That’s very foolish. How d’you know I may not be bringing you a fortune?”

“I’m prepared to take the risk.”

“Then take a smaller one, and give me a subject to write you a sample about.”

“Write about damn nuisances,” said the editor.

“Give me a sheet of paper.”

“Look here! Are you going to get out?”

“No. You told me to write about damn nuisances, and I’m going to do it.”

At this the editor leant back in his chair and said:

“Well, if you haven’t a profound cheek—”

Realizing the opening, Wynne seated himself before a vacant table and took up a pen.

“Paper and silence,” he said, “are the ingredients required, and you shall have your article in an hour’s time.”

Being a man of some humour the editor relaxed, and laughed exuberantly.

“Go to it then,” he said. “I’m off to tea, and I shall clear you out when I come back.”

“You’ll do nothing of the kind. I’ll be on the permanent staff by nightfall.”

In writing upon damn nuisances Wynne took for his subject such widely divergent national symbols as the Albert Memorial and *The Oracle*. Of the two *The Oracle* fared worst, and came in for the most complete defamation in its heartily criticized career. The article was iconoclastic, spirited and intensely funny. The entire office staff read it, and the editor volunteered to take Wynne out and make him drunk then and there. This offer Wynne declined, but he accepted the post of a casual article writer at a penny a line, and returned home with a greater feeling of satisfaction than he had known for some time.

The satisfaction, however, was short-lived, for in a very little while he was heartily ashamed of subscribing his signature to scurrilous paragraphs deprecating the private lives of parsons, and hinting darkly at dirty doings in Downing Street.

He perceived that by such means greatness was not to be achieved, and sought to ease his conscience by spending nearly all his earnings on reputable books, and most of his spare time in the reading-room at the British Museum. In the matter of food he was most provident, scarcely, if ever, standing himself a good meal. He acquired the habit of munching chocolate and of making tea at all hours of the day and night. By this means, although he staved off actual hunger, he was never properly satisfied, and his physical side became ill-nourished and gaunt. The hours he kept were as irregular as could well be conceived, and he frequently worked all night without a thought of going to bed.

IV

The days of his employment on the staff of *The Oracle* were far from happy, and the material he was asked to write soured his style and embittered his outlook. Of this circumstance he was painfully aware, and tried to combat it by writing of simple, gentle matters for his own education. But the canker of cynicism overran and corrupted his better thoughts like deadly nightshade twining in the brambles of a hedgerow.

Always his own severest critic, he would tear up the sheets of close-written manuscript and scatter them over the room, stamp his feet or throw up the window and hurl imprecation at the dying night.

Sometimes he sent articles or stories to the press, but from them he received no encouragement. *The Oracle* had an unsavoury reputation in Fleet Street, and no self-respecting editor desired to employ the journalists who wrote for this vicious little rag.

After his uncompromising attitude at their first meeting, the editor of *The Oracle* made a great deal of Wynne, and besought him to sign a binding contract.

“I won’t sign anything,” Wynne replied.

“I’ll give you a salary of seven pounds a week if you do.”

“I wouldn’t for seventy.”

“You’ll think better of it later on.”

“Later on I shall wish to God I had never written for you at all. It isn’t a thing to be proud of.”

At this the editor laughed and clapped him on the back.

"I've been wanting some one like you for years," he cried.

"You'll be wanting some one like me again before long," came the answer.

Strange to say, the stout man did not resent Wynne's attitude, neither did he understand it. He regarded this queer, emaciated boy as an agreeable oddity, and allowed him to say whatever he liked. Wynne was most valuable to *The Oracle*, for his articles were infinitely more educated and infinitely more stinging than any of the other writers'. As a direct result they caused a corresponding increase of irritation and a corresponding improvement in sales.

Whenever there was a hint of scandal, or any disreputable suggestion in regard to some notable personage, Wynne was put on the track, with *carte noire* to give the affair the greatest possible publicity. In the pursuance of this degrading journalese of detection and exposure he disclosed unexpected moral considerations. When he did not consider the person to be attacked merited rough handling he would resolutely decline to associate himself in any way with the campaign. Entreaties and protests were alike incapable of moving him. He would set his mouth, and refuse, and fly into a towering fury with the editor when he suggested:

"Very well, then, Harbutt must do it."

"Isn't there enough beastliness in the world without seeking it where it doesn't exist?" cried Wynne. "I'll burn this damn building to the ground one of these days."

He did not actually put this threat into practice, but did the next best thing. A dispute had arisen in regard to some sordid disclosures which the editor desired to make, and Wynne had proved beyond dispute that there was no foundation for the charges. The editor, however, decided that the story was too good to lose, and accordingly had it inserted, with a thin veil drawn over the identity of the persons concerned.

"All right," said Wynne, after he had seen a copy. "You're going through the hoops for this."

An opportunity arose a short while after, and Wynne seized it without scruple.

It was the habit of the paper to reserve a column each month in which to set forth their ideals and intentions. Sometimes one and sometimes another of the writers undertook this work. As a rule it was the last paragraph to be inserted, and depended for its length upon the available space.

The sub-editor, who was also proof-reader, was not a conscientious man, and frequently delegated his duties to subordinates.

"It's all plain sailing," he said to Wynne. "Write about four hundred words, and sling it over to the compositor. I'm meeting a friend or two tonight."

With that he went out, and Wynne, with a peculiar smile, wrote the article, and very faithfully described the motives which inspired the paper.

"*The Oracle*," he wrote, "is the Mungo of the London Press—a sniffing wretch for ever scrabbling garbage in the national refuse heaps."

There was a good deal more in this style, and the compositor, while setting up the type, was not a little disturbed in mind.

"Is this to be printed?" he asked Wynne.

"Certainly."

"Danged if I can see what the idea is."

"Imagine the sales, and go ahead."

The entire issue had to be destroyed, but one or two copies escaped from the printer's hands, and a rival flew to hilarious headlines about it.

To the amazement of every one Wynne marched into the office the morning after he had perpetrated the offence.

"What the hell is the idea?" shouted the editor. "What the hell do you think you're doing?"

"Getting even with my conscience," replied Wynne.

He looked very frail and insignificant with the semi-circle of scarlet, inflamed countenances and threatening fists besetting him.

"If you don't want to be killed, take your blasted conscience out of here."

He did, but with no great speed, although many were the offers of violence made as he passed out.

V

On the Embankment Wynne apologized to God very sincerely for having debased his art. It was rather a pretty little prayer which he put up, and had a gentler tenor than his wonted expression. After it was finished he felt easier in mind, and comforted. But when he returned to his rooms the oppression of a great loneliness took command of his soul. Of late this feeling had dominated his thoughts not a little. He desired some one to whom he might confess his thoughts and fears, some one of the sympathetic intellect, who

could smooth out the harsher creases of life's cloak, and give companionable warmth to the solitary hours.

No such friendships had come his way, and when he turned his thoughts more closely to the subject he could not imagine that he would be likely to happen upon such a one. Beyond the intermittent flashes of Uncle Clem's society there had been no one with whom he could discuss his real feelings and emotions. Pride, and desire to excel, had kept him from seeking Uncle Clem when the mood of loneliness was upon him. He, as it were, saved up that friendship for the great days ahead. The few occasions when he had sought to quicken intimacy from acquaintance had invariably led to nothing. Once a young actor asked him to share an idle hour or two, and before they arrived at the end of the street stopped at the door of a public-house and invited him to enter.

"Let's get primed—what do you say?"

And Wynne said, "Need we? I don't drink for a hobby."

"Care for a game of pills?"

"Not very much."

"Well, what *do* you care about?"

The suggestion that in order to be entertained one must either drink or play billiards made Wynne laugh, and since no man cares to have his more serious pleasures ridiculed, the young actor snorted, and left him to spend the rest of the evening alone.

Possibly it was loneliness which directed Wynne once more to seek employment upon the stage. In the play in which he appeared he was given the part of a hot-potato man who was on the stage for only a few moments.

To perfect the detail for this rôle he made the acquaintance of a real example of this calling, and spent many midnight hours talking with the old fellow and warming himself before the pleasant coke fire.

Wynne discovered that there was a deal of philosophy to be gleaned in this manner. Thereafter he became well known to many of the strange, quiet men who feed the hungry in queer, out-of-the-way corners of the sleeping city.

On Sundays he would go to Petticoat Lane, or pry into the private lives of the outcasts of Norfolk House. The East End fascinated him, with its mixture of old customs and new—its spice of adventure and savour of Orientalism. Many of the folk with whom he conversed were strangely illuminating. After an initial period of distrust and suspicion they would open out and disgorge some startling views on life and matters in general.

They spoke of anarchy and crime and confinements as their more civilized brothers of the West spoke of the brand of cigarettes they preferred. The elemental side of these men's natures, being so totally dissimilar from his own, made a profound impression upon Wynne. Their attitude toward women amazed and perplexed him. The phrase, "*my* woman," with its solid, possessive, animal note, was original to the ears. It suggested an entirely different attitude from the one he had observed in France, the one so alive with thrill and volatile desire.

"*My* woman!" he repeated it over to himself as he plodded homeward through the dark streets. He said it experimentally with the same inflection that had been used—and yet to him it was only an inflection. He could not conceive a circumstance in which he would naturally stress the "my," or would actually feel the possessive impulse to make it inevitable.

"She's *my* woman," the man had said, when telling his story—"*my* woman, d'y'hear?" Followed an oathy description of a chair and table fight, a beer bottle broken across a bedrail and used as a dagger—something, that was once a man, carried in the arms of a trustworthy few and hidden in a murky doorway a couple of streets distant.

It was hard to imagine such a coming about at the dictates of a convention of sex. If a woman inclined to sin with another man, let her—what did it matter? Fidelity was of very little consequence. Common reason proved it to be a myth. Yet men committed murder that fidelity—physical fidelity—might be preserved. That's what it amounted to. But did it? That possessive "my" argued a greater and more masterful motive—something beyond mere moral adherences.

"*My* woman!" Very perplexing!

"But I suppose I would fight to the death for my ideals—whatever they may be."

With sudden force it struck Wynne that he should define his ideals, and know precisely at what he aimed. It was good for a man to be certain of those things for which he would be prepared to lay down his life.

He set himself the task of writing down what his ideals actually were, and in so doing failed horribly. What he wrote was inconclusive and embryonic. To a reader it would have conveyed little or nothing. There was a hint of some ambition, but nothing more. It showed the target of his hopes in the pupal stage. The grammatical perfection with which he wrote only added melancholy to the failure.

"My God!" exclaimed Wynne, "I can't even write a specification of what I want to do."

VI

The play in which Wynne figured as a hot-potato man was not a success, and there followed a period in which he found no work, and very considerable hardship. Then his fortunes turned a trifle, and to reward himself for all he had endured he took new rooms at the top of a house near Tottenham Court Road, and spent all his money buying furniture and queer odds and ends of brass and Oriental china. It was the first time he had indulged in the luxury of agreeable appointments, and it gave him tremendous pleasure. The furniture he bought was true to its period, though time and the worm had bitten deep beneath the blackened surfaces. He bought in the Caledonian Market or little known streets, and took a fierce pride in bartering for his prizes. These he would bring home upon his head, or, if their size defeated his powers, would push them before him on a greengrocer's barrow. For pieces of *vertu* he possessed a sure and infallible eye, and a remarkable sense for disposing them to the best advantage.

On the mantelpiece of the attic sitting-room he achieved successfully what, years before, he had failed to do in his father's home. A note of colour from a cracked Kin Lung bowl, a fillip of light from a battered copper kettle, a slanting pile of beautifully-bound books, and the thing was done.

There was no struggle after effect, but the effect was there as if by nature —the right things had found their rightful abiding place.

He found writing easier in these surroundings. Hitherto his eye had inevitably fallen upon some hideous object or picture, unthinkingly bought and disastrously disposed in relation to its neighbours—then his thoughts would travel away, lose the thread of their reasoning, or become involved in futile speculation upon other folks' perverted tastes. But here it was different: here there were no disturbing influences, nothing but a pleasant, restful simplicity.

Mrs. Mommet, the bed-shaker, who, for a very small wage, gave Wynne an equally small measure of time, did not share his high opinions of himself as a decorator.

"I don't know 'ow you can put up with the place," she said, shaking her head sadly over the pail of dirty water which was her constant companion. "It gives me the creeps every time I comes into it. That ole table, y'know. Well, it *looks* as if it was a 'undred years old."

"It's a great deal more," said Wynne.

"There you are, y'see! Why you don't git a nice cloth and cover it up beats me!"

“Roundheads drank at that table,” said Wynne.

“Fat-’eads, more like—nowhere for your knees or anything. And the walls, too! My ole man does a bit o’ paper-’anging to oblige in ’is spare time. I dessay ’e’d ’ang a piece for you, to oblige.”

“He would oblige me very much by doing nothing of the kind.”

“Thet’s silly—that is. No one can’t like plain walls when they can ’ave ’em floral. Not so much as a picture anywhere! W’y don’t you pin up a few photos?”

“Don’t possess any, and I—”

“Well, if that’s all, I dessay I could give you a few. Liknesses, they’d be—not views. You could ’ave any one of my pore Minnie o’o was took.”

Wynne did not want to offend the woman, but was forced to safeguard his own peace of mind.

“You ought not to give them away in the circumstances,” he said.

Fortunately Mrs. Mommet did not press the offer. She had some views to express in relation to “nice plush curtains,” which Wynne hastily discouraged.

“Oh, well, you must please yourself, I s’pose. Gentlemen never do ’ave any taste, as the sayin’ is. Still, it’s no small wonder you look poorly, and yer face is as white as the under-side of a lemon sole.”

The description was apt. Wynne’s features were certainly of a lifeless hue. The long hours, the poor food, and the never-ending mental activity had sapped a full measure of his youth. No one would have placed his age at twenty-three, yet twenty-three summers were all that he held to his credit. One might have guessed him nearer forty—and a none too hearty forty either. Only his eyes were young—young and greedily active—for ever assessing and assimilating, but this seemed to detract from, rather than add to, his youth.

Yet despite his frailty and general suggestion of weakness, Wynne could, upon occasion, develop startling energy. He used his brain as the driving force which overcame his feebleness, and bade his muscles undertake tasks out of all proportion to their ability. On one occasion he carried an armchair, weighing nearly a hundredweight, for three miles, a task which a strong man might well have failed to accomplish. His power lay in the will to do, and a form of obstinate courage which defied all obstacles.

“I am glad you said soul,” he said, “for I have long believed that to be the only thing that matters.”

Mrs. Mommet shook her head.

“I was talkin’ of fishmonger’s, not parson’s souls,” she replied; “but if you ask me, I should say firce look after the body, and the soul’ll look after itself. Same as the ole sayin’ ’bout the pennies and the poun’s. If you was to feed your body up a bit, ’stead o’ wastin’ money on ole cracked plates, books and whatnot, you’d be doing yerself more good, you would.”

“Depends on the point of view.”

“I know I can’t never do nothin’ if I neglect my bit o’ nourishment.”

“Nor I, but you work with your body and I with my brain. That’s why we stock our larders with different fare. There’s mine yonder.” He tilted his head toward the crowded bookcases.

“Lot o’ nonsense! Ole books!”

“Don’t despise them, please.”

“I don’t; but a book’s a thing for after dinner, not to make yer dinner off of, like you do. Wonder is you ’aven’t more pride in yerself.”

“Pride?” He was quite startled.

“A young feller like wot you are lettin’ ’imself go to pieces like the lilies in the field, or whatever the sayin’ is. ’Ow d’you s’pose you’ll ever take the fancy of a young woman lookin’ like you do? You wouldn’t never do it.”

Wynne smiled. “Is it only the dressed ox which can go to the altar?” he asked.

“I donno nothin’ ’bout dressed oxes, but I do know as any young woman of spirit looks for a man with a bit of blood in ’im. After all, nature’s nature, y’know, with Christian or ’eathen alike, and there’s no gettin’ away from it.”

“You should write a treatise on Eugenics,” said Wynne, and escaped to the solitude of his bedroom.

PART FIVE
EVE

I

During a rehearsal of a new play in which he was engaged Wynne noticed Eve Dalry. She was walking-on in the crowd, and did not seem of a piece with the other girls. When her scene was over she slipped away to a quiet corner and produced a book. Finding the required page, she shook her head as though to banish other considerations, seated herself on an upturned box, and began to read with great absorption.

Partly from curiosity to see the title of the book Wynne moved toward her. Carlyle's "Heroes and Hero Worship." A queer choice for a girl to make, he thought, and wondered how much she understood. For awhile he stood behind her glancing at a paragraph here and there, and watching the careful way she turned over a page, then turned it back again to reread and reconsider some passage not wholly understood. He was unused to women who read so seriously, and, despite the semi-cynical smile at the corners of his mouth, her studiousness impressed him.

Presently, impelled by a new and curious familiarity, he drew a long, tapered forefinger over the straight, thin parting in her hair. She looked up slowly, as though his action had been scarcely enough to distract her attention.

"I like the shape of your head," he found himself saying in reply to the query in her eyes, "it is the kind of vessel which is never empty. The square of your chin, too, is so very right. One seldom sees the two together."

She met the critical survey with equal candour.

"I have been liking your head," she said, "but not the chin. Its—"

She drew a slanting line in the air.

"I know," he nodded; "but it's not significant."

"I meant that—insignificant."

Wynne was not at his best when humour turned against him. His smile and his frown struck a balance.

"I could quote the names of a dozen brilliant men who did not carry their strength or wit in the lower half of their faces, and illustrate my instances at

the National Portrait Gallery."

"Are you brilliant?" There was no barb to the question.

"It pleases me to think so."

"One wonders, then, why you are doing this little jobbery in a theatre."

"Yes, that's reasonable enough. I wonder, too, sometimes. I suppose I was hungry when I took the engagement."

"This is not your real work, then?"

"I hardly know what my real work is, but it is not in the market. In theory real work never should be in the market."

" 'And no one shall work for money
And no one shall work for fame,' "

quoted Eve.

"Spare me from Kipling. It is so disheartening to find one's views supported by quotations."

"I'm not so advanced as that. I'm rather proud of quotations—I look on them as medals for reading."

He made an intolerant gesture.

"But no sane persons show their medals."

"While I'm young I had rather not be altogether sane."

"Good! I take back sanity. It's the worst asset an artist can possess."

She looked at him with a faint, intricate smile.

"You are easy to catch out," she said.

"Possibly. I don't aspire to be a cricketer. Indeed, cricket stands for all I dislike most. Cricket is an Englishman's notion of the proper conduct of life—a game with rules. If he resists seducing a friend's wife it is because to do so is not cricket."

"Do you favour his doing so?"

"Not I—but it depends on the mood and the man, and the attraction. I simply do not admit the existence of cricket in these matters."

"Do you know," said Eve, "you seem to me to be expressing ideas and not thoughts. Tell me, what is your real work?"

"I assume that one day I shall know, but I don't know yet. If I were to say painting—writing—talking—acting—I should be equally right. I have searched the dictionaries in vain to find a word to describe myself. The verb 'to lead' is the nearest approach. I think, by nature, I am the centre of a

circle—a circle that is even widening. Sounds absurd, doesn't it?—to lead from the centre of a circle."

The conviction and frankness with which he discussed himself was remarkable, and, strangely enough, not offensive. He possessed a quality of magnetism which robbed his words of half their arrogance. Eve allowed her eyes to travel over him with calm interest. His clothes were careless and shabby, his collar too big, and his cuffs frayed; his tie seemed anywhere but in the right place. At the first glance she saw he was ill-nourished, and felt an immediate impulse to feed him up with possets and strong beef tea. Frailty excites kindly resolves from the generous-hearted. She found his features attractive, despite their irregularity, and his eyes appealed to her enormously. They were such plucky eyes, eyes that would look the world in the face unfalteringly and support with impertinent courage the wildest views which the mobile, cynical, and weak mouth might choose to utter.

When anything pleased her, Eve laughed—not so much a laugh of amusement as a purr of satisfaction. The unusual appealed to her, and beyond all doubt Wynne Rendall was unusual. Hers were plucky eyes too. They rested frankly, and seemed to read the meanings of what they reflected. Eve had a broad forehead, straight brows, and clean-cut, clearly defined features. Her mouth was sweet and tolerant; to borrow from a painter's terminology, it was a beautifully drawn mouth. One felt she would be very sure in all her dealings—analytic and purposeful. Hers was not a present-day face, but belonged rather to the period of the old Florentine Masters.

For quite a while these two young people surveyed each other with calm appreciation, and presently Wynne broke the silence.

"You are a new type to me," he said—"a perplexing type. I've seen you on canvas, but never in the flesh. Something of Leonardo's Lucretia! We might see more of each other, I think."

"Yes," she said.

He was about to speak again when the leading man came through a door in the canvas scene and moved toward them. In an instant Wynne pulled down the corners of his mouth pathetically.

"Oh dear! I must go."

"Why? Your scene is a long way ahead."

"I know, but here's K. G. If I stayed he might think I wanted to talk to him—and I don't."

Eve understood the feeling very well. Those whose future is all to make are wary and resentful of patronage, and often needlessly shun the society of

others more successful than themselves. None is more jealous of his pride than the climber.

She allowed Wynne to depart unhindered, and presently the eminent K. G. came near enough to condescend a "Good morning."

"Been talking to young Rendall?" he queried.

She nodded.

"A queer boy—quite a clever actor—quite! A good sense of character!"

"Very."

"Know him well?"

"About five minutes."

"Oh, yes—yes. Sadly opinionated! Notice it?"

"He has opinions, certainly."

"H'm! Never get on—people with too many views. He won't learn—clever enough in himself, but won't learn from others."

"I rather thought he had learnt a good deal from others."

"Oh no—most inaccessible."

"Does that mean he wouldn't learn from you?" she inquired, very frankly.

K. G. looked down in mild surprise. Young ladies who are "walking-on" should agree with and not interrogate those lofty beings whose salaries are paid by cheque. But this young lady ignored the principle, and seemed to expect an answer.

"Yes," he replied, very frankly. "Of course it's his own affair if he cares to ignore the advice of—well—" Modesty forbade the mention of his own name, and he finished the sentence by a gesture.

"Of course it is," said Eve.

K. G. frowned. The conversation was not proceeding on orthodox lines.

"Still, as I say, young men of that sort do not get on."

"I can't see why. Perhaps he thought you could teach him nothing."

It was the protective mother instinct compelled the words. The remark annoyed K. G. excessively. It was not, however, his habit to vent irritation upon a woman, even though she might be its original cause, consequently he attacked Wynne Rendall.

"He is a fellow who wants a good kicking, and has never had it."

"A man always wants to kick what he cannot understand," said Eve.

To defend some one who is absent from the attacks of a third person is a sure basis upon which friendships are established. When Eve returned to her little bed-sitting-room after the rehearsal, Wynne Rendall occupied a large share of her thoughts.

"I like him," she said to herself. "He's all wrong in all sorts of ways, but there's something tremendous about him in spite of that—and I like him."

She fell to wondering how he had arrived at what he was, what queer turns of circumstance or inclination had aged the youth from him. With quickening sympathy she recalled his sunken cheeks, the nervous sensitive movements of his hands and head.

"Looks as if he never had enough to eat. I'm sure he doesn't eat enough."

Then she laughed, for in her own existence eating did not enter very largely. A salary of one pound one shilling per week does not admit of extravagant *menus*. A woman can keep the roses of her cheeks flowering upon very little. With a man it is different. A man, to be a man, must set his teeth in solid victuals, or nature denied will deny.

She thought over her exchange with the leading man, and was glad she had stood up for Wynne. It offended her that a fat, luxurious fellow should say what he chose, and imagine himself immune from counter-attack on account of his position in the company. She would not have been at ease with her conscience if she had acted otherwise. In the circumstances Eve did not prosper well with her reading that night. "Heroes and Hero Worship" was cast aside to make room for other considerations.

At the rehearsal next day it was with almost a proprietary interest she responded to Wynne's flickering greeting.

"You are making a reputation," he said, and added, "by the easiest way."

"What way is that?"

"Being frank with your superiors."

"Is it easy?"

"Assuredly—if you have the courage. Most people are content to accept their superiors as being superior. Invert the principle—tell an accepted success you consider him an ass—and you create an immediate interest in yourself."

"It wasn't my reason," said Eve.

"Wasn't it?" He seemed quite surprised.

"No. He annoyed me, and I showed him I was annoyed."

“You were sincere, then?”

“Of course.”

“How queer of you.”

“Why queer?”

“Oh, I don’t know. It seems so odd to be sincere with a man like that. Are you often sincere?”

“Yes. Aren’t you?”

“Inside I am. Been at the stage long?”

“This is the beginning.”

“The egg stage?”

“Yes.”

“Tell me, where do you live?”

“A room—anywhere.”

“You’ve no people, then?”

“None to whom I matter—or who matter to me.”

“I know. D’you know I was afraid you might have been rich and comfortable.”

Eve fingered a piece of her dress and held it out.

“Eight-three a yard, and made at home.”

“There are rich women who disguise themselves.”

“I am not one. I have king’s treasures, that is all.”

“A row of books over your bed, h’m.”

“That was clever,” she smiled.

“I could guess the authors.”

“Try.”

“Meredith—Browning—Hardy—Wendell Holmes.”

“Pretty good—especially Meredith.”

“You mustn’t overdo Meredith—he is a cult, not an author. You’re intricate—with the ‘Diana’ courage, and that’s dangerous. If you care to borrow I have some books. Come and choose a few.”

“May I? I should like that.”

“Come tonight?”

“It’s the first night of the play.”

"I'd forgotten. Well"—with a sudden impulse—"why not after it is over?"

"If you like."

He rubbed his chin with his long, sensitive fingers, and nodded approvingly.

"You'd make a friend," he said.

He could say things very attractively when he chose. The remark was a compliment to Eve and her sex.

II

Wynne's part ended with the first act, but he waited at the stage door till the close of the play. Presently Eve came out and joined him.

Very small she looked wrapped in a long brown coat, with her hands tucked in the pockets. She wore a little close-fitting hat which accentuated the oval of her gravely piquant face.

"Which way?" she asked.

"Through Covent Garden, if we walk. Be jollier to walk, I think, don't you?"

He suddenly remembered when last he had put the same question, and almost flushed at the memory. Then, as now, he had been seeking a friend. He had been a long time finding one.

"Yes, much," said Eve. "I always walk back. I like it, and it saves the pennies."

"I like it, and try not to remember that it saves the pennies," he remarked whimsically. " 'Tisn't bad being poor when one doesn't mean to be poor for ever. I have tremendous beliefs that this is only a passing stage, haven't you?"

"A valley?"

"Yes, which in passing through gives us the answer to all manner of whys and wherefores."

Eve nodded. "What a queer old street!" she said. "I haven't been this way before."

"There's a coffee stall at the corner where I buy provender; that's why I brought you. There it is."

They stopped at the stall, with the proprietor of which Wynne seemed on excellent terms, and bought some hard-boiled eggs, "balls of chalk" as they are familiarly called.

“A friend to every one that man is,” said Wynne as they proceeded on their way. “Does all manner of good turns to the queer folk whose business keeps ’em abroad late. He lent me three suppers once, at a time when I needed them badly.”

From a glowing oven on wheels nearer his lodging they bought baked potatoes.

“Put one in each pocket. Finest things in the world to keep your hands warm.” As she followed his advice he nodded encouragingly.

“That’s the way. It’s a fire and a good dinner all in one. I’ve a very great regard for a baked potato; it’s the president of the republic of vegetables, as the hot pie is the dowager queen of confectionery.”

“What do you call a hot pie?”

“Just that! They used to be cooked in the streets in little portable ovens. Did you never meet a pieman?”

“I don’t think so.”

“Daresay not, for the last one died two years ago. A fine fellow he was. I went to his funeral.”

“I’d love to have seen a real pieman. Didn’t Simple Simon meet one going to a fair?”

“So it’s said.”

“And now they’ve all gone for ever. How sad!”

“Tell you what,” exclaimed Wynne, “there’s an old man Richmond way who sells hot turnovers. When the spring comes we might ’bus down there, have a walk in the park, and munch turnovers in the night on the way home.”

“Yes, let’s do that.”

Very ordinary affairs assume a delicate outline when approached in a romantic spirit. The idea of eating turnovers on the top of a ’bus does not sound very attractive, and yet to Wynne, as he suggested it, and to Eve as she listened, the promised expedition seemed full of the happiest possibilities. They felt the touch of a spring breeze blowing in their hair, and saw the whitey-green of the new leaves, and the blue sky turn to a lavender in which the stars appeared. Almost they could taste the good baked crust and the sour-sweet apples of the midnight feast.

“D’you know,” said Eve, “I think, of all things in the world, the most glorious are those we mean to do.”

They stopped before an old Queen Anne house, and producing a latchkey Wynne unlocked the door.

"Top floor," he said, "and rather a climb."

They mounted the creaky stairs, and he was puffing gustily when they reached the top landing. For a young man he seemed unduly exhausted. Striking a light on his boot, he entered and lit a shaded lamp.

"Take off your hat and I'll get the fire going. Look! I must have paid the rent, for it is actually laid."

Eve smiled as he went down on his knees before a tiny basket grate, then let her gaze travel round the room. Inset, in the damp-stained slanting roof, were two gable windows, broad silled and littered with books and papers. Before one of these was a writing table, dilapidated but glorious with age; this, too, was liberally sprinkled with half-written manuscripts, pens, cigarette ends, and the jumble of odds and ends with which a man surrounds himself. A small Jacobean table stood in the middle of the uncarpeted floor, a tarnished copper bowl, battered but still shapely, giving tone to its dark fissured surface. Two age-worn grandfather chairs were drawn up near the fire. In each recess in the walls was a bookcase, piled ceiling-high with books. A couple of Holbein prints, and an unframed Albrecht Dürer completed the decoration. It was a shabby, unkempt room, yet, like its owner, it possessed individuality and charm.

"I like this," said Eve. "I'm glad I came."

"You like it. I thought you would—hoped so, too. I've never shown it to any one else. It is good though, isn't it? Try that chair. I carried it back on my head from a ragshop in Holloway Road, and having nearly deprived me of life it gave it back to me in sweet repose. Take off your coat first, won't you? That's right. Don't forget the 'taters though. Thanks! I'll put 'em on the trivet. Good. Thank God the fire means to burn. D'you know sometimes I've almost cried when it wouldn't. I can't lay a fire, and I loathe to be defeated."

He began wandering round the room and producing plates and knives from unexpected quarters. Presently he stopped and puzzled.

"Can you think of a likely place to find the bread?" he asked.

"Where did you see it last?"

"I don't know. I have meals at all sorts of odd times and places, so one loses track. Wait a minute, though."

He disappeared into the bedroom and emerged with a loaf and a saucer with butter on it.

“Breakfasted while I was dressing,” he explained, “or else I had supper in there over night. I don’t know which—but let’s make a start.”

They feasted very royally off bread and hard-boiled eggs and hot potatoes and raspberry jam, followed by a pot of tea. The tea they drank from little Chinese Saki cups without handles.

“I only use these on the especialist occasions,” he announced, adding with a smile, “In fact I have never used them before.”

“Haven’t you many friends?”

“No. Have you?”

“No.”

“I thought you hadn’t.”

“Why?”

“People with lots of friends don’t like me—but then I don’t like them—so that’s that—isn’t it. Let’s draw near the fire. The poor little thing means well, but it can’t reach us at such a distance.”

So they drew up their chairs and talked. They talked of books, of dead men, and of great ambitions. Under the influence of her society Wynne seemed to lose much of his arrogance and cynicism. He spoke of the things he loved naturally and with reverence. Ever and again he would dart to the shelves for a volume and read some passage to the point of the subject they had been discussing. Then he would throw it aside and paraphrase with a clear and almost inspired insight.

“One should always paraphrase,” he said. “One should paraphrase one’s own thoughts and every one else’s. It’s the sure way of getting down to basic facts. If I were to produce a play of Shakespeare’s I should make every actor translate his lines into colloquial schoolboy English. Then we should know he had his meanings right. Some glimmer of that necessity occurred to me the first time I went to a theatre, but now I see how absolutely essential it is.”

The talk always led back to himself. His own ego was the all-important factor.

“Extraordinary wrong most people are in their ideas!”

“When will you start to put them right?”

He looked at her keenly—on guard lest she should be laughing at him. But the question was sincere enough.

“Oh, I don’t know,” he answered. “I don’t believe in beginnings—gradual ascent, ladder of fame, and all that. Life to me is divided into two

halves—the period of finding out and the period of handing out. I don't intend to be a person who is beginning to be spoken of. When I am spoken of it will be by every one—simultaneously. In the meantime it is better to be obscure—and absorbent."

"You want success."

"I shall have it too."

"For the world's sake."

"Ye-es—and for mine."

Quarter after quarter boomed out from the neighbouring clocks. It was after two when Eve rose and took her coat from the nail on the door.

"You going?"

"Yes."

"Shall I walk with you?"

"No, it isn't far."

"Very well—I want to work too. But you'll come again, won't you?"

"If I may."

" 'Course you may. You must. You're an easy person—easier than I'd have thought possible—you sort of—don't bother me. Take a Walter Pater with you. Better for you than Meredith. Treat it gently, though; I starved a whole week to buy that book."

She took the white-vellum bound volume, nodded, and tucked it under her arm.

"Good-night."

" 'Night. You are rather an admirable person."

"Am I?"

"Yes. A girl is generally frightened to be in a man's rooms in the middle of the night."

"It wouldn't occur to me to be frightened of you," said Eve.

"Why not?"

"A man who starved for a week to buy this." She touched the book under her arm.

For some reason her gently spoken words piqued him, and he replied:

"Yet I am a man just the same."

"A man but not the same," she said, and, smiling, passed out on to the landing.

She had descended the first flight before he moved and followed her to the front door.

"I will walk back with you." It was what any man would have said.

"No, please not. I had rather think of you as the student working for the day."

He hesitated—then, "Very well. Good-night."

"Good-night."

He retraced his steps slowly. The memory of her attitude and her words puzzled him.

"More like a boy," he concluded, which if you think it out was a very fine form of conceit.

His thoughts wandered from his work, and he bit his pen for a long, long while. His eyes rested unseeingly on the black patch which was the window.

"More like a boy—much more."

He nodded to convince himself. After all, the friendship of a boy who is really a girl is very pleasant.

Never once did it cross his mind how entirely negligible was the physical side of his nature. A man whose brain works with febrile intensity night and day, and whose earnings are scarcely sufficient to buy the meanest fare, knows little or nothing of passionate callings. Unlike your idle, over-fed fellow whose intellect performs no greater task than finding excuses for bodily indulgence, the student's sensuality lies in words and colour. His worst vice is the prostitution of an artistic standard.

III

It was the neuter quality in Wynne Rendall which made possible the all-hour intimacy which came to exist between Eve and himself. She would come to his rooms, indifferent to time and convention, and stay far into the night.

Sometimes they conversed little, and then, while he worked or wandered about in a seemingly aimless fashion, seeking some cherished but elusive word, she would read, curled up in the age-worn chair. When the talking mood possessed him she would lay her book aside and contribute endorsement or censure to his ideas. In this respect her courage was boundless, for she never hesitated to dispute with him when she felt he was at fault. He would fight for his mental holdings to the last breath of argument, then of a sudden swing round and say:

“Yes, I know you are right—but how do you know?”

His extraordinary belief in himself filled her with a queer mixture of distress and admiration, but the distress was outweighed by the admiration and the joy she took in their brain to brain fencing or accord. Their talks, although embracing nearly every subject under the sun, were, as a rule, impersonal, or rather impersonal in so far as their relations to one another was concerned.

In common with many folk, Wynne thought more highly of his lesser deeds than of his greater, and vaunted them enthusiastically. He was inordinately proud of his truculence and acerbity to men who were more successful than himself, and took pleasure in recounting the fine-edged verbal tools he had employed against them. He was mortally offended when Eve told him frankly the attitude was unworthy and easily misconstrued.

“They only think you are envious,” she said.

“I envious of them? Good God!”

Her frankness had its effect, however, for he modified the characteristic, and no longer shouted “Yah” at lesser intellects and longer purses.

Another change she brought about was the matter of diet. Very drastically she quashed the nibbling habit which with him had taken the place of meals.

“Wynne,” she said, “what did you have for breakfast?”

“Lord knows. I don’t! Nothing, I expect.”

“Would you like to please me?”

“Yes,” he answered, “I suppose so.”

“You are starving yourself.”

“What nonsense!”

“You are. You won’t be able to stand the strain if you don’t eat properly.”

“I shan’t if I do,” he replied. “How can I buy books and pay rent and all that if I lavish my substance on victuals.”

“How much do you spend a week on food?”

“Never thought.”

“Think then.”

“Not I. Look! You haven’t seen this copy of ‘Erewhon,’ have you? It’s a first edition!”

“I want you to answer my question.”

He tossed his head petulantly.

"Oh, don't be like that," he implored. "The world is peopled with folk who worry about these matters; let's be away from them. You'll want me to buy a dinner-gong next so that half the street may know I am sitting down to table."

"Perhaps I shall, for I want you to sit at table—regularly."

He caught the word "regularly," and played tunes upon it.

"I know," said Eve, "and I like you for feeling that way—but you are fighting against nature—not convention—and that's all wrong. We funny little things who walk about on the world must follow certain laws—we can't help ourselves—and we may as well follow them sensibly. We have to lie down and get up and wash our faces and brush our hair and eat our dinners; we have to—if we didn't we should accomplish nothing. It is foolish to fight with the 'musts' when there are armies of 'needn't be's' to draw the sword against."

He snorted derisively and ridiculed prosaic philosophy. When he had finished she calmly repeated her question.

"How much do you spend a week on food?"

Very reluctantly he produced a sheet of paper and a pencil and scribbled a rough estimate.

"Will you give me the nine shillings and let me cater for you?"

"No," he said emphatically.

"Please do."

"Why should I spend money on a dinner when I can stave off hunger with a stick of chocolate?"

"Couldn't we make a common fund and have one meal together each day. I'd cook it here."

His expression brightened instantly.

"You would? You'd come each day?"

"If you consent."

Hitherto her comings had been sporadic—too sporadic. He had felt, when she was absent, the consciousness of something lacking.

"I should like you to come here every day," he said.

He was willing to accept a routine of her society, though rebelling against a time-table for meals. She smiled as the thought crossed her mind, but to have voiced it would have been to sacrifice the gains she had made.

“If you consent,” she repeated.

“All right; do what you will,” he said.

So every afternoon Eve cooked a meal over a grubby little gas-ring, assisted by a methylated spirit stove, and had the satisfaction of seeing her labours rewarded by a slightly added tinge of colour to his cheeks.

In buying the food she contributed more toward the cost than he, for in the matter of money he was strangely unmindful. Frequently he forgot his weekly contribution altogether, and returned home with some trifle of china or an old print by way of alternative. On these occasions it did not occur to him to question how meals still appeared upon his table, and Eve would not have told him for the world how hard it had been that this should be so.

Increasingly her thoughts centred on his welfare, and her own personality took second place. Even her ambitions—and they had been many and glorious—became merged in the task of helping him to success.

He had not taken into consideration the possibility that she, too, was a climber at heart, and had set her sails for the port where the dreams come true. He was quite offended when one day she spoke of herself.

“But can you act?” he staccatoed.

“One day I shall,” she answered. “One day I shall feel I know so much more than all the others—then I shall act, and people will sit up and say so.”

“H’m.”

“You think it unlikely?”

“Oh, I don’t know.” He fidgeted with a cup on the mantelshelf. “It seemed you were echoing those things which I say to myself.”

“We have thoughts in common.”

He shook his head irritably.

“I don’t admit it. There is no common currency in thoughts or ideas. To me parallel lines are antagonistic lines. Why should you want to act?”

“I want to express myself as strongly as you do. I want to succeed.”

“I don’t like women who succeed. Why should you succeed? Where’s the necessity—?”

“Born in me,” she answered.

His words for the moment had hurt her bitterly, but the subtler side of her nature took comfort from the almost childishly petulant tone in which he had spoken them.

“The necessity is born by the things around you,” he said. “They are the impulses toward success.”

"Yes, that's true. Perhaps it was the wretched drabness of my surroundings which fired the impulse in me. We haven't talked to each other of our people, you and I?"

"I never think back," he said.

"I do, because it's the impetus to think forward."

He looked at her critically.

"You might have come from princely stock by the look of you. You haven't the seeming of the drab."

"Perhaps I did; but it was the inbred collapsed finish of the good stock. My father idled backward to the slums—my mother was gentle, but that was all. He was dead before I could remember. Oh, that dreadful back-street life! You can't understand. We were only a little removed from the gossipy-doorstep folk who talk of a neighbour's confinement as they lean on the rickety railings. We played with their children, my sister and I, bought from their horrid mean shops—went to the same wretched school. Oh! how I hated it all—the miserable rooms, the bargaining for food, the squabbles, and the never-ending economy and thrift. Grey—grey—grey! I used to lash a purple whiptop at the corner of the street, and pray sometimes a great chariot of fire would snatch me up into the skies."

It was Wynne's habit to ignore central ideas in another's conversation, hence the question:

"Why a *purple* top?"

"I hardly know—but it was *always* purple. I kept a patch of purple on my horizon."

He looked at her queerly.

"What do you mean by that?"

"The Royal Purple. Somehow it stands out as the colour which rises above all sordidness. Can't explain it otherwise."

He nodded. "I know what you mean. Strange you should feel like that, too." The "too" was scarcely audible.

"When I was ever so little I had that feeling, and it has grown up with me. I used to believe that a purple goodness lined the great clouds above and the hilltops of my imagination. I could travel in my imagination, too. Just close my eyes and say to myself: Now the world is falling away, and I'm floating upwards, and I would pass above all the slates and see down all the chimneys until the houses became cities, and the cities grey marks on the green earth—and the rivers twisted silver wires which curled from the mountains to the sea."

“You should meet Uncle Clem,” said Wynne.

“Who is he?”

“A man who thinks that way. But what is it like up there in the clouds?”

“Do you know, strangely, it isn’t very different—only fuller. Just as if one went up discontented and found contentment in what one had left behind. I used to think this was because my imagination couldn’t picture a better state, but I believe that no longer.”

“The climb is for nothing, then?”

“Oh, no, for the climb proves that what you sought is the best of what you left behind.”

“H’m! Sometimes,” he said. “You have queer notions. Have you found out what is the best of your possessions?”

“I don’t know them by heart, yet.”

“Why by heart?”

“I am a woman.”

“Yes, and sometimes, I think, just like any other.”

“I am.”

“Once I tried to define my motives—can you define yours?”

“I want a place in the sun—want it tremendously. I want to be able to think and feel and move among lovely things and people. I have given away twenty years to sordidness, and all I have earned is appreciation of the beautiful. I want to live the beautiful now, and rise above the trivial bother of a washpail and a gas-ring.”

“Mammon, Mammon,” cried Wynne, for want of a better thought.

“Oh no. Don’t think I crave for money, for it isn’t so; but one must have money if one is never to think of it.”

“Why?”

“Isn’t half the sorrow in the world traceable to such little causes as an extra halfpenny on a quartern of bread?”

“Not untrue,” Wynne nodded. His eyes fell on the dirty gas-ring of the grate, and he frowned. “Why do you come here, then?”

“Don’t you know?” she replied.

“No. It’s squalid enough!”

“Then it is because you are the first real person I have ever met outside the cover of a book.”

“I give you something, then?”

“A great deal.”

A modesty seized him, touched with self-reproach.

“Only because it pleases me,” he said, brusquely. “The giving is done by you. That much I realize.”

“I’m glad—and I’m glad to give.”

“Yes, a woman’s life is to give—that’s natural law—the only kind of law worth accepting.” He hesitated—then, “Are you satisfied to give?”

She smiled her wise, intricate smile, and he did not wait for the answer.

“You never smile as you should,” he reproached. “Yours is a thinking smile—perplexing. Do you never smile or laugh from sheer happiness?”

“Perhaps I have never yet been sheerly happy.”

“What would make you?”

“I haven’t found out.”

“But I want to know. If you smiled for me you would seem less remote.”

“Am I remote?”

“Yes—remote is the word.” He looked at her fixedly, then shook himself and began to pace up and down the room. When next he spoke his voice was querulous and irritable:

“I should have been working all this while. The train of my thoughts is all upset—disordered. It is unlike you to disturb me. I’ve lost an hour. Tomorrow I must work all day—alone.”

“Go back to yourself,” she said, gently.

She did not leave at once, but half an hour later he looked up and saw she was buttoning her coat.

“You needn’t go.”

“I had better,” she said; and at the door—“I come here too often, perhaps. It is selfish of me.”

“But I like you to be here—I want you here. I meant nothing—only I’m a little keyed up and worried. I don’t know why.”

“It’s all right,” said Eve. “Just for tomorrow I’ll stay away.”

“You want to?”

“No; but it is good sometimes to do what one doesn’t want. G’bye.” And she was gone.

That night, as he lay in bed, the same feeling of self-reproach which had sprung into being for an instant during their talk came back to him heavily.

"What do I do for her? Nothing."

IV

The thought awoke with him next day, and seemed to write itself across the pages of his manuscript. He could not concentrate, and the ink on his dipped pen dried times without number, and not a line was committed to the paper. The hour for their united meal came, and with it a feeling of loneliness and disappointment. He made no attempt to set the table for himself, but sat staring dully at the criss-cross lines of the window transoms, fiddling aimlessly with the books and papers before him.

Once he thought he would go out, but changed his mind, and threw his hat aside before he had reached the door of the room. He tried to read, but the words were meaningless and confused, and conveyed nothing to his mind, so he dropped the book to the floor and fell back to the fruitless staring again. The words she had spoken about her childhood recurred, and with the startling reproductive faculty which he possessed he was able to picture it all very vividly. He could almost visualize the cheap short dress she would have worn when, years before, she lashed her purple top at the corner of that grey side street. The houses there would have narrow and worn steps leading down to the pavement; they would have mean areas, and windows repaired with gelatine lozenges. One of the lodgers would boast a row of geranium pots on the window-sill, stayed from falling by a slack string. No flowers would bloom in those pots—a few atrophied leaves on a brown stalk would be the only reward of the desultory waterings. In the yards at the back queer, shapeless garments would flap and fill upon a line, and gaunt cats would creep along the sooty walls. There would be querulous voices somewhere raised in argument or rebuke, and the shrill cries of children at unfriendly games. On Sundays vulgar youths with button-holes would loaf by the letter-box at the street corner, making eyes and blowing coarse kisses to the giggling girls who warily congregated on the far side. At times there would be chasings, slaps, and rough-and-tumble courtships. Old men without coats would blink and smoke complacently on the doorsteps, and women would nod and whisper of their misfortunes and their fears.

"She came from there—untouched by it all," thought Wynne. "She deserves her place in the sun."

A strange restlessness seized him, and he started to pace up and down.

V

Wynne arrived at the theatre earlier than usual that night, and met Eve in one of the corridors.

"Well," he said.

"Well?"

He shook his head. "I haven't worked all day—I couldn't."

"I'm sorry. What have you done?"

"Walked about—and thought."

"Of what?"

"Of you mostly."

"Have you? I'm glad. I wanted you to think of me today."

"Why today?"

"It's my birthday."

"No!"

She nodded.

"How old?"

"Twenty-one."

"Twenty-one!"

It seemed rather sad. Twenty-one is a great birthday. Had she been an earl's daughter there would have been laughter and dancing in the hall that night—white flowers and scarlet in happy clusters everywhere. There would have been pearls from her father, and a dream dress to wear. Wax candles would have glittered the silver on the board, and pink-coated huntsmen would have led her to the dance.

It seemed rather sad she should be walking-on in a crowd to earn three shillings and sixpence. And with this reflection there came to Wynne an idea —one of the first that did not actually concern himself. It smote him gloriously, and sent a pulsation of delight throbbing through his veins. But all he said was:

"You will come to the rooms after the play?"

She hesitated. "I said I would not."

"But it's your birthday."

"Then, if I shan't disturb you."

"Even if you do, I want you to come."

"Very well. Will you wait for me?"

“No. Follow me round. I’ve something to do first. Here, take a key and keep it if you will. I give you the freedom of the rooms.”

“I wish you’d wait,” she said.

“Sorry,” he replied, shaking his head.

“After all, a birthday means very little to a man,” thought Eve. Yet she was disappointed he had refused so small a service.

When his scene was over, Wynne dressed quickly and hurried from the theatre. In his pocket was a sum of six shillings and threepence. He counted it by touch as he walked down Maiden Lane and struck across Covent Garden. Before a modest wine shop in Endell Street he stopped and considered. In the window was a pyramid of champagne bottles, the base composed of magnums, the first tier of quarts, the second of pints, and, resting proudly on top, a single half-pint. Each size was carefully priced, even the tiny bottle showing a ticket on which was printed, “Two shillings and eightpence.”

Wynne squared his shoulders and entered the shop with an air of some importance.

“This Dry Royal,” he said, “is it a wine you can recommend?”

“It is a very drinkable wine,” replied the merchant. “Of course it does not compare—”

But Wynne interrupted with:

“I’ll take one of the half-pints to sample.”

“I have no half-pints.”

“There is one in the window.”

“It is not for sale.”

“Why not?”

“There is no demand for that size.”

“I am supplying the demand.” His tone was irritatingly precise, and the merchant was offended.

“I regret, sir, I cannot undertake to spoil my window dressing for so small an order.” He spoke with finality that could not be misconstrued.

“Good God!” exclaimed Wynne. “You call it a small order? It is nearly half of all I possess. Am I to be cheated of a celebration for the sake of your damned ideas of symmetry?”

His very genuine concern excited interest.

“I should be very sorry to cheat you of anything,” came the answer in a more kindly voice. “Perhaps if you would explain—”

“What explanation is needed? Why does any one buy champagne except to celebrate an event? Must I sacrifice the desire to please and the hope of giving a sparkle of happiness because your hide-bound conventions won’t let you knock the top off a triangle? Is the expression of a kindly wish to be nullified because my worldly wealth won’t run to a pint? Would you decline to serve a rich man with a quart because you stock magnums? There’s no damned sense of justice in it.”

It so happened there were warm springs in the heart of the little Endell Street wine merchant—and imagination too. As he listened to this intemperate outburst he pictured very vividly the event which the small gold-braided bottle was destined to enliven. A man does not spend half his belongings for no purpose, and accordingly he said:

“I never wish to disappoint a customer, sir. If you would accept a pint for the price of the half, you would be doing me a service.”

But the rancour had not abated, and Wynne replied:

“This is a celebration—not a damned charity.”

“I see—of course not. Please forgive me,” said the little man, and opening a panelled door he took the tiny bottle from the top of the pyramid and wrapped it up.

Wynne placed two shillings and eightpence on the counter, pocketed the parcel, and walked to the door. Arrived there, he turned and came back with an outstretched hand.

“You’re a good sort,” he said.

“Thank you, sir, and a very merry evening.”

They shook hands warmly.

At a very special fruiterer’s in Southampton Row Wynne bought a quarter of a pound of hothouse grapes, and argued fiercely with the shop assistant who did not consider the purchase warranted placing the fruit on vine leaves in a basket. He next made his way to a confectioner’s, and forced an entrance as they were putting up the shutters. Here he had a windfall, and secured a small but beautifully iced cake for a shilling, on the double account of the lateness of the hour and a slight crack in the icing.

On the pavement outside he counted what remained of his original capital.

“One and tenpence—good!” he remarked.

The red and green lights of a chemist lured him to enter, and he emerged, after a period of exquisite indecision, with two elegant packages—one containing a tablet of soap, and the other a tiny bottle of perfume.

Carrying his treasures with prodigious care he hastened toward his rooms, but had hardly covered half the distance when an appalling thought occurred to him. Under the weight of it he stopped short, and beat his forehead with a closed fist.

"I've forgotten the candles," he gasped. "The fairy candles—the twenty-one candles!"

Without those twenty-one candles the whole affair would be flat and meaningless. In being able to obtain them reposed the success of the scheme. He tried an oilshop, but without success—he tried another with the same result.

"My God!" he exclaimed in an ecstasy of anxiety, "where can I get the things?"

And the good angel who listens for such prayers heard, and sent toward him a small boy of pleasing exterior who whistled gaily.

"I say," said Wynne, "ever had a Christmas-tree?"

The boy grinned and nodded.

"One with candles on it, I mean—coloured candles?"

"Yus, it was a proper tree."

"I want some candles—want 'em tremendously. Know where I could get some?"

Appealed to as a specialist, the urchin adopted a professional mien, and paused for consideration. Eventually he said:

"Dad got ours at Dawes's, rahnd the street. She's still got some, 'cos my mate, Joe, bought one for his bull's-eye."

"Round which street?"

"Over there."

Wynne waited for no more, and broke into a run. By a kindly Providence Mrs. Dawes had not put up the shutters, being a lady who traded sweets to little voyagers whose parents were not over particular as to the hours they kept.

"I dessay I could lay my 'and on a few," she replied to Wynne's fervent appeal, "though it isn't the season for them, you understand."

With that she opened, or rattled, an incredible number of wrong boxes, taken from beneath the counter. The sweat had beaded Wynne's forehead

when at last she discovered what she had been seeking. She did not appear to be in any hurry, and conversed on technical subjects during the search.

"There isn't the sale for coloured candles that there used to be. Of course you may say as it is more the peg-top season, and that might account for it; but it doesn't—not altogether, that is. Putting the Christmas trade on one side, boys don't go for bull's-eye lanterns as once they did—no, nor Chinese neither. It's all iron 'oops, or roller skates nowadays, as you may say. Why, I dessay I sell as much as ten or a dozen 'oops a week."

"Do you indeed?"

"Quite that. Let's see! Candles! Ah, I think this is them." And it was.

"Thank God!" exclaimed Wynne. "I want twenty-one."

He watched in an agony of suspense as she turned out precisely that number.

"Five a penny," she said.

"Lord!" he gasped. "I've only fourpence."

"You can pay me the odd farthing when you are passing."

Greatly to the good lady's surprise the extraordinary young man leant across the counter and planted a kiss upon her ample cheek, then seizing his purchases raced from the shop and scuttled down the street.

"Well I never!" she exclaimed—"must be a bit mad." But nevertheless she rubbed the spot where the kiss had fallen with a kindly touch.

VI

Probably for the first time in his life Wynne felt the need of fine linen. It is a sorry happening to lay choice dishes on a bare board. A flash of memory provided an alternative, and he unearthed a roll of white wallpaper from a cupboard. Mindful of a trick performed by small boys at gallery doors, he folded and tore the paper to a rough presentment of a lace cloth. Quite imposing it looked upon the black surface of the old oak table.

To the rim of a fine, but much-riveted blue-and-white plate he waxed the twenty-one candles, and in the centre, pedestalled upon an inverted soap-dish, he stood the birthday cake. The champagne and some glasses were placed on one side of this setpiece, the grapes on the other, while before it, squarely and precisely laid, were the two beautifully tied parcels of soap and scent.

So wrapped up was he in the exquisite pleasure of his preparations that he was quite insensible to the deliberate symmetry he had brought about—a

circumstance which may prove a great deal, or nothing at all. When he had done he fell back and surveyed his handiwork as an artist before a masterpiece.

And outside rumbled the voices of the clocks saying the hour was eleven.

"Eleven! She will be here in a moment," he thought. A sudden nervousness seized him. He did not know why or what it was about. He touched his pocket to be sure the matches were there. He wondered if she were all right, and had crossed Long Acre and Oxford Street safely—they were busiest in theatre traffic at that hour, and private cars and taxis paid little heed to pedestrians. It would be so easy for her to be knocked down and run over. He could picture the curious, jostling crowds that would gather round, the blue helmets of the police in the centre—and the gaunt ambulance which would appear from nowhere.

"God! What a fool I am," he exclaimed. "She's all right—of course she is."

Yet, despite this guarantee of her safety, thoughts of possible disaster raced across his mind. Memory of his visit to the Morgue in Paris arose and would not be banished. He recalled what he had said that day: "Death is so horribly conclusive." Conclusive! Suppose it were visited upon her?—something would die in him, too. He asked himself what that something would be, but could find no answer. It would be something so lately come to life that he did not know it well enough to name.

Once more his eyes fell upon the table, and the fears vanished. Of course she would come—of course nothing would happen to her. Even though it were against her will, she would be drawn by what he had prepared.

He blew out the lamp, and crossing the room opened the window and leant over the sill to wait.

It was a sweet night, starred and silent. Smoke rose ghostily from the silhouetted stacks, and a faint, murmurous wind, which seemed to have stolen from a Devon lane, touched his hair to movement. North, south, east, and west stretched the roofs of London, and in imagination he could hear the soft rustle as the dwellers beneath tucked themselves in for the night.

A hundred times before he had leant out, as now, with thoughts which ran on the groundlings who ate and slept and worked and squabbled beneath that army of stacks and slates; and how, one day, his name should come to be as familiar with them as the pictures hanging on their walls. But tonight his feelings were different. He conceived these people in their relation to each other and not to himself. In each and all those myriad abiding-places

there would be folk with gentle thoughts and kindly desires, even as his were then. They would be linked together by the common tie of doing something to please. Never before had it occurred to him that in pleasing another happiness was born in oneself. Hitherto he had only thought to please by the nimbleness of his artistry—the perfection of a style, the ability to express; but now he saw the surer way was to appeal to the heart—to minister to the true sentiment—to hand over sincerity from one's simple best.

A footfall below, and the glimpse of a grey figure in the light of the street-lamp, brought him to immediate action. He drew back from the window, and, trembling with excitement, put a match to the circle of coloured candles.

A ring of fire leapt into being—a tiny flame for every year of her in whose honour they were burnt in offering.

Standing behind the lights, and almost invisible in the twinkling glare, Wynne waited breathlessly for the door to open.

She was drawing off her gloves as she came into the room, but she stopped, and her hands fell gently to her sides. Her eyes rested on every detail of the little scene, hovering over it with an exquisite increase of lustre. And slowly her lips broke into a smile of the purest child-happiness, as, with a little catch in her voice, she breathed:

"How lovely and dear of you."

It was hard to find a reply.

"You're pleased?" he said. "I'm glad."

"Pleased! Look! there are two presents for me—real champagne, with its livery all bright and goldy—and the bloom on the grapes, it's—that's a proper birthday cake, with 'marzi' inside—and twenty-one candles because I am twenty-one years old today."

She held out her hand, and he came to her and took it in one of his. For quite a while they stood in silence.

"This is my first real birthday, and you've thought of it all for me. Oh, it is wonderful, you know."

"You have done something more wonderful for me," he said, in a voice that seemed unlike his own.

"I?"

"You smiled for me."

"Because you made me utterly happy."

“D’you think—I could—go on making you happy?”

For the first time she raised her eyes from the fairy candles to meet his.

“Do you want to?”

His reply was characteristic.

“Yes—for I am happier now than I have ever been.”

She laughed understandingly, and caressed his hand.

“Oh, here!” he said. “Sit down, I want to talk.” He almost thrust her into the chair and settled himself upon the arm. “All of a sudden you have become something that I want—must have. Spiritually I want you near me—you’re—you’re essential. Without you I am incomplete. If I lost you I should lose more than you—far more. D’you understand?”

“Yes, I understand.”

“Together we could reach any heights, you and I, for you give me the atmosphere I need—the right essence. I used to believe the line, ‘He travels fastest who travels alone,’ but now I scout it—it’s lost its truth for me. I believe you are wrapped up in my happiness and my success; I believe without you they would be in jeopardy—in danger. D’you care for me well enough to take me on those terms?”

Very slowly she replied:

“I want you to have your happiness, Wynne, and your success—I want that to be a true dream.”

“Then—?”

“I’ll accept your spiritual offer—and give you all in return. But won’t you say just one thing more?”

“What have I left unsaid?”

“Did you say you loved me?”

“No,” he replied; “but, in God’s name, I believe I do.”

“My dear,” she said, with a mother’s voice.

He broke away from her and started to pace the room feverishly.

“Come back,” she pleaded. “I am so proud of that belief.”

He threw up his head.

“I was honest enough to offer all I possessed,” he cried. “A man would have taken you in his arms. God! I’m only half a man—a starveling—! You are beautiful—beautiful to me—beautiful—subtle—desirable—but I haven’t a shred of passion in my half-starved body.”

“Yours is the better half, dear. The spirit counts, and the greatest possession a woman can have is all that her man can give. Let us keep our spirits bright together.” She rose, and he came toward her, and suddenly his face lost its tragic look, and the lines at the corners of his mouth pulled down in a whimsical smile.

“What a triumph for Plato!” he said. “When shall it be?”

She smiled back at him. “Whenever you wish.”

Very delicious she looked in the dancing fairy light. A strangely new and elemental impulse seized him, and he gripped her shoulders fiercely.

“You are wonderful,” he said. “We’ll work together for the Day. The Day shall be our *real* wedding; till then—partners.”

“Partners.”

“You shall help to make a success, and—a man; and when I’m a man I shall seek a man’s reward. We’ll pledge that! Come, let’s feast before the candles burn low.”

The tiny bottle of champagne popped bravely, and the wine tinkled against the glass.

PART SIX
"HE TRAVELS FASTEST—

I

They were on their way to the registrar's when Wynne stopped short and exclaimed, "Of course!" Then, in answer to an arched-brow inquiry from Eve: "Would you like to meet some one nice?"

"I have," she smiled, for it was their wedding day, and future wives and husbands say pleasant things to each other on their wedding days, even though sometimes they forget to do so afterwards.

"A man—in fact, an uncle of mine."

"Uncle Clem?"

"Yes. How did you know?"

"Guessed."

"Have I spoken of him?"

"Once."

"I want you to meet him."

"Then I do too."

"Don't know where he lives though."

"Let's try a telephone directory."

They did—and successfully.

"He would live in Kensington Square," said Wynne.

"Have you never been to see him before?"

Wynne shook his head.

"But why not?"

"Did you never have that feeling of wanting to keep something back? How can I explain? If you are thirsty and at last you are within reach of a drink, have you never waited awhile instead of snatching it to your lips?"

"I know."

"Then that's why. Only here and there has he entered my life, and somehow each time I felt the better for him. I'm not a very grateful individual, but I'm grateful to Uncle Clem—and I'm grateful *for* Uncle

Clem, too. He sees things very agreeably. When I was a child I thought him a god—and I haven't altogether outgrown that feeling."

"Then why do you avoid him?"

"When one goes before the Presence one likes to have something to show."

"I see."

He touched her hand lightly.

"Today I have something to show."

They climbed to the top of a bright red 'bus and journeyed to Kensington. At the church they descended, and dipped into the little side street which leads to the Queen Anne houses of Kensington Square.

There was a copper knocker on the door of Uncle Clem's abode, with which Wynne very bravely tattooed his arrival.

"Yes, Mr. Rendall is in," admitted the manservant who answered the summons. "Was he expecting you?"

"Heavens! no," said Wynne. "I'm his nephew—but let him find out for himself. We shouldn't pocket the spoons if you invited us to come inside."

The man smiled. "I recognize the relationship in your speech, sir."

He opened the door of a white-panelled room, and, when they had entered, mounted the stairs to inform his master.

"Good, isn't it?" said Wynne, his eyes roaming over the comfortable disorder and beautiful appointments. "Everything right. Hullo!" He halted abruptly before a large framed canvas on one of the walls, "The Faun and the Villagers."

He was standing so when the door opened, and Uncle Clem, dressed in quilted smoking jacket and a pair of ultra vermilion slippers, came in. He paused a moment, then out rang his voice:

"Ha! The young fellow! Ain't dead, then? Let's look at you!"

Wynne met the full smack of the descending hand in his open palm.

"No," he laughed. "Look here, instead," and pivoted Uncle Clem so that Eve came in his line of sight.

"Splendid!" said Clem, moving to meet her. "Used to tell him he'd do no good until he fell in love. May I kiss her?"

"Don't ask me."

"Well, may I?"

"Um!" said Eve.

And he did, saying thereafter:

"First rate! I like it immensely. Sit down—take off your hat, or whatever you do to feel at home. That's the way. Now let's hear all about it. Are you married—or going to be? I see—going to be—no ring. Splendid!"

"Here's the ring," said Wynne. "It will be worn for the first time today."

"Today! Today the best day in all the year! And you came to see me on the way to the church. Fine! Y'know, there is something in 'im after all, even though he's devilish sporadic in coming to see me."

"He's saving you up for the good time ahead," said Eve; "and I can see why, now."

"Then give up seeing why, little lady. What's your name, by the way? What is her name, young fellar?"

"Eve."

"Eve—couldn't be better. What was I saying? Ah, yes. Give up seeing *why* and come and see *me* instead. Rotten policy to save! (never saved a penny in my life). Fatal to save! Find out, when it's too late, don't want what you've been saving for—outgrown your impulses. Buried with your bankbook, and every one glad you're dead. No—no. Spend while you are young. Get a hold on all the friendship and all the love within reach—and then, why then, when you're old, at least memories will be yours as comforters. You agree, don't you?"

"Yes, I agree," said Eve.

"And what about you?"

"All or nothing," replied Wynne. "And I had rather keep the 'nothing' till I can claim the 'all.' "

"Good stars!" exclaimed Clem. "What a speech for a wedding day!" Then, catching a glimpse of the growing colour on Eve's cheeks:

"Don't heed me, my dear. I've a reputation for saying things which, in the vernacular, I didn't ought. But a man who speaks of nothing on his wedding day—?"

Wynne hesitated, then:

"This isn't altogether our wedding day," he said.

"Eh?"

"Today she and I are becoming—legalized partners."

"What the devil are you talking about?"

"Partners. We shall join forces, she and I, and work together for success—think of, live for, and concentrate on that goal. Afterwards we—"

But Uncle Clem would not let him finish.

"Rank folly!" he cried, jumping to his feet.

"You've read your Plato!" said Wynne.

"Plato be damned! Well enough for an old philosopher to mumble his repressive theories from a dead log in the market-place—but for you at twenty-what-ever-it-may-be, tss—madness—rot—folly! My dear, dear girl, for God's sake, tell him not to talk such utter damn nonsense."

"You haven't quite understood," said Eve, very gently.

"He speaks of success and denies love—he places success before love. Doesn't he know—? Here! don't you know," twisting suddenly round, "that love is the only success worth having—that success is only possible through love?"

"Love is the reward," said Wynne.

"It is not. It is no more the reward than rain is a reward to the ground, or air is a reward to the lungs. Love is a necessity—a primary necessity—and the fountain of all inspiration. If you can't realize that, don't marry—you have no right to marry. Don't marry him, my dear. Keep away from him till he comes to his proper senses."

"I think we have a greater knowledge," said Wynne, moving to Eve's side.

"And I think you have no knowledge whatsoever—that you are throttling it at the main. Partners!" he threw up his head. "Oh, can't you see what partners means—what it amounts to in practice? A staling of each other for each other—that's all. A mutual day-by-day loss of conceit and regard. You can see it in the City, or wherever you choose to look. Listen to what any man says of his partner: 'He's all right, but getting old—losing his grip—isn't the man he was,' so on and so forth. And why is it? Because they have no closer tie than their signatures on a piece of paper. Nature admits of no lasting partnership between man and woman save one—love."

"Even that partnership is sometimes dissolved."

"By fools, yes, and by the blind, but not by those who can see. Knowledge is the keystone which holds up the archway of heaven, my boy—knowledge which has sprung from love. I may be no more than a talkative old bachelor, but, by God! I know that to be true. There are few enough spirits on this earthy old world of ours, and only through love comes the power to know them each by name." He stopped and fiddled with a pipe on the mantelshelf. "This is a disappointment to me—a big disappointment. I'd looked to you young folk to open your hearts and tell me what was inside,

and, instead, I've done all the talking, and told you what I think they ought to contain, and perhaps offended you both into the bargain."

"No, you haven't," said Eve. "I like you for it."

"And you?"

"If I were offended," said Wynne, "I should not ask you to come to the wedding—and I do."

Uncle Clem shook his head slowly.

"Not I," he said. "I'm an idealist—not a business man. I'd as soon watch a stockbroker signing scrip."

On the doorstep, a few moments later, he touched Eve's arm and whispered:

"Run away—don't do it—run away."

She shook her head. "I love him," she said.

In silence she and Wynne walked to the High Street and turned into Kensington Gardens.

"He's losing his grip—not the man he was—getting old," quoted Wynne.

"And yet," she answered, "he is younger than we are."

They fell upon a second silence, then very suddenly Wynne said:

"Are you unhappy?"

"No."

"Are you doubtful?"

"No."

"You do believe in me?"

"Yes."

"It's—it's not much of a wedding for you."

"There's all the future."

"Yes. He was wrong, of course."

"If the future is to be ours."

"It shall be ours. What's it matter if we grope along the flats if at last we jump to the mountain top together?"

"I put all my faith in that."

"You shall never regret it."

She hung close upon his arm. "No, you won't let me regret it, will you? You won't *ever* let me regret it?"

" 'Course not."

“I want to know, when you make that leap to the mountain top, that my arm will be through yours as it is now.”

“It will be then. I shall want to show my treasures to the world,” he said.

Her mouth broke into a smile.

“Nothing else matters,” she said.

II

A registrar is not, as a rule, an enlivening person. He is a dealer in extremities—to him a birth or a death is merely a matter of so many words written upon a page, and a marriage is no greater affair than a union of two people brought together for the purpose of providing him with subjects for his more serious offices.

The particular registrar who was responsible for making Wynne and Eve man and wife was no exception to the rule. He proved to be a man of boundless melancholy, who recited the necessary passages with a gloom of intonation better befitting a burial than a bridal. His distress was acute in that they had failed to import the required witnesses—and, indeed, at one time he seemed disposed to deny them the privileges of his powers. The apartment in which the ceremony took place smelt disagreeably from lack of ventilation, and the newly-wed pair were thankful to come into the sunshine of the street outside.

So great was the oppression produced that neither one nor the other felt capable of saying a word, and it was only by a mighty effort Wynne was able to say:

“We’re married.”

Eve pressed his hand, and nodded.

“Rather beastly, wasn’t it?”

She nodded again.

“Doesn’t seem very real, does it?”

And she replied, “Would you kiss me just to make it seem more real?”

Rather awkwardly he stooped and brushed her cheek with a kiss.

“Better?” he said.

“A bit.”

He began to speak rather fast:

“After all, what’s it matter? This is only the beginning. We’ll count today as any other day—a working day. I’m no more to you—or you to me—

beyond the sharing of a single name and a single roof. We won't spoil our future by any foretaste of its good. Do you agree?"

"I agree."

"Then shake hands, partner."

"God bless you and let you win," said Eve, as she laid her hand on his.

By the doors of the British Museum they nodded a temporary farewell. He entered and made his way to the reading-room, and she walked home alone.

III

The moonlight streamed through the slanting window, pitching a dim ray upon Wynne as he lay asleep.

It was dark in the lonely corner, on the far side of the room, where, very faintly, the outline of a slim white figure could be seen—a figure hugging her knees and resting her chin upon them. Very quiet it was—just the rise and fall of a man's breathing and the muted, humming noises of the night.

The clocks of the City coughed and jarred the hour of three.

Presently the still white figure moved, and, bare-footed, crossed the floor between the two beds. For a little while she stood looking down upon the sleeping man; then, in answer to a human impulse too gentle, and yet too strong to be denied, stooped and laid her head beside his upon the pillow. Her breath was warm upon his cheek, but he made no movement; her hair tressed upon his arm, but it did not quicken to life and fold around her, as a husband's might; her lips were almost touching his, but he did not move that they might meet in the darkness.

With a little catch in her throat Eve lifted herself and crossed to the lonely shadows beneath the sloping roof.

IV

"May I read these?" asked Eve.

She had unearthed a box full of old manuscripts he had written and cast aside.

"Burn 'em, if you like," he replied.

She chose one from the pile, saying:

"Have they been sent anywhere?"

“Oh yes, a few have been the round. They are true to the boomerang type, for they always returned to the point of departure.”

She curled herself in the big armchair and began to read. The breakfast things had been washed up, the beds made, and the rooms tidied.

It was an article she had chosen, and the subject was “Education.” Wynne had a singularly marked style of his own—his sentences were crisp and incisive, his views original and striking. When he chose he could write with a degree of tenderness that was infinitely appealing; but in odd contrast to this mood, and usually in immediate proximity to his most happy expressed phrases, occurred passages of satire and mordant wit which detracted immeasurably from the charm of the whole. They stood out like blots upon the page.

The same conditions prevailed in each of the other manuscripts which Eve read, with the result that the fine susceptibilities which had been awakened by his best, were wounded by the ill-humour of his worst.

“Why do you give all the butterflies stings?” she asked.

The question pleased him, and he smiled.

“Why not? Aren’t they mostly well deserved?”

“By whom?”

“The public.”

She had it in mind to say that it was not the public who felt the sting, but, instead, she replied:

“May I copy these out?”

“If you like.”

She did, and, with certain reservations and omissions, dispatched them to the kind of periodical which might be interested.

Three weeks later a letter arrived from *The Forum* accepting the essay on Education. “Payment of ten guineas will be made on publication,” said the letter.

“But they refused it before!” exclaimed Wynne.

“I made a few cuts, and altered it a little.”

His forehead flew into straight creases.

“Where? What did you cut?”

She showed him.

He shook his head and paced up and down the room. “Heavens above!” he reproached. “Those were the best passages.”

"They weren't. They were bad, and destructive."

"Revolutionary, if you like."

"The wrong sort of revolution."

"Not at all. I wrote them with a purpose."

"Then the purpose was wrong."

"Thank God you cut them and not I. I should esteem myself a coward if I had done that."

"I don't. You will never heal by throwing vitriol."

Wynne's tenacity was tremendous, and he fought for every inch of ground before conceding it. The lesson, however, did him good, and thereafter, if not always with the best grace, he submitted his writings to her for approval.

Eve had a very sure literary sense, and her criticisms were as just as they were courageous. Wynne could never gauge to what extent a reader will allow the scourge of wit to fall upon his shoulders, but Eve, by some peculiar insight of her own, knew this to a nicety, and little by little forced him to her way of seeing.

As his writings began to be accepted he came to a silent acknowledgment of the value of her decisions, and, subconsciously, his mind, in certain directions, ran parallel with hers. By his sharp acquisitive sense he came to know how she arrived at her reasoning, and in learning this, the necessity to appeal to her diminished correspondingly. Once an idea was firmly implanted it became a part of his being, and very soon his pen lost its jagged edge and ran more smoothly over the pages.

For nearly a year the partners worked together, each in their separate spheres, to the common end of success.

That his mind might go free and unworried wheresoever it willed, Eve cooked and darned, and kept his house in order. It was a grey enough life, with little to raise it from the ruck of sordid domesticity. To all intent and purpose she was a general servant, privileged at rare intervals to wash her hands, sit at her master's table and share his speech. Her reward was to hear an echo of some of her sweetness in his writings, and to see the results of her gentle care in his looks and bearing.

He had more colour, his step was springier than in the days before they had met, and this added vitality he converted into longer hours of labour. He never spared himself or relaxed, and his tireless energy, perseverance, and concentration were abnormal. Except when he needed her advice he appeared to be wholly detached, and scarcely aware of her presence. The

cramped conditions in which they lived made it very difficult for Eve to conduct her household duties without disturbing him. He was very sensitive and exacting, and the sound of a rattled teacup would throw him out of line. Not the least of Eve's achievement was the manner in which she contrived to do everything that was needful without disturbance, and at the same time to be ever ready to lay all aside in case he should want her.

A man will always give or find occupation for a woman, and in some small way or another the whole of Eve's time was taken up in meeting his needs and wishes. She was obliged to forego many of the happy book hours she used to spend in order that the wheels could run smoothly and silently. This in itself was a very great sacrifice, for she had loved her reading, and grubbing with pots and pans, or bargaining with tradesfolk, was a sorry substitute.

"But it's only for a while," she comforted herself. "One day—" and her thoughts floated out to the sun-lit hills and the sweeping purple heather of the moors.

V

One evening Wynne arrived home and announced that he had left the stage.

"I am going to write a play," he said, "and I shall want all my time."

He had not taken into consideration that with the loss of his theatre salary their finances would be seriously crippled. Of late there had been rather more money than usual, and Eve had entertained the hope of engaging a maid to come in and do the rougher work, but with this announcement that happy prospect took immediate wings.

A play would certainly take several weeks to write, and probably months or even years to place. In the meantime there were three or four outstanding sales of stories and articles which would realize a total of thirty or forty pounds.

Yet, although these considerations arose very clearly in Eve's mind, she only nodded and expressed enthusiasm for the idea.

And so, with a great deal of energy and intention, Wynne attacked the play, and Eve rolled up her sleeves and washed the greasy plates, and blacked the stove and cooked the meals, and did the meagre housekeeping, and many things she liked not, on little more than nothing a week. It was strenuous work, but she carried it out cheerfully and unostentatiously, and

contrived to provide enough to keep his mind from being worried with sordid considerations.

Sometimes—not so often as she wished—he read what he had written, and they talked over the human considerations that go to make a play. He himself was most enthusiastic about the work, and to a great extent she shared his belief. There was, however, a certain chilliness in his lines and expressed thoughts, which by the gentlest tact she strove to warm.

It was a delicate enough operation in all conscience, for there is no machinery more difficult to guide than an artist's mind, and none that demands overhaul more constantly. Hers was the task of tightening the bolts of a moving vehicle—one attended with grave risks to the mechanic. She took her satisfaction after the manner of a mechanic, by noting the smoother running and more even purr of the machine.

As they had determined upon their wedding day, the physical, and even the spiritual, side of their union was in abeyance. Of sweet intimacies and gentle understandings there were none. It was the work first, the work last, and the work which took precedence to all.

For Eve it was a lonely life—a life of unceasing mental and manual exercise. She strove with head and hand that his spirit might talk with posterity.

Sometimes there were knocks, but she took them bravely, looking always to the future to repay.

One morning in the early summer Wynne fretfully threw down his pen.

The whitey-gold sunshine was calling of bluebell woods and cloud shadows racing over the downs.

"I must get out," he said—"out in the fields somewhere."

Eve filled her lungs expectantly.

"Let's go to Richmond," she said. "Do you remember the first night I came back, and we said we'd go there one day and eat apple turnovers on the way home?"

"Yes, oh yes."

"It'ud be gorgeous to have some fresh air, and we could make plans and—"

"Yes, but not today. I want to think today—I should be better alone."

It was foolish to be hurt, and gently she answered:

"I shouldn't stop you thinking."

"Some other day, then. This morning I'll go alone. That last act is bothering me. I shall bring back a fierce hunger for you to appease."

That was all. He reached for his hat and walked to the door. As he laid his hand on the knob she said:

"Think of me bending over the gas-ring, Wynne."

He turned and looked queerly at her without replying. The angle of her speech was new and unexpected. Then his cleverness suggested:

"I shall think of you as you'll look when our honeymoon begins."

In an instant she was disarmed and had stretched out a friendly hand.

"I wanted to be level with the future for one day," she said. "Out in the fields we are as rich as we shall ever be."

He nodded.

"The leaves would be no greener if all fame were ours," he answered; and added, "but they'd seem greener. Come, if you like."

"No, I'll stay."

She gave his hand a small pressure. He looked down on it as it lay in his palm. There was dirt upon her fingers from the scouring of pots and pans. As he noted this he laughed shortly.

"We must employ a Court manicurist when our Day dawns," he said. "I could not worship a queen whose hands were soiled. Expect me about six."

He closed the door behind him.

Who can pretend to fathom the deeps of a woman's mind. Long after he had gone, Eve stood looking at her hands with solemn, frightened eyes.

VI

The manner of Wynne Rendall's coming into prominence was fortuitous. It happened a little over two years after his marriage, and, broadly speaking, was engineered by Eve.

As a result of some unexpected sales to American publishers a few extra pounds slipped through the lodging letter-box, and Eve insisted he should spend some of these in joining a club of good standing.

"You've been in the dark too long, Wynne. A writer of plays must be known by the people who produce them, by the better actors and critics. They must get used to seeing you before they will believe in you."

He raised no opposition to the idea. Of late he had felt cabined and confined, and the thought of broader horizons appealed to him.

“Uncle Clem would put you up for the Phœnician, wouldn’t he?”

Wynne shook his head irritably.

“I’m not disposed to ask favours of Uncle Clem,” he replied.

“Why not?”

“It was evident enough he disapproved of my mode of life when last we met. It will be time to ask him to do things for me when he approves. Besides, there’s no need. A cousin of my mother’s is a member—I’ll ask him.”

“Does he approve of your mode of life?”

“Probably not; but, since I have no interest in him one way or the other, it doesn’t matter. The man is rich and a fool.”

“I didn’t know you had a rich cousin.”

“It isn’t a thing to boast about. I rather believe I have a moderately rich father and mother somewhere—still it can’t be helped.”

“Do you know,” said Eve, “you have never mentioned them before.”

“I don’t know what persuaded me to do so at all.”

“Tell me about them.”

“Nothing to tell. They wanted me to accept a sound commercial position—whatever that may mean; in declining to do so I forfeited my birthright, and sacrificed my immortal soul to the flames.”

“Did you run away?”

“I walked away. They were too slow to render running a necessity.”

“I think you are rather callous,” said Eve.

“Surely to God you don’t expect me to take off my hat, like a music-hall serio, when I speak of Home and Mother.”

“No, that would be rather silly—still—”

“One must judge the value of things and persons on two counts—their service and their effect. If their service is negligible, and they produce no effect, it is clearly useless to have any further dealings with them.”

“I don’t like that,” said Eve. “It’s a cold philosophy. You sponge the wine from the cellars and complain when the vats are empty.”

“I don’t complain—I pass on. One must, or die of thirst.”

“It is a false thirst.”

“That doesn’t matter so long as one feels it acutely.”

She generally allowed him the luxury of supplying the phrase to round off an argument. It is a tribute to the gallantry of women that they will allow the vanquished to feel he is the victor, and as true of the best of them as the popular belief to the contrary is false.

Wynne joined the Phœnician, and after a while came to spend much of his time there. It made, he said, a change from the never-ending sameness of their penny-threefarthing home.

It was so long since he had foregathered with fellow-men that at first he spent his club hours in shy silence. He would sit, ostensibly reading a periodical, and actually listening to the conversation of those about him. In so doing he learnt many things in regard to the subjects which men will discuss one with another. The Phœnician was to a great extent a rabble club. The members were composed of professional men—artists, writers, actors, and those curious individuals who form a tail-light to the arts, being bracketed on as a kind of chorus. These latter always appeared to be well provided with money and ill provided with brains. They knew the names of many stage people, and reeled them off one after another as a parrot delivers its limited vocabulary. Seemingly they derived much pleasure from the practice, and their happiest conversational circumstance was to mention some one whose name they had never introduced before.

Wynne made unto himself an enemy of this section of the rabble by a chance remark on an occasion when he happened to be in their midst.

"I suppose," he said, "you collect names as more intellectual folk collect cigar bands."

As invariably was the case he was rather pleased with himself for producing this remark. It suggested a line of thought, and shortly afterwards he produced an article entitled "Men and their Talk." The article, which boasted a lemon wit, appeared in the *Monday Review*, and offended many people.

"The average man," he wrote, "has but four topics of conversation which he considers worthy of discussion. 1. His relation to other men's wives. 2. His prowess at sport. 3. The names of restaurants at which he would have us believe he dines. 4. His capacity for consuming liquor. Of these subjects Nos. 1 and 4 are usually taken in conjunction. Thus, before we are privileged to hear the more intimate passages of his amours, we are obliged to follow the assuaging of his thirst from double cocktail to treble liqueur. A nice balance in self-satisfaction is proved by a man's pride in what he drinks and how he loves." Then, in another paragraph: "The average man is not proud of resisting the temptations of the flesh, but is always proud of

yielding to them. Whenever men are gathered together you will hear them speak in admiration of what our moral code forbids, but you will not hear them boast of their fidelity. Many a faithful husband lies of infidelity that he may stand even with his fellows."

Of all the criticisms provoked by this article Wynne was best pleased by one from a brother member, who announced that it was "an infernal breach of confidence."

The club made serious inroads on Wynne's finances, for no matter how abstemious a man may be, he cannot rub shoulders with his own kind without a certain amount of wear on his pocket linings. In consequence, Eve was obliged to cut things very fine and forego every atom of personal expenditure.

Possibly because he had had such small dealings with money, Wynne was not a generous giver. In these days he disbursed less toward the household account than ever before, but did not expect less to appear upon the table on this account. Neither did he expect Eve to appear before him in dresses which had lost all pretentions to attractiveness. Sometimes he would remark:

"When on earth are you going to throw away that dreadful old garment?"

The artistic mind is apt to be unreasonable in its demands—a circumstance which Eve was obliged to keep very much before her eyes if she would stay the tear which sought to rise there.

VII

It was some months before the club yielded a practical return.

Wynne was seated in the hollow of a deep leather chair, and he overheard two men talking. One was Max Levis, London's newest impresario, and the other Leonard Passmore, a producer of some standing, whose methods Wynne disapproved of very heartily.

"You've read the play?" queried Levis.

"Yes. I should say it was a certainty."

"Thought you would—that's capital! Wanted your opinion before writing to Quiltan."

Wynne knew Quiltan by reputation. His Oxford verses had caused a stir, and the rare appearances of his articles were hailed enthusiastically by press and public alike. Lane Quiltan besides being gifted, was exceedingly well off—a reason, perhaps, for his small literary output.

Max Levis played with the pages of a manuscript copy of the play.

"Formed any views regarding the production?" he asked.

Mr. Passmore had formed many views, and proceeded to expound them at some length. He held forth for the best part of half an hour, while Wynne, from the screen of his chair, silently scorned every word he uttered.

"God!" he thought, "and these are the men who cater art to the nation!"

Presently the two men rose and walked toward the dining-room, heavy in talk. On the small table beside where they had sat lay the copy of the play. As the swing doors closed behind them Wynne picked it up and started to read.

Messrs. Levis and Passmore stayed long at their meat, and Wynne had read the play from cover to cover before they returned.

It was not often his heart went out to a contemporary's work, but this was an exception. What he read filled him with delight, envy, and admiration. "Witches"—for so the play was called—possessed the rarest quality. There was wit, imagination, and satire, and it was written with that effortless ease at which all true artists should aim.

As he laid the copy back on the small table Wynne gave vent to an exclamation of indignant resentment, provoked by memories of the proposals Passmore had made in regard to the manner in which he proposed to interpret the work. Here was a thing of real artistic beauty, which was to be subjected to commercial mutilation by a cross-grained fool who had made a reputation by massing crowds in such positions that the centre of the stage was clear for the principals.

His feelings toward Mr. Passmore were not improved when that gentleman and Mr. Levis reoccupied their former chairs, and, warmed by wine, started to discuss their mutual follies.

With silent irritation Wynne rose and left the club. He arrived home about nine o'clock, where he inveighed against managers and producers, and the dunces who dance in high places. In the course of the tirade he explained the cause of his anger.

"There's a real thing—and it's good and right, and cram-jam full of exquisite possibilities. Those idiots haven't begun to understand it—are blind to its beauty—haven't a notion how good it is. In God's name, why don't they let me produce the thing?"

Then Eve had an inspiration which sent Wynne forth into the night, and found him, twenty minutes later, ringing the bell of a house in Clarges Street.

Taking into consideration the clothes he wore, and his general look of dilapidation, his attitude when the door was opened by an important footman was praiseworthy and remarkable.

He simply said "Thank you," and stepped into the hall. Then he removed his hat and gave it to the man, saying, "Mr. Wynne Rendall." The bluff resulted in his being ushered into a drawing-room, in which were a number of ladies and gentlemen.

"It is always easy to recognize one's host in a mixed gathering, provided he does not know you," commented Wynne, as the door closed, "for he is the person whose face betrays the greatest perplexity. How do you do, Mr. Quiltan?"

Lane Quiltan shook hands doubtfully, but not without interest. Out of politeness he said:

"I seem to know your name."

"That's unlikely," replied Wynne, "for I have been at some pains to keep it in the background. One of these days, however, you will know it very much better."

"Did you come here to tell me so?"

"Not altogether, although in a sense it is mixed up with my visit. To be frank, I came in the hope of finding you alone. Still, I suppose later on you will be." He smiled engagingly.

Quiltan scarcely knew whether to be annoyed or amused. In deference to his guests, he chose the latter alternative.

"You seem to be an unconventional man, Mr. Rendall," he laughed.

"Come, I had not looked for a compliment so soon; but perhaps you use the term correctively?"

"It is just possible, isn't it?"

"And yet my conduct is nothing like so unconventional as the central character in 'Witches' "—a remark which startled from Lane Quiltan: "What on earth do you know about 'Witches'?"

Wynne smiled agreeably.

"I have relations of my own."

"Doubtless, but I *would* like an answer to my question."

He did not get it, for Wynne only repeated the smile, with a shade more satisfaction.

"I fear," he said, "our conversation is proving very tiresome to your friends. Shall we talk in another room?"

“Extraordinary creature!” gasped a very splendid lady seated at the grand piano.

“It is what every one will be saying shortly,” returned Wynne, and won a laugh for the readiness of his wit.

“I suppose, Lane,” assumed a man who was airing the tails of his dress-coat before the fire—“I suppose we ought to take the hint and depart, but your friend is so devilish amusing I vote in favour of remaining.”

“Sir,” said Wynne, with very great solemnity, “if I vow to be devilish dull, will you in return vote in favour of going?” The laugh came his way again; and he proceeded, “I make the suggestion with the most generous motives, for if you remain with your coat-tails so perilously near the flame we shall be constrained to the inevitable necessity of putting you out.”

A youngish man, who was sitting in a corner, rose and shook the creases from his trousers and glanced at the clock.

“I at least have to go,” he said.

“You needn’t hurry away!”

Wynne touched Quiltan on the arm. “Never stay a pioneer,” he implored. “ ‘For the rest shall follow after by the bones upon the way,’ to quote Kipling.”

Ten minutes after his arrival he had cleared the room completely. The guests departed without apparent resentment: indeed, one lady gave Wynne her card, and said, “You positively must come and be amusing at one of my Thursdays.”

Quiltan was wearing an expression of some annoyance when he returned after bidding farewell to the last of the company.

“It is all very well,” he said; “but what precisely do you want?”

Before answering Wynne took an easy inspection of the man before him.

Lane Quiltan was tall, well built, and very pleasant to look upon. His features were attractive and regular, his voice and expression were compelling of confidence. At a glance Wynne summed him up as a “good fellow, and a good deal more.”

“Well?” said Quiltan.

“Primarily I have succeeded in doing what I wanted, and that was to convince you that I am no ordinary man. Secondly, I want to produce your play, ‘Witches,’ and if you will ask me to sit down for a minute I shall prove beyond argument why I am the only person who can do it justice.”

Lane Quiltan gestured Wynne to a chair, and seated himself.

“Fire away!” he said; “but I am afraid your chances are small. The play is already in the hands of Max Levis.”

“I know.”

“You seem pretty well acquainted with my affairs.”

“On the contrary, I know nothing about them. I knew Levis had the play, because I borrowed his copy without permission while the fellow was feeding.”

“Do you generally do things like that?”

“I have no general practices. I act as the inclination suggests. In this case it is fortunate for both of us that I did.”

“For both of us?”

“Certainly, for I *mean* to produce ‘Witches.’ ”

Quiltan laughed.

“At least you are persistent,” he said.

“I am, and you are not. You take things too easily, because you’ve all this”—he made an embracing gesture. “You are too sure, Mr. Quiltan, I know. You write this play and direct it to Max Levis, and then, because fame and money are merely accessories in your life, you take no further interest in the matter.”

“How do you arrive at that conclusion?”

“Simply enough. Why did you send the play to Levis? Do you admire his work so inordinately?”

“I know very little about him.”

“Exactly. Would you hand over a best child to be taught by some one who might be an idiot for all you knew? Two years ago Max Levis was a diamond buyer—what the devil should he know about plays?”

“He engages competent people to produce them.”

“And takes forty per cent. for doing so. Do you consider he is more qualified to engage competent people than you are?”

“I have never thought about it.”

“Then think about it now. Don’t spoil a fine work through artistic slackness and drift.”

“I like your enthusiasm.”

“You’d like my production better. Now, look here, I overheard Levis talking to Leonard Passmore about your play tonight. These are some of Passmore’s ideas. Tell me if you like ’em.”

Word for word he repeated the conversation of a couple of hours before.

"Were those your intentions, Mr. Quiltan?"

"No, not exactly."

"What were?"

"I'm not a producer."

"Of course you are not. You're an author, and an author never knows where the good or bad in his own work lies. Your work is shining good—if the good can be brought out,—and you'd entrust it, without a thought, to a couple of merchants, with no more artistry or selection between 'em than a provincial auctioneer. Let me produce the play, and I'll give you this—"

There was something dazzling in the sparkle of thoughts Wynne gave voice to as he discussed the possibilities of the play. He seemed to have grasped its living essence, and to have impregnated it with a spirit of higher worth than even the author had believed possible.

"And you could do that?"

"I can always do as I feel."

Quiltan rose and paced the room excitedly.

"I believe in you," he said. "I favour this co-operation. But what'd Levis say? He'd stick out for his own man."

"Good heavens! What do you want with Levis? Back the venture yourself."

"I—but—"

"God knows you've money enough."

"I know nothing about theatres."

"I know plenty."

Quiltan paused and bit his forefinger.

"Take a theatre and do it ourselves?" he queried.

"Why not?"

"By the Lord, why not indeed! It 'ud be tremendous fun."

"It 'ud be tremendous earnest."

"Either way, I'm game."

"Settled, then?"

"Yes, it's settled."

Wynne stood himself a cab from Clarges Street at three o'clock in the morning. He looked ten years younger as he burst into the room where Eve

was waiting up for him.

"I've done it!" he cried. "I've done it! I'm on the road upward at last."

VIII

Wynne was extraordinarily full of himself in the days which followed. Day and night he worked with feverish energy on schemes for the play. He went out and came in at all hours. In his excitement he entirely ignored Eve's presence, except when he appealed to her on some delicate point dealing with the attitude of the women characters. Having secured what he wanted he would wave aside further discussion and plunge afresh into his thought-packed aloneness.

Once he jerked out the information that he was to receive a hundred pounds for the production and ten per cent. profits during the run of the piece.

"I've engaged the cast and we shall arrange about the theatre in a day or two. Here, read that speech aloud—I want to hear what it sounds like in a woman's voice. Yes, that's it. Thanks! That's all I want to know. You read it quite right. I believe you could have acted! Is there something to eat ready? I'm going out in ten minutes."

"It won't be long."

"Quick as you can, then."

As she laid the cloth, Eve ventured to say: "Don't you think we might have a maid to do the grubby work? It would give me more time to help you."

He seemed absorbed.

"Yes, all right. Some day. You do everything I want, though."

"Yes, but—"

"Is that lunch ready?"

Some clothes arrived for him a few days later, and for the first time Eve saw her husband well clad. The build of them gave an added manliness to his slender figure.

The business of taking a theatre being successfully accomplished, Wynne assumed instantly the guise of a commander-in-chief. He spoke with an air of finality on all subjects, and wrapped himself in a kind of remoteness not infrequently to be observed in actor-managers.

Oddly enough, his new importance possessed Eve with a desire to laugh and ruffle his hair. Had he taken himself less seriously she would have done

so.

Once she asked if he would not like to give her a part in the play.

"Heavens alive!" he said, "I'm pestered the day long with people who want engagements. Spare me from it at home."

It was hardly a graceful speech, but it demonstrated his frame of mind with some accuracy. Perhaps he realized the remark was churlish, for he followed it with another:

"Besides, you'll have plenty to do. We're going to get out of this. I took a flat this afternoon."

"Without saying a word to me?"

"I said all that was needed to the agent."

"Yet you might have mentioned it."

"I was busy. After all, it only requires one person to take a flat. There, that's the address. Fix up moving in as soon as you can."

Eve picked up the slip of paper he had dropped into her lap. Despite her disappointment she felt a thrill of excitement at the news:

"How many rooms are there?"

"Oh, four or five—a bedroom for each of us—I forget the number. Have a look at it in the morning."

"We shall want carpets and some more furniture."

"Yes, but that can wait—can't it?"

Take away the joy of planning from a woman and you rob the safe of half its treasure.

IX

There was no room in Wynne's mind for further discussion. It was fully occupied with his great advertisement scheme, which, in a few days' time, would fling his name upon every newspaper and hoarding in the metropolis. He had no intention of allowing his share in the production to lack prominence. The name Wynne Rendall was to take precedence of all other consideration in his campaign.

"The public is to take this play through me," he announced, "and me they shall have in large doses."

Eve visited the flat alone, and made what arrangements were needful for moving their few belongings. It was a sunny little flat, and with adequate appointments would have looked very charming. The small amount of

furniture they possessed, however, seemed painfully inadequate spread over the various rooms.

On the day of the move she worked like a galley-slave to put the place in agreeable order. She felt somehow that it was a great occasion, and that when Wynne returned from the theatre he would feel likewise. Together, perhaps, they would have a glorious talk about their nearing future, and a little house-warming of two.

But she was disappointed, for Wynne made no comment when he came in.

"My posters are out," he cried. "Have you seen 'em?"

She shook her head.

"I haven't had a chance. I've been busy here all day getting straight."

She looked tired and rather grubby—her hair was tumbled, and her hands patched with floor-stain. For some reason her untidiness irritated Wynne. The girls at the theatre were smart and fresh, and their clothes were pleasant to see. A man expects his wife to be always at her best.

"Um!" he remarked. "You look in rather a pickle." His eyes wandered round the room: "Seems very bare, doesn't it?"

It seemed bare to her, too, but she would have taken it kindly if he had not said so.

"With some curtains it would be better—and a few more chairs."

"Yes. Still, it's the address that matters at the moment. The rest can wait till we see how the play goes. Just now I need all the money I can get for my own pocket. It's essential. It's bare and uncomfortable; but I have the club, so it doesn't really matter."

"I haven't a club," flashed Eve, and repented the words almost before she had spoken them.

Wynne looked at her fixedly.

"Lord!" he exclaimed, "we are not going to start that sort of thing, are we?"

Something in the quality of his voice struck her with startling force. It was so much more a "married" tone than she remembered to have heard before. The petulant child note had disappeared, and with its disappearance the mother note in her own voice wrapped itself up in sudden hardness.

She held his eyes with hers.

"I bargained for a share," she said. "Am I getting it?"

He wilted, and his head tossed from side to side.

"What is all this about?"

"Am I getting my share?" repeated Eve, more kindly. "You know if I am. Answer 'Yes,' if you honestly think so."

"I'm tired," he countered.

"Not too tired to say 'Yes.' "

"Oh, very well! If you want furniture and things, buy them. I rather thought you could see deeper than that. Still, if you—"

"Stop! Don't say any more—please don't." She pressed her hand quickly and nervously to her lips; then, with a half-laugh, "Oh, how silly I am; but you frightened me. You—you were laughing, Wynne, when you said that—weren't you?"

He looked at her perplexed, and saw she was in deadly earnest.

"Oh, yes," he answered. "I was laughing—'course I was."

But to tell the truth, Wynne Rendall, Master of Psychology, was sorely out of his depth.

"That's all right," said Eve, and crossed to the little fireplace, where she stood awhile thinking. "I'll fetch your dinner now."

She laid the cloth and placed the dishes upon it. There was an awkwardness between them as they took their places, and very little disposition to talk. Wynne's thoughts were mixed with wondering at her attitude and with intentions for the play. Hers were back to the birthday party of nearly three years before. It had been a night so full of promise. Everything had seemed so likely then. Then it had seemed good that the love and sunshine for which her spirit prayed should be rendered on the deferred payment system. Was it possible those goods would be outworn before the debt was discharged? She shivered and looked up under her lids at Wynne. He had changed so much; he seemed bigger—more like a man! The frail boy body and restless spirit were no longer upon the surface. He looked to have more ballast—to stand more firmly as a man among men.

His voice broke in upon her thoughts:

"You're extraordinarily mine, aren't you?"

"Yes," she nodded, and after a pause, "are you glad?"

He did not give a direct answer.

"You should know. Look! small wife, this is a between-while with us, and I want you to sympathize with the position. I'm all out to win—and I shall win—but I haven't won yet. Until I do it isn't possible for us to stand side by side. There's barely enough to keep one afloat, and that one must be

myself. You admit that, don't you? I'm meeting all sorts of alleged big-wigs, and I must meet 'em level. As things are it is only just possible to do so. To raise the scale at one side, t'other must be kept down. But it won't be for long, and afterwards it will be you and I—understand."

"Of course I do."

"Keep on helping, then, all you can."

"Of course I will."

"That's all right."

And so the best of us fulfil our obligations and justify our consciences.

X

Eve sat by herself in the second row of the stalls. Her eyes were glorious with hope. On her lap lay the program of the piece, with Wynne's name ringing from the page.

The printing was a stupendous piece of self-sufficiency. She had noted, half-fearful, half-amused, the hum of conversation which had gone round the theatre as the audience noted the persistent large-type booming of a single unknown personality.

"This young man is taking responsibilities upon his shoulders," observed one newspaper critic to another.

The other smiled sardonically. Already he was tasting in anticipation several phrases he proposed to level against Mr. Wynne Rendall.

"But who is he anyway?" seemed to arise from the general buzz of voices.

From where she sat Eve could see the profile of Lane Quiltan. His box seemed very full—a circumstance which made her glad, for Wynne had refused to offer her a seat there. "He won't want to be bothered with introductions on a first night; besides, there are lots of people who must be invited. I want you to be in the body of the house and feel the pulse of the audience."

So it came about she was alone with none to talk with, and none to admire the pretty frock she wore.

It had not occurred to Wynne she would want a dress for his first night—she had not expected that it would; but, nevertheless, she was beautifully clad.

The possession of the evening dress and a wrap marked her first deliberate step toward rebellion. She had ordered it from a first-class West

End dress-maker.

"Send the bill to Mr. Wynne Rendall at the Vandyke Theatre," she had said.

Never before had Eve possessed so sweet a frock, and the touch of it sent a pleasurable thrill through her body. When she had finished dressing, every vestige of the drab, houseworking little figure had been transformed into a simple expression of fragile and delicious womanhood. Very gloriously she had felt this to be so as she stood before the mirror waiting for Wynne to return and take her to the theatre.

But he did not return. A messenger boy came instead, with a scribbled note asking for his "dress things, as I shan't have time to get back before the play begins."

Thus Eve was denied even a moment to wish him well, and took her stall unnoticed and alone.

As she looked at Lane Quiltan's profile she wondered how he felt at being forced to take a second place to Wynne in every point of prominence. For some reason she conceived that he would not be troubled over-much. There was a repose and stability in his looks which suggested a mental balance not easily disturbed by small-weight issues.

At long range she liked and felt the wish to know him better.

"Steadfast, substantial," she reasoned; "very unlike Wynne. He is hoping for the success of the play, not of himself. He won't mind sacrificing himself to get it."

It came to her that both she and Quiltan were contributing their share toward the making of Wynne Rendall, and both she and Quiltan were being left a little behind in the doing of it.

The curtain rose, and half an hour later Eve knew that Wynne had made good all he boasted he would do—and more. The spirit of the play shone through the lines with a truth of definition that was truly remarkable. The values of the human emotions portrayed were perfect. It was an example of the purest artistry and the surest perception. Not an idea was blurred—not an inflection out of place. Through an infinity of natural detail, rendered with mirrored exactitude, ran the soul and intention of the play, like the dominant theme of a great orchestral fugue. Even the veriest tyro in matters dramatic realized that no mere assembly of actors and actresses, however brilliant, could have achieved so faultless an effect without a master hand to guide them. What Wynne had learnt in the Paris ateliers years before he had set upon the stage. The words of the old Maitre had soaked in: "To we artists the human figure exists in masses of light and shade. It is not made up of

legs and hands, and breasts, and ears and teeth. No, by the good God, no!" Wynne had remembered, and here was the distillation of the words. Here was his canvas with its faithful *chiaroscuro* of life.

But of all the people in the house that night only Eve knew the palette whereon the colours had been mixed. One by one she recognized and silently named them, and sometimes she glowed with pride, for many owed their brilliance and their being to herself.

"Well done, Wynne! Oh, well done!" she breathed, as the curtain fell.

"We are seeing things tonight," said an important critic as he and a contemporary passed toward the foyer.

Eve rose and followed them, and during the interval she moved from group to group and listened to what the audience had to say.

There was no doubt Wynne Rendall had come into his own, for although every one praised the play it was his name which came first.

"I shall let him off a scathing over the press campaign," said a representative of one of London's dailies. "It's the best production I've seen in years."

Eve noticed and recognized from Wynne's descriptions, some of the tail-lights to the arts. They were busy adding his name to their lists. They were boasting of alleged friendship with him. One of the more venturesome spoke of him familiarly as "old W. R."

A man who leaps from obscurity to initials in a single night is getting a move on.

At the final curtain there was an ovation. The author and Wynne responded to "author's call" together, then, as the applause continued, Wynne came down to the footlights alone. He seemed very collected, and twisted an unlighted cigarette between his forefinger and thumb. For the first time Eve thought he looked young—young and care-free, as though he had stepped into the element he had searched for for so many years. In this new element he moved with an ease and assurance that surprised her. She had thought he would show feverishness or excitement, but there was no trace of either in his bearing.

"Speech! speech!" shouted the gallery.

He looked up at them with a winning smile, and replied, "Of course." There was a fresh burst of applause and a wave of laughter, and when it died away he began to speak in the manner of a man chatting with friends about a fireside:

"It's a charming play, isn't it? Very charming. Tomorrow my learned critics will be saying so. They will say, perhaps, 'The play's the thing'; but I trust they won't forget that the manner of its interpretation is possibly an even greater thing." He stopped, smiled and said, half under his breath, "Render unto Cæsar—Good-night, everybody."

Eve waited in the foyer, her cheeks aglow with excitement. Presently she saw Wynne come through an iron door into the press of congratulation. Half the important stage people in London were thronging round him. His composure was remarkable. Under the influence of success he seemed to have grown up and moved as a man among men. A pretty, rather elaborate girl pressed forward to greet him with adulation, and Eve noted how he touched her cheek with a kind of possessive patronage, and turned aside to speak to some one else. The action was very unlike her preconception of his character. Presently he noticed her, and nodded a smile across the crowded room.

"Like it?" his lips framed.

And her eyes flashed back the answer.

Seemingly this satisfied him, for he moved away. A little later on he noticed her again.

"Don't wait for me," he said. "I'm sure to be late."

Eve walked out of the theatre alone.

"Get me a cab," she said to the commissionaire.

"I'm sorry, madam, but there are very few tonight."

"That one," she pointed to a taxi standing by the curb.

"That is being kept for Mr. Rendall, madam."

"Oh, is it?" said Eve, and walked toward the Tube.

XI

As she turned into Jermyn Street a middle-aged man, walking briskly in the same direction, came level with her. He was in evening dress, and his coat was open to the night air. He wore a soft hat, and a pipe projected from his mouth at a jaunty angle. As he walked he sang to himself as one who is glad.

Eve caught a glimpse of his features, and gave a little exclamation, whereupon the man turned and looked at her.

"Hallo!" he said, "I know you—but—good heavens! I've got you. But what in blazes are you doing here by yourself, tonight of all nights?"

"I'm walking home, Uncle Clementine."

"Then, begad! it's meself will walk with you. Always talk Irish when I'm excited—at least I believe I do; but what's it matter? I'm excited enough to talk double Dutch tonight—aren't you?"

"Rather," responded Eve, for Uncle Clem awoke an echo of his mood in others.

"I should think you were. Splendid! Top-hole! Lord! Lord! Lord! What a production! Aren't you proud?"

"Very."

"He's away, that young fellar of yours—he's up and away. Always knew he had the stuff, from the day when I ran off with him in a station fly and talked fairies under the trees. He's learnt—knew he would, and he has. Oh! he's learnt well! Wouldn't mind laying a fiver he's taken a share of his knowledge from you."

"That's nice of you."

"Not a bit—common sense! Tell you what, though—'tween us two—that speech was a mistake. Cheap and nasty! Drop him a hint, there's a clever girl, to cut all that stuff right out."

Eve smiled. "Have you ever tried to drop Wynne hints about things like that?"

"I've thrown him a slab of wisdom from time to time. Not that kind, perhaps. But that's what I say—*you* tell him. You've the opportunity. Ha!" He threw up his head. "That's one of the good things in life that I've missed."

"What is?"

"To have some one who, in the night, will touch my foot with her littlest toe and breathe over the pillow all the naughty mistakes I've made during the day."

"I see," said Eve.

Something in her tone discouraged him.

" 'Course that mayn't be the way it's done; I've no experience, but I've fondly imagined it was so."

"So have I," said Eve; "but, like yourself, I have no experience."

"What d'you say?"

"If I stretched out my littlest toe I should bump it against the partition wall. That would be very sad, wouldn't it?"

Uncle Clem stopped short.

“Are you serious?”

“Yes. Don’t you remember our wedding talk?”

“Remember it!”

He began to walk very fast, so fast that she could scarcely keep pace with him. At last he jerked out the question:

“That travesty holds good, then? That’s why, on the night of his success, you’re walking home alone ’stead of feasting at a top-notch restaurant. Good God! And I’ve been shaking hands with myself these four hours past that my gloomy forebodings hadn’t come true—but, damn it! they have.”

“No,” exclaimed Eve, “you mustn’t say that; it isn’t so.”

“But it is.”

“No. The success was to come first. You remember we said so that day.”

“Well, what’s wrong with tonight’s success?—and you’re walking home alone.”

“Yes, tonight he has found himself.”

“And left you behind.”

“I don’t want to say that. I beg you not to say things like that. They hurt so.”

In an instant he was all sympathy.

“Why, my dear, don’t heed me. You understand the boy, and I’m only an onlooker who gets a glimpse here and there. That’s how it seemed to me at a snapshot glance—but I may be wrong. I don’t know what I’m talking about half the time. I love that husband of yours, he has such a splendid pluck.”

“Yes, he’s been so splendid, Uncle Clem—you must believe that. Never for an instant has he spared himself. He’s worked—worked—worked. That’s why he came out so finely tonight.”

“I know. But though a man does not spare himself he must always spare others—that’s the great science of life. Haven’t you worked too?”

“We’ve been partners, as we said we’d be until success was ours. And now he’s made the success, and—”

“Success as an artist, and he’s going to share it as a man?”

“I believe so—oh, I do believe so.”

Uncle Clem walked awhile in silence. When he began to talk it was almost as if he were speaking to himself.

“Queer trusting folk, we mortals,” he said. “And we set ourselves such wonderful tasks. How old Dame Nature must laugh at us and all our

philosophies. Fancy two young people locking up the spark of love which had sprung between them, packing it away in a secret safe, and believing it could be brought to life when convenience allowed. How old Dame Nature must laugh! Can't you imagine her peeping into the safe to see how the spark is getting along?" He turned suddenly upon Eve. "How is it getting along?"

"I keep it locked up here." She pressed her hand upon her heart.

"Wonderful you!" said Uncle Clem. "God bless your trust. Hullo! This where you live?"

"Yes."

"Can I come up for awhile?"

"Not tonight."

"No—no—no. Of course not. He'll come back with his pockets full of champagne, and his heart come to life. I like you, you know. I think you're fine. You're so damn good to look at, too. Ever hear of the purple patch?"

"Yes. Why?"

"Just thinking you've the leading light in your eyes that should guide a man there. Good-night."

"Good-night, Uncle Clem."

At two o'clock Eve took off her pretty frock, put on her plain cotton nightdress, and went to bed.

PART SEVEN
—WHO TRAVELS ALONE”

I

In the weeks following it was made clearly evident that Wynne Rendall was taking no precautions that his wife should share his new prosperity. Conceivably he thought that the mere sharing of his name—a name which had sprung into such instant prominence—was adequate compensation for any woman.

The newspapers had given him unsparing praise, and already he had been approached by several managements with a view to undertaking their productions. To these offers he shook his head, replying that he was a writer by profession and not a producer.

In an interview he told the reporter that he only worked in the direction of his ambitions, and for the moment his ambitions were satisfied.

This was, of course, mere persiflage, but several members of the reading public thought it very fine.

He was asked everywhere—but only accepted invitations which appealed to him. At the functions he attended he usually contrived to fire off at least a couple of startling phrases which were remembered and repeated by those persons who unintentionally work inside advertising for the would-be great.

Being out and about so much he did not bother to alter the conditions of life at home. It is true he left rather more money for Eve to use, but since he showed no disposition for her to take a place beside him on the new plane she found no incentive to change the old régime.

On the morning after the play was produced, with all the notices before her, Eve had stretched out a hand to him, and said:

“You’ve won—absolutely you’ve won. My dear, I am so proud.”

“Yes, I’ve made a start. There’s a long way to go yet.”

With a chilly sense she felt that he had not said this from any modesty, but rather to delay admitting the success for which they had fought their battle.

She was conscious afterwards that he shunned the topic of his success, and kept the conversation on impersonal lines.

That glorious moment to which all her hopes had been pinned and all her labours consecrated did not mature into reality. It seemed that he was floating out of her life as a steamship passes a yacht at sea. And so, with the measure of his success, there came about in Eve a corresponding stagnation.

It would have been easy then to have engaged a servant to do the housework, to have bought furniture, linen, and the many delightful things she had planned to do; but somehow the inclination to do so had gone. It was preferable to have occupation of some sort, if only to keep her thoughts from brooding on these disappointments. Besides, she took an almost cynical interest in wondering how long he would allow her to remain as a drudge who worked for him with her two hands.

Wynne himself was cheerfully indifferent to the trend of her thoughts. He was in excellent spirits, enthusiastic for the present, and full of plans for the future.

When "Witches" came to an end he said he proposed to put on a play of his own. Lane Quiltan would supply the capital.

"Have you asked him?" said Eve.

"Not yet."

"Wouldn't it be better to do so before being too sure?"

He tossed the idea aside with:

"Some things one can take for granted. I am as confident of his support as I am confident that at least five young ladies in the company are wondering when I shall invite them to Brighton for the week-end."

With rather an effort, Eve replied:

"Only five?"

"I said in the company," he very rapturously retorted.

The suggestion of these words struck a peculiar chord of memory in Eve. They recalled very vividly a vulgar little cousin of hers—a boy scarcely out of his teens—who had boasted, with considerable pride, of a liaison with a young lady at a tobacconist's. It was an unpleasant parallel, but she could not clear it from her mind.

Hitherto the physical side of Wynne had been so dormant. She had nursed the shell which held his spirit, and nourished it to a manlier form. As he stood there before speaking she realized that in body he was a man of different fibre, capable of passions not only of the mind. It would be tragic

and pitiable if these were to be awakened by the same vulgar instincts which attack the little Lotharios of nineteen.

This was the man who had starved for a week to buy a copy of Walter Pater.

She fell to wondering whether, had their first meeting been now instead of then, she could have sat the night through in his rooms without fear of consequence.

And while she wondered upon these matters, Wynne's eyes travelled critically over her face and figure.

"You're rather drab," he thought; "you haven't much colour. If your hair were dressed differently it would be an improvement, perhaps. That is certainly a deplorable dress—and your hands!"

A man whose function is to produce plays acquires a ready knack of judging possible qualities by external indications. The habit is not one to be recommended in the home, for in practising it he is apt to overlook many essentials and ignore grave liabilities.

A just man would not accuse a sweep of possessing a blackened soul because his face was sooted from sweeping the flues. The instance may sound trivial enough, but it is no less trivial than the train of thought running through Wynne's lightly-poised mind as he contemplated the wife of his own making. His eyes were deceived by petty superficiality, and blinded to the beauty veiled behind a screen of three years' unremitting toil. He did not bother to speculate if that beauty would leap to glorious life at the touch of the hand that swept the screen away. To follow his thoughts to their inglorious anchorage, he was sensible to a wave of self-pity. It seemed rather ill-luck, with the ball of success at his feet, a fresh glow of manhood ripening in his veins, that he should be tied to a woman who had lost the fine edge of her desirability.

"I see," said Eve at last; "and do you propose to disappoint them?"

Wynne dropped his cigarette into the grate.

"I never know what I propose to do. The greatest mistake in the world is to cut the picnic sandwiches before knowing what the weather will be."

II

It was more to please his humour than from any liking for the lesser grades of courtship that Wynne came to amuse himself at the theatre by talking perilous rubbish to a highly unimportant young lady of the cast.

Never before had he indulged in this particular sport, and never, until lately, had the temptation to do so allured him.

To tell the truth, he was not a little flattered by the success of his early attempts at love badinage; although, had he chosen to look beneath the surfaces of the very shallow waters which were ruffled by his wit, he would have found little cause for self-congratulation.

Esme Waybury, the favoured, had an ax to grind. In her trivial soul was ambition to get on ("getting on" implying the receipt of a salary large enough to satisfy her tastes in shoe-leather and millinery). A little moral laxity is sometimes a short road to the realizations of these trifles. Favours, artfully bestowed in the right quarter, are often more fruitful of success than is genuine talent.

To her, Wynne Rendall was a power in the land—a power which, with a little tact, might easily be diverted toward herself. Without being affected by prickings of conscience, she decided, if occasion offered, she would compromise herself with him, and step lightly from the wreckage of her virtue to spheres of extravagance hitherto unattainable. To the furtherance of this ignoble end, she pouted, smiled, and performed those various verbal and facial evolutions which, for a hundred centuries, have served to divert mankind from the straight and narrow path.

Esme was one of those pouting darlings who look infinitely sad at the smallest word, with that quality of sadness which provokes thoughts of remedial kisses in the male mind.

Eve produced her first pout at an understudy rehearsal taken by Wynne.

"You know," he had said, "you are very bad in this part."

Esme then pouted.

"Well, aren't you?" continued Wynne.

Esme added four quick blinks to the pout very adroitly.

That was all, but when Wynne passed through the stage door Esme and her pout were there—a vision to disturb dreams.

Wynne smiled as he walked up the street. It was pleasant to reflect that by half a dozen words he could cause a pout to be produced of so enduring a nature. As an observer, he considered the elements which go to make a good pout. Undoubtedly Esme's pout had been a good one. Her lips were of a sweet red, and moist with the dews of grief. With a good pout one saw ever such a little more of lips than one was accustomed to see.

No man can think long of this subject without considering the possibilities thereof, and for the first time Wynne was consciously drawn to

the idea that it must be a sweet enough task to kiss a pair of pretty lips. Further to this line of thought, he deemed that it might be pleasanter still to kiss a pair of pouting lips. And here his investigation stopped short in a sharp surprise that such considerations could find a place in his over-stocked brain.

Clearly he must have changed in some important features. Was it a sign of age or youth? he asked himself. He became aware that his feet rang heartily upon the pavement, and when he filled his lungs with good air the life quickened in his veins.

"It's youth," he said aloud—"youth!"

To the astonishment of a passer-by he stretched out his arms luxuriously and laughed:

"I'm young—young!" Then with a wave of self-pity: "Lord! I've worked hard!"

III

Even the most virtuous of men are conscious of a foolish elation when marked for favour from a woman's eyes. They do not, as a rule, inquire over-deeply into the value of the glances bestowed upon them. In theory Wynne Rendall was not in the least virtuous. At the club he had frequently remarked that, if lack of virtue were not such a general failing with mankind, he would certainly have been a very devil of a fellow. But this and many similar statements had been mere phrase-making, designed to fit the wall-space of a conversation.

To adopt a cynical attitude toward human frailty was part of his mental routine, and in no way sprung from a natural distaste for sin. Until now sex had left him unmoved and apathetic. He had watched others flounder in the toils of emotion, himself unstirred by curiosity or desire.

With the discovery of Esme's pout and his own youth arose the opportunity to direct the currents of his stored wisdom upon himself. And, after the fashion of most men since the world began, he did no such thing. He made no attempt to consider whither these thoughts led, or where they drifted, but contentedly let himself gravitate toward the enchanting vortices so lately revealed to him.

And so, on the night on which he had told his wife that he never knew what he proposed to do, he engaged Miss Esme in trivial conversation, and found in the practice a new and amusing diversion.

He was sufficiently entertained to mention some of the passages which had occurred between them at breakfast next day, and thereafter the name Esme—always referred to in the lightest manner—recurred with some frequency in his conversation.

But, if he were pleased with the affair, Miss Esme deplored its tedious progression, and did her noblest to smarten up the course of events. In this, however, she met with ill-success. Wynne was amused, but no more, and made no attempt to encourage a closer intimacy.

There are few women who would have undergone those first months of Wynne's success as courageously as did Eve. There are few who would have followed so particularly, and with such understanding, the mental processes through which he passed.

To the Esme affair she attached no great importance. She realized that any healthy-bodied youngster would have outgrown the Esme period as he passed from his teens. That Wynne had failed to do so was a natural consequence of the starved, brain-fagging life he had led.

"How old Dame Nature must laugh at us and all our philosophies," Uncle Clem had said. Very clearly Eve saw the meaning he had sought to convey. Dame Nature must be laughing now—laughing at the natural reaction of nature denied.

A woman will always make allowances for the man she loves, and she forced herself to believe that the period through which Wynne was passing would prove transient. When it had passed the real metamorphosis might come about—and the future promised to each other.

One of the greatest mercies is the survival of the hoping habit. In imagination it still seemed possible Wynne would turn to her with the light of pride and possession, and call her to his side because he needed her there.

So once more she harnessed her soul to wait, though the collar galled as never before.

IV

One night Wynne said:

"I shall tackle Quiltan tomorrow about backing my play. I would have spoken at the club tonight, but some one always interrupts. Think you could provide a decent meal if I asked him to lunch here?"

Eve's spirits leapt.

"Of course I could," she said.

At last, and for the first time, he was bringing his interests home. Unimportant though his words may have seemed they were full of the most glorious possibilities. It meant so much more than asking a man to lunch. It meant that, at a critical point, he and she would be side by side to discuss a great step in his future—in their future. Besides, it would be so splendid to meet Quiltan—to know and be known by a friend of Wynne's. She suddenly realized in the three years of their married life there had been no friends—nothing but work and their partnership to relieve the grey monotony of existence. At the mere suggestion of Quiltan's coming she was bubbling over with excitement.

"What's the matter?" asked Wynne.

"I don't know—only I'm awfully, awfully glad. It's—I haven't met many people lately—and your asking him—here, I— What would you like for lunch?"

"Heaven knows! Any notepaper? I'll drop him a line."

That night Eve lay awake and her thoughts were good to own. They began nowhere and travelled everywhere—out into the unknown and beyond. And because of a sudden intense happiness she forgot all manner of doubts which of late had oppressed and haunted her.

She rose early and took a pretty dress from a drawer—a dress which, because he seemed not to care about these things, she foolishly had never worn before him. When she returned from the shops she was laden with parcels, and light of heart.

Wynne was standing in the sitting-room with an expression of some displeasure upon his face. The spring sunshine coming through the windows emphasized the shabbiness of the furniture and appointments. A golden shaft caught Eve's face as she entered, and made her radiant. But Wynne did not look toward her. His eyes rested on the tufts of horsehair projecting from the upholstery of the old armchair—the sunken springs, and the threadbare dilapidation of the carpet.

"I've bought a sole," said Eve, "and some cutlets and peas, and I'll make an omelette with apricot jam—"

"Yes—all right," said Wynne.

"But I must hurry, for there's a fearsome lot to do."

Away she went to the kitchen, where she donned an apron, rolled up her sleeves, and got to work.

Never since the early days of her marriage had she set about her duties so happily.

"God's going to be good to me soon," she said to the frying-pan. "I know He is—I know He is."

The sunshine thrilled her veins with a new sense of life. Two affectionate sparrows set up a lover-like duet on the kitchen window-sill. The air was full of young spring. All was right with the world.

"Hallo!" It was Wynne's voice calling. "I say, I can't possibly ask Quiltan to this shabby old place. It would bias any one. I'll ring him up and tell him to meet me at the club. G'bye."

A moment later the front door slammed. The sound scared the sparrows at their courtship and sent them fluttering to a tree below.

Then Eve sat down, and resting her head on the kitchen table, cried as if her soul were broken in two.

V

Wynne rang up Quiltan's number, and was answered by the manservant, who said:

"Very good, sir. I will tell him." But when he went to do so he found his master had already gone out.

Lane Quiltan was somewhat surprised when the door of Wynne's flat was opened by a girl who by no stretch of imagination could be thought to belong to the servant class. She wore a coarse apron, her sleeves were rolled up, and there was a redness about her eyes that could only have come from tears.

"I beg your pardon," he said; "is this Mr. Rendall's flat?"

"Yes."

"Is he—at home?"

"No," replied Eve. Then, as she realized what had happened, a smile broke the tragical lines of her expression.

"He asked me to lunch," said Quiltan. "May I come in?"

"Yes, please do."

He followed her to the shabby sitting-room.

"I'm afraid," said Eve, "my husband won't be back to lunch. He was telephoning to ask you to meet him at the club instead."

"Your husband?" He looked at her in surprise. "I didn't know Rendall was married."

She bit her lip—it was rather an unkind stab. He noticed this, and hastened to say:

"That is, he never told me."

"Why should he?" she answered quickly.

He looked at her for a longish while before replying:

"I can see quite a number of reasons."

The words were spoken with simple sincerity, and they brought a glow of bright colour to her cheeks. Thinking perhaps he had offended, he said:

"Well, since he has gone to the club, I suppose I had better follow him there. I don't want to go a bit, and I'm sorry we shan't be lunching together."

"So am I," she nodded.

"Why aren't we?" he asked, unexpectedly.

"I suppose there is no great harm telling you—since you are here. This was to have been a business meeting, and Wynne thought the surroundings might prove—unproductive."

"Oh!" He hesitated; then: "When did he think that?"

"An hour ago."

"Then," said Quiltan, with quick intuition, "the lunch must have been partially prepared?"

"It was."

He took a deep breath.

"Isn't it a pity to waste it? I mean, don't you think I might be invited to share it with you?"

There was something very attractive in the tentative manner in which he made the proposal.

"Do you want to stay?"

"Very much indeed."

"Do stay, then—please stay. I was rather— I mean, it would make a difference if you stayed. But I haven't finished cooking yet. You'd have to wait a little."

"So much the better."

"I'll be as quick as I can. There are plenty of books here."

He made a wry face.

"Of course, if I must read I will," he said; "but I'd much rather help cook."

"You can if you like."

"That's jolly of you."

He threw his overcoat over the back of a chair, and together they made their way to the kitchen.

"I had no idea a sole had its face powdered before being put in a fry-pan," he observed, and made her laugh merrily.

"It goes in like a white Parisian, and comes out a sunburnt Spaniard," she returned.

"You look as if some sun would do you no harm."

"I dare say it wouldn't. Haven't tried the experiment. Would you like to be useful and lay the table in the front room?"

"Oh, can't we eat here?"

"If you'd rather, we can."

"Much rather. Everything piping hot, and you won't be everlastingly running off to fetch dishes, will you?"

It was so long since any one had minded what she did that Eve caught her breath in a half-sob.

"What's the matter?"

"Nothing."

It had seemed rather cruel that this five minutes' friend should say the very things Wynne never bothered to say.

"But you—"

"I did. I do silly things sometimes, but I'm not really hysterical."

"I know."

"How can you know?"

"I seem to know you very well. That remarkable husband of yours contrived to put a lot of you into the characters of my play. I used to puzzle about it—used to wonder where his extraordinary intimate knowledge came from."

Eve was all enthusiasm in a second.

"You really mean that?"

" 'Course. He used to show the women what to do in the most amazing way. Now I can see the source of his wisdom."

"That's made me happy. It's nice to feel one is of use, isn't it? There are some knives and forks in the box there, and the plates are in the dresser."

It was because she could feel his eyes resting inquiringly upon her that she gave him this sudden direction.

Presently they sat down to the first course.

"This is jolly," said Quiltan.

"It's a change for you. I wonder—"

"What?"

"Only whether you would think it quite so jolly if it were all."

For awhile he made no reply, then he laid down his knife and fork.

"I say," he said, "shall we be friends?"

"I am sure we shall be."

"I mean— Well, this meeting of ours was never really intended, so one might excusably assume that it had never taken place. Wouldn't we be justified, then, in talking to one another as we might have talked to ourselves if we had been alone?"

Eve shivered. "It might not be a happy conversation."

"Even so—why not? We could be as honest as dreams are, and what we said could be as easily forgotten."

"I'm frightened of dreams," said Eve. "They never come true."

"Won't you tell me one that hasn't come true? If it hasn't come false there is hope for it yet."

"I suppose there is."

"Won't you tell me that dream?"

"If you promise to wake up and forget it."

"Tell me first."

And so, rather haltingly, but with growing confidence, Eve told the stranger of her hopes:

"I can see clearly now, it was a companion Wynne needed, that's all—a mental companion. Had I been a man I might have entered more deeply into his life. You see, we fought to rise out of this rut, and now he has begun to rise he finds that I am part of the rut—something to be left behind. I believe a man and woman were not intended to live together as we have—there was no fire, you see—we were just partners. The marriage link cannot be welded without fire. I wonder—do you understand what I mean?"

He nodded gravely.

"Wynne's was all mental fire. The embers of his love for me have never glowed into a flame." She laughed to smother a sob. "They are out—out

altogether—dead and cold! At least it seems so. I have been like a book to him—an information bureau and debating society in one. Ever ready to supply the thoughts that were not self-revealing. And now I have been read from cover to cover, and it's foolish, I suppose, to expect a place in the new library."

"What a damnable story!" said Quiltan, with sudden fierceness. "I feel like—kicking him."

"Don't feel like that. Everybody has wanted to kick Wynne. It was the first thing which drew me toward him. And when you look at it all from his point of view, you *can see*."

"*You* find excuses for him?"

"Easily."

"How—how?"

"I love him."

"Still?"

"Yes. And I'd go through just such another three years if I thought that he would love me at the end—gladly I would."

"But suppose he never does love you! What then? How long can you last out like this? Don't you want to live?"

"Oh, yes, I want to live."

"Well then?"

"But all the folk who want to live can't have their way. Perhaps I shall just go on wanting till even the want dies."

"That's unthinkable."

"But very possible."

She became suddenly aware of the intensity of his expression. The sinews of his close-shut hands showed white, and in his eyes burnt a strange fire. An odd fear seized her, and to cover her nervousness she quoted at random.

"Don't you remember the Browning lines:

" 'Some with lives that came to nothing,
Some with deeds as well undone,
Death came tacitly and took them where they never see the sun.' "

He seized on the purport of a single line, and said:

"Isn't the alternative better, perhaps, than this?"

“Death?” she queried.

“ ‘Some with deeds as well undone.’ ”

He spoke with a queer hoarseness.

For a moment she held his eyes steadily, then with quick colour turned away her head.

“I thought,” she said, “we were to be friends.”

“Haven’t you had enough of friendship?”

She had thought he would recover himself at the rebuke, but if anything his voice was more insistent.

“Haven’t you?” he repeated.

“There is no need for you to make love to me, Mr. Quiltan.”

“How do you know?” he retorted. “How can you possibly say that?”

She rose and moved some plates to the dresser.

“I suppose you were sorry for me, and thought that the kindest way to show it. You were wrong.”

His reply was unexpected:

“How can you possibly say I was wrong? You don’t know—you don’t know what may have happened to me since I came here. If I made you think I am a lover by trade I apologize—for it’s the last thing I would have you believe.”

She scarcely knew what to answer, but there was no need, for he started afresh:

“D’you know, I have never been in love with any one before. I have never even made love to any one; but, by God! I want to make love to you. The instant you opened the door I knew something had happened to me. I’m in love with you—do you understand?—absolutely.”

Despite the startled fear these crazy words awoke, Eve could not but feel a sudden impulse of warmth. In the midst of the passionless monotony of her life—at a time when her every thought was doubting if she possessed any one quality to endear—came this sudden avowal, backed by a sincerity that could not be misunderstood. The very surprise written on his face testified that he meant all he had said.

So they looked at each other with the greatest perplexity, and only the silliest, most conventional phrase found its way to Eve’s lips.

“I’m married,” she said. “You forget. You mustn’t speak so.”

“I deny your marriage, so why shouldn’t I speak as I feel? I must speak.”

“When I ask you not?”

His hands fell to his sides.

“Why do you ask me not? Is it nothing to hear of love, even though you may not need it? Oh, I—”

“Please.”

He took a step toward her, then turned sharply away. Presently he laughed:

“Ha! I said we’d be as honest as dreams are—and we have been. You know how dreams go—leaping from rock to rock—clearing all difficulties—you and the subject to the predestined end.”

“What is the predestined end?” said Curiosity.

“To make you happy.”

“Is that a part of love?”

“All of mine,” he said.

She stretched out her hand.

“Oh, you’re rather good. I’m glad you came, you have given me back what I had lost.”

“What?”

“You’ve given me hope.”

“I wish I could give you reality.”

“Hope is better, New Friend.”

“Until it dies.”

“It shan’t die,” said Eve, with a sudden fierceness.

“But if it should, would not reality help you to forget?”

“I don’t know.”

“How would you know if hope had died?”

“If—if he failed me altogether,” she slowly answered.

“I understand,” said Quiltan.

VI

Wynne Rendall was not a little irritated at Quiltan’s failure to keep the appointment. He lunched alone at the club, and for want of better occupation strolled round to the theatre afterwards. He walked on to the stage at the very moment Miss Esme was beginning her scene, and, observing him, this young lady very promptly gave up all attempts to proceed, and said:

“I do wish you wouldn’t come to rehearsals—you frighten me most dreadfully.”

“Come along, Miss Waybury,” insisted the stage manager.

But Wynne held up his hand.

“Wait a bit. We’ll go over it together. Take the rest through, Henson, and read for Miss Waybury.”

He led the way to a comfortable office which had been set aside for his use, and nodded Esme toward one of the big leather chairs.

“Now then, what’s the matter with you?”

“You frighten me.”

“Do I?”

“Umps!”

“Don’t believe it,” said Wynne. “You’re up to some mischief, you are.”

Esme pouted and looked at him demurely for just the right length of time.

“I’m not.”

“Oh, yes you are.”

Esme hesitated. “Well, I can’t help liking you.”

“Heroic announcement of an infatuated young lady. And now what good purpose do you suppose that will serve?”

“No good.”

“At the first guess!”

“Because you’re so stand off.”

“Would the purpose be any better if I weren’t?”

“I don’t know.”

“Well, think.”

“No. You’re horrid—you’re trying to tie me up.”

“Believe me!” Wynne negatived.

“Yes, in words—and I can’t talk.”

“Eloquent in other ways?”

“I’m not.”

“Oh, yes. That pout, for instance.”

“You *are* horrid.”

“But I like the pout. You pout ever so much better than you act—you should stick to pouting. Pout now!”

“I shan’t.”

“Come, just a little one—one small pout.”

“No.”

“I insist.”

“You can’t make me.”

“I’m waiting.”

Esme covered her mouth with her hand. “Now what are you going to do?”

“Wait—go on waiting.”

Very slowly she lowered her hand, and for a short second he saw the little red lips screwed up in obedience to his command. Absurd as it may seem, the foolish conquest gave him a perplexing thrill.

“Again,” he said. “It was too short.”

“No,” said Esme, shaking her head. “I shan’t do it again. You’re laughing at me.”

She rose and moved a little toward him and the door.

“And what’s wrong with that?”

“Don’t want to be laughed at—not by you.”

“I doubt if you know what you do want.”

“ ’Tany rate I shan’t tell you.”

“Wonderful independence!”

“I’ll go back now, please.”

“Never neglecting her studies for an instant!”

Esme came level with him and laid her hand on the door knob.

“Sometimes,” she began, “I think—I think—”

“No.”

“I think you are a very good little boy.”

She opened the door, but as quickly he closed it again.

“What do you mean by that?”

Her eyes rested on the pattern of the carpet. There was brighter colour on Wynne’s cheeks as he repeated:

“What do you mean by that?”

“Just what I said.” Her eyes were still lowered. “ ’Course I don’t blame you—some people are born good—some people can’t help it—some people aren’t plucky enough to be anything else.”

They stood without moving, while new and insane senses started to pulse in his side and throat.

Then very slowly Esme raised her chin and looked at him, her eyes half hidden by their lids, her lips curled in a moist, mocking pout.

In an instant Wynne’s arms fastened round her, but she pressed away from him.

“You mustn’t kiss me—you mustn’t. If you did I don’t know what would happen.”

“I don’t care,” said Wynne, madly.

So having won her pretty little battle she struggled no more, but put her lips where best they might be reached.

VII

Five minutes later he was speeding northward in a taxi. He had given the driver his home address, but he said a second later:

“No; drive me out Hampstead way—keep going—any old where.”

Then he lay back and let the wind rush through his hair, while his thoughts ran riot.

His last words to Esme had been:

“In a few days—I’ll arrange something.”

He had meant it—he meant it still. She was nothing to him—only youth. But youth was splendid. What did anything else matter? He felt like some wild young thing of the forests when the “spring running” was in the air. A great sense of release possessed him. It was unlike any other sensation he had ever known. He was amazed it should have sprung from so trivial a source, but ignored to inquire more deeply into this line of thought. Had he but known it, the change that had come about in him—that curious, half-wicked ecstasy—was of the same emotional coinage that attacks the average boy when first he kisses a pretty chambermaid in the dark of a dormitory corridor.

As the taxi climbed the Hampstead hill his thoughts turned to Eve, and he wondered how he should approach her in the telling of the affair. After all, there was nothing to tell yet—but later there would be.

In his insane exuberance he decided that he would make no attempt to mask his actions. If he were not ashamed he would not act as though he were. Emphatically not. Let people say what they might, he would steer his own course—go his own way for all the world to see.

Would Eve mind a great deal? Why should she? After all, there was but a partnership of brain and work which bound each to each. He wondered even if there would be any infidelity in what he proposed to do.

But what had infidelity or partnership, or obligation or anything else, to do with it? He was an artist, unruled by law or convention. If he desired an excess of the brain he had indulged the desire—why not, then, an excess of the body.

In the middle of the Heath he left the taxi, and tramped across the soft turf. He walked fast and in a large circle. As he went he sang to himself, and once, hat in hand, chased a butterfly as a schoolboy might have done. In the little clearing among the trees he came upon some boys and girls playing a boisterous laughing game. The girls were flappers with short skirts, and cheeks rosy with running. He stayed to watch them, and, fired by enthusiasm, shouted encouragement to pursuer and pursued. One of the bolder shouted back that he should join in, and without a thought he threw aside his coat and was racing and laughing with the rest. The game was postman's knock, and as postman he caught the prettiest after a spirited chase, and kissed her as they collapsed into the tangled brambles.

Still laughing and breathless, he picked up his coat and followed his way.

The sun was falling red, and the chill evening air tasted like champagne.

Champagne—yes—he would go to the club and drink champagne—lots of it. He wanted to hear men talk—listen to and applaud their tales of adventure. He had laughed at them—hurled at their frailty lampoons through the press, and yet tonight he would laugh with them—yes, with them, for they were right, and he, for all his wisdom, had been wrong—wrong—wrong.

God gave unto each man one life—to make the most of. That was the wise man's creed.

"Of making many books there is no end:
and much study is a weariness of the flesh."

He arrived at the club about seven o'clock, and was informed that a gentleman was waiting to see him.

“I don’t want to see anybody. Who is he?”

The page produced a card bearing the name, “Mr. Sefton Wainwright,” and below, “New British Drama Association.”

Every one had heard of the New British Drama Association. It was rumoured that it would be the greatest and most progressive theatrical enterprise in England. The scaffold-poles of the façade of their splendid new theatre were already being taken down, and it was said that the opening would be in the coming autumn.

“How long had he been waiting?”

“Nearly an hour, sir.”

“Then he deserves to see me.”

Mr. Wainwright was very affable, also he was very businesslike.

“We want three producers on our permanent staff—a business producer, a classic producer, and one with a *flair* like yourself. We mean to do things at our theatre, Mr. Rendall!”

“Aha.”

“Well, what about it?”

“I’m a writer.”

“So much the better. You’ll have plenty of time.”

“I believe I’m a mercenary too.”

“A thousand a year any good?”

Wynne smiled.

“I have lived on less,” he said.

“Then I repeat, what about it?”

“If you’ll do a play of mine I’ll think more kindly of the offer.”

“Send it right along. And in the meantime—”

“You let me know about the play and I’ll let you know about the producing.”

“Very well—today is Friday. Shall we say Friday week?”

“I’ll come and see you at eleven o’clock.”

“And you like the idea?”

“I like everything. I’m in love with the world today.”

At dinner Wynne drank a large quantity of champagne, and insisted that every one else in the immediate neighbourhood should do likewise. As he drank his spirits rose, and so also did his voice. There was a great deal of

laughter and much wit—and the wit was accorded more laughter than it deserved. After dinner there were brandies and sodas and more wit—lots of wit—so much wit that every one was witty at once and missed their neighbour's scintillations. Under the influence of the brandies and sodas wit ripened to adventure. Many and glorious were the adventures recited, and it seemed that all save Wynne had adventured deeply. He leaned against the mantelshelf and looked at the brave with bright eyes.

"Oh, you marvellous Lotharios!" he cried. "To think that you, Anson—and you, too, Braithwaite—should have adventured along paths denied to myself."

Many wise heads were shaken at this improbable suggestion.

"No, no, no, I assure you—innocent, my lords and gentlemen—hand on heart I say it" (much laughter and ironical cheers). "But I will turn over a new leaf. The spring is in the air—the call! Guide me with your wise lights to glades of Eros, for honestly"—he dropped into the commonplace—"if I ran away with a girl I shouldn't know where to run. Tell me, some one."

"Depends on how secret you wish to be," the some one replied.

"Secret no—to hell with subterfuge!" cried Wynne, who had many drinks beneath his waistcoat. "Love is for the light, the sunshine, and the sea."

"Nothing for it but the Cosmopolis, Brighton."

"Right—every time. Marvellous Lotharios! Every time right. The Cosmopolis, Brighton. I shan't forget—write it down, some one, 'case I do. Hullo, that you Quiltan?"

Lane Quiltan, who had entered the room five minutes earlier, nodded.

"Made an appointment, and you didn't turn up."

"Yes."

"Lost a fine chance! Might have had an interest in something of mine."

"Might I?"

"Had your chance—didn't take it. Too late now!"

"Is it?" said Quiltan.

PART EIGHT
THE LEAP

I

Clementine Rendall lay in bed and watched the sun-patterns of the string-coloured pile carpet. The birds on the lettuce-green trees of Kensington Square sang gaily of summer and their adventurous flights from the roof of John Barker's to the happy hunting ground of Earl's Court. It was a good day, he reflected, a day full of scent and harmony, and yet for some reason he felt oppressed.

"Parsons," he said, as his man entered with a small tea-tray. "Parsons, I have an impression that I am not going to enjoy myself."

"I hope that won't be so, sir."

"So do I, Parsons; but I fear the worst. How old am I?"

"Fifty-one and three months."

"That's not very old—but it's too old!"

"For what, sir?"

"I don't know. But I should like always to be young enough to go courting when summer's here. Dreadful thing when one loses the inclination to court, isn't it?"

"I couldn't say, sir."

"Then you're not fifty-one."

"That was not my meaning."

"Seems to me, if one can't go courting oneself one should show the lanes to others. Know any one, Parsons, to whom I could show the lanes? I'd be an awful good guide."

"I rather fancy, sir, young folk find 'em pretty easy without help."

"You're wrong there—they don't—least some don't; they stick to the barren moor and the wind-swept places. Not very good tea this morning, Parsons."

"I'm sorry, sir."

" 'Twouldn't have been good, anyhow. I'm in for a bad day. I can feel it in my bones."

Parsons laid out a tweed suit and a cheerful necktie, and placed a silk dressing-gown over the bedrail.

"Ready for your bath, sir?"

"Yes, turn it on."

Parsons retired and returned a few moments later with the announcement:

"A gentleman has called to see you, sir. I told him you wasn't up, but he asked permission to wait."

"Who is he?"

"Mr. Lane Quiltan, sir."

"Quiltan, oh, yes—yes, wrote that play at the—. What's he after?"

"I don't know, sir. Looked a bit worried, I thought."

"Oh! I don't know the fellar. What's he like? Think he'd care for me in my dressing-gown?"

"I could ask, sir."

"Yes, ask, and tell him if he wants me in a suit he can't have me at all."

Clementine Rendall swung his feet to the floor as the door closed and felt for his slippers. He pulled on the bandanna dressing-gown, lit a cigarette, and combed his hair. As he did so he sang cheerfully a song written to the occasion:

"I don't know the fellar,
I don't know the fellar,
I don't know the fellar,
Or who the hell he is."

At the conclusion he became aware of the reflection of a stranger in the mirror.

"Hullo! Mr. Quiltan," he said. "Excuse my song—went with the comb strokes. Liked your play no end—top hole! Sit down, won't you. What you come to see me for, eh?"

Quiltan hesitated.

"It's difficult to answer," he replied, "for really I don't know."

"That's the style. Just a friendly visit."

"Not altogether. I want to talk to some one—and I chose you. I'm in love."

"I envy you."

“You needn’t, for I’m as miserable as hell.”

“It’s all a part of it.”

“And I don’t know what to do.”

“It’s all a part of it.”

“Don’t you want to know with whom I’m in love?”

“Does it concern me?”

“In a way it does.”

“Fire ahead.”

“Wynne Rendall is your nephew, isn’t he? I’m in love with his wife.”

Clementine shot a quick, fierce glance at his visitor.

“Oh! Well, hadn’t you better get over it?”

“I’m not sure that I want to. Not at all sure.”

“Then I’m glad you came to see me. Why did you?”

“Your name occurred last night. She said that you understood. Well, I want you to understand, that’s all; to understand that, if anything goes wrong, it’s her husband’s fault, not hers.”

“And not yours?” The question was very direct.

“No, by God, I believe not mine either. I want her to be happy—I think of nothing else.”

“And isn’t she?”

“You know the life she’s led!”

“Well?”

“Doesn’t that answer the question? He treats her as if she didn’t exist. I verily believe he isn’t even conscious of her.”

“Is she in love with you?”

Quiltan hesitated. “Not yet—but I think I could make her.”

“Ha! Make her love you that you may make her happy, eh? Roundabout scheme, isn’t it?”

“She shall be happy. I’m determined on that.”

“You’re very sympathetic.”

“I am.”

Clem’s voice softened.

“I believe you are,” he said. “Tell me—what’s the trouble there?”

“He’s cheated her, and used her as a ladder to climb from her world. It’s a damnable enough story—d’you want to hear it?”

“No—no—no. I can fill in the gaps. But look here! D’you think a lover will make up for what she’s lost? And are you sure she has lost? That’s the point to decide.”

“I say he ignores her—isn’t conscious of her—”

“But imagine what might happen if he were.”

“He never will be.”

“You’re very sure.”

“Absolutely.”

“How long have you known her?”

“We met first last Friday.”

“And today’s Thursday. Six days?”

“We’ve met every day since.”

“Does he know that?”

“No.”

“Tell him.”

“Why should I?”

“You said you wanted her to be happy.”

“I do, but why should I tell him?”

“Love is a light sleeper—who wakes very easily. Tell him—wake him up. The boy is drunk with success—blind drunk. Are you going to steal from a blind man?”

“I shan’t tell him,” said Quiltan, slowly.

“No, because you’re a coward. Frightened of losing ground. Her happiness! You don’t give a damn for it beside your own.”

“That’s not true. If I refuse to tell him, it’s because he wouldn’t care if I did. God! he isn’t even faithful to her.”

Clementine Rendall sprang to his feet and dropped a hand on Quiltan’s shoulder.

“You’re inventing it—inventing it.”

“No. He boasted at the club the other night of a girl he would take to Brighton.”

“He was drunk.”

“He had been drinking.”

"Who listens to a drunken man?"

"He was sober enough to mean it. Besides, it's true. I know the girl—Esme Waybury, a pretty, flaxen little strumpet—week-end wife to any bidder—understudying at the theatre. You needn't doubt the facts. Half the company knows by this time."

Clem rapped his closed fist upon the table.

"I hate this," he exclaimed, "hate it! What will she do—Eve?"

"God knows. It'ud be the last knock. God knows how she'll take it. Anything might happen—she's extraordinary, and she's counted on him so much—built up a future of hopes. It's pitiable. If he fails her altogether—"

"If?"

"As he will tomorrow night."

"Tss!"

"Sounds sordid enough, doesn't it?"

"Well, what then?"

"As I said—anything. She might jump off a bridge."

"Or fall into your arms, eh?"

"They are waiting."

For a moment or two Clementine paced the floor of the bedroom, his brows creased and his chin down.

"Where's it all going to lead? How are we going to pull 'em out?"

"Them?"

"Yes. For the boy's worth saving when he comes to life. I'm sorry for him—damn sorry."

"Think he's worth it?"

"Worth it? Of course he's worth it. One can see—you can't, perhaps, but I can—why this has happened. She knows too. One gets a true perspective right down the aisle of all those straining, striving years through which he struggled. A boy of no physique, whose mind was a great question-mark, and a mighty desire to find the answer. That was all that mattered—Nature could go hang. He's dragooned that body of his to carry the mind to the places where the answers might be found—worked, toiled, sweated, starved for that ideal, asking no help, accepting no charity, driving, driving forward on the fuel of his own brain. Then she came—the all-understanding she—and took half the burden from his shoulders, and built up his neglected body to the likeness of a man. Nature was coming back! She knew his ideals, and

wanted him to realize them—gave up herself that he might realize them, for there was a promise in his eyes that she and the ideals might be one."

"Will it come true?"

"God knows; but He does not put promises there for nothing. It's all outside their reach now. Now Nature is taking a hand—cruel, tempting, thrilling old Nature. She's found the untried subject, and is whispering her thousand impulses in his ear. Take your mind back, Quiltan. Can't you remember how it was? Can't you recall the first pretty face you kissed, for no better reason than a whisper of Nature's that today it would be different from what it had been before. And wasn't it different? And didn't Nature whisper to you that night of a thousand other differences? And didn't you tremble and wonder, and wasn't curiosity alive in you? Oh, man, it comes to all of us sooner or later, and the later it comes the more devil there is to pay. A boy is young enough to be afraid and old enough to live clean; but a man is not afraid, and when his passions come to life they rule him through and through, and no damned power on earth can turn them aside."

"There isn't much hope, then, for her."

"It looks like that. But we've got to try."

"Are you going to see him?"

"Not for an instant."

"Then what?"

"Don't know. Perhaps something will turn up. But you'll give her her chance?"

Quiltan hesitated.

"Come on, man!"

"Very well."

"Word of honour?"

"Word of honour."

"Good. Where can I find you tomorrow?"

"You've got my card. I'll stop in all day."

"There's a good chap."

Quiltan rose and moved toward the door.

"Good-bye, then."

" 'Bye."

II

Wynne rose from the breakfast table and took a step toward the window. Then he turned abruptly, as a man will who has something important to say.

"Yes," said Eve.

He shook his head. "Nothing. I—er. No, nothing."

It was the first time he had spoken that morning. They had sat opposite each other in silence, and three times he had opened his lips as if about to speak, only to close them again.

They were both near, perilously near, saying many things to each other, but that unexplainable conversational barrier which holds up the traffic of speech had risen between them. For six days it had been thus, six days in which they had not expressed a word that was not commonplace.

That night at the club it had seemed easy enough to Wynne to come and tell his wife that red blood was coursing in his veins, and white carelessness had thrown an arm about his shoulders. It had seemed a simple and an honest confession. She was concerned in him, and had a right to know. Yet try as he would his pluck broke down before the ordeal. He could do no more than look at her furtively and postpone.

Wynne hated himself when he shirked a deed. Want of courage galled him, and the knowledge that he lacked the temerity to put his intentions into words seemed to clip the wings of the new mad impulses which possessed him.

All the while Eve knew there was something he wanted to say, but she could not fathom what manner of thing it might be. Thus from his silence grew her own, each waiting for the other to begin.

The day before he had telephoned to the Cosmopolis for rooms. He and Esme were going down by the 9.15 that night. As an understudy it was easy for her to be released from appearing at the theatre on the Saturday. If Eve were to be told it would have to be at once, for the appointment with the British Drama Association was at eleven o'clock.

He put a cigarette in his mouth and tapped his pocket for matches.

"Empty," he said.

"I'll get you some."

"Doesn't matter."

"I'm going to the kitchen with these things."

As she went from the room carrying the tray he noticed how shabby she was. He was not irritated, but it seemed wrong, somehow. Presently she

returned and laid a box of matches on the table.

"Thanks. I—"

"Yes."

"I shall want a box. I'm just going out."

"I see."

"Got to—er—see some people. Might be rather good. Do my play, perhaps, and a big production job. Quite good, it might be."

"I'm glad."

"Yes. 'Pointment at eleven. There's—er—. Didn't you want some furniture for this place?"

"No," said Eve.

"Thought you said—"

"I may have done—but—"

"No reason why you shouldn't have it."

A vague hope took shape, but it was too vague to risk encouraging him to say more. Often before the hope had arisen, only to fall to dust.

She made no answer.

"No reason at all why you shouldn't have it," he repeated, "or any clothes you want. Don't you want some clothes? You do."

Still she made no answer.

"Come on."

"I want clothes—yes."

"Well, get them, I mean."

"Is that all—all you mean?"

"Yes, I think so."

"I don't want any clothes," said Eve.

He looked at her uneasily, then at his watch.

"I ought to be off."

She nodded.

"Shall you be back?"

He hesitated.

"Probably; but don't keep anything for me if I'm late. I may—be late."

As the door closed Eve said, very gently:

"Oh, we're having a hell of a life."

Wynne went to his bedroom and pulled out a drawer. He threw a shirt or two and some collars on to the bed, then rummaged for a suit case behind the dressing-table.

"Damn the things, I can buy what I want," he said.

Eve heard the front door slam a moment later.

III

At the offices of the New British Drama Association Wynne met some important gentlemen, and the words they spoke acted upon him like good red wine.

"It's an astonishing play," said Mr. Howard Delvin, who was not given to encomiums. "So astonishing that we propose to use it for our opening event."

"I thought *you'd* like it, Mr. Delvin," said Wynne.

"I don't like it—I dislike it very much indeed. I said it was an astonishing play, and that is exactly what I meant. Your wit is positively polar, there is no other word; and your philosophy is glacial—with all the hard, clear transparence of ice. My personal inclination is to put the whole play in a stewpan and boil it, for if any man were clever enough to raise its temperature to blood heat he would have achieved a play—I say it in all sincerity—of incomparable worth. However, we're satisfied, and now well see if we can satisfy you."

When Wynne departed from that erudite circle he felt almost sublime—like nightingales sang their words of praise. A wild elation prompted him to sing, to dance, to fill his lungs with the thin air of the high peaks to which he had leapt. With youth in one hand and success in the other there were no limits to the achievements which might be his.

He felt a frenzied desire to celebrate—to celebrate wildly.

He lunched at Scott's, and ordered a lobster, because its livery was scarlet, and a rare champagne, because it beat against the glass. He pledged himself and the future—the broad, untrammelled future—and drank damnation to the cobwebs of dull care.

The wine fired his brain and imagination, restocked his courage, and set his heart a-thumping.

"Paper and an envelope and some Napoleon brandy," he called to the waiter. And when these were brought:

"I was a waiter once—just such a fellow as yourself—a very devil of a waiter. Here's a sovereign. Go and be happy."

The white paper lay before him, and he dashed a dozen careless words across its surface. The envelope he addressed to his wife.

"Here," he cried, "send that along in an hour or two. God bless you."

He rose and pushed his way through the swing doors.

IV

Clementine Rendall spent the morning in a peculiar fashion. He first called on his banker, and, armed with many banknotes, took a cab to the Vandyke Theatre. At the stage door he inquired for Miss Esme Waybury.

"Just gone," said the doorkeeper, "half an hour ago."

"Unfortunate. Now I wonder when I could see her. Comes out about eleven at night, I s'pose?"

"Get out 'bout nine. Understudyin', she is."

"I wonder if you could ask her to wait a little tonight."

The doorkeeper negatived the idea: "Wouldn't be any good. She's a-goin' to Brighton by the 9.15, and won't be back till Monday. Ast me to have a cab ready."

"I see. 'Safternoon I'm engaged. But you could give me her address, no doubt."

"Couldn't. 'Tisn't allowed."

"Nonsense. I'm her uncle. Right to know."

He produced silver in generous quantities, to which the doorkeeper succumbed.

Miss Esme had a flat in Maida Vale, whither Clementine Rendall proceeded with all dispatch.

In the taxi he reflected that he had set himself a foolish and a hopeless task. Even supposing he succeeded in buying off Miss Esme, nothing would have been achieved. To postpone a crisis is not to avert it. Accordingly he thrust his head from the window and addressed the driver:

"Look here—I don't want to go to Maida Vale. Drive me to Whatshisname Mansions—one of the turnings off Baker Street. I'll rap on the glass to show you." And as he subsided on the cushions again: "Heaven knows what I shall do when I get there."

He found a porter, who directed him to Wynne's flat, and though assailed by many doubts, he beat a cheerful tattoo upon the knocker.

"Hullo!" he exclaimed, when Eve opened the door.

"Can you do with a visitor?"

Without waiting for the answer he kissed her very cordially, and putting a friendly arm round her shoulders carried her off to the sitting-room.

"As you never come and see me I came to see you," he announced. "Well, how's things?"

"Oh, they are all right."

There was a restraint in her manner, which even his cheeriness was unable to break down. He could feel a sense of crisis in the atmosphere.

"And Wynne?"

"He's out."

"Out to lunch?"

"Yes."

"Brain storm!—we'll go out too."

"You and I?"

"As ever is! Get yer hat."

Eve hesitated. "I—"

"Don't tell me you haven't a hat."

She laughed. "No; but it's so long since I went out to lunch, probably I shouldn't know how to behave."

"I never could," he answered. "Eat peas with my knife, talk with my mouth full—never was such a fellar as me. Come on—lively does it. What 'ud you like to do afterwards?"

"Anything."

" 'Cos I've an idea—more'n that, I've the means of carrying it out. Listen to the program: Taxi; a sole and a cutlet at the Berkeley Grill, with just a little Rhine wine to help it along. Then what? I suggest a picture gallery, and you nod—I suggest a theatre, and you nod a bit more agreeably. Finally, I suggest a shopping excursion up Bond Street and down Regent Street, with a taxi rolling from door to door to carry the parcels; at this you nod vigorously—and perhaps you smile. You shall have a Crême de Cacao after your ice, and then you *will* smile. The third and last proposal is carried unanimously, and before we start we make out a complete trousseau on the

back of the menu card. Outside and inside we'll get the lot. What do you say?"

Eve leant over and touched his hand.

"It sounds so lovely," she said in a trembling voice; "but what do I want with a trousseau?"

"Want with it? Every one wants a trousseau."

"If anybody cared how you looked in it."

Uncle Clem's forehead clouded, and his eyes rested upon her. As he looked he noted how sadly she was dressed.

"Little Eve," he said, "has he ever seen you in a trousseau? I mean—look here, my dear, we men are such poor trivial, sleepy beings. We only wake up when something bangs us in the eye. Have you never thought it might be worth while to bang him in the eye with all that beauty of yours in the setting it deserves? You see we get used to things as they are, and never bother our heads with things as they might be. Don't answer. I know it's all quite indefensible, and I know you know it too. But just for fun—for a lark—a spree, let's go out and do this thing. He'll be in later, yes?"

"He said he would come to dinner."

"Then we'll fill in the time between then and now, and I'll take charge."

Eve stood up suddenly.

"Why—why do you always make me feel it will be all right?"

"It will. There, be off and get your hat."

"Very well." At the door she turned. "I have a frock if you'll let me put it on. You won't have to take me out in this old thing."

"Have you worn it for him?"

"No."

"Silly girl. Wear it for me, then. I'll wait."

As the door closed he muttered to himself:

"Wonder why the devil I'm buoying up her hopes. Wonder where we'll be this time tomorrow?"

Clementine Rendall was a wonderful host, and he ordered the most delicious luncheon. He and monsieur, the faultless monsieur, laid their heads together and made decisions over the menu with a deliberation Downing Street might have envied. Monsieur would touch the title of some precious dish with the extreme point of pencil, and Clem would nod or query the suggestion. At last the decision was made, brought up for amendment, and finally approved.

The cooking was incomparable, and Uncle Clem matched his spirits to its perfection. Gradually he drew Eve out, and by the time the last course was set before them she was full of exquisite plans for the things they would buy together. The harmony of the surroundings, the attention, the good food, and the subtle white wine worked a miracle of change. Her eyes softened and took fresh lustre, her cheeks glowed with a gentle colour, and her voice warmed.

Noting these matters Uncle Clem was glad, but feared greatly.

"Now for the shops," she said.

They had scarcely turned the corner of Piccadilly before he rapped against the glass of the taxi.

"Barrett's!" he cried; "we mustn't pass poor old Barrett's without giving them a look in."

Next instant they were in those pleasant leather-smelling showrooms, and an attentive assistant was directing their gaze to rows of dressing bags, both great and small.

"Make your choice—mustn't lose time."

"Am I really to have one of those bright bottley things?"

" 'Course you are; what's old Barrett run the place for? Choose, and quick about it."

Long economy prompted Eve to decide upon the smallest and cheapest. Whereupon Clementine pointed to another with his stick, and cried:

"Sling it in the taxi—you know me! Right! On we go."

But he did not go on before he had purchased a great spray of malmaisons at Solomon's.

"Hats, dresses, and all the rest of it! Bond Street, cabby."

In Bond Street he was at his best. He insisted on following Eve through all manner of extraordinary departments.

"Oh, go on with you. I'm old enough to have been married years ago. I'll look out of the window if you like—but if the bill ain't big enough I shall turn round. Get busy!"

Infected by his enthusiasm Eve got busy, and two great boxes of exquisite frillies floated down to the taxi.

"When we've filled this cab we'll get another," he declared as they clambered in and took their seats.

At Redfern's, in Conduit Street, he showed that he was a man of discrimination. He paraded the *mannequins*, and bought four dresses after a

deal of inspection and deliberation.

"But four's such a heap!" said Eve.

"Nonsense. I'll make it six if you say another word. Here, bundle off and put on that fawn thing—know it'll suit you—want to see how you look! I'll go and choose hats. I'm a whaler on hats."

So while she changed he went off hatting, to the great joy of the department, and returned with many.

Eve was very quick, and as she came from the little changing-room he had a wild desire to cheer.

"Lord! You look lovely! Here, try some of these. Ain't I a chooser? This one! Ain't it a tartar—the very devil of a little hat."

He was right.

"It!" he cried. "It! Clicks with the dress every time! Keep it on. Here, some of you kind young ladies, this lot for the taxi. Bill! Splendid."

He shovelled out a handful of notes and they followed their purchases to the street.

"No more," begged Eve, between laughter and tears. "Not any more today."

"Gloves—shoes—'brollies must be bought."

He was inexorable, and it was six o'clock before the laden taxi rolled them to the door of the Mansions.

"You've given me my most wonderful day," she said.

"You child!" he answered, and pressed her hand. "There are lots more wonderful days ahead—remember that."

Then he and she, and the driver, each burdened sky-high with packages, mounted the stairs to the flat.

As Uncle Clem paid the fare, Eve stooped and picked up a note from the door-mat. She opened it as he closed the door.

"God!" she said, in a very little voice.

He took the note and read it.

V

Twenty minutes later Clementine Rendall was hammering on Quiltan's front door.

He had seen what to do. It had come to him very suddenly with all the force of a strong white light. He had made no attempt to comfort Eve—she

had not needed that. Wynne Rendall's note had done its work strangely. At the death of her hopes Eve had laughed a careless, wanton laugh. It was the laugh which gave him the idea.

"Mr. Quiltan—at once!" he said to the servant who opened the door.

"Well?" said Quiltan.

"You're in love with Eve?"

"Yes."

"Will you run away with her—now?"

"Now?"

"At once. Go and make love to her. Don't be frightened, it will be quite easy. She knows. Then take her away."

"But I don't understand."

"Have you got a car?"

"Yes."

"Order it. Pack her inside and get away to Brighton."

"Brighton?"

"I said so—the Cosmopolis."

"But good God! he's going there."

"She doesn't know that."

"Have you gone mad?"

"Thought you wanted her to be happy?"

"I do."

"Thought you were prepared to give her the chance."

"Yes, but—"

"Then do as I say. Take her to Brighton. She'll go—give her supper in the public room at 10.30. Don't look so blank, man. After all, it's ten to one against, and the odds are with you."

Quiltan hesitated. "It's so extraordinary."

"Quiltan! if you refuse to do this thing I'll shoot you—by God! I believe I will."

Quiltan rang the bell.

"I want the car," he said—"immediately—and—and a suit case."

VI

Eve scarcely spoke in the car as they drove over the long, undulating road to Brighton. When Quiltan came to the flat he found her with a queer hard light in her eyes. She nodded in a detached kind of way when he told her he knew. In the same detached way she listened to his half-scared, wholly genuine, protestations of love. She even allowed him to kiss her.

"I want you to come with me," he had said—"to come away now."

And with a fierceness which astonished him she had answered:

"Yes—yes— I don't care—I will—will. Seems rather funny to me! All right. I've heaps of clothes—I'll come—yes."

At Crawley a tyre burst, and it took nearly an hour to wake up a garage and procure a new outer cover. It was after 10.30 when they drew up before the Cosmopolis, with all its naughty lights winking at the sea.

Eve laughed as they stood in the foyer, and the porter brought in her beautiful new suit case.

"Don't," said Quiltan.

For the first time she seemed aware of his presence, and turned with kindlier light in her eyes.

"I'm sorry. I'm not playing the game, am I? But it *does* seem funny. I suppose we have supper now. Will you wait, and I'll run up and put on a pretty frock for you?"

He would have stopped her, but she was gone with the words.

Rather nervously he entered the great dining-hall and ordered a table for two. There were many guests present, and his eyes travelled quickly from table to table. Wynne was nowhere to be seen, and with this a sudden intolerable excitement seized him. It was short-lived, however, for his next glance lighted on the fluffy head of little Miss Esme, her eyes demurely lowered over a dessert plate. Facing her, with his back to Quiltan, sat Wynne. They were some distance away, and while the room was crowded it was impossible to see them from the table he had taken.

Quiltan took a cigarette from his case and passed out to wait for Eve.

As she stepped from the lift he thought her the most wonderful being he had ever seen. Fragile—adorable—desirable—everything to set a man's heart on fire.

With a passion he could not control he whispered:

"You dear, beautiful—beautiful dear!"

Her answering smile seemed to come from a long way off.

They took their places, hers looking in the direction of Wynne's table, and a busy waiter approached:

"Ah, in one minute the supper. Wine? Cliquot ver' good."

"Champagne?" queried Quiltan.

"I suppose so—yes, of course."

He gave the order.

A *consommé* was brought in little cups. Presently a cork popped into a serviette and the creaming wine tinkled into the glasses. A few guests at the neighbouring table rose and left, one or two others following their example.

The company began to thin out, and vistas occurred through which one could see people in other parts of the room. The conversation lost its general constant hum and became isolated and more individual.

VII

"You are a quiet old boy, aren't you?" whispered Miss Esme.

Wynne started and raised his head.

"What—what's that?"

"I say you are quiet."

"Oh, yes."

"Funny old boy!"

He called a waiter.

"Get me some more cigarettes—these little boxes hold none at all."

"You smoke too much."

He played with a cold cigarette-end upon his plate.

"You simply haven't stopped."

"What?"

"I say"—she whispered it—"isn't it lovely being down here—just we two?"

"Um."

He crumbled a piece of bread, then swept the crumbs to the floor. He shot a quick glance at her, lowered his eyes, picked up the cigarette-end again, and drew with it upon his plate.

"I say—"

"Wish that waiter would do what he is told."

Esme sighed and stole a shy glance at the clock.

“Isn’t it getting late?”

“Is it? I don’t know—I’m a late person. Ah, that’s better!”

He took the cigarettes from the waiter and lighted one.

When the man had gone, Esme remarked:

“Everybody seems to be going away. Nobody left soon—but us.”

“H’m.”

“I love Brighton. Don’t you love the sea? I do—and the hills—oh, I love the hills!”

Quite suddenly Wynne said:

“Must you talk such a lot?”

“Oh,” said Esme, “you old cross patch.”

A party of people at a round table in the centre of the room rose and moved toward the door.

VIII

Eve and Quiltan sat in silence as course after course was brought to them. His few efforts to talk had broken down, and all he could do was to look at her—look at this woman who *might* become his.

As the party from the round table passed them by he said:

“Emptying now.”

Eve roused herself, and her eyes wandered round the room. Suddenly she leant forward with a sharp little gasp in her throat.

“What is it?” said Quiltan, although he knew.

She ignored his question. Her eyes were wide open and bright. Then she laughed a cold, quick laugh.

“I’m glad,” she whispered—“yes, I’m glad—glad. Look!”

She did not notice if he acted well or ill when he saw the sight he had expected to see.

“What are you going to do?” he asked.

“I don’t know—don’t care.”

She did not move her eyes from Wynne’s table, and after a moment a puzzled look came into her face. She had recognized his attitude. He always sat like that, with his head down and his fingers fidgeting, when he was irritated. But why now? A sudden insane desire possessed her to spring to her feet and cry aloud.

Then Esme's eyes, wandering once more toward the clock, met hers, and in an instant Eve smiled and bowed. Esme looked surprised, and Eve smiled again.

"Some one over there knows me," said Esme, "but I don't know her. No, you mustn't look, 'cos she's too pretty."

Wynne turned slowly in the direction indicated, and saw. His napkin dropped to the floor, and unsteadily he rose to his feet. He rubbed one hand over his eyes as though to clear the vision. He took a few quick steps to the centre of the room—stopped—then came on again.

And all the while Eve kept her eyes on his.

Beside her table he stopped, and looked from one to the other, his mouth twitching and his face strangely white.

"Yes—well?" he said, as if expecting they would be ready with explanation.

"What are you doing here?"

"Or you?" she answered.

"What's *he* doing?"

"Or *she*?"

"Come on."

"Can't you see?"

"No."

"We said when we took the leap we'd take it together. We are."

Quiltan rose and moved a little away.

"I shall want you," whispered Wynne.

"No, you won't," said Eve.

Quiltan walked from the room. In the hall he waited indecisively. Then he remembered the flash of a light seen in Wynne's eyes—a light of possession—wild, primal, outraged possession. He drew a quick conclusion.

"I'm no good," he thought. Then, turning to the porter, "I want that car of mine." He waited in the porch until it came.

Wynne jerked his head toward the door.

"Out of this," he said. "Can't talk here."

He moved to the half-light of a deserted winter garden beyond the dining-hall, and suddenly he spoke, very fast and hoarsely:

"You and that fellar—wasn't true!"

“Yes it was.”

“God!”

“Why not?”

“God! But you’re mine.”

“You say that.”

“Mine.”

“In what possible way?”

“You are—you are! My woman—mine!”

“And that other one?”

“That! Nothing—it’s you—you!”

He clenched and unclenched his hands. Then caught at a random hope:

“You knew I was here—came because of that.”

She shook her head.

“You did.”

“I came with him.”

His hands fell on her shoulders and shook her fiercely.

“For Christ’s sake! no, that’s not the reason!”

The wild agony in his voice started the honest answer:

“I came because of what you’re doing.”

He stopped, caught his breath, took fresh fear, and sobbed out:

“But—but you’ve never looked—like this before—you never looked like this for *me*.”

“Did you ever want me to look like this for you? Did you ever—— Oh—oh—oh!”

She turned, covered her eyes with her hands, and fell sobbing on to a chair.

And he fell on his knees beside her, and fought to draw away her hands, calling:

“Oh, God! I haven’t lost you! For God’s sake!—for Christ’s sake!—I haven’t lost you!”

IX

Miss Esme sat at her table wearing an expression of absolute amazement. A slight but growing tendency toward tears emphasized itself in her small and brittle soul. She, of all the guests, remained in the room.

Presently the lights were lowered one by one, and presently an elderly gentleman detached himself from a shadowy seat in a window corner and came toward her.

"Don't you think you'd better be going?" he said, in the kindliest possible way.

Esme started.

"I beg your pardon—n-no, I must wait for my husband."

"Dear me! I shouldn't do that, because—I mean—after all—you haven't one—and he has a wife already."

"Oh!" she exclaimed, "then that—"

"Quite so. Splendid, isn't it?"

"But—who are you?"

"Just a friend."

"Of course," said Esme, trying to recover a grain of lost prestige. "I hadn't any idea he was married."

" 'Course not. Not in the least to blame."

"Fancy his being married!"

"I'm doing that," said Clem, with rather a wonderful expression on his face. "But, look here, suppose we do the rest of our fancyin' in the 12.30 to town? Nice time to catch it."

"Well, I can't stop here, can I?"

"Wouldn't do."

They had a first-class compartment all to themselves, and Uncle Clem made a most favourable impression upon Miss Esme. She thought him such a nice old gentleman. He talked of such pleasant things in such a pleasant way. He wasn't a bit prudish, and seemed to think she had done perfectly right in coming away with Wynne.

"Still, I do think it was very wrong of him, as he was married," she said.

"Yes—yes—yes. Still, it's a queer world. You see he may have forgotten he was married—some folk do. He may never really have known—but he *will* know. My dear, it isn't until we realize the wonder of another that we become wonderful ourselves. You don't know what you've done for that young man."

"Somehow I don't believe I should like to have married him," said Esme, thoughtfully.

“You don’t! No! Well, there you are, you see! Yet somebody is always wanted by somebody else, and that somebody else can always make that somebody into something. Victoria! Wouldn’t be any harm to kiss you good-night, would it? ’Course not! That’s right Splendid!”

THE END

Transcriber’s Notes:

A few obvious punctuation and typesetting errors have been corrected without note. When multiple spellings occurred, majority use has been employed.

A cover has been created for this ebook and is placed in the public domain.

[The end of *Our Wonderful Selves* by Roland Pertwee]