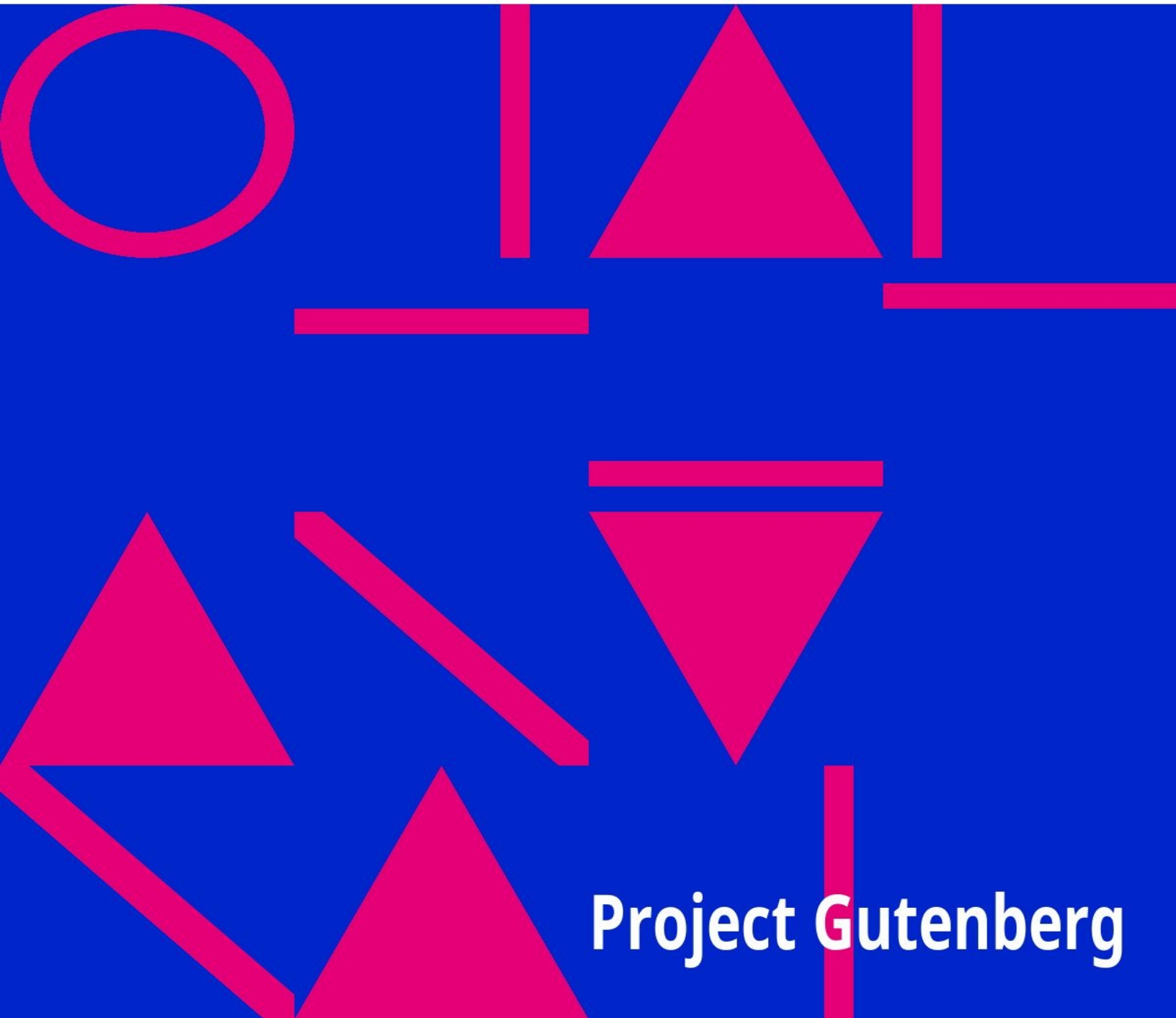
What Dreams May Come

Gertrude Franklin Horn Atherton



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WHAT DREAMS MAY COME.

by Frank Lin (pseud. of Gertrude Franklin Horn Atherton)

Dedicated to Muriel Atherton

WHAT DREAMS MAY COME.

THE OVERTURE.

Constantinople; the month of August; the early days of the century. It was the hour of the city's most perfect beauty. The sun was setting, and flung a mellowing glow over the great golden domes and minarets of the mosques, the bazaars glittering with trifles and precious with elements of Oriental luxury, the tortuous thoroughfares with their motley throng, the quiet streets with their latticed windows, and their atmosphere heavy with silence and mystery, the palaces whose cupolas and towers had watched over so many centuries of luxury and intrigue, pleasure and crime, the pavilions, groves, gardens, kiosks which swarmed with the luxuriance of tropical growth over the hills and valleys of a city so vast and so beautiful that it tired the brain and fatigued the senses. Scutari, purple and green and gold, blended in the dying light into exquisite harmony of color; Stamboul gathered deeper gloom under her overhanging balconies, behind which lay hidden the loveliest of her women; and in the deserted gardens of the Old Seraglio, beneath the heavy pall of the cypresses, memories of a grand, terrible, barbarous, but most romantic Past crept forth and whispered ruin and decay.

High up in Pera the gray walls of the English Embassy stood out sharply defined against the gold-wrought sky. The windows were thrown wide to invite the faint, capricious breeze which wandered through the hot city; but the silken curtains were drawn in one of the smaller reception-rooms. The room itself was a soft blaze of wax candles against the dull richness of crimson and gold. Men and women were idling about in that uneasy atmosphere which precedes the announcement of dinner. Many of the men wore orders on their breasts, and the uniforms of the countries they represented, and a number of Turks gave a picturesque touch to the scene, with their jewelled turbans and flowing robes. The women were as typical as their husbands; the wife of the Russian Ambassador, with her pale hair and moonlight eyes, her delicate shoulders and

jewel-sewn robe; the Italian, with her lithe grace and heavy brows, the Spanish beauty, with her almond, dreamy eyes, her chiselled features and mantilla-draped head; the Frenchwoman, with her bright, sallow, charming, unrestful face; the Austrian, with her cold repose and latent devil. In addition were the Secretaries of Legation, with their gaily-gowned young wives, and one or two English residents; all assembled at the bidding of Sir Dafyd-ap-Penrhyn, the famous diplomatist who represented England at the court of the Sultan.

Sir Dafyd was standing between the windows and underneath one of the heavy candelabra. He was a small but striking-looking man, with a great deal of head above the ears, light blue eyes deeply set and far apart, a delicate arched nose, and a certain expression of brutality about the thin lips, so faint as to be little more than a shadow. He was blandly apologizing for the absence of his wife. She had dressed to meet her guests, but had been taken suddenly ill and obliged to retire.

As he finished speaking he turned to a woman who sat on a low chair at his right. She was young and very handsome. Her eyes were black and brilliant, her mouth was pouting and petulant, her chin curved slightly outward. Her features were very regular, but there was neither softness nor repose in her face. She looked like a statue that had been taken possession of by the Spirit of Discontent.

"I am sorry not to see Dartmouth," said the great minister, affably.
"Is he ill again? He must be careful; the fever is dangerous."

Mrs. Dartmouth drew her curved brows together with a frown which did not soften her face. "He is writing," she said, shortly. "He is always writing."

"O, but you know that is a Dartmouth failing—ambition," said Sir Dafyd, with a smile. "They must be either in the study or dictating to the King."

"Well, I wish my Fate had been a political Dartmouth. Lionel sits in his study all day and writes poetry—which I detest. I shall bring up my son to be a statesman."

"So that his wife may see more of him?" said Sir Dafyd, laughing. "You are quite capable of making whatever you like of him, however, for you are a clever woman—if you are not poetical. But it is hard that you should be so much alone, Catherine. Why are not you and Sionèd more together? There are so few of you here, you should try and amuse each other. Diplomatists, like poets, see little of

their wives, and Sionèd, I have no doubt, is bored very often."

Dinner was announced at the moment, and Mrs. Dartmouth stood up and looked her companion full in the eyes. "I do not like Sionèd," she said, harshly. "She, too, is poetical."

For a moment there was a suspicion of color in Sir Dafyd's pale face, and the shadow on his mouth seemed to take shape and form. Then he bowed slightly, and crossing the room offered his arm to the wife of the Russian Ambassador.

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The sun sank lower, Constantinople's richer tints faded into soft opal hues, and the muezzin called the people to prayer. From a window in a wing of the Embassy furthest from the banqueting hall, and overlooking the city, a woman watched the shifting panorama below. She was more beautiful than any of her neglected guests, although her eyes were heavy and her face was pale. Her hair was a rich, burnished brown, and drawn up to the crown of her head in a loose mass of short curls, held in place by a half-coronet of diamonds. In front the hair was parted and curled, and the entire head was encircled by a band of diamond stars which pressed the bronze ringlets low over the forehead. The features were slightly aquiline; the head was oval and admirably poised. But it was the individuality of the woman that made her beauty, not features or coloring. The keen, intelligent eyes, with their unmistakable power to soften, the spiritual brow, the strong, sensuous chin, the tender mouth, the spirited head, each a poet's delight, each an artist's study, all blended, a strange, strong, passionate story in flesh and blood—a remarkable face. Her neck and arms were bare, and she wore a short-waisted gown of yellow satin, which fell in shining lines from belt to hem.

Pale as she was she assuredly did not look ill enough to justify her desertion of her guests. As a matter of fact she had forgotten both guests and excuse. When a woman has taken a resolution which flings her suddenly up to the crisis of her destiny she is apt to forget state dinners and whispered comment. To-morrow state dinners would pass out of her life, and they would go unregretted. She turned suddenly and picked up some loose sheets of manuscript which lay on a table beside her—a poem which would immortalize the city her window overlooked. A proud smile curved her mouth, then faded swiftly as she pressed the pages passionately to her lips. She put them back on the table and turning her

head looked down the room with much of the affection one gives a living thing. The room was as Oriental as any carefully secluded chamber in the city below. The walls were hung with heavy, soft Eastern stuffs, dusky and rich, which shut out all suggestion of doors. The black marble floor was covered with a strange assortment of wild beasts' skins, pale, tawny, sombre, ferocious. There were deep, soft couches and great piles of cushions, a few rare paintings stood on easels, and the air was heavy with jasmine. The woman's lids fell over her eyes, and the blood mounted slowly, making her temples throb. Then she threw back her head, a triumphant light flashing in her eyes, and brought her open palm down sharply on the table. "If I fall," she said, "I fall through strength, not through weakness. If I sin, I do so wittingly, not in a moment of overmastering passion."

She bent suddenly forward, her breath coming quickly. There were footsteps at the end of the marble corridor without. For a moment she trembled from head to foot. Remorse, regret, horror, fear, chased each other across her face, her convulsed features reflecting the emotions which for weeks past had oppressed heart and brain. Then, before the footsteps reached the door, she was calm again and her head erect. The glory of the sunset had faded, and behind her was the short grey twilight of the Southern night; but in her face was that magic light that never was on sea or land.

The heavy portière at the end of the room was thrust aside and a man entered. He closed the door and pushed the hanging back into place, then went swiftly forward and stood before her. She held out her hand and he took it and drew her further within the room. The twilight had gone from the window, the shadows had deepened, and the darkness of night was about them.

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In the great banqueting-hall the stout mahogany table upheld its weight of flashing gold and silver and sparkling crystal without a groan, and solemn, turbaned Turks passed wine and viand. Around the board the diplomatic colony forgot their exile in remote Constantinople, and wit and anecdote, spicy but good-humored political discussion, repartee and flirtation made a charming accompaniment to the wonderful variety displayed in the faces and accents of the guests. The stately, dignified ministers of the Sultan gazed at the fair faces and jewel-laden shoulders of the women of the North, and sighed as they thought of their dusky wives; and the women of the North threw blue, smiling glances to

the Turks and wondered if it were romantic to live in a harem.

At the end of the second course Sir Dafyd raised a glass of wine to his lips, and, as he glanced about the table, conversation ceased for a moment.

"Will you drink to my wife's health?" he said. "It has caused me much anxiety of late."

Every glass was simultaneously raised, and then Sir Dafyd pushed back his chair and rose to his feet. "If you will pardon me," he said, "I will go and see how she is."

He left the room, and the wife of the Spanish Ambassador turned to her companion with a sigh. "So devot he is, no?" she murmured. "You Eenglish, you have the fire undere the ice. He lover his wife very moocho when he leaver the dinner. And she lover him too, no?"

"I don't know," said the Englishman to whom she spoke. "It never struck me that Penrhyn was a particularly lovable fellow. He's so deuced haughty; the Welsh are worse for that than we English. He's as unapproachable as a stone. I don't fancy the Lady Sionèd worships the ground he treads upon. But then, he's the biggest diplomate in Great Britain; one can't have everything."

"I no liker all the Eenglish, though," pursued the pretty Spaniard. "The Señora Dar-muth, I no care for her. She looker like she have the tempere—how you call him?—the dev-vil, no? And she looker like she have the fire ouside and the ice in."

"Oh, she's not so bad," said the Englishman, loyally. "She has some admirable traits, and she's deuced clever, but she has an ill-regulated sort of a nature, and is awfully obstinate and prejudiced. It's a sort of vanity. She worries Dartmouth a good deal. He's a born poet, if ever a man was, and she wants him to go into politics. Wants a *salon* and all that sort of thing. She ought to have it, too. Political intrigue would just suit her; she's diplomatic and secretive. But Dartmouth prefers his study."

The lady from Spain raised her sympathetic, pensive eyes to the Englishman's. "And the Señor Dar-muth? How he is? He is nice fellow? I no meeting hime?"

"The best fellow that ever lived, God bless him!" exclaimed the young man,

enthusiastically. "He has the temperament of genius, and he isn't always there when you want him—I mean, he isn't always in the right mood; but he's a splendid specimen of a man, and the most likeable fellow I ever knew—poor fellow!"

"Why you say 'poor fel-low'? He is no happy, no?"

"Well, you see," said the young man, succumbing to those lovely, pitying eyes, and not observing that they gazed with equal tenderness at the crimson wine in the cup beside her plate—"you see, he and his wife are none too congenial, as I said. It makes her wild to have him write, not only because she wants to cut a figure in London, and he will always live in some romantic place like this, but she's in love with him, in her way, and she's jealous of his very desk. That makes things unpleasant about the domestic hearthstone. And then she doesn't believe a bit in his talent, and takes good care to let him know it. So, you see, he's not the most enviable of mortals."

"Much better she have be careful," said the Spanish woman; "some day he feel tire out and go to lover someone else. Please you geeve me some more clarette?"

"Here comes Sir Dafyd," said the Englishman, as he filled her glass. "It has taken him a long time to find out how she is."

The shadow had wholly disappeared from Sir Dafyd's mouth, a faint smile hovering there instead. As he took his seat the Austrian Ambassador leaned forward and inquired politely about the state of Lady Sionèd's health.

"She is sleeping quietly," said Sir Dafyd.

PART I.

THE MELODY.

I.

The Hon. Harold Dartmouth was bored. He had been in Paris three months and it was his third winter. He was young. He possessed a liberal allowance of good looks, money, and family prestige. Combining these three conditions, he had managed to pretty thoroughly exhaust the pleasures of the capital. At all events he believed he had exhausted them, and he wanted a new sensation. He had "done" his London until it was more flavorless than Paris, and he had dawdled more or less in the various Courts of Europe. While in St. Petersburg he had inserted a too curious finger into the Terrorist pie, and had come very near making a prolonged acquaintance with the House of Preventative Detention; but after being whisked safely out of the country under cover of a friend's passport, he had announced himself cured of further interest in revolutionary politics. The affair had made him quite famous for a time, however; Krapotkin had sought him out and warmly thanked him for his interest in the Russian Geysers, and begged him to induce his father to abjure his peace policy and lend his hand to the laudable breaking of Czarism's back. But Lord Cardingham, who was not altogether ruled by his younger son, had declined to expend his seductions upon Mr. Gladstone in the cause of a possible laying of too heavy a rod upon England's back, and had recommended his erratic son to let the barbarism of absolutism alone in the future, and try his genius upon that of democracy. Dartmouth, accordingly, had spent a winter in Washington as Secretary of Legation, and had entertained himself by doling out such allowance of diplomatic love to the fair American dames as had won him much biographical honor in the press of the great republic. Upon his father's private admonition, that it would be as well to generously resign his position in favor of some more needy applicant, with a less complex heart-line and a slight acquaintance with international law, he had, after a summer at Newport, returned to Europe and

again devoted himself to winning a fame not altogether political. And now there was nothing left, and he felt that fate had used him scurrilously. He was twenty-eight, and had exhausted life. He had nothing left but to yawn through weary years and wish he had never been born.

He clasped his hands behind his head and looked out on the brilliant crowd from his chair in the Café de la Cascade in the Bois. He was handsome, this blasé young Englishman, with a shapely head, poised strongly upon a muscular throat. Neither beard nor moustache hid the strong lines of the face. A high type, in spite of his career, his face was a good deal more suggestive of passion than of sensuality. He was tall, slight, and sinewy, and carried himself with the indolent hauteur of a man of many grandfathers. And indeed, unless, perhaps, that this plaything, the world, was too small, he had little to complain of. Although a younger son, he had a large fortune in his own right, left him by an adoring grandmother who had died shortly before he had come of age, and with whom he had lived from infancy as adopted son and heir. This grandmother was the one woman who had ever shone upon his horizon whose disappearance he regretted; and he was wont to remark that he never again expected to find anything beneath a coiffure at once so brilliant, so fascinating, so clever, so altogether "filling" as his lamented relative. If he ever did he would marry and settle down as a highly respectable member of society, and become an M.P. and the owner of a winner of the Derby; but until then he would sigh away his tired life at the feet of beauty, Bacchus, or chance.

"What is the matter, Hal?" asked Bective Hollington, coming up behind him. "Yawning so early in the day?"

"Bored," replied Dartmouth, briefly. "Don't expect me to talk to you.
I haven't an idea left."

"My dear Harold, do not flatter yourself that I came to you in search of ideas. I venture to break upon your sulky meditations in the cause of friendship alone. If you will rouse yourself and walk to the window you may enrich your sterile mind with an idea, possibly with ideas. Miss Penrhyn will pass in a moment."

"The devil!"

"No, not the devil; Miss Penrhyn."

"And who the devil is Miss Penrhyn?"

"The new English, or rather, Welsh beauty, Weir Penrhyn," replied Hollington. "She came out last season in London, and the Queen pronounced her the most beautiful girl who had been presented at Court for twenty years. Such a relief from the blue-eyed and 'golden-bronze' professional! She will pass in a moment. Do rouse yourself."

Dartmouth got up languidly and walked to the window. After all, a new face and a pretty one was something; one degree, perhaps, better than nothing. "Which is she?" he asked. "The one in the next carriage, with Lady Langdon, talking to Bolton."

The carriage passed them, and Harold's eyes met for a moment those of a girl who was lying back chatting idly with a man who rode on horseback beside her. She was a beautiful creature, truly, with a rich, dark skin, and eyes like a tropical animal's. A youthful face, striking and unconventional.

"Well?" queried Hollington.

"Yes, a very handsome girl," said Dartmouth. "I have seen her before, somewhere."

"What! you have seen that woman before and not remembered her? Impossible! And then you have not been in England for a year."

"I am sure I have seen her before," said Dartmouth. "Where could it have been?"

"Her father is a Welsh baronet, and your estates are in the North, so you could hardly have known her as a child. She was educated in the utmost seclusion at home; no one ever saw her or heard of her until the fag end of the last London season, and she only arrived in Paris two days ago, and made her first appearance in public last night at the opera, where you were not. So where could you have seen her?"

"I cannot imagine," said Dartmouth, meditatively. "But her face is dimly familiar, and it is a most unusual one. Tell me something about her;" and he resumed his seat.

"She is the daughter of Sir Iltyd-ap-Penrhyn," said Hollington, craning his neck to catch a last glimpse of the disappearing beauty. "Awfully poor, but dates back to before Chaos. Looks down with scorn upon Sir Watkin Wynn, who hangs up

the flood on the middle branch of his family tree. They live in a dilapitated old castle on the coast, and there Sir Iltyd brought up this tropical bird—she is an only child—and educated her himself. Her mother died when she was very young, and her father, with the proverbial constancy of mankind, has never been known to smile since. Lively for the tropical bird, was it not? Lady Langdon, who was in Wales last year, and who was an old friend of the girl's mother, called on her and saw the professional possibilities, so to speak. She gave the old gentleman no peace until he told her she could take the girl to London, which she did forthwith, before he had time to change his mind. She has made a rousing sensation, but she is a downright beauty and no mistake. Lady Langdon evidently intends to hold on to her, for I see she has her still."

"I could not have known her, of course; I have never put my foot in Wales. But I suppose I shall meet her now. Is she to be at the Russian Legation to-night?"

"Yes; I have it from the best authority—herself. You had better go. She is worth knowing, I can tell you."

"Well, I'll think of it," said Dartmouth. "I must be off now; I have no end of letters to write. I'll rely upon you to do the honors if I go!" and he took up his hat and sauntered out.

He went directly to his apartments on the Avenue Champs Élysées, and wrote a few epistles to his impatient and much-enduring relatives in Britain; then, lighting a cigar, he flung himself upon the sofa. The room accorded with the man. Art and negligence were hand-in-hand. The hangings were of dusky-gold plush, embroidered with designs which breathed the fervent spirit of Decorative Art, and the floor was covered with the oldest and oddest of Persian rugs. There were cabinets of antique medallions, cameos, and enamels; low brass book-cases, filled with volumes bound in Russian leather, whose pungent odor filled the room; a varied collection of pipes; a case of valuable ceramics, one of the collection having a pedigree which no uncelestial mind had ever pretended to grasp, and which had been presented to Lord Cardingham, while minister to China, by the Emperor. That his younger son had unblushingly pilfered it he had but recently discovered, but demands for its return had as yet availed not. There were a few valuable paintings, a case of rare old plates, many with the coats of arms of sovereigns upon them, strangely carved chairs, each with a history, all crowded together and making a charming nest for the listless, somewhat morbid,

and disgusted young man stretched out upon a couch, covered with a rug of ostrich feathers brought from the Straits of Magellan. Over the onyx mantel was a portrait of his grandmother, a handsome old lady with high-piled, snow-white hair, and eyes whose brilliancy age had not dimmed. The lines about the mouth were hard, but the face was full of intelligence, and the man at her feet had never seen anything of the hardness of her nature. She had blindly idolized him.

"I wish she were here now," thought Dartmouth regretfully, as he contemplated the picture through the rings of smoke; "I could talk over things with her, and she could hit off people with that tongue of hers. Gods! how it could cut! Poor old lady! I wonder if I shall ever find her equal." After which, he fell asleep and forgot his sorrows until his valet awakened him and told him it was time to dress for dinner.

II.

I hope I have not conveyed to the reader the idea that our hero is frivolous. On the contrary, he was considered a very brilliant young man, and he could command the respect of his elders when he chose. But, partly owing to his wealth and independent condition, partly to the fact that the world had done its best to spoil him, he had led a very aimless existence. He was by no means satisfied with his life, however; he was far too clever for that; and he had spent a good deal of time, first and last, reviling Fate for not having endowed him with some talent upon which he could concentrate his energies, and with which attain distinction and find balm for his ennui. His grandmother had cherished the conviction that he was an undeveloped genius; but in regard to what particular field his genius was to enrich, she had never clearly expressed herself, and his own consciousness had not been more explicit. He had long ago made up his mind, indeed, that his grandmother's convictions had been the fond delusions of a doting parent, and that the sooner he unburdened himself of that particular legacy the better. The unburdening, however, had been accomplished with a good deal of bitterness, for he was very ambitious and very proud, and to be obliged to digest the fact that he was but a type of the great majority was distinctly galling. True, politics were left. His father, one of the most distinguished of England's statesmen, and a member of the present cabinet, would have been delighted to assist his career; but Harold disliked politics. With the exception of his passing interest in the Russian socialists—an interest springing from his adventurous nature—he had never troubled himself about any party, faction, or policy, home or foreign. He would like to write a great poem, but he had never felt a second's inspiration, and had never wasted time in the endeavor to force it. Failing that, he would like to write a novel; but, fluently and even brilliantly as he sometimes talked, his pen was not ready, and he was conscious of a conspicuous lack of imagination. To be sure, one does not need much in these days of realistic fervor; it is considered rather a coarse and old-fashioned article; but that one needs some sort of a plot is indisputable, and

Dartmouth's brain had consistently refused to evolve one. Doubtless he could cultivate the mere habit of writing, and achieve reputation as an essayist. His critical faculty was pronounced, and he had carefully developed it; and it was possible that when the world had completely palled upon him, he would shut himself up at Crumford Hall and give the public the benefit of his accumulated opinions, abstract and biographical. But he was not ready for that yet; he needed several years more of experience, observation, and assiduous cultivation of the habit of analysis; and in the meantime he was in a condition of cold disgust with himself and with Fate. It may also have been gathered that Mr. Dartmouth was a young man of decidedly reckless proclivities. It is quite true that he never troubled himself about any question of morals or social ethics; he simply calculated the mathematical amount of happiness possible to the individual. That was all there was in life. Had he lived a generation or two earlier, he would have pursued his way along the paths of the prohibited without introspective analysis; but being the intellectual young man of the latter decades of the 19th century, it amused him to season his defiance of certain conventional codes with the salt of philosophy.

Miss Penrhyn reached the Legation a few moments after Dartmouth's arrival, and he watched her as she entered the ballroom. She wore a simple white gown, embroidered about the corsage with silver crescents; and her richly-tinted brown hair was coiled about her head and held in place by a crescent-shaped comb. She was a tall, slim, shapely girl, with an extreme grace of carriage and motion, and a neck and arms whose clear olive was brought out with admirable effect by the dead white of her gown. Her face, somewhat listless and preoccupied as she entered, quickly brightened into animation as a number of men at once surrounded her. Dartmouth continued to watch her for a few moments, and concluded that he would like to know her, even if she were a girl and an *ingenue*. She was fascinating, apart from her beauty; she looked different from other women, and that was quite enough to command his interest. It would be too much trouble to struggle for an introduction at present, however, and he allowed himself to be taken possession of by his cousin, Margaret Talbot, who, with the easy skill of a spoiled beauty, dismissed several other cavaliers upon his approach. They wandered about for a time, and finally entered a tiny boudoir fitted up to represent a bird's nest in tufted blue satin, with an infinite number of teacups so arranged as to be cunningly suggestive of eggs whose parents had been addicted to Decorative Art.

"What do you think of the new beauty?" demanded Mrs. Talbot, as they

established themselves upon an extremely uncomfortable little sofa upheld between the outstretched wings of the parent bird, which was much too large for the eggs.

"She does very well," replied Harold, who was wise in his generation.

Mrs. Talbot put her handkerchief suddenly to her face and burst into tears. Dartmouth turned pale.

"What is it, Margaret?" he said. "Do not cry here; people will notice, and make remarks."

She made no reply, and he got up and moved restlessly about the room; then returning he stood looking moodily down upon her.

Some years before, just about the time he was emerging from knickerbockers, he had been madly in love with this golden-haired, hazel-eyed cousin of his, and the lady, who had the advantage of him in years, being unresponsive, he had haunted a very large and very deep ornamental pond in his grandmother's park for several weeks with considerable persistency. Had the disease attacked him in summer it is quite probable that this story would never have been written, for his nature was essentially a high-strung and tragic one; but fortunately he met his beautiful cousin in mid-winter, and 'tis a despairing lover indeed who breaks the ice. Near as their relationship was, he had not met her again until the present winter, and then he had found that years had lent her additional fascination. She was extremely unhappy in her domestic life, and naturally she gave him her confidence and awoke that sentiment which is so fatally akin to another and sometimes more disastrous one.

Dartmouth loved her with that love which a man gives to so many women before the day comes wherein he recognizes the spurious metal from the real. It was not, as in its first stage, the mad, unreasoning fancy of an unfledged boy, but that sentiment, half sympathy, half passion, which a woman may inspire who is not strong enough to call out the highest and best that lies hidden in a man's nature. This feeling for his cousin, if not the supremest that a woman can command, bore one characteristic which distinguished it from any of his previous passions. For the first time in his life he had resisted a temptation—principally because she was his cousin. With the instinct of his caste he acknowledged the obligation to avert dishonor in his own family where he could. And, aside from family

pride, he had a strong personal regard for his cousin which was quite independent of that sentiment which, for want of a better name, he called love. She was young, she was lonely, she was unhappy, and his calmer affection prompted him to protect her from himself, and not, after a brief period of doubtful happiness, to leave her to a lifetime of tormenting memories and regrets. She loved him, of course; and reckless with the knowledge of her ruined life, her hopeless future, and above all the certainty that youth and its delicious opportunities were slipping fast, she would doubtless have gone the way of most women under similar circumstances, had not Harold, for once in his life, been strong. Perhaps, if he had really loved her, he would not have been so self-sacrificing.

After her paroxysm of tears had partly subsided, he took her hand.
"What is the matter?" he asked, kindly. "Is there any more trouble?"

"It is the same," she said. "You know how unhappy I am; it was foolish of me to break down here, but I could not help it. Besides, there is another thing—I wish you would go away."

He walked to the end of the room, then returned and bent over her, placing his hand on the back of the sofa. "Very well," he said, "I will go. I should have gone before. I would have done so, but I hated to leave you alone."

He lifted her face and kissed her. She laid her head against his shoulder, then she suddenly pushed him from her with a low cry, and Dartmouth, following her gaze, turned his head in time to meet the scornful eyes of Miss Penrhyn as she dropped the portière from her hand. Dartmouth kicked aside a footstool with an exclamation of anger. He was acutely conscious of having been caught in a ridiculous position, and moreover, he would not be the chief sufferer.

"Oh, Harold! Harold!" gasped Margaret, "I am ruined. You know what women are. By this time to-morrow that girl will have told the story all over Paris."

The words made Dartmouth forget his personal annoyance for the moment. "Do not cry any more," he said, kindly; "I am awfully sorry, but I will see what I can do. I will make a point of meeting the girl, and I will see that—do not worry. I will go at once, and you had better remain here for the present. There is no danger of anyone intruding upon you: this room was never intended for three."
He paused a moment. "Good-bye, Margaret!" he said.

She started sharply, but rose to her feet and put out her hand:
"Good-bye," she said.

He lifted her hand to his lips, then the portière fell behind him and she was alone.

He went directly to the ball-room and asked Hollington to present him to Miss Penrhyn. She was standing with her back to him and did not notice his approach, and his name was pronounced while her eyes were still on the face of the man to whom she was talking. She gave him a glance of swift scorn, bent her head haughtily, and all but turned her back upon him. But Dartmouth, indolent and lazy as he was, was not the man to be lightly disposed of when once roused to action.

"Bolton," he said, to her companion, "they are waiting for you in the billiard-room; you have an engagement to play a game with our host at twelve. It is now exactly the hour. I will take charge of Miss Penrhyn;" and before the bewildered Bolton could protest, or Miss Penrhyn realize his purpose, he had drawn the girl's arm through his own and was half-way down the room.

"Where have I met you before?" he demanded, when they were safely lost in the crowd. "Surely, we are not altogether strangers."

"I do not know," haughtily; "I have never met you before that I am aware of."

"It is strange, but I cannot get rid of the idea that I have seen you elsewhere," continued Dartmouth, unmoved. "And yet, if I had, I most assuredly could not have forgotten it."

"You are flattering, but I must ask you to excuse me. I am engaged for the next dance, and I see my partner looking for me."

"Indeed, I shall do nothing of the kind. I have no idea of resigning you so lightly." And he calmly led her into a small withdrawing-room and seated her behind a protecting screen. He took the chair beside her and smiled down into her angry face. Her eyes, which had a peculiar yellow flame in them, now within, now just without the iris, as if from a tiny lantern hidden in their depths, were blazing.

"Well?" he said, calmly; "of what are you thinking?"

"That you are the rudest and the most impertinent man I have ever met," she replied, hotly.

"You are unkind; I have been unfortunate enough to incur your disapproval, but you judge me cruelly. I am undoubtedly a very reprehensible character, Miss Penrhyn, but I don't think that I am worse than most men." He recognized at once that it would be folly to tell the usual lie: she would simply laugh in his face. He must accept the situation, plead guilty and make a skilful defense. Later, when he had established himself in her confidence, he would exonerate his cousin.

Miss Penrhyn's lip curled disdainfully. "I am not aware that I have asked you to justify yourself," she said. "It is of no possible interest to me whether you are better or worse than most men. It is quite possible, however," she added, hastily and unwillingly, "that in this case, as in others, there may be the relief of an exception to prove the rule."

Dartmouth saw his advantage at once. She was not merely disgusted; she was angry; and in her anger she forgot herself and condescended to sarcasm. There was one barrier the less to be broken down. "We are a bad lot, I am afraid, Miss Penrhyn," he replied, quietly; "but keep your illusions while you can. You are happier for them, and I would be the last to dispel them."

"You are considerate," she retorted: "it is more than possible you will not dispel my illusions; there will not be—"

"You mean to imply, delicately," he interrupted her, "that you do not consider me worthy of being added to the list of your acquaintances?"

"I really have given the matter no thought, and I do not see what advantage either side could derive from further acquaintance." But she colored slightly as she spoke, and turned to him an angrily severe profile.

"Don't you think," he said—and his calm, drawling tone formed a contrast to her own lack of control which she could not fail to appreciate—"don't you think that you judge me with exaggerated harshness? Do you think the life of any one of these men who have surrounded you to-night, and upon whom you certainly did not frown, would bear inspection? It would almost appear as if I had personally incurred your displeasure, you are so very hard upon me. You forget that my offense could not have any individual application for you. Had I known you, you

might reasonably have been indignant had I gone from you, a young girl, to things which you held to be wrong. But I did not know you; you must remember that. And as for the wrong itself, I hope the knowledge of greater wrong may never come to you. When you have lived in the world a few years longer, I am very much afraid you will look upon such things with an only too careless eye."

The cruel allusion to her youth told, and the girl's cheek flushed, as she threw back her head with a spirited movement which delighted Dartmouth, while the lanterns in her eyes leaped up afresh. Where had he seen those eyes before?

"I don't know what your ideas of honor may be in regard to the young ladies of your acquaintance," she said, with an additional dash of ice in her voice, "but it seems to me a peculiar kind of honor which allows a man to insult his hostess by making love to a married woman in her house."

"Pret-ty good for a baby!" thought Dartmouth. "She could not have done that better if she had been brought up Lady Langdon's daughter, instead of having been under that general's tuition, and emancipated from a life of seclusion, just about six months. Decidedly, she is worth cultivating." He looked at her reflectively. That he was in utter disgrace admitted of not a doubt. Women found little fault with him, as a rule. They had shown themselves willing, with an aptitude which savored of monotony, to take him on any terms; and to be sat in judgment upon by a penniless girl with the face and air of an angry goddess, had a flavor of novelty about it decidedly thrilling. He determined to conquer or die. Clever as she was, she was still absolutely a child, and no match for him. He placed his elbow on his knee and leaned his head on his hand.

"Your rebuke is a very just one," he said, sadly. "And I have only the poor excuse to offer that in this wicked world of ours we grow very callous, and forget those old codes of honor which men were once so strict about, no matter what the irregularities of their lives might be. I am afraid it is quite true that I am not fit to touch your hand; and indeed," he added hastily, "it is a miserable business all round, and God knows there is little enough in it."

She turned and regarded him with something less of anger, something more of interest, in her eyes.

"Then why do not you reform?" she asked, in a matter-of fact tone.
"Why do you remain so bad, if you regret it?"

"There is nothing else to do," gloomily "Life is such a wretched bore that the only thing to do is to seize what little spice there is in it, and the spice, alas! will never bear analysis."

"Are you unhappy?" she demanded. Her eyes were still disapproving, but her voice was a shade less cold.

He smiled, but at the same time he felt a little ashamed of himself, the weapons were so trite, and it was so easy to manage an unworldly-wise and romantic girl. There was nothing to do but go on, however. "No, I am not unhappy, Miss Penrhyn," he said; "that is, not unhappy in the sense you would mean. I am only tired of life. That is all—but it is enough."

"But you are very young," she said, innocently. "You cannot yet be thirty."

He laughed shortly. "I am twenty-eight, Miss Penrhyn—and I am—forty five. You cannot understand, and it is well you should not. But this much I can tell you. I was born with a wretched load of *ennui* on my spirits, and all things pall after a brief experience. It has been so since the first hour I can remember. My grandmother used to tell me that I should wake up some day and find myself a genius, that I rejoiced in several pointed indications toward that desirable end; that I had only to wait, and ample compensation for the boredom of life would come But, alas! I am twenty-eight, and there are no signs of genius yet. I am merely a commonplace young man pursuing the most commonplace of lives—but I am not going to bore you by talking about myself any longer. I never do. I do not know why I do so to-night. But there is something about you which is strangely sympathetic, in spite of your"—he hesitated—"your unkindness."

She had kept her eyes implacably on the opposite wall, but when he finished she turned to him suddenly, and he saw that her face had perceptibly relaxed.

"You impress me very strangely," she said, abruptly. "I am willing to tell you that frankly, and I hardly understand it. You are doubtless correct when you say I have no right to be angry with you, and I suppose it is also true that you are no worse than other men. When I pushed aside that portière to-night I felt an unreasoning anger which it would be hard to account for. Had it been Lord Bective Hollington or Mr. Bolton I—I should not have cared. I should not have been angry, I am sure of it. And yet I never saw you before to-day, and had no possible interest in you. I do not understand it. I hardly know whether I like you

very much or hate you very much."

He bent his head and looked down sharply into her eyes. He was so used to the coquetry and finesse of women! Was she like the rest? But the eyes she had turned to him were sincere to disquiet, and there was not a suggestion of coquetry about her.

"Do not hate me," he said, softly, "for I would give more for your good opinion than for that of any woman I know. No, I do not mean that for idle flattery. You may not realize it, but you are very different from other women—Oh, bother!"—this last under his breath, as their retreat was invaded by two indignant young men who insisted upon the lawful rights of which Dartmouth had so unblushingly deprived them. There was nothing to do but resign himself to his fate.

Knowing that a second uninterrupted conversation would be impossible with her that night, he left the house shortly after, not, however, before a parting word had assured him that though she still might disapprove, he would have many future opportunities to plead his cause, and, furthermore, that she would not risk the loss of his admiration by relating what she had seen. When he reached his apartment he exchanged his coat for a smoking-jacket, lit a cigar, and throwing himself down on a sofa, gave himself up to thoughts of Miss Penrhyn.

"A strange creature," he mentally announced. "If one can put one's trust in physiognomy, I should say she had about ten times more in her than dwells in ordinary women. She has no suspicion of it herself, however; she will make that discovery later on. I should like to have the power to render myself invisible; but no, I beg pardon, I should like to be present in astral body when her nature awakens. I have always wanted to study the successive psychological evolutions of a woman in love. Not of the ordinary compound of the domestic and the fashionable; there is nothing exciting in that; and besides, our realistic novelists have rendered such researches on my part superfluous; but of a type, small, but each member of which is built up of infinite complexities—like this girl. The nature would awaken with a sudden, mighty shock, not creep toward the light with slow, well-regulated steps—but, bah! what is the use of indulging in boneless imaginings? One can never tell what a woman of that sort will think and feel, until her experience has been a part of his own. And there is no possibility of my falling in love with her, even did I wish it, which I certainly do not. The man who fascinates is not the man who loves. Pardon my modesty,

most charming of grandmothers, if your soul really lurks behind that wonderful likeness of yours, as I sometimes think it does, but a man cannot have the double power of making many others feel and of feeling himself. At least, so it seems to me. Love lightly roused is held as lightly, and one loses one's respect for even the passion in the abstract. Of what value can a thing be which springs into life for a trick of manner, an atom or two more of that negative quality called personal magnetism, while wiser and better men pass by unnoticed? One naturally asks, What is love? A spiritual enthusiasm which a cold-blooded analyst would call sentimentality, or its correlative, a fever of the senses? Neither is a very exalted set of conditions. I have been through both more than once, and if my attacks have been light, I have been the better enabled to study my fair inspiration. I never discovered that she felt more deeply; simply more strongly, more tempestuously, after the nature of women. Her feelings were not more complex, they were merely more strongly accentuated. A woman in love imagines that she is the pivot on which the world revolves. A general may immortalize himself, an emperor be assassinated and his empire plunged into a French Revolution, and her passing interest is not roused; nor is she unapt to wonder how others can be interested in matters so purely impersonal. She thinks she loves as no woman ever loved before, and sometimes she succeeds in making the man think so too. But when a man has gone through this sort of thing a couple of dozen times, he becomes impressed with the monotony, the shallowness, and the racial resemblance, so to speak, of the divine passion; and his own capacity for indulging in it diminishes in proportion. If Miss Penrhyn is capable of anything wider and deeper and higher than her average sister, I have met her too late to be inspired with anything beyond passing curiosity. In fact, I doubt if I could be capable of so much as indulging in the surmise had I never known my grandmother. *There* was a woman unique in her generation. So strong was her individuality that I was forced to appreciate it, even in the days when I used to make her life a burden by planting her silver spoons in the rose-garden and re-setting her favorite cuttings wrong side up. I wish she had lived longer; it would have been both a pleasure and a profit to have studied and analyzed her. And how I should like to know her history! That she had one there is no doubt. The lines of repression in her face were the strongest I have ever seen, to say nothing of the night I found her standing over the Byzantine chest with her hands full of yellow papers. There were no lines of repression in her face just then; she looked fairly murderous. She did not see me, and I left with a brevity worthy of its cause. I should like to know who wrote those letters. I looked for them after her death, but she had either destroyed them or else that old Byzantine chest has a secret drawer. If it has I'll discover it some day when time hangs heavily.

"No," he continued, settling himself down more comfortably among his pillows, and tossing the end of his cigar into the grate, "I shall marry some day, undoubtedly, but I must find a woman with the brains and charm of my grandmother. This girl, they say, is brilliant, and certainly she cut me up sharply enough to-night; but she would be altogether too much to handle for a lifetime. It would be very pleasant for a time, but a deuced bore later on. What a beauty she is, though! I cannot get her out of my mind. She has been posing before my mental vision all the time I have been trying to think about something else. Those eyes—gods! And what a figure! What—"

With a nervous, precipitate motion, he rose to his feet and drew in his breath, as if to throw a sudden load from his chest. He stood irresolute for a moment, then revolving slowly on his heel, walked, as if independently of his own volition, over to his desk. He felt very strangely; he did not remember to have ever felt so strangely before. His head had become suddenly confused, but at the same time he was aware that his brain had thrown open its doors to a new arrival, and that the visitor was trying to make itself heard. It appeared to be a visitor of great importance, and Dartmouth was conscious that it had presented itself to his perceptions in the form of an extraordinarily strong impulse, a great and clamorous Desire. He had been aware of the same desire before, but only in an abstract way, a general purposeless longing; but now this peremptory, loudly-knocking consciousness was vaguely suggesting another—just behind. It would almost seem, if it were not too preposterous a supposition, as if that second struggling consciousness were trying to announce itself under the high-sounding title of—what? He could not formulate it. If his brain were only not so confused! What could so suddenly have affected him? He was always so clear-headed and logical. Was he going to be ill? When he reached his desk he sat down before it and mechanically took up his pen. He leaned his head on his hand, like a man in a state of mental exhaustion, and closed his eyes for a moment. Then he opened them wide, with an exclamation which was almost a cry; and of his usual calm repose there was not a trace remaining. He leaned forward breathlessly and put his pen to the paper. "Her eyes! Her skin! Her form!" he muttered uncertainly. "Her—her—her—Oh! *what* is it? *Why* cannot I say it? It has come at last—*she* was right after all—but the words—the words—why will not they come? The music is there—a great rhythm and harmony—but the words are floating about like wraiths of mist. If I could only grasp and crystallize them, and set them to that wonderful music, the world—the world would rise at last and call me great! Her eyes—her hair—oh, my God, *what* is it?" He threw down his pen and staggered to his feet. His face was blanched and drawn, and his eyes had lost

their steady light. He grasped the chair to save himself from falling; he had lost over himself both physical and mental control. It seemed to him that two beings, two distinct entities, were at war within his brain—that new, glorious consciousness, and a tangible power above, which forced it down with an iron hand—down—down—into the depths of his mind, where its cries for speech came up in faint, inarticulate murmurs. And it tried and tried, that strange new thing, to struggle from its dungeon and reach the wide, free halls of his thought, but it could not; it beat against that unrelaxing iron hand only to fall back again and again. And it sang and sang and sang, in spite of its struggles and captivity. The faint, sweet echo came up—if he could but catch the words! If he could but dash aside that iron hand, and let his brain absorb them! Surely a word or two must force their way—yes! yes! they had come! "Her face! her form!"—He tore open his waistcoat; his lungs felt as if they had been exhausted. Then, how he never knew, he managed to reach his sofa, and fell face downward upon it; and the next morning, when his valet came in and drew aside the curtains and let in the light of mid-day, he found him there as he had fallen.

III.

Harold Dartmouth came of a family celebrated throughout its history for producing men of marked literary and political ability. Few generations had passed without a Dartmouth distinguishing himself, and those members of the family less gifted were not in the habit of having their fine intellectual qualities called to account. The consequence was that their young descendant, who inherited all the family cleverness, although as yet he had betrayed the possession of none of its higher gifts, paid the penalty of his mental patrimony. His brain was abnormally active, both through conditions of heredity and personal incitement; and the cerebral excitation necessarily produced resulted not infrequently in violent reaction, which took the form of protracted periods of melancholy. These attacks of melancholy had begun during his early school-days, when, a remarkably bright but extremely wild boy, he had been invariably fired with ambition as examinations approached, and obliged to cram to make up for lost time. As years went by they grew with his growth, and few months passed without an attack of the blues more or less violent, no matter how brief. They came after hours of brooding over his desire to distinguish himself, and his fatal want of ability; they came during his intervals of purely intellectual disgust with himself and with life; but more frequently still they came upon him from no apparent cause whatever. They were a part of his personality, just as humor, or light, unthinking gaiety, or a constantly bubbling wit may form the predominating characteristic of another man.

For a week after the night of his futile impulse to put into shape the nebulous verse which had tormented his brain, no one saw Harold Dartmouth. The violent shock and strain had induced an attack of mental and spiritual depression which amounted to prostration, and he lay on his sofa taking no notice of the days as they slipped by, eating little and speaking to no one. At first Jones, his man-servant, was not particularly disturbed. He had brought Dartmouth up, and had come to look upon his moods as a matter of course. He therefore confined

himself to forcing his master to take his food and to parrying the curiosity of the French servants; he knew Dartmouth's temper too well to venture to call a doctor, and he hoped that in a few days the mood would wear itself out. But at the end of a week he became seriously alarmed. He had spent the last day but one in a desperate and fruitless attempt to rouse Dartmouth, and had used every expedient his ingenuity could suggest. Finally, at his wits' end, he determined to call in the help of Lord Bective Hollington, who was Dartmouth's most intimate friend, and had lived with him and his moods for months together. He came to this decision late on the night of the seventh day, and at eleven the next morning he presented himself at Hollington's apartments in the Rue Lincoln. Hollington was still in bed and reading the morning paper, but he put it down at once.

"Send him in," he said. "Something is the matter with Harold," he continued to himself. "Something unusual has been the matter with him all the week, when he wouldn't even see me. Well, Jones, what is it?" as that perturbed worthy entered. "You are an early visitor."

"Oh! my Lord!" exclaimed Jones, tearfully; "something dreadful hails Master 'Arold."

"What is it?" demanded Hollington, quickly. "Is he ill?"

Jones shook his head. "No, my Lord; I wish 'ee was. 'Ee's worse than hill. 'Ee's got one of 'is moods."

"Poor Harold! I thought he had got over all that since he had given himself over to the distractions of wine, woman, and song. I haven't seen him in one of his moods for three or four years."

"Ah, sir, I 'ave, then. 'Ee don't 'ave them so frequent like before he begun to travel, but hevery wunst in a while 'ee will be terrible for two hor three days; but I never see hanything like this before, heven at Crumford 'All. 'Ee 'as never spoke for a week; not since the night of the ball hat the Russian Legation."

"By Jove! you don't mean it. I thought he was on a 'private tear,' as the Americans say; but I don't like this at all. Just clear out, and I'll be dressed and over in his rooms in less than half an hour." And he sprang out of bed before Jones had closed the door.

He was but a few moments dressing, as he had promised, and was at Dartmouth's

apartment before Jones had time to become impatient, nervous as he was. He pulled aside the portière of the salon and looked in. The curtains were drawn and the room was dark, but on a sofa near the window he saw his friend lying. He picked his way over through the studiously disordered furniture and touched Dartmouth on the shoulder.

"Hal!" he said, "Hal!"

Dartmouth opened his eyes and looked up. "Is it you, Becky?" he said, languidly. "Go away and let me alone." But his words and manner indicated that the attack was at last "wearing itself out."

"I will do nothing of the sort," replied Hollington. "Get up off that sofa this moment. A week! I am ashamed of you. What would the old lady say?"

"She would understand," murmured Dartmouth. "She always understood. I wish she were here now."

"I wish she were. She would soon have you out of this. Get up. Don't be a fool."

"I am not a fool. I have got one of the worst of the old attacks, and I can't shake it off; that is all. Go away, and let me fight it out by myself."

"I will not move from this room, if I stay here for six months, until you go with me. So make up your mind to it." And he threw himself into an easy-chair, and lighting a cigar, proceeded leisurely to smoke it.

Dartmouth turned uneasily once or twice. "You know I can't bear anyone near me," he said; "I want to be alone."

"You have been alone long enough. I will do as I have said."

There was silence for a few moments, and Dartmouth's restlessness increased. Hollington watched him closely, and after a time handed him a cigar and offered him a light. Dartmouth accepted both mechanically, and for a time the two men smoked in silence. When Dartmouth finished he rose to his feet.

"Very well," he said, "have your own way. Wait until I dress and I will go out with you." He went into his dressing-room and returned about an hour later, during which time Hollington had thrown back the curtains and written a couple

of letters. Dartmouth was still haggard and very pale, but his face had been shaved and he looked something like himself once more. Hollington rose and threw down his pen at once.

"I will drop in on our way back and finish this letter," he said. "You must get out of the house as quickly as possible. By Jove! how bad you look!" He put his hand on his friend's shoulder and looked at him a moment. He was the average Englishman in most of his details, tall, well-built, with a good profile, and a ruddy Saxon face. His individual characteristics were an eternal twinkle in his eye, a forehead with remarkably well-developed reflectives, and a very square chin and jaw. Just now the twinkle was less aggressive and his face had softened noticeably. "There is no help for it, I suppose, Hal, is there?" he said.

Dartmouth looked back at him with a smile, and a good deal of affection in his eyes. "No, old fellow," he replied; "I am afraid there is not. But they are rarely as bad as this last. And—thank you for coming."

They went out together and walked to the Café Anglais on the Boulevard des Italiens. The air was keen and cold, the walk a long one, and Dartmouth felt like another man by the time he sat down to breakfast. One or two other men joined them. Hollington was unusually witty, the conversation was general and animated, and when Dartmouth left the café the past week seemed an ugly dream. In the afternoon he met the wife of the American Consul-General, Mrs. Raleigh, in the Bois, and learned from her that Margaret Talbot had left Paris. This left him free to remain; and when Mrs. Raleigh reminded him that her doors were open that evening, he asked permission at once to present himself. Mrs. Raleigh not only had a distinguished and interesting salon, but she casually remarked that she expected Miss Penrhyn, and Dartmouth felt a strong desire to see the girl again.

IV.

When, a few hours later, Dartmouth entered Mrs. Raleigh's salon, he saw Miss Penrhyn surrounded by some half-dozen men, and talking with the abandon of a pleased child, her eyes sparkling, her cheeks flushed. As he went over to her the flush faded slightly, but she held out her hand and smiled up into his eyes.

"You have been ill," she murmured, sympathetically. "You look so still."

"Yes," he said, "I have been ill; otherwise I should have made an effort to see you before. I suppose I cannot get a word with you to-night May I call on you to morrow morning?"

"Yes, you may come."

"Thank you. And there will not be a dozen other men there?"

She smiled. "I do not think there will be anyone else. I rarely receive in the morning."

"But are you sure?"

He had a long sweep of black lash, through which the clear blue of his eyes had a way of shining with a pleading, softening lustre, immensely effective. It was an accepted fact that when Mr. Dartmouth turned on this battery of eyes and lash, resistance was a forgotten art and protest a waste of time. Miss Penrhyn did not prove an exception to the rule. She hesitated, then answered, with a little laugh, as if amused at herself, "Well, yes, I am sure."

"Very well, then, remember, I look upon that as a promise. And I will try to get a word with you later, but there is no hope now."

He moved off and, leaning against the opposite wall, covertly watched her, while ostensibly listening with due sympathy to the hopes and fears of an old friend and embryo author. In a moment he made a discovery—of his friend's confidence I regret to say he heard not one word—she did not treat him as she treated other men. Well bred as she was, there was a perceptible embarrassment in her manner whenever he addressed her, but with these other men she was talking and smiling without a trace of effort or restraint. He knew what it meant. He was thoroughly aware that he was a man of extraordinary magnetism, and he had seen his power over a great many women. Ordinarily, to a man so sated with easy success as Harold Dartmouth, the certainty of conquest would have strangled the fancy, but there was something about this girl which awakened in him an interest he did not pretend to define, except that he found her more beautiful, and believed her to be more original, than other women. He was anxious to have a longer conversation with her, and ascertain whether or not he was correct in his latter supposition. He did not want to marry, and she was too good to flirt with, but platonics were left. And platonics with Miss Penrhyn suggested variety.

He also made another discovery. Someone played an interminable piece of classic music. During its recital it was not possible for Miss Penrhyn to talk with the men about her, and as the animation faded from her face, he noticed the same preoccupied look overspread it which had characterized it the night she had entered the ball-room at the Legation. Something troubled her, but to Dartmouth's quick eye it was not an active trouble, it was more like a shadow which took possession of her face in its moments of repose with the quiet assurance of a dweller of long standing. Possibly she herself was habitually forgetful of its cause; but the cause had struck deep into the roots of her nature, and its shadow had become a part of her beauty. Dartmouth speculated much and widely, but rejected the hypothesis of a lover. She had never loved for a moment; and in spite of his platonic predilections, this last of his conclusions held a very perceptible flavor of satisfaction. When the classic young lady had gracefully acknowledged the raptures she had evoked, and tripped back to her seat, Miss Penrhyn was asked to sing, and then Dartmouth saw his opportunity; he captured her when she had finished, and bore her off to the conservatory before anyone could interfere.

"You sing charmingly," he said. "Will you sing for me to-morrow?"

"If you can stretch flattery to that extent, with Patti at the Grand

Opera House."

"I have been listening to Patti for fifteen years, and man loves variety. I wish I could tell where I have seen you before," he continued, abruptly. "Do you look like your mother? I may have seen her in my youth."

Her face flushed a sudden, painful red, and then turned very pale. "I do not remember my mother," she stammered. "She died when I was quite young."

"Poor thing!" thought Dartmouth. "How girls do grieve for an unknown mother!" "But you have seen her picture?" he said, aloud.

"Yes, I have seen her pictures. They are dark, like myself. But that is all."

"You must have had a lonely childhood, brought up all by yourself in that gloomy old castle I have heard described."

She colored again and crushed a fern-leaf nervously between her fingers. "Yes, it was lonesome. Yes—those old castles always are."

"By the way—I remember—my mother spent a summer down there once, some twelve or thirteen years ago, and—it comes back to me now—I remember having heard her speak of Rhyd-Alwyn as the most picturesque castle in Wales. She must have known your mother, of course. And you must have known the children. *Why* was I not there?"

"I do not remember," she said, rising suddenly to her feet, and turning so pale that Dartmouth started to his in alarm. "Come; let us go back to the salon."

"There is some mystery," thought Dartmouth. "Have I stumbled upon a family skeleton? Poor child!" But aloud he said, "No, do not go yet; I want to talk to you." And when he had persuaded her to sit down once more, he exerted himself to amuse her, and before long had the satisfaction of seeing that she had forgotten her agitation. It did not take him long to discover that she had read a great deal and that her favorite reading had been travels, and he entertained her with graphic recitals of such of his own varied experience as he thought most likely to interest her. She listened with flattering attention and a natural and keen sense of humor, and he was stimulated to a good deal more effort than habit prompted. "You will enjoy travelling," he said, finally; "and you will not travel like other women. You will see something besides picture-galleries, and

churches, and *Bons marchés*. I believe that you would realize what it is to be an atom of to-day in the presence of twenty centuries."

She smiled up at him with quick sympathy. "Yes," she said, "I believe one must more frequently be awed than pleased, or even enraptured. And I can imagine how even the most self-content of men, if he absorb the meaning of Europe, must feel his insignificance. If he has wit enough to reflect that all these represented ages, with their extraordinary results, abstract and concrete, have come and gone with no aid of his; that no prophet ever whispered his name among the thousands of great in every conceivable destiny; that he is, mentally and physically, simply a result of evolution and civilization, not, in any way worth mentioning, a cause, he will be apt to reflect as well upon how many men, all told, have ever heard of his existence or who besides his grandchildren will remember him a generation hence. He will probably wish that arithmetic had never been invented. Or if he be one of the great of earth, he is only one after all, and, if he be in danger of bursting from inflation, he can be grateful for a timely reminder that there are several millions on the globe who have never heard of him, and a few millions more who do not and never will take the faintest interest in him or his career. But it needs the presence of twenty centuries to bring the fact of man's individual insignificance home to most of us."

"She is clever," thought Dartmouth, as he dismissed his brougham a little later and walked home alone. "Very un-modern and most reprehensibly unconventional, in so much as she thinks, and develops her mental muscles; but very charming, notwithstanding. There is an incongruity about her, however, which is almost absurd. She has been brought up in such seclusion—and under the sole tuition of a man not only a pedant, but who has never stepped through the gates of the last generation—that she reminds one of those fair English dames who used to prowl about their parks with the Phaedo under their arm and long for a block on which to float down to prosperity; Plato had quite enough to do to sail for himself. And upon this epitomized abstraction of the sixteenth century, this mingling of old-time stateliness, of womanly charm, of tougher mental fibre, are superimposed the shallow and purely objective attributes of the nineteenth-century belle and woman of fashion. It is almost a shock to hear her use our modern vernacular, and when she relapses into the somewhat stilted language in which she is still accustomed to think, it is a positive relief. She is conscious that she is apt to be a little high-flown, and when she forgets herself and is natural, she quickly pulls herself in with a round turn, which is an apology in itself. Upon such occasions a man wants to get his fingers about the throat of

the world. She has acquired all the little arts and mannerisms of the London drawing-room girl, and although they do not sit ungracefully upon her, because she is innately graceful, and too clever to assume a virtue which she cannot assimilate, still it is like a foreigner who speaks your language to perfection in all but accent, and whom you long to hear in his own tongue. Put her back in her Welsh castle, and the scales would fall from her as from a mermaid who loves. If she returns to her father at the end of the season, I think I will call upon her six months later. She should go now, though; scales are apt to corrode. But what is the mystery about the mother? Did she elope with the coachman? But, no; that is strictly a modern freak of fashion. Perhaps she died in a mad-house. Not improbable, if she had anything of the nature of this girl in her, and Sir Iltyd sowed the way with thorns too sharp. Poor girl! she is too young for mysteries, whatever it is. I shall like to know her better, but she is so intense that she makes me feel frivolous. I am never intense except when I have the blues, and intensity, with my peculiar mental anatomy, is a thing to be avoided. In what is invariably the last chapter of those attacks of morbid dissatisfaction I shall some day feel an intense desire to blow out my brains, and shall probably succumb. I wonder if she will induce another rhyming attack to-night. Was that night a dream or a reality? Could I have had a short but sharp attack of brain fever? Perhaps the less I think about it the better; but it is decidedly hard to be gifted with the instincts of a poet and denied the verbal formulation. And it was the most painfully realistic, aggressively material thing, that conflict in my brain, that mortal ever experienced. That, however, may have been a mere figment of my excited imagination. But what excited my imagination? That is the question. If I remember aright, I was mentally discoursing with some enthusiasm upon Miss Penrhyn's charms, but in strict impartiality it cannot be said that I was excited. The excitement was like that produced by an onslaught from behind. It is the more surprising, as I think it may be conceded that I have myself pretty well in hand by this time, and that my nerves, unruly as nature saw fit to make them, are now my very abject slaves. Occasionally one of our fiction carpenters flies off at a tangent and treats us to a series of intellectual gymnastics, the significance of which—so we are called upon to digest—is that the soul of one dead, finding its present clime too warm—or too cold—or having left something undone on earth, takes temporary and summary possession of an unfortunate still in the flesh, and through this unhappy medium endeavors to work his will. Perhaps that is what is the matter with me. Pollok, perchance, who died in his flower, thinking that he had not given the world a big enough pill to swallow, wants to concoct another dose in my presumably vacant brain. I appreciate the compliment, but I disdain to be Pollok's mouthpiece: I will be original or nothing. Besides, it is deuced

uncomfortable. And I should like to know if there is anything in life more bitter than the sense, even momentary, of loss of self-mastery. Well, as I remarked a few moments since, the less I think about it the better, considering my unfortunate peculiarities. I will go and see Miss Penrhyn to-morrow; that will be sufficiently distracting for the present."

V.

He found her the next day in a pretty morning-room, dressed in a long white gown, with a single great yellow rose at her throat. She had a piece of tapestry in her hand, and as she rose to greet him, the plain, heavy folds of her gown clinging about her, and her dark hair bound closely around her head with a simplicity that was almost severe, Dartmouth again felt a humorous sense of having suddenly stepped into a page of a past century.

"What are you doing?" he said, as he took a chair opposite her. "Women never make tapestry—real tapestry—in these days. You remind me of Lady Jane Grey. Shall I get a volume of Greek and read it to you?"

She laughed. "I fear it would literally be Greek to me. Latin and I had a fierce and desperate war, but I conquered in the end. With the Greek, however, the war was extremely brief, and he marched off with colors flying, and never condescended to renew the engagement."

"For all mercies make us duly thankful. A woman who knows Greek is like a hot-house grape; a mathematically perfect thing, but scentless and flavorless."

"You are consoling; and, indeed, I cannot see that it would have done me much good; it certainly would not have increased my popularity among your exacting sex. You are the first man to whom I have dared acknowledge I know Latin. Lady Langdon was kind enough to give me elaborate warnings and instructions before she launched me into society. Among other things, she constantly reiterated, 'Never let a man suspect that you know anything, my dear. He will fly from you as a hare to cover. I want you to be a belle, and you must help me.' I naturally asked her what I was to talk about, and she promptly replied 'Nothing. Study the American girl, they have the most brilliant way of jabbering meaningless recitativos of any tribe on the face of the earth. Every sentence is an epigram with the point left out. They are like the effervescent part of a bottle of

soda-water.' This was while we were still in Wales, and she sent for six books by two of those American novelists who are supposed to be the expounders-in-chief of the American girl at home and abroad, and made me read them. It nearly killed me, but I did it, and I learned a valuable lesson. I hated the American girl, but I felt as if I had been boiled in soda-water and every pore of my body had absorbed it. I felt ecstatically frivolous, and commonplace, and flashing, and sizzling. And—I assure you this is a fact, although you may not give me credit for such grim determination and concentration of purpose—but I never eat my breakfast before I have read an entire chapter from one of those two authors, it adjusts my mental tone for the day and keeps me in proper condition."

Dartmouth threw back his head and gave vent to the heartiest burst of laughter he had indulged in for years. "Upon my word, you are original," he exclaimed, delightedly, "and for heaven's sake, don't try to be anything else. You could not be an American girl if you tried for a century, for the reason that you have too many centuries behind you. The American girl is charming, exquisite, a perfect flower—but thin. She is like the first fruit of a new tree planted in new soil. Her flavor is as subtle and vanishing as pistachio, but there is no richness, no depth, no mellowness, no suggestion of generations of grafting, or of orchards whose very sites are forgotten. The soda-water simile is good, but the American girl, in her actual existence—not in her verbal photographs, I grant you—is worthy of a better. She is more like one glass of champagne-*frappe*, momentarily stimulating, but quickly forgotten. When I was in America, I met the most charming women in New York—I did not spend two weeks, all told, in Washington—and New York is the concentrated essence, the pinnacle of American civilization and achievement. But although I frequently talked to one or another of those women for five hours at a time without a suggestion of fatigue, I always had the same sensation in regard to them that I had in regard to their waists while dancing—they were unsatisfactory, intangible. I never could be sure I really held a woman in my arms, and I never could remember a word I had exchanged with them. But they are charming—that word describes them 'down to the ground.'"

"That word 'thin' is good, too," she replied; "and I think it describes their literature better than any other. They write beautifully those Americans, they are witty, they are amusing, they are entertaining, they delineate character with a master hand; they give us an exact idea of their peculiar environment and conditions; and the way they handle dialect is a marvel; but—they are thin; they ring hollow; they are like sketches in pen-and-ink; there is no color, no warmth,

and above all, no perspective. I don't know that they are even done in sharp black-and-white; to me the pervading tone is gray. The American author depresses me; he makes me feel commonplace and new and unballasted. I always feel as if I were the 'millionth woman in superfluous herds'; and when one of those terrible American authors attacks my type, and carves me up for the delectation of the public, I shall go back to Wales, nor ever emerge from my towers again. And they are so cool and calm and deliberate, and so horribly exact, even the lesser lights. They always remind me of a medical student watching the workings of the exposed nervous system of a chloroformed hare."

Dartmouth looked at her with some intensity in his gaze. "I am glad your ideas are so singularly like my own," he said. "It is rather remarkable they should be, but so it is. You have even a way of putting your thoughts that strikes me as familiar, and which, out of my natural egotism, I find attractive. But I wish you would go back to your old castle; the world will spoil you."

"I shall return in a month or two now; my father is lonely without me."

"I suppose he spoils you," said Dartmouth, smiling. "I imagine you were an abominable infant. Tell me of some of the outrageous things you used to do. I was called the worst child in three counties; but, I doubt not, your exploits discounted mine, as the Americans say."

"Oh, mine are too bad to relate," she exclaimed, with a nervous laugh, and coloring swiftly, as she had done the night before. "But you were ill for a whole week, were you not? Was it anything serious?"

Dartmouth felt a sudden impulse to tell her of his strange experience. He was not given to making confidences, but he felt *en rapport* with this girl as he had never felt with man or woman before. He had a singular feeling, when talking with or listening to her, of losing his sense of separateness. It was not that he felt de-individualized, but that he had an accession of personality. It was pleasant because it was novel, but at the same time it was uncomfortable because it was a trifle unnatural. He smiled a little to himself. Was it a case of affinity after all? But he had no time to analyze. She was waiting for an answer, and in a moment he found himself yielding to his impulse and giving her a graphic account of his peculiar visitation.

At first she merely dropped her tapestry and listened attentively, smiling and

blushing a little when he told her what had immediately preceded the impulse to write. But gradually the delicate pink left her face, and she began to move in the spasmodic, uncontrollable way of a person handling an electric battery. She clasped the arms of her chair with such force that her arms looked twisted and rigid, and finally she bent slowly forward, gazing up into his face with eyes expanded to twice their natural size and not a vestige of color in her cheek or lips: she looked like a corpse still engaged in the mechanical act of gazing on the scene of agony which had preceded its death. Suddenly she sprang to her feet and threw out her hands. "Stop!" she cried; "stop!"

"What is it?" he demanded, rising to his feet in amazement; he had been watching her with more or less surprise for some time. "I am afraid I have frightened you and made you nervous. I had better have kept my confidence to myself."

"No, no," she cried, throwing back her head and clasping her hands about it; "it is not that I am frightened—only—it was so strange! While you were talking it seemed—oh! I cannot describe it!—as if you were telling me something which I knew as well as yourself. When you spoke it seemed to me that I knew and could put into words the wonderful verse-music which was battling upward to reach your brain. They were, they were—I know them so well. I have known them always; but I cannot—I cannot catch their meaning!" Suddenly she stepped backward, dropped her hands, and colored painfully. "It is all purest nonsense, of course," she said, in her ordinary tone and manner, except for its painful embarrasment. "It is only your strong, picturesque way of telling it which presented it as vividly to my mind as if it were an experience of my own. I never so much as dreamed of it before you began to speak."

Dartmouth did not answer her for a moment. His own mind was in something of a tumult. In telling the story he had felt, not a recurrence of its conditions, but a certain sense of their influence; and the girl's manner and words were extraordinary. It could hardly be possible, even in cold blood, to understand their meaning. She was indisputably not acting. What she had said was very strange and unconventional, but from whatever source the words had sprung, they had not been uttered with the intention premeditated or spontaneous of making an impression upon him. They carried conviction of their sincerity with them, and Dartmouth was sensible that they produced a somewhat uncanny but strangely responsive effect upon himself. But what did it mean? That in some occult way she had been granted a glimpse into the depths of his nature was unthinkable. He

was not averse to indulging a belief in affinity; and that this girl was his was not a disagreeable idea; but his belief by no means embraced a second, to the effect that the soul of one's antitype is as an open book to the other. Could her mind be affected? But no. She was a very unusual girl, possibly an eccentric one; but he flattered himself that he knew a lunatic when he saw one. There was left then but the conclusion that she possessed a strongly and remarkably sympathetic nature, as yet unbridled and unblunted by the world, and that he had made a dangerous imprint upon it. He was not unduly vain, but he was willing to believe that she would not vibrate so violently to every man's touch.

This point settled to the best of his capabilities, he allowed a second consciousness, which had been held under for the moment, during the exercisings of his analytical instinct, to claim his consideration. He was sensible that he was attracted as he had never been attracted by woman before. He had felt something of this on the night he had met her, and he had felt it more strongly on the occasion of their second interview; but now he was aware that it had suddenly taken the form of an overmastering desire for possession. He was by nature an impulsive man, but he was a man of the world as well, and he had his impulses pretty well subordinated to interest and common-sense; nevertheless he felt very much like doing a rash and impulsive thing at the present moment. He was a man of rapid thought, and these reflections chased each other through his mind much more quickly than I have been able to take them down, and Miss Penrhyn had averted her gaze and was playing nervously with some flowers in a basket on a pedestal beside her. She was acutely aware that she had made a fool of herself, and imagined that his hesitation was due to a polite desire to arrange his reply in such wise as not to make his appreciation of the fact too crudely apparent. At the same time she was a little exhausted under the reaction of a short but very severe mental strain. As for Dartmouth, he hesitated a moment longer. He was balancing several pros and cons very rapidly. He was aware that if he asked this girl to marry him and she consented, he must, as a man of honor, abide by the contract, no matter how much she might disappoint him hereafter. At the same time the knowledge that he was in love with her was growing more distinct every second. Doubtless the wisest course would be to go away for the present and postpone any decisive step until he knew her better. But he was not a patient man, and he was not in the habit of putting off until to-morrow what he could do to-day. (He considered that certain of the precepts instilled during childhood were of admirable practical value). The best thing in life was its morning: he did not like evening shadows and autumn twilights. There was nothing that could compare with the sweetness and fineness

of the flavor of novelty. When it was practicable to take advantage of one's impulses one had a brief draught of true philosopher's happiness. And, at all events, this girl was a lady, high-born, high-bred, intellectual, and unique. She was also plastic, and if she had a somewhat too high-strung nature, love had been known to work wonders before. He had mastered the difficult art of controlling himself; he was not afraid of not being able to control any woman who loved him. He went over to her and took her hands in his strong clasp.

"I have known you a very short—" he began, and then paused abruptly.

He had meant to speak calmly and not frighten her by the suddenness of his love-making, but her touch fired him and sent the blood to his head. He flung down her hands, and throwing his arms about her, kissed her full on the mouth. The girl turned very white and tried to free herself, but his arms were too strong, and in a moment she ceased to resist. She made no attempt to define her feelings as Dartmouth had done. She had felt the young man's remarkable magnetism the moment she had met him: she had been aware of a certain prophetic instinct of it some hours before, when he had stood in the window of a crowded café above a crowded thoroughfare and speculatively returned her gaze. And the night before, she had gone home with a very sharply outlined consciousness that she would never again meet a man who would interest her so deeply. To-day, this feeling had developed into one of strong reciprocal sympathy, and he had exerted a psychological influence over her as vaguely delightful as it was curious and painful. But all this was no preparation for the sudden tumult of feeling which possessed her under his kiss. She knew that it was love; and, that it had come to her without warning, made the knowledge no less keen and sure. Her first impulse was to resist, but purely out of that pride which forbids a woman to yield too soon; and when his physical strength made her powerless, she was glad that it should be so.

"Will you marry me?" he asked.

"Yes" she said; "I will marry you."

PART II.

THE DISCORD.

I.

Two weeks later Dartmouth had followed Weir Penrhyn to Wales. He had written to her father at once, and Sir Iltyd had informed him in reply that although aware of his rank and private fortune, through Lady Langdon's intimation, and although possessing a high regard and esteem for his father, still it was impossible for him to give any definite answer until he had known him personally, and he therefore invited him to come as soon as it pleased him and pay Rhyd-Alwyn a visit. Weir accordingly, and much to Lady Langdon's disgust, had returned to Wales at once; Dartmouth insisted upon an early marriage, and the longer they delayed obtaining Sir Iltyd's consent the longer must the wedding be postponed.

Dartmouth arrived late in the afternoon at Rhyd-Alwyn—a great pile of gray towers of the Norman era and half in ruins. He did not meet Sir Iltyd until a few minutes before dinner was announced, but he saw Weir for a moment before he went up-stairs to dress for dinner. His room was in one of the towers, and as he entered it he had the pleasurable feeling, which Weir so often induced, of stepping back into a dead and gone century. It looked as if unnumbered generations of Penrhyns had slept there since the hand of the furnisher had touched it. The hard, polished, ascetic-looking floor was black with age; the tapestry on the walls conveyed but a suggestion of what its pattern and color had been; a huge four-posted bed heavily shrouded with curtains stood in the centre of the room, and there were a number of heavy, carved pieces of furniture whose use no modern Penrhyn would pretend to explain. The vaulted ceiling was panelled, and the windows were narrow and long and high. Sufficient light found its way through them, however, to dress by, and there was a bright log-fire in the open fire-place.

"Jones," said Dartmouth, after he had admiringly examined the details of the room and was getting into his clothes, "just throw those curtains up over the roof of that bed. I like the antique, but I don't care to be smothered. Give me my necktie, and look out for the bed before you forget it."

Jones looked doubtfully up at the canopy. "That is pretty 'igh, sir," he said. "Hif I can find a step-ladder—"

"A step-ladder in a Welsh castle! The ante-deluge Penrhyns would turn in their graves, or to be correct, in their family vaults. No true Welsh noble is guilty of departing from the creed of his ancestors to the tune of domestic comforts. It is fortunate a man does not have to marry his wife's castle as well as herself. Get up on to that cabinet—it is twice as high as yourself—and you can manage the curtains quite easily."

Jones with some difficulty succeeded in moving the tall piece of furniture designated to the bed-side; then with the help of a chair he climbed to the top of it. He caught one of the tender-looking curtains carefully between his hands, and was about to throw it over the canopy, shutting his eyes and his mouth to exclude the possible dust, when the cabinet beneath him suddenly groaned, swayed, and the next moment there was a heavy crash, and he was groaning in the midst of a dozen antique fragments. Harold sprang forward in some alarm and picked him up. "By Jove!" he exclaimed, "I am afraid you are hurt; and what a row I have made! I might have known better than to tell you to trust your weight on that old thing."

Jones shook himself slowly, extended his arms and legs, announced himself unhurt, and Dartmouth gave his attention to the cabinet. "I shall have to initiate myself in my prospective father-in-law's good graces by announcing myself a spoiler of his household goods," he exclaimed, ruefully. "And a handsome old thing like that, too; it is a shame!" He thrust his hands into his pockets and continued looking down at the ruins with a quizzical smile on his face.

"By every law of romance and of precedent," he thought, "I ought to find in that cabinet the traditional packet of old letters which would throw a flood of light upon some dark and tragic mystery. Else why did I tell Jones to stand upon that particular cabinet instead of that one over there, which looks as if iron hammers could not break it; and why did Jones blindly obey me? That it should be meaningless chance is too flat to be countenanced. I should find the long lost

Mss. of that rhymer who took possession of me that night, and so save myself the discomfort of being turned into a Temple of Fame a second time. Truly there has been an element of the unusual throughout this whole affair with Weir. Once or twice I have felt as if about to sail out of the calm, prosaic waters of this every-day nineteenth-century life, and embark upon the phosphorescent sea of our sensational novelists—psychological, so-called. It is rather soon for the cabinet to break, however. It suggests an anti-climax, which would be inartistic. But such material was never intended to be thrown away by a hero of romance."

He kicked about among the fragments of the ruined cabinet, but was rewarded by no hollow ring. It was a most undutifully matter-of-fact and prosaic piece of furniture in its interior, however much it may have pleased the æsthetic sense outwardly. He gave it up after a time, and finished dressing. "Nothing in that but firewood," he announced to Jones, who had been watching his researches with some surprise. "Pile it up in a corner and leave it there until I have made my peace with Sir Iltyd."

He gave his necktie a final touch, then went down to the drawing-room, where he found the candles lit and Sir Iltyd standing on the hearth-rug beside his daughter. The old gentleman came forward at once and greeted him with stately, old-fashioned courtesy, his stern, somewhat sad features relaxing at once under Dartmouth's rare charm of manner. He was a fine-looking man, tall and slim like his daughter, but very fair. His head, well developed, but by no means massive, and scantily covered with gray hair, was carried with the pride which was the bone and fibre of his nature. Pride, in fact, albeit a gentle, chastened sort of pride, was written all over him, from the haughty curve of his eyebrow to the conscious wave of his small, delicate hand—pride, and love for his daughter, for he followed her every movement with the adoring eyes of a man for the one solace of a sad and lonely old age.

"It is so awfully good of you to let me come up here so soon," exclaimed Dartmouth. "But what do you suppose I have done to prove my gratitude?"

"Made the castle your own, I hope."

"I have. I proceeded at once to make myself at home by smashing up the furniture. One of your handsomest cabinets is now in ruins upon my bedroom floor."

Sir Iltyd looked at him with a somewhat puzzled glance. He had lived in seclusion for nearly thirty years, and was unaccustomed to the facetiousness of the modern youth. "Has anything happened?" he demanded anxiously.

Dartmouth smiled, but gave an account of the disaster in unadorned English, and received forgiveness at once. Had he confessed to having chopped his entire tower to pieces, Sir Iltyd would have listened without a tightening of the lips, and with the air of a man about to invite his guest to make a bonfire of the castle if so it pleased him. As for Weir, her late education made her appreciate the humor of the situation, and she smiled sympathetically at Harold over her father's shoulder.

They went into dinner a few moments later, and Sir Iltyd talked a good deal. Although a man of somewhat narrow limitations and one-sided views, as was but natural, taking into consideration the fact that his mental horizon had not been widened out by contact with his fellow-men for twenty-five years, he was, for a recluse, surprisingly well-informed upon the topics of the day. Dartmouth could not forbear making some allusion to the apparent paradox, and his host smiled and told him that as history had been his favorite study all his life, he could hardly be so inconsistent as to ignore the work which his more active contemporaries were making for the future chronicler. He then drew from Dartmouth a detailed account of that restless young gentleman's political experience in Russia, and afterward questioned him somewhat minutely about the American form of government. He seemed to be pleased with the felicity of expression and the well-stored mind of his would-be son-in-law, and lingered at the table longer than was his habit. There were no formalities at Rhyd-Alwyn. Weir remained with them, and when her father finally rose and went over to the hearth-rug, as if loth to leave the society of the young people, she went and stood beside him. He laid his arm across her shoulders, then turned to Dartmouth with a sigh. "You would take her from me," he said, sadly, "do you know that you will leave me to a very lonely life?"

"Oh, you will see enough of us," replied Harold, promptly. "We shall be back and forth all the time. And Crumford Hall, I can assure you, is not a bad place to come to for the shooting."

Sir Iltyd shook his head: "I could not live out of Wales," he said; "and I have not slept under another roof for a quarter of a century. But it is good of you to say you would not mind coming once in a while to this lonely old place, and it

would make the separation easier to bear."

He left them shortly after, and as he took Harold's hand in good-night, he retained it a moment with an approving smile, then passed a characteristic Welsh criticism: "It is a small hand," he said, "and a very well-shaped hand; and your feet, too. I am willing to acknowledge to you that I am weak enough to have a horror of large hands and feet. Good-night. I have to thank you for a very pleasant evening."

II.

"Harold," said Weir, the next morning after breakfast, as the door closed behind Sir Iltyd, "I shall entertain you until luncheon by showing you the castle."

"My dear girl," said Harold, smiling, "let your role of hostess sit lightly upon you. I do not want to be entertained. I am perfectly happy."

"Of that I have no doubt. Nevertheless I want you to see the castle, particularly the picture-gallery, where all my ancestors be."

"Then, by my troth, will I go, fair Mistress Penrhyn, for a goodly show your ancestors be, I make no doubt;" and Dartmouth plunged his hands into his pockets and looked down at her with a broad smile.

Weir lifted her head. "My English is quite as pure as yours," she said. "And you certainly cannot accuse me of using what the London girls call 'slang.'"

This time Dartmouth laughed aloud. "No, my dear," he said, "not even Shakespearean slang. But let us investigate the mysteries of the castle by all means. Lead, and I will follow."

"There are no mysteries," said Weir; "we have not even a ghost. Nor have we a murder, or crime of any sort, to make us blush for our family tree."

"Happy tree! Mine has a blush for every twig, and a drop curtain for every branch. Thank God for the Penrhyn graft! Let us hope that it will do as much good as its fairest flower has already done the degenerate scion of all the Dartmouths. But, to the castle! I would get through—I mean, I would gaze upon its antiquities as soon as possible."

"This castle is very interesting, Mr. Dartmouth," replied Weir, elevating her chin;

"you have nothing so old in England."

"True, nor yet in Jerusalem, O haughtiest of Welsh maidens! I esteem it a favor that I am not put below the salt."

Weir laughed. "What a tease you are! But you know that in your heart your pride of family is as great as mine. Only it is the 'fad' of the day to affect to despise birth and lineage. We of Wales are more honest."

"Yes, it is your sign and seal, and it sits well upon you. I don't affect to despise birth and lineage, my dear. If I could not trace my ancestry back to the first tadpole who loafed his life away in the tropical forests of old, I should be miserable."

He spoke jestingly, but he drew himself up as he spoke, his lip was supercilious, and there was an intolerant light in his eye. At that moment he did not look a promising subject for the Liberal side of the House, avowedly as were his sympathies in that quarter. Weir, however, gave him an approving smile, and then commanded him to follow her.

She took him over the castle, from the dungeons below to the cell-like rooms in the topmost towers. She led him through state bedrooms, in which had slept many a warlike Welsh prince, whose bones could scarcely be in worse order than the magnificence which once had sheltered them. She piloted him down long galleries with arcades on one side, like a cloister, and a row of rooms on the other wherein the retainers of ancient princes of the house of Penrhyn had been wont to rest their thews after a hard day's fight. She slid back panels and conducted him up by secret ways to gloomy rooms, thick with cobwebs, where treasure had been hid, and heads too loyal to a fallen king had alone felt secure on their trunks. She led him to chambers hung with tapestries wrought by fair, forgotten grandmothers, who over their work had dreamed their eventless lives away. She showed him the chapel, impressive in its ancient Norman simplicity and in its ruin, and the great smoke-begrimed banqueting-hall, where wassails had been held, and beauty had thought her lord a beast.

"Well," she demanded, as they paused at length on the threshold of the picture-gallery, "what do you think of my father's castle?"

"Your father's castle is the most consistent thing I have seen for a long time: it is an artistically correct setting for your father's daughter. The chain of evolution is

without a missing link. And what is better, the last link is uncorroded with the rust of modern conventions. Seriously, your castle is the most romantic I have ever seen. The nineteenth century is forgotten, and I am a belted Knight of Merrie England who has stormed your castle and won you by his prowess. You stood in your window, high up in your tower, and threw me a rose, while your father stalked about the ramparts and swore that my bones should whiten on the beach. I raised the rose to my lips, dashed across the drawbridge, and hurled my lance at the gates. About my head a shower of barbs and bullets fell, but I heeded them not. Behind me thundered my retainers, and under their onslaught the mighty gates gave way with a crash, and the castle was ours! We trampled into the great hall, making it ring with our shouts and the clash of our shields. Your father's men fled before us, but he calmly descended the staircase and confronted us with his best Welsh stare. 'I fear ye not, villains,' he cried. 'Barbarians, English dogs! I defy ye. Do your worst. My daughter and I for death care not. The mighty house of Istyn-ap-Dafyd-ap-Owain-ap-Caradoc-ap-Iltyd-ap-Penrhyn knoweth not fear of living man, nor yet of death's mysterious charnel-house.' 'Wrong me not, gentle sir,' I cried, snatching off my helmet and trailing its plumes upon the floor; 'I come in love, not in destruction. Give me but thy daughter, O Dafyd-ap-Owain-ap-Istyn-ap-Caradoc-ap-Iltyd-ap-Penrhyn, and thy castle and thy lands, thy rocks and thy sea, are thine again, even as were they before the beauty of the Lady Weir turned my blood to lava and my heart to a seething volcano. Give me but thy daughter's hand, and wealth shall flow into thy coffers, and the multitude of thy retainers shall carry terror to the heart of thy foe. What say ye, my Lord Caradoc-ap-Owain-ap-etcetera?' Whereupon the lord of Rhyd-Alwyn unbent his haughty brows, and placing one narrow, white, and shapely hand upon my blood-stained baldric, spoke as follows: 'Well said, young Briton. Spoken like a brave knight and an honorable gentleman. My daughter thou shalt have, my son thou shalt be, thy friends shall be my friends, and thou and all of them shall be baptized Welshmen.' And then he himself re-ascended the staircase and sought you in your tower and led you down and placed your hand in mine. And the drums beat, and the shields clashed, and once more the mighty storm shook the rooks from the roof. But we heard it not, for on your finger I had placed the betrothal ring, then thrown my brawny arms about you and forgot that earth existed. Excuse my eloquence," he cried, as he lifted her up and kissed her, "but your castle and yourself are inspiring."

"That was all very charming, however," she said, "if you only had not such a reprehensible way of jumping from the sublime to the ridiculous, like a meteor from world to world."

"Prettily said, sweetheart. But, trust me, if I ever reach the sublime I will stay there. Now, to your ancestors! Great heaven! what an array!"

They had entered a long, narrow room, against whose dark background stood out darker canvasses of an army of now celestial Penrhyns; an army whose numbers would have been a morning's task to count. The ancient Penrhyns had been princes, like most of their ilk; and the titles which Weir glibly recited, and the traditions of valor and achievement which she had at her tongue's end, finally wrung from Dartmouth a cry for mercy.

"My dear girl!" he exclaimed, "keep the rest for another day. Those 'aps' are buzzing in my ears like an army of infuriated gnats, and those mighty deeds are so much alike—who is that?"

He left her side abruptly and strode down the gallery to a picture at the end, and facing the room. It was the full-length, life-size portrait of a woman with gown and head-dress in the style of the First Empire. One tiny, pointed foot was slightly extended from beneath the white gown, and—so perfect had been the skill of the artist—she looked as if about to step from the canvas to greet her guests.

"That is my grandmother, Sionèd, wife of Dafyd-ap-Penrhyn, who, I would have you know, was one of the most famous diplomatists of his day," said Weir, who had followed, and stood beside him. "She was the daughter of the proudest earl in Wales—but I spare you his titles. I am exactly like her, am I not? It is the most remarkable resemblance which has ever occurred in the family."

"Yes," said Dartmouth, "you are like her." He plunged his hands into his pockets and stared at the floor, drawing his brows together. Then he turned suddenly to Weir. "I have seen that woman before," he said. "That is the reason why I thought it was your face which was familiar. I must have seen your grandmother when I was a very young child. I have forgotten the event, but I could never forget such a face."

"But Harold," said Weir, elevating her brows "It is quite impossible you could ever have seen my grandmother. She died when papa was a little boy."

"Are you sure?"

"Quite sure. I have often heard him say he had no memory whatever of his

mother. And grandpapa would never talk with him about her. He was a terribly severe old man, they say—he died long years before I was born—but he must have loved my grandmother very much, for he could not bear to hear her name, and he never came to the castle after her death."

"It is strange," said Harold, musingly, "but I have surely seen that face before."

He looked long at the beautiful, life-like picture before him. It was marvellously like Weir in form and feature and coloring. But the expression was sad, the eyes were wistful, and the whole face was that, not of a woman who had lived, but of a woman who knew that out of her life had passed the power to live did she bow her knee to the Social Decalogue. As Weir stood, with her bright, eager, girlish face upheld to the woman out of whose face the girlish light had forever gone, the resemblance and the contrast were painfully striking.

"I love her!" exclaimed Weir, "and whenever I come in here I always kiss her hand." She went forward and pressed her lips lightly to the canvas, while Dartmouth stood with his eyes fastened upon the face whose gaze seemed to meet his own and—soften—and invite—

He stepped forward suddenly as Weir drew back. "She fascinates me, also," he said, with a half laugh. "I, too, will kiss her hand."

III.

With the exception of the time spent in the dining-room, the young people saw little of Sir Iltyd. That he liked Dartmouth and enjoyed his society were facts he did not pretend to disguise. But the habits of years were too strong, and he always wandered back to his books. He did not trouble himself about proprieties. Weir had grown up and ruled the castle all these years without a chaperon, and he had lived out of the world too long to suggest the advisability of one now. His daughter and her lover experienced no yearning for supervision, and the free, untrammelled life was a very pleasant one, particularly to Dartmouth, who always gave to novelty its just meed of appreciation. At this period, in fact, Dartmouth's frame of mind left nothing to be desired. In the first place, it was a delightful experience to find himself able to stand the uninterrupted society of one woman from morning till night, day after day, without a suggestion of fatigue. And in the second, he found her a charming study. It is true that he was very much in love, very sincerely and passionately in love; but at the same time, his brain had been trained through too many years to the habit of analysis; he could no more help studying Weir and drawing her on to reveal herself than he could help loving her. She was not a difficult problem to solve, individual as she was, because she was so natural. Her experience with the world had been too brief to give her an opportunity to encase herself in any shell which would not fall from her at the first reaction to primitive conditions; and above all, she was in love.

In the love of a woman there is always a certain element of childishness, which has a reflex, if but temporary action upon her whole nature. The phenomenon is due partly to the fact that she is under the dominant influence of a wholly natural instinct, partly to the fact that the object of her love is of stronger make than herself, mentally, spiritually, and physically. This sense of dependence and weakness, and, consequently, of extreme youth, remains until she has children. Then, under the influence of peculiarly strong responsibilities, she gives her

youth to them, and with it the plasticity of her nature.

At present Weir was in the stage where she analyzed herself for her lover's benefit, and confided to him every sensation she had ever experienced; and he encouraged her. He had frequently encouraged other women to do the same thing, and in each case, after the first few chapters, he had found it a good deal of a bore. The moment a woman falls in love, that moment she becomes an object of paramount interest in her own eyes. All her life she has regarded herself from the outside; her wants and needs have been purely objective; consequently she has not known herself, and her spiritual nature has claimed but little of her attention. But under the influence of love she plunges into herself, as it were, and her life for the time being is purely subjective. She broadens, expands, develops, concentrates; and her successive evolutions are a perpetual source of delight and absorbing study. Moreover, her sense of individuality grows and flourishes, and becomes so powerful that she is unalterably certain—until it is over—that her experience is an isolated and wholly remarkable one. Naturally she must talk to someone; she is teeming with her discoveries, her excursions into the heretofore unexplored depths of human nature; the necessity for a confidant is not one to be withstood, and who so natural or understanding a confidant as her lover? If the lover be a clever man and an analyst, he is profoundly interested at first, particularly if she have some trick of mind which gives her, or seems to give her, the smack of individuality. If he be a true lover, and a man with any depth of feeling and of mind, he does not tire, of course; but otherwise he eventually becomes either oppressed or frightened; he either wishes that women would not take themselves so seriously and forget to be amusing, or her belief in her peculiar and absolute originality communicates itself to him, and he does not feel equal to handling and directing so remarkable a passion.

There was no question about the strength and verity of Dartmouth's love for Weir, and he had yet to be daunted by anything in life; consequently he found his present course of psychological research without flaw. Moreover, the quaintness of her nature pervaded all her ideas. She had an old-fashioned simplicity and directness which, combined with a charming quality of mind and an unusual amount of mental development, gave her that impress of originality which he had recognized and been attracted by. He was gratified also to find that the old-time stateliness, almost primness, which had been to him from the first her chiefest exterior charm did not disappear with association. She might sit on a rock muffled to her ears in furs, and with her feet dangling in the air, and yet manage to look as dignified as a duchess. She might race with him on horseback

and clamber down a cliff with the thoughtlessness of a child, but she always looked as if she had been brought up on a chessboard. Dartmouth used to tell her that her peculiarly erect carriage and lofty fashion of carrying her head gave her the effect of surveillance over an invisible crown with an unreliable fit, and that she stepped like the maiden in the fairy tale who was obliged to walk upon peas. He made a tin halo one day, and put it suddenly on her head when her back was turned, and she avenged herself by wearing it until he went down on his knees and begged her to take it off. When she sat in her carved high-back chair at the head of her father's table, with the deep collar and cuffs of linen and heavy lace to which she was addicted, and her dark, sensuous, haughty, tender face motionless for the moment, against the dark background of the leather, she looked like a Vandyke; and at such times Dartmouth's artistic nature was keenly responsive, and he forgot to chaff.

IV.

Dartmouth had been at Rhyd-Alwyn two weeks, when Sir Iltyd turned to him one night as he was leaving the dining-room and asked him to follow him into the library for a few moments.

"I feel quite alarmed," said Harold to Weir, as the door closed behind her father. "Do you suppose he is going to tell me that I do not give satisfaction?"

"Harold!" exclaimed Weir, reprovingly, "I wish you would not talk as if you were a butler; you look much more dignified than you ever talk. You look like an English nobleman, and you talk like any ordinary young man about town."

"My dearest girl, would you have me a Sir Charles Grandison? The English nobleman of your imagination is the gentleman who perambulates the pages of Miss Burney's novels. The present species and the young man about town are synonymous animals."

"There you are again! You always make me laugh; I cannot help that; but I wish you would do yourself justice, nevertheless. You may not know it, but if you would only put on a ruff and satin doublet and hose and wig, and all the rest of it, you would look exactly like one of the courtiers of the court of Queen Elizabeth. You are a perfect type of the English aristocrat."

"My dear Lady Jane Grey, if you had been an American girl, you would have said a perfect gentleman, and I should never have spoken to you again. As a matter of fact, I always feel it a sort of sacrilege that I do not address you in blank verse; only my attempts thereat are so very bad. But it is never too late to mend. We will read Pope together, Shakespeare, and all the rest of the old boys. We will saturate our minds with their rhythm, and we will thereafter communicate in stately phrase and rolling periods."

"It would be a great deal better than slang and 'facetiousness,' as you call it. That is all very well for Lord Bective Hollington; it suits him; but you should aim at a higher standard."

Dartmouth, who was standing by the chimney-piece near the chair on which she was sitting, put his hand under her chin and raised her face, smiling quizzically as he did so.

"My dear child," he said, "you are too clever to fall into the common error of women, and idealize your lover. The tendency is a constituent part of the feminine nature, it is true. The average woman will idealize the old tweed coat on her lover's back. But your eyes are too clear for that sort of thing. I am a very ordinary young man, my dear. Becky is twice as clever—"

"He is not!" burst in Weir, indignantly. "A man who can do nothing but chaff and joke and talk witty nonsense!"

"If you knew him better you would know that under all that persiflage there is much depth of feeling and passion. I do not claim any unusual amount of intellectuality for him, but he has a wonderful supply of hard common-sense, and remarkably quick perceptions. And I have great respect for his judgment."

"That may be," said Weir, indifferently; "I care nothing about him." She rose and stood in front of him and leaned her elbows on his shoulders. "You may underrate yourself, if you like," she went on, "but I know that you are capable of accomplishing anything you wish, and of distinguishing yourself. I recall the conversations I have had with you in your serious moments, if you do not, and I expect you to be a great man yet."

Dartmouth flung his cigar impatiently into the fire. "My dear girl, my grandmother preached that same thing to me from the day I was old enough to reason, to the day she died. But I tell you, Weir, I have not got it in me. I have the ambition and the desire—yes; but no marked ability of any sort. Some day, when we are ready to settle down, I will write, and publish what I write. Men will grant me a certain standing as a thinker, I believe, and perhaps they will also give me credit for a certain nice use of words; I have made a study of literary style all my life. But that is the most I shall ever attain. I am not a man of any genius or originality, and you may as well make up your mind to the inevitable at once."

"Harold," said Weir, without taking the slightest notice of his outburst, "do you remember that extraordinary experience of yours that night in Paris? I believe you have the soul of a poet in you, only as yet your brain hasn't got it under control. Did you ever read the life of Alfieri? He experienced the same desire to write, over and over again, but could accomplish nothing until after he was thirty. Disraeli illustrated his struggles for speech in 'Contarini Fleming' most graphically, you remember."

"Neither Alfieri nor Contarini Fleming ever had any such experience as mine. Their impulse to write was not only a mental concept as well as a spiritual longing, but it was abiding. I never really experienced a desire to write poetry except on that night. I have occasionally wished that I had the ability, but common-sense withheld me from brooding over the impossible. The experience of that night is one which can be explained by no ordinary methods. I can make nothing of it, and for that reason I prefer not to speak of it. I abominate mysteries."

"Well," she said, "some day I believe it will be explained. I believe it was nothing more than an extraordinarily strong impulse to write, and that you exaggerate it into the supernatural as you look back upon it. I did not think so when you first told me; you were so dramatic that you carried me off my feet, and I was an actor in the scene. But that is the way I look at it now, and I believe I am correct."

"It may be," said Dartmouth, moodily, "but I hope it won't affect me that way again, that is all." He caught her suddenly to him and kissed her. "Let us be contented as we are," he said. "Ambition is love's worst enemy. Geniuses do not make their wives happy."

"They do when their wives understand and are in absolute sympathy with them," she said, returning his caress; "and that I should always be with you. But do not imagine that I am in love with the idea of your being a famous man. I care nothing for fame in itself. It is only that I believe you to be capable of great things, and that you would be happier if they were developed."

"Well, well," he said, laughing; "have your own way, as you will in spite of me. If ever the divine fire lays me in ashes, you may triumph in your predictions. But I must go and interview your father; I have kept him waiting too long already."

They went out into the hall, and Dartmouth left her there and went to the library. Sir Iltyd was sitting before a large table, reading by the light of a student's lamp, which looked like an anachronism in the lofty, ancient room. He closed his book as Dartmouth entered, and rising, waved his hand toward a chair on the other side of the table.

"Will you sit down?" he said; "I should like to have a little talk with you."

Dartmouth obeyed, and waited for the old gentleman to introduce the subject. Sir Iltyd continued in a moment, taking up a small book and bringing it down lengthwise on the desk at regular intervals while he spoke:

"Of course, you must know, Harold, that it has not taken me two weeks to discover my personal feelings toward you. I should have liked or disliked you on the first evening we met, and, as a matter of fact, my sensations towards you have undergone no change since that night. If it had happened that I disliked you, I should not have allowed the fact to bias my judgment as to whether or not you were a suitable husband for my daughter, but it would not have taken me two weeks to make up my mind. As it is I have merely delayed my consent as an unnecessary formality; but perhaps the time has come to say in so many words that I shall be very glad to give my daughter to you."

"Thank you," said Dartmouth. The words sounded rather bald, but it was an unusual situation, and he did not know exactly what to say. Something more was evidently expected of him, however, and he plunged in recklessly: "I am sure I need not say that I am highly honored by your regard and your confidence, nor protest that you will never regret it. To tell you that I loved Weir with all my heart would be trite, and perhaps it is also unnecessary to add that I am not a man of 'veering passions'—that is, of course when my heart is engaged as well."

Sir Iltyd smiled. "I should imagine that the last clause was added advisedly. I was a man of the world myself in my young days, and I recognize one in you. Judging from your physiognomy and general personality I should say that you have loved a good many women, and have lived in the widest sense of the word."

"Well—yes," admitted Dartmouth, with a laugh. "That sort of thing leaves a man's heart untouched, however."

"It may, and I am willing to believe that you have given your heart to

Weir for good and all."

"I think I have," said Dartmouth.

And then the question of settlements was broached, and when it had been satisfactorily arranged, Dartmouth lingered a few moments longer in conversation with his host, and then rose to go. Sir Iltyd rose also and walked with him to the door.

"Do you mind our being married in a month?" asked Dartmouth, as they crossed the room. "That will give Weir all the time she wants, and we should like to spend the spring in Rome."

"Very well; let it be in a month. I cannot see that the date is of any importance; only do not forget me in the summer."

"Oh, no," said Dartmouth; "we expect you to harbor us off and on all the year around."

And then Sir Iltyd opened the door and bowed with his old-time courtier-like dignity, and Dartmouth passed out and into the hall.

V.

He found Weir kneeling on the hearth-rug. The hall was an immense place with a vaulted ceiling upheld by massive beams; the walls were wainscotted almost to the top with oak which had been polished for many a century; and the floor, polished also, was covered with rugs which had been very handsome in their day. There were several superb suits of armor and a quantity of massive, carved oaken furniture, extremely uncomfortable but very picturesque. In the open fire-place, which would have held many more than Harold and Weir within its depths, great logs were burning. The lamps had been brought in but had not been turned up, and save for the firelight the great cathedral apartment was a thicket of shadows, out of which the steel warriors gleamed, menacing guardians of the girl.

Weir made a pretty picture kneeling on the hearth-rug, with the fire-light playing on her dark face and pliant figure, in its closely-fitting black gown, throwing golden flickers on her hair, and coquetting with the lanterns in her eyes. She rose as Dartmouth approached, and he gave her one of his brilliant, satisfied smiles.

"We are to be married a month from to-day," he said. "A month from to-day and we shall be knocking about Europe and pining for English civilization." He drew her down on the cushioned seat that ran along the wall by the chimney-piece. "We cannot go out to-night; there is a storm coming up. Ah, did I not tell you?" as a gust of wind shrieked and rattled the sash.

She gave a little shiver and drew closer to him. "I hate a storm," she said. "It always brings back—" she stopped abruptly.

"Brings back what?"

"Nothing," hastily. "So father has given his consent? But I knew he would. I knew he liked you the moment you met; and when he alluded that night to your

small hands and feet I knew that the cause was won. Had they been at fault, nothing could have persuaded him that you did not have a broad river of red blood in you somewhere, and he never would have approved of you had you been the monarch of a kingdom."

Dartmouth smiled. "The men at college used to laugh at my hands, until I nearly choked one of them to death one day, after which they never laughed at them again. There is no doubt now about my having been destined at birth for a Welsh maiden, and equipped accordingly. But you know your father pretty thoroughly."

"I have lived alone with him so long that I can almost read his mind, and I certainly know his peculiarities."

"It must have been a terribly lonely life for you. How old were you when your mother died?"

She moved with the nervous motion habitual to her whenever her mother's name was mentioned. "I was about nine," she said.

"*Nine*? And yet you remember nothing of her? Weir, it is impossible that you cannot remember her."

"I do not remember her," she said.

"I saw her picture in the library to-night. She must have been very beautiful, but like you only in being dark. Otherwise, there is not a trace of resemblance. But surely you must remember her, Weir; you are joking. I can remember when I was four years of age perfectly, and many things that happened."

"I remember nothing that happened before I was nine years old," she said.

He bent down suddenly and looked into her face. "Weir, what do you mean? There is always an uncomfortable suggestion of mystery whenever one speaks of your mother or your childhood. What is the reason you cannot remember? Did you have brain fever, and when you recovered, find your mind a blank? Such things have happened."

"No," she said, desperately, as if she had nerved herself for an effort. "That was not it. I have often wanted to tell you, but I cannot bear to speak of it. The old horror always comes back when I think of it. But I feel that I ought to tell you

before we are married, and I will do so now since we are speaking of it. I did not have brain fever, but when I was nine years old—I died."

"You what?"

"Yes, it is true. They called it catalepsy, a trance; but it was not; I was really dead. I was thrown from a horse a few months after my mother's death, and killed instantly. They laid me in the family vault, but my father had ice put about me and would not have me covered, and went every hour to see me, as he told me afterward. I remember nothing; and they say that when people are in a trance they are conscious of everything that passes around them. I knew nothing until one night I suddenly opened my eyes and looked about me. It was just such a night as this, only in mid-winter; the wind was howling and shrieking, and the terrible gusts shook the vault in which I lay. The ocean roared like thunder, and I could hear it hurl itself in its fury against the rocks at the foot of the castle. A lamp was burning at my feet, and by its flickering light I could see in their niches on every side of me the long lines of dead who had lain there for centuries. And I was alone with them, locked in with them; no living creature within call! And I was so deathly cold. There was a great block of ice on my chest, and slabs of it were packed about my limbs so tightly that I could not move. I could only feel that horrible, glassy cold which I knew had frozen the marrow in my bones and turned my blood to jelly; and the pain of it was something which I have no words to describe. I tried to call out, but the ice was on my chest, and I could hardly breathe. Then for a moment I lay trying to collect my thoughts. I did not know where I was. I did not know that I was in the vault of my ancestors. I only felt that I had been wandering and wandering in some dim, far-off land looking for someone I could never find, and that suddenly I had come into another world and found rest. But although I did not know that I was in the vault at Rhyd-Alwyn, and that my name was Weir Penrhyn, I knew that I was laid out as a corpse, and that the dead were about me. Child as I was, it seemed to me that I must go frantic with the horror of the thing, stretched out in that ghastly place, a storm roaring about me, bound hand and foot, unable to cry for help. I think that if I had been left there all night I should have died again or lost my mind, but in a moment I heard a noise at the grating and men's voices.

"'I must go in and see her once more,' I heard a strange voice say. 'It seems cruelty to leave her alone in this storm.' And then a man came in and bent over me. In a moment he called sharply, 'Madoc!—bring me the light.' And then another man came, and I looked up into two strange, eager, almost terrified

faces. I heard incoherent and excited voices, then the ice was dashed off my chest and I was caught up in a pair of strong arms and borne swiftly to the house. They took me to a great blazing fire and wrapped me in blankets and poured hot drinks down my throat, and soon that terrible chill began to leave me and the congealed blood in my veins to thaw. And in a few days I was as well as ever again. But I remembered no one. I had to become acquainted with them all as with the veriest strangers. I had the natural intelligence of my years, but nothing more. Between the hour of my soul's flight from its body and that of its return it had been robbed of every memory. I remembered neither my mother nor any incident of my childhood. I could not find my way over the castle, and the rocks on which I had lived since infancy were strangers to me. Everything was a blank up to the hour when I opened my eyes and found myself between the narrow walls of a coffin."

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Dartmouth. "Why, you are a regular heroine of a sensational novel."

Weir sprang to her feet and struck her hands fiercely together, her eyes blazing. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself," she cried, passionately. "Can you never be serious? Must you joke about everything? I believe you will find something to laugh at in the marriage service. That thing I have told you is the most serious and horrible experience of my life, and yet you treat it as if I were acting a part in a melodrama in a third-rate theatre! Sometimes I think I hate you."

Dartmouth caught her in his arms and forced her to sit down again beside him. "My dear girl," he said, "why is it that a woman can never understand that when a man feels most he chaffs, especially if he has cultivated the beastly habit. Your story stirred me powerfully; the more so because such things do not happen to every-day girls—"

"Harold!"

"Do not wrong me; I am in dead earnest. As a plain matter of fact, I never heard of anything so horrible. Thank heaven it happened when you were so young! No woman's will and spirit could rise superior to such a memory if it were a recent one. But am I forgiven?"

"As you are perfectly incorrigible, I suppose there is no use being angry with you," she said, still with a little pout on her lips. "But I will forgive you on one

condition only."

"Name it."

"You are never to mention the subject to me again after to-night."

"I never will; but tell me, has the memory of your childhood never come back for a moment?"

"Never. All I remember is that sense of everlasting wandering and looking for something. For a long while I was haunted with the idea that there was something I still must find. I never could discover what it was, but it has left me now. If you had not been so unkind, I should have said that it is because I am too happy for mysterious and somewhat supernatural longings."

"But as it is, you won't. It was an odd feeling to have, though. Perhaps it was a quest for the memories of your childhood—for a lost existence, as it were. If ever it comes again, tell me, and we will try and work it out together."

"Harold!" she exclaimed, smiling outright this time, "you will be trying to analyze the cobwebs of heaven before long."

"No," he said, "they are too dense."

VI.

It was eleven o'clock when they parted for the night. Dartmouth went up to his room and sat down at his desk to write a letter to his father. In a moment he threw down the pen; he was not in a humor for writing. He picked up a book (he never went to bed until he felt sleepy), and crossed the room and sat down before the fire. But he had not read two pages when he dropped it with an exclamation of impatience: the story Weir had told him was written between every line. She had told it so vividly and realistically that she had carried him with her and almost curdled his blood. He had answered her with a joke, because, in spite of the fact that he had been strongly affected, he was angry as well. He hated melodrama, and the idea of Weir having had an experience which read like a sensational column in a newspaper was extremely distasteful to him. He sympathized with her with all his heart, but he had a strong distaste for anything which savored of the supernatural. Nevertheless, he was obliged to acknowledge that this horrible, if commonplace experience of Weir's had taken possession of his mind, and refused to be evicted. The scene kept presenting itself in all its details again and again, and finally he jumped to his feet in disgust and determined to go to the long gallery which overhung the sea, and watch the storm. Rhyd-Alwyn was built on a steep cliff directly on the coast, and exposed to all the fury of the elements. In times of storm, and when the waves were high, the spray flew up against the lower windows.

He left his room and went down the wide hall, then turned into a corridor, which terminated in a gallery that had been built as a sort of observatory. The gallery was long and very narrow, and the floor was bare. But there were seats under the windows, and on a table were a number of books; it was a place Dartmouth and Weir were very fond of when it was not too cold.

It was a clear, moonlit night, in spite of the storm. There was no rain; it was simply a battle of wind and waves. Dartmouth stood at one of the windows and looked out over the angry waters. The billows were piling one above the other,

black, foam-crested, raging like wild animals beneath the lash of the shrieking wind. Moon and stars gazed down calmly, almost wonderingly, holding their unperturbed watch over the war below. Sublime, forceful, the sight suited the somewhat excited condition of Dartmouth's mind. Moreover, he was beginning to feel that one of his moods was insidiously creeping upon him: not an attack like the last, but a general feeling of melancholy. If he could only put that wonderful scene before him into verse, what a solace and distraction the doing of it would be! He could forget—he pulled himself together with something like terror. In another moment there would be a repetition of that night in Paris. The best thing he could do was to go back to his room and take an anodyne.

He turned to leave the gallery, but as he did so he paused suddenly. Far down, at the other end, something was slowly coming toward him. The gallery was very long and ill-lighted by the narrow, infrequent windows, and he could not distinguish whom it was. He stood, however, involuntarily waiting for it to approach him. But how slowly it came, as one groping or one walking in a dream! Then, as it gradually neared him, he saw that it was a woman, dimly outlined, but still unmistakably a woman. He spoke, but there was no answer, nothing but the echo of his voice through the gallery. Someone trying to play a practical joke upon him! Perhaps it was Weir: it would be just like her. He walked forward quickly, but before he had taken a dozen steps the advancing figure came opposite one of the windows, and the moonlight fell about it. Dartmouth started back and caught his breath as if someone had struck him. For a moment his pulses stood still, and sense seemed suspended. Then he walked quickly forward and stood in front of her.

"Sionèd!" he said, in a low voice which thrilled through the room. "Sionèd!" He put out his hand and took hers. It was ice-cold, and its contact chilled him to the bone; but his clasp grew closer and his eyes gazed into hers with passionate longing.

"I am dead," she said. "I am dead, and I am so cold." She drew closer and peered up into his face. "I have found you at last," she went on, "but I wandered so far. There was no nook or corner of Eternity in which I did not search. But although we went together, we were hurled to the opposite poles of space before our spiritual eyes had met, and an unseen hand directed us ever apart. I was alone, alone, in a great, gray, boundless land, with but the memory of those brief moments of happiness to set at bay the shrieking host of regrets and remorse and repentance which crowded about me. I floated on and on and on for millions and

millions of miles; but of you, my one thought on earth, my one thought in Eternity, I could find no trace, not even the whisper of your voice in passing. I tossed myself upon a hurrying wind and let it carry me whither it would. It gathered strength and haste as it flew, and whirled me out into the night, nowhere, everywhere. And then it slackened—and moaned—and then, with one great sob, it died, and once more I was alone in space and an awful silence. And then a voice came from out the void and said to me, 'Go down; he is there;' and I knew that he meant to Earth, and for a moment I rebelled. To go back to that terrible—But on Earth there had been nothing so desolate as this—and if you were there! So I came—and I have found you at last."

She put her arms about him and drew him down onto the low window-seat. He shivered at her touch, but felt no impulse to resist her will, and she pressed his head down upon her cold breast. Then, suddenly, all things changed; the gallery, the moonlight, the white-robed, ice-cold woman faded from sense. The storm was no longer in his ears nor were the waves at his feet. He was standing in a dusky Eastern room, familiar and dear to him. Tapestries of rich stuffs were about him, and the skins of wild animals beneath his feet. Beyond, the twilight stole through a window, but did not reach where he stood. And in his close embrace was the woman he loved, with the stamp on her face of suffering, of desperate resolution, and of conscious, welcomed weakness. And in his face was the regret for wasted years and possibilities, and a present, passionate gladness; *that* he could see in the mirror of the eyes over which the lids were slowly falling…. And the woman wore a clinging, shining yellow gown, and a blaze of jewels in her hair. What was said he hardly knew. It was enough to feel that a suddenly-born, passionate joy was making his pulses leap and his head reel; to know that heaven had come to him in this soft, quiet Southern night.

* * * * *

VII.

Dartmouth opened his eyes and looked about him. The storm had died, the waves were at rest, and he was alone. He let his head fall back against the frame of the window, and his eyes closed once more. What a dream!—so vivid!—so realistic! Was it not his actual life? Could he take up the threads of another? He felt ten years older; and, retreating down the dim, remote corridors of his brain, were trooping memories of a long, regretted, troubled, eventful past. In a moment they had vanished like ghosts and left no trace; he could recall none of them. He opened his eyes again and looked down the gallery, and gradually his perceptions grasped its familiar lines, and he was himself once more. He rose to his feet and put his hand to his head. That woman whom he had taken for the ghost of one dead and gone had been Weir, of course. She had arisen in her sleep and attired herself like the grandmother whose living portrait she was; she had piled up her hair and caught her white gown up under her bosom; and, in the shadows and mystery of night, small wonder that she had looked as if the canvas in the gallery below had yielded her up! But what had her words meant?—her words, and that dream?—but no—they were not what he wanted. There had been something else—what was it? He felt as if a mist had newly arisen to cloud his faculties. There had been something else which had made him not quite himself as he had stood there with his arms about the woman who had been Weir, and yet not Weir. Above the pain and joy and passion which had shaken him, there had been an unmistakable perception of—an attribute—a quality—of another sort—of a power, of which he, Harold Dartmouth, had never been conscious—of—of—ah, yes! of the power to pour out at the feet of that woman, in richest verse, the love she had awakened, and make them both immortal. What were the words? They had been written legibly in his brain; he remembered now. He had seen and read them—yes, at last, at last! "Her face! her form!" No! no! not that again. Oh, why would they not come? They had been there, the words; the sense must be there, the inspiration, the battling for voice and victory. They were ready to pour through his speech in a flood of song, but that iron hand forced them

back—down, down, setting blood and brain on fire. Ah! what was that? Far off, at the end of some long gallery, there was a sweet, dying strain of music, and there were words—gathering in volume; they were rolling on; they were coming; they were thundering through his brain in a mighty chorus! There! he had grasped them—No! that iron hand had grasped them—and was hurling them back. In another moment it would have forced them down into their cell and turned the key! He must catch and hold one of them! Yes, he had it! Oh! victory! —"Her eyes, her hair."

Dartmouth thrust out his hands as if fighting with a physical enemy, and he looked as if he had been through the agonies of death. The conflict in his brain had suddenly ceased, but his physical strength was exhausted. He turned and walked uncertainly to his room; then he collected his scattered wits sufficiently to drop some laudanum and take it, that he might ward off, if possible, the attack of physical and spiritual prostration which had been the result of a former experience of a similar kind. Then, dressed as he was, he flung himself on the bed and slept.

VIII.

When Dartmouth awoke the next day, the sun was streaming across the bed and Jones's anxious face was bending over him.

"Oh, Mr. 'Arold," exclaimed Jones, "you've got it again."

Dartmouth laughed aloud. "One would think I had delirium tremens," he said.

He put his hand over his eyes, and struggled with the desire to have the room darkened. The melancholy had fastened itself upon him, and he knew that for three or four days he was to be the victim of one of his unhappiest moods. The laudanum had lulled his brain and prevented violent reaction after its prolonged tension; but his spirits were at zero, and his instinct was to shut out the light and succumb to his enemy without resistance. If he had been anywhere but at Rhyd-Alwyn he would not have thought twice about it; but if he shut himself up in his room, not only would Weir be frightened and unhappy, but it was probable that Sir Iltyd would question the desirability of a son-in-law who was given to prolonged and uncontrollable attacks of the blues. He dressed and went down-stairs, but Weir was nowhere to be found, and after a search through the various rooms and corners of the castle which she was in the habit of frequenting, he met her maid and was informed that Miss Penrhyn was not well and would not come down-stairs before dinner. The news was very unwelcome to Dartmouth. Weir at least would have been a distraction. Now he must get through a dismal day, and fight his enemy by himself. To make matters worse, it was raining, and he could not go out and ride or hunt. He went into Sir Iltyd's library and talked to him for the rest of the morning. Sir Iltyd was not exciting, at his best, and to-day he had a bad cold; so after lunch Dartmouth went up to his tower and resigned himself to his own company. He sat down before the fire, and taking his head between his hands allowed the blue devils to triumph. He felt dull as well as depressed; but for a time he made an attempt to solve the problem of the phenomenon to which he had been twice subjected. That it was a phenomenon he did not see any

reason to doubt. If he had spent his life in a vain attempt to write poetry and an unceasing wish for the necessary inspiration, there would be nothing remarkable in his mind yielding suddenly to the impetus of accumulated pressure, wrenching itself free of the will's control, and dashing off on a wild excursion of its own. But he had never voluntarily taken a pen in his hand to make verse, nor had he even felt the desire to possess the gift, except as a part of general ambition. He may have acknowledged the regret that he could not immortalize himself by writing a great poem, but the regret was the offspring of personal ambition, not of yearning poetical instinct. But the most extraordinary phase of the matter was that such a tempest could take place in a brain as well regulated as his own. He was eminently a practical man, and a good deal of a thinker. He had never been given to flights of imagination, and even in his attacks of melancholy, although his will might be somewhat enfeebled, his brain could always work clearly and cleverly. The lethargy which had occasionally got the best of him had invariably been due to violent nervous shock or strain, and was as natural as excessive bodily languor after violent physical effort. Why, then, should his brain twice have acted as if he had sown it with eccentric weeds all his life, instead of planting it with the choicest seeds he could obtain, and watering and cultivating them with a patience and an interest which had been untiring?

But the explanation of his attempt to put his unborn poem into words gave him less thought to-day than it had after its first occurrence; there were other phases of last night's experience weirder and more unexplainable still. Paramount, of course, was the vision or dream—which would seem to have been induced by some magnetic property possessed and exerted by Weir. Such things do not occur without cause, and he was not the sort of man to yield himself, physically and mentally, his will and his perceptions, to the unconscious caprice of a somnambulist. And the scene had cut itself so deeply into the tablets of his memory that he found himself forgetting more than once that it was not an actual episode of his past. He wished he could see Weir, and hear her account of her mental experiences of those hours. If her dream should have been a companion to his, then the explanation would suggest itself that the scene might have been a vagary of her brain; that in some way which he did not pretend to explain, she had hypnotized him, and that his brain had received a photographic imprint of what had been in hers. It would then be merely a sort of telepathy. But why should she have dreamed a dream in which they both were so unhappily metamorphosed? and why should it have produced so powerful an impression upon his waking sense? And why, strangest of all, had he, without thought or self-surprise, gone to her, and with his soul stirred to its depths, called her

"Sionèd"? True, she had almost disguised herself, and had been the living counterfeit of Sionèd Penrhyn; but that was no reason why he should have called a woman who had belonged to his grandmother's time by her first name. Could Weir, thoroughly imbued with the character she was unconsciously representing, have exercised her hypnotic power from the moment she entered the gallery, and left him without power to think or feel except through her own altered perceptions? He thrust out his foot against the fender, almost overturning it, and, throwing back his head, clasped his hands behind it and scowled at the black ceiling above him. He was a man who liked things explained, and he felt both sullen and angry that he should have had an experience which baffled his powers of analysis and reason. His partial solution gave him no satisfaction, and he had the uncomfortable sense of actual mystery, and a premonition of something more to come. This, however, he was willing to attribute to the depressed condition of his spirits, which threw its gloom over every object, abstract and concrete, and which induced the tendency to exaggerate any strange or unpleasant experience of which he had been the victim. It was useless to try to think of anything else; his brain felt as if it had resolved itself into a kaleidoscope, through which those three scenes shifted eternally. Finally, he fell asleep, and did not awaken until it was time to dress for dinner. Before he left his room, Weir's maid knocked at his door and handed him a note, in which the lady of Rhyd-Alwyn apologized for leaving him to himself for an entire day, and announced that she would not appear at dinner, but would meet him in the drawing-room immediately thereafter. Dartmouth read the note through with a puzzled expression: it was formal and stilted, even for Weir. She was gone when he came to his senses in the gallery the night before. Had she awakened and become conscious of the situation? It was not a pleasant reminiscense for a girl to have, and he felt honestly sorry for her. Then he groaned in spirit at the prospect of an hour's tête-à-tête with Sir Iltyd. He liked Sir Iltyd very much, and thought him possessed of several qualifications valuable in a father-in-law, among them his devotion to his library; but in his present frame of mind he felt that history and politics were topics he would like to relegate out of existence.

He put the best face on the situation he could muster, however, and managed to conceal from Sir Iltyd the fact that his spirits were in other than their normal condition. The old baronet's eyes were not very sharp, particularly when he had a cold, and he was not disposed to notice Harold's pallor and occasional fits of abstraction, so long as one of his favorite topics was under discussion. When Dartmouth found that he had got safely through the dinner, he felt that he had accomplished a feat which would have rejoiced the heart of his grandmother, and

he thought that his reward could not come a moment too soon. Accordingly, for the first time since he had been at Rhyd-Alwyn, he declined to sit with Sir Iltyd over the wine, and went at once in search of Weir.

As he opened the door of the drawing-room he found the room in semi-darkness, lighted only by the last rays of the setting sun, which strayed through the window. He went in, but did not see Weir. She was not in her accustomed seat by the fire, and he was about to call her name, when he came to a sudden halt, and for the moment every faculty but one seemed suspended. A woman was standing by the open window looking out over the water. She had not heard him, and had not turned her head. Dartmouth felt a certain languor, as of one who is dreaming, and is half-conscious that he is dreaming, and therefore yields unresistingly to the pranks of his sleeping brain. Was it Weir, or was it the woman who had been a part of his vision last night? She wore a long, shining yellow dress, and her arms and neck were bare. Surely it was the other woman! She turned her head a little, and he saw her face in profile; there was the same stamp of suffering, the same pallor. Weir had never looked like that; before he had known her she had had, sometimes, a little expression of sadness and abstraction which had made her look very picturesque, but which had borne no relationship to suffering or experience. And the scene! the room filled with dying light, the glimpse of water beyond, the very attitude of the woman at the casement—all were strangely and deeply familiar to him, although not the details of the vision of last night. The only things that were wanting were the Eastern hangings to cover the dark wainscotted old walls, and the skins on the black, time-stained floor.

With a sudden effort of will he threw off the sense of mystery which had again taken possession of him, and walked forward quickly. As Weir heard him, she turned her head and met his eyes, and although a closer look at her face startled him afresh, his brain was his own again, and he was determined that it should remain so. He might yield to supernatural impressions when unprepared, but not when both brain and will were defiantly on the alert. That she was not only unaccountably altered, but that she shrank from him, was evident; and he was determined to hear her version of last night's adventure without delay. He believed that she would unconsciously say something which would throw a flood of light on the whole matter.

"Where did you get that dress?" he said, abruptly.

She started sharply, and the color flew to the roots of her hair, then, receding, left

her paler than before. "Why do you ask me that?" she demanded, with unconcealed, almost terrified suspicion in her tones.

"Because," he said, looking straight into her eyes, "I had a peculiar dream last night, in which you wore a dress exactly like this. It is rather a remarkable coincidence that you should put it on to-night."

"Harold!" she cried, springing forward and catching his arm convulsively in both her hands, "what has happened? What is it? And how can you talk so calmly when to me it seems—"

He put his arm around her. "Seems what?" he said, soothingly. "Did *you* have a dream, too?"

"Yes," she said, her face turning a shade paler, "I had a dream."

"And in it you wore this dress?"

"Yes."

"Tell me your dream."

"No!" she exclaimed, "I cannot."

Dartmouth put his hand under her chin and pushed her head back against his shoulder, upturning her face. "You must tell me," he said, quietly; "every word of it! I am not asking you out of curiosity, but because the dream I had was too remarkable to be without meaning. I cannot reach that meaning unassisted; but with your help I believe I can. So tell me at once."

"Oh, Harold!" she cried, throwing her arms suddenly about him and clinging to him, "I have no one else to speak to but you: I cannot tell my father; he would not understand. No girl ever felt so horribly alone as I have felt to-day. If it had not been for you I believe I should have killed myself; but you are everything to me, only—*how* can I tell you?"

He tightened his arms about her and kissed her.

"Don't kiss me," she exclaimed sharply, trying to free herself.

"Why not?" he demanded, in surprise. "Why should I not kiss you?"

She let her head drop again to his shoulder. "True," she said; "why should you not? It is only that I forget that I am not the woman I dreamed I was; and for her—it was wrong to kiss you."

"Weir, tell me your dream at once. It is for your good as well as mine that I insist. You will be miserable and terrified until you take someone into your confidence. I believe I can explain your dream, as well as give you the comfort of talking it over with you."

She slipped suddenly out of his arms and walked quickly to the end of the room and back, pausing within a few feet of him. The room was growing dark, and he could distinguish little of her beyond the tall outline of her form and the unnatural brilliancy of her eyes, but he respected her wish and remained where he was.

"Very well," she said, rapidly. "I will tell you. I went to sleep without much terror, for I had told my maid to sleep in my dressing-room. But I suppose the storm and the story I had told you had unsettled my nerves, for I soon began to dream a horrid dream. I thought I was dead once more. I could feel the horrible chill and pain, the close-packed ice about me. I was dead, but yet there was a spirit within me. I could feel it whispering to itself, although it had not as yet spread its fire through me and awakened me into life. It whispered that it was tired, and disheartened, and disappointed, and wanted rest; that it had been on a long, fruitless journey, and was so weary that it would not take up the burden of life again just yet. But its rest could not be long; there was someone it must find, and before he had gone again to that boundless land, whose haunting spirits were impalpable as flecks of mist. And then it moaned and wept, and seemed to live over its past, and I went back with it, or I was one with it—I cannot define. It recalled many scenes, but only one made an impression on my memory; I can recall no other." She paused abruptly, but Dartmouth made no comment; he stood motionless in breathless expectancy. She put her hand to her head, and after a moment continued haltingly:

"I—oh—I hardly know how to tell it. I seemed to be standing with you in a room more familiar to me than any room in this castle; a room full of tapestries and skins and cushions and couches; a room which if I had seen it in a picture I should have recognized as Oriental, although I have never seen an Oriental

room. I have always had an indescribable longing to see Constantinople, and it seemed to me in that dream as if I had but to walk to the window and look down upon it—as if I had looked down upon it many times and loved its beauty. But although I was with you, and your arms were about me, we were not as we are now—as we were before the dream: we had suffered all that a man and a woman can suffer who love and are held apart. And you looked as you do now, yet utterly different. You looked years older, and you were dressed so strangely. I do not know how I looked, but I know how I felt. I felt that I had made up my mind to commit a deadly sin, and that I gloried in it. I had suffered because to love you was a sin; but I only loved you the more for that reason. Then you slowly drew me further into the room and pressed me more closely in your arms and kissed me again, and then—I—oh—I do not know—it is all so vague I don't know what it meant—but it seemed as if the very foundations of my life were being swept away. And yet—oh, I cannot explain! I do not know, myself." And she would have thrown herself headlong on the sofa had not Dartmouth sprang forward and caught her.

"There, never mind," he said, quickly. "Let that go. It is of no consequence. A dream like that must necessarily end in a climax of incoherence and excitement."

He drew her down on the sofa, and for a moment said nothing further. He had to acknowledge that she had deepened the mystery, and given no key. A silence fell, and neither moved. Suddenly she raised her head. "What was your dream?" she demanded.

"The same. I don't pretend to explain it. And I shall not insult your understanding by inventing weak excuses. If it means anything we will give the problem no rest until we have solved it. If we cannot solve it, then we are justified in coming to the conclusion that there is nothing in it. But I believe we shall get to the bottom of it yet."

"Perhaps," she said, wearily; "I do not know. I only feel that I shall never be myself again, but must go through life with that woman's burden of sin and suffering weighing me down." She paused a moment, and then continued: "In that dream I wore a dress like this, and that is the reason I put it on to-night. I was getting some things in Paris before I left, and I bought it thinking you would like it; I had heard you say that yellow was your favorite color. When my maid opened the door of my wardrobe to-night to take out a dress, and I saw this hanging there, it gave me such a shock that I caught at a chair to keep from

falling. And then I felt irresistibly impelled to put it on. I felt as if it were a shroud, vivid in color as it is; but it had an uncanny fascination for me, and I experienced a morbid delight in feeling both spirit and flesh revolt, and yet compelling them to do my will. I never knew that it was in me to feel so, but I suppose I am utterly demoralized by so realistically living over again that awful experience of my childhood. If it happened again I should either be carried back to the vault for good and all, or end my days in the topmost tower of the castle, with a keeper, and the storms and sea-gulls for sole companions."

She sat up in a moment, and putting her hand on his shoulder, looked him full in the face for the first time. "It seems to me that I know you now," she said, "and that I never knew you before. When I first saw you to-night I shrank from you: why, I hardly know, except that the personality of that woman had woven itself so strongly into mine that for the moment I felt I had no right to love you. But I have never loved you as I do to-night, because that dream, however little else I may have to thank it for, did for me this at least: it seemed to give me a glimpse into every nook and corner of your character; I feel now that my understanding of your strange nature is absolute. I had seen only one side of it before, and had made but instinctive guesses at the rest; but as I stood with you in that dream, I had, graven on my memory, the knowledge of every side and phase of your character as you had revealed it to me many times; and that memory abides with me. I remember no details, but that makes no difference; if I were one with you I could not know you better." She slipped her arms about his neck and pressed her face close to his. "You have one of your attacks of melancholy to-night," she murmured. "You tried to conceal it, and the effort made you appear cold. It was the first thing I thought of when I turned and saw you, in spite of all I felt myself. And although you had described those attacks before, the description had conveyed little to me; that your moods were different from other people's blues had hardly occurred to me, we had been so happy. But now I understand. I pay for the knowledge with a high price; but that is life, I suppose."

IX.

Two Days later Dartmouth received a despatch from the steward of his estates in the north of England announcing that there was serious trouble among his tenantry, and that his interests demanded he should be on the scene at once. The despatch was brought to his room, and he went directly down to the hall, where he had left Weir, and told her he must leave her for a few days. She had been standing by the fire-place warming her foot on the fender, but she sat suddenly down on a chair as he explained to her the nature of the telegram. "Harold," she said, "if you go you will never come back."

"My dear girl," he said, "that speech is unworthy of you. You are not the sort of woman to believe in such nonsense as presentiments."

"Presentiments may be supernatural," she said, "but not more so than the experience we have had. So long as you are with me I feel comparatively untroubled, but if you go I know that something will happen."

He sat down on the arm of her chair and took her hand. "You are low-spirited yet," he said, "and consequently you take a morbid view of everything. That is all. I am beginning to doubt if the dream we had was anything more than the most remarkable dream on record; if it were otherwise, two such wise heads as ours would have discovered the hidden meaning by this time. And, granting that, you must also grant that if anything were going to happen, you could not possibly know it; nor will predicting it bring it about. I will be with you in two days from this hour, and you will only remember how glad you were to get rid of me."

"I hope so," she said. "But—is it absolutely necessary for you to go?"

"Not if you don't mind living on bread and cheese for a year or two. The farms of my ancestral home make a pretty good rent-roll, but if my tenants become the

untrammelled communists my steward predicts, we may have to camp out on burnt stubble for some time to come. It is in the hope of inducing them to leave me at least the Hall to take a bride to that I go to interview them at once. I may be too late, but I will do my best."

"You will always joke, I suppose," she said, smiling a little; "but come back to me."

He left Rhyd-Alwyn that evening and arrived at Crumford Hall the next morning. He slept little during the journey. His mood was still upon him, and without consideration for Weir as an incentive it was more difficult to fight it off, indeed, it was almost a luxury to yield to it. Moreover, although it had been easy enough to say he would think no more about his vision and its accompanying incidents, it was not so easy to put the determination into practice, and he found himself spending the night in the vain attempt to untangle the web, and in endeavoring to analyze the subtle, uncomfortable sense of mystery which those events had left behind them. Toward morning he lost all patience with himself, and taking a novel out of his bag fixed his mind deliberately upon it; and as the story was rather stupid, it had the comfortable effect of sending him to sleep.

When he arrived at his place he found that the trouble was less serious than his steward had represented. The year had been unproductive, and his tenants had demanded a lowering of their rents; but neither flames nor imprecations were in order. Dartmouth was inclined to be a just man, and, moreover, he was very much in love, and anxious to get away; consequently, after a two days' examination of the situation in all its bearings, he acceded in great part to their demands and gave his lieutenant orders to hold the reins lightly during the coming year.

On the second night after his arrival he went into his study to write to Weir. He had been so busy heretofore that he had sent her but a couple of lines at different times, scribbled on a leaf of his note book, and he was glad to find the opportunity to write her a letter. He had hoped to return to her instead, but had found several other matters which demanded his attention, and he preferred to look into them at once, otherwise he would be obliged to return later on.

His study was a comfortable little den just off the library, and its four walls had witnessed the worst of his moods and the most roseate of his dreams. In it he had frequently sat up all night talking with his grandmother, and the atmosphere had

vibrated with some hot disputes. There was a divan across one end, some bookshelves across the other, and on one side was a desk with a revolving chair before it. Above the desk hung a battle-axe which he had brought from America. Opposite was a heavily curtained window, and near it a door which led into his private apartments. Between was a heavy piece of furniture of Byzantine manufacture. As he entered the little room for the first time since his arrival, he stood for a moment with a retrospective smile in his eyes. He almost fancied he could see his grandmother half-reclining on one end of the divan, with a pillow beneath her elbow, her stately head, with its tower of white hair, thrown imperiously, somewhat superciliously back, as her eyes flashed and her mouth poured forth a torrent of overwhelming argument. "Poor old girl!" he thought; "why do women like that have to die? How she and Weir would have—argued, to put it mildly. I am afraid I should have had to put a continent between them. But I would give a good deal to see her again, all the same."

He shut the door, sat down before his desk, and took a bunch of keys from his pocket. As he did so, his eyes fell upon one of curious workmanship, and he felt a sudden sense of pleasant anticipation. That key opened the Byzantine chest opposite, somewhere in whose cunningly hidden recesses lay, he was convinced, the papers which he had once seen in his grandmother's clenched hands. He did not believe she had destroyed them; she had remarked a few days before her death—which had been sudden and unexpected—that she must soon devote an unpleasant hour to the burning of old letters and papers. She had spoken lightly, but there had been a gleam in her eyes and a tightening of her lips which had suggested the night he had seen her look as if she wished that the papers between her fingers were a human throat. Should he find those papers and pass away a dull evening? There was certainly nothing but the obstinacy of the chest to prevent, and she would forgive him more than that. He had always had a strong curiosity in regard to those papers, but his curiosity so far had been an inactive one; he had never before been alone at the Hall since his grandmother's death. He wheeled about on his chair and looked whimsically at the divan. "Have I your permission, O most fascinating of grandmothers?" he demanded aloud. "No answer. That means I have. So be it."

He wrote to Weir, then went over and kneeled on one knee before the chest. It looked outwardly like a high, deep box, and was covered with heavy Smyrna cloth, and ornamented with immense brass handles and lock. Dartmouth fitted the key into a small key-hole hidden in the carving on the side of the lock, and the front of the chest fell outward. He let it down to the floor, then gave his

attention to the interior. It was as complicated as the exterior was plain. On one side of the central partition were dozens of little drawers, on the other as many slides and pigeon-holes and alcoves. On every square inch of wood was a delicate tracery, each different, each telling a story. The handles of the drawers, the arcades of the alcoves, the pillars of the pigeon-holes—all were of ivory, and all were carved with the fantastic art of the Mussulman. It was so beautiful and so intricate that for a time Dartmouth forgot the papers. He had seen it before, but it was a work of art which required minute observation and study of its details to be appreciated. After a time, however, he recurred to his quest and took the drawers out, one by one, laying them on the floor. They were very small, and not one of them contained so much as a roseleaf. At the end of each fourth shelf which separated the rows of drawers, was a knob. Dartmouth turned one and the shelf fell from its place. He saw the object. Behind each four rows of drawers was a room. Each of these rooms had the dome ceiling and Byzantine pillars of a mosque, and each represented a different portion of the building—presumably that of St. Sophia. The capitals of the pillars were exquisite, few being duplicated, and the shafts were solid columns of black marble, supported on bases of porphyry. The floor was a network of mosaics, and the walls were a blaze of colored marbles. The altar, which stood in the central room, was of silver, with trappings of gold-embroidered velvet, and paraphernalia of gold. Dartmouth was entranced. He had a keen love of and appreciation for art, but he had never found anything as interesting as this. He congratulated himself upon the prospect of many pleasant hours in its company.

He let it go for the present and pressed his finger against every inch of the walls and floor and ceilings of the mosque, and of the various other apartments. It was a good half-hour's work, and the monotony and non-success induced a certain nervousness. His head ached and his hand trembled a little. When he had finished, and no panel had flown back at his touch, he threw himself down on one hand with an exclamation of impatience, and gazed with a scowl at the noncommittal beauty before him. He cared nothing for its beauty at that moment. What he wanted were the papers, and he was determined to find them. He stood up and examined the top of the chest. There was certainly a space between the visible depths of the interior and the back wall. He rapped loudly, but the wood and the stuff with which it was covered were too thick; there was no answering ring. He recalled the night when he had cynically examined the fragments of the broken cabinet at Rhyd-Alwyn. He felt anything but cynical now; indeed, he was conscious of a restless eagerness and a dogged determination with which curiosity had little to do. He would find those papers if he died in the attempt.

He knelt once more before the chest, and once more pressed his finger along its interior, following regular lines. Then he shook the pillars, and inserted his penknife in each most minute interstice of the carving; he prodded the ribs of the arches, and brought his fist down violently on the separate floors of the mosque. At the end of an hour he sprang to his feet with a smothered oath, and cutting a slit in the cover of the chest with his penknife, tore it off and examined the top and sides as carefully as his strained eyes and trembling hands would allow. He was ashamed of his nervousness, but he was powerless to overcome it. His examination met with no better success, and he suddenly sprang across the room and snatched the battle-axe from the wall. He walked quickly back to the chest. For a moment he hesitated, the thing was so beautiful! But only for a moment. The overmastering desire to feel those papers in his hands had driven out all regard for art. He lifted the axe on high and brought it down on the top of the chest with a blow which made the little room echo. He was a powerful man, and the axe was imbedded to its haft. He worked it out of the tough wood and planted another blow, which widened the rift and made the stout old chest creak like a falling tree. The mutilated wood acted upon Dartmouth like the smell of blood upon a wolf: the spirit of destruction leaped up and blazed within him, a devouring flame, and the blows fell thick and fast. He felt a fierce delight in the havoc he was making, in the rare and exquisite beauty he was ruining beyond hope of redemption. He leaned down, and swinging the axe outward, sent it straight through the arcades and pillars, the mosques and images, shattering them to bits. Then he raised the axe again and brought it down on the seam which joined the back to the top. The blow made but little impression, but a succession of blows produced a wide gap. Harold inserted the axe in the rift, and kneeling on the chest, attempted to force the back wall outward. For a time it resisted his efforts, then it suddenly gave way, and Dartmouth dropped the axe with a cry. From a shelf below the roof a package had sprung outward with the shock, and a small object had fallen with a clatter on the prostrate wall. Dartmouth picked it up in one hand and the papers in the other, his fingers closing over the latter with a joy which thrilled him from head to foot. It was a joy so great that it filled him with a profound peace; the excitement of the past hour suddenly left him. He went over to his desk and sat down before it. With the papers still held firmly in his hand, he opened the locket. There were two pictures within, and as he held them up to the light he was vaguely conscious that he should feel a shock of surprise; but he did not. The pictures were those of Lady Sionèd Penrhyn and—himself! With the same apparent lack of mental prompting as on the night in the gallery when he had addressed Weir with the name of her grandmother, he raised the picture of the woman to his lips and kissed it fondly. Then he laid it down

and opened the packet. Within were a thick piece of manuscript and a bundle of letters. He pressed his hand lovingly over the closely written sheets of the manuscript, but laid them down and gave his attention to the letters. They were roughly tied into a bundle with a bit of string. He slipped the string off and glanced at the address of the letter which lay uppermost. The ink, though faded, was legible enough—"Lady Sionèd-ap-Penrhyn, Constantinople." He opened the letter and glanced at the signature. The note was signed with the initials of his grandfather, Lionel Dartmouth. They were peculiarly formed, and were in many of the library books.

He turned back to the first page. As he did so he was aware of a new sensation, which seemed, however, but a natural evolution in his present mental and spiritual exaltation. It was as if the page were a blank sheet and he were wielding an invisible pen. Although, before he took up the letter, he had had no idea of its contents beyond a formless, general intuition, as soon as he began to read he was clearly aware of every coming word and sentence and sentiment in it. So strong was the impression, that once he involuntarily dropped the note and, picking up a pen, began hastily writing what he knew was on the unread page. But his mind became foggy at once, and he threw down the pen and returned to the letter. Then the sense of authorship and familiarity returned. He read the letters in the order in which they came, which was the order of their writing. Among them were some pages of exquisite verse: and verses and letters alike were the words of a man to a woman whom he loved with all the concentration and intensity of a solitary, turbulent, passionate nature; who knew that in this love lay his and her only happiness; and who would cast aside the orthodoxy of the world as beneath consideration when balanced against the perfecting of two human lives. They reflected the melancholy, ill-regulated nature of the man, but they rang with a tenderness and a passion which were as unmistakable as the genius of the writer; and Harold knew that if the dead poet had never loved another woman he had loved Sionèd Penrhyn. Or had he loved her himself? Or was it Weir? Surely these letters were his. He had written them to that beautiful dark-eyed woman with the jewels about her head. He could read the answers between the lines; he knew them by heart; the passionate words of the unhappy woman who had quickened his genius from its sleep. Ah, how he loved her, his beautiful Weir!—No—Sionèd was her name, Sionèd Penrhyn, and her picture hung in the castle where the storms beat upon the grey Welsh cliffs thousands of miles away….

If he had but met her earlier—he might to-day be one of that brilliant galaxy of poets whose music the whole world honored. Oh! the wasted years of his life,

and his half-hearted attempts to give to the world those wonderful children of his brain! He had loved and been jealous of them, those children, and they had multiplied until it had seemed as if they would prove stronger than his will. But he had let them sing for himself alone; he would give the world nothing until one day in that densely peopled land of his brain there should go up a paean of rejoicing that a child, before which their own glory paled, had been born. And above the tumult should rise the sound of such a strain of music as had never been heard out of heaven; and before it the world should sink to its knees….

And it had come to pass at last, this dream. This woman had awakened his nature from its torpor, and with the love had come, leaping, rushing, thundering, a torrent of verse such as had burst from no man's brain in any age.

And to her he owed his future, his fame, and his immortal name. And she would be with him always. She had struggled and resisted and refused him speech, but the terrible strength of her nature had triumphed over dogmas and over the lesser duties she owed to others; of her free will she had sent for him. He would be with her in an hour, and to-morrow they would have left codes and conventions behind them. There was a pang in leaving this beautiful room where his poem had been born, and beneath which lay such a picture as man sees nowhere else on earth. But to that which was to come, what was this? He would write a few lines to the woman who bore his name, and then the time would have come to go. She too was a beautiful and a brilliant woman, but her nature was narrow and cold, and she had never understood him for a moment. There! he had finished, and she would be happier without him. She had her world and her child—that beautiful boy!—But this was no time for pangs. He had chosen his destiny, and a man cannot have all things. It was time to go. Should he take one last glance at the boy laughing in the room beyond? He had but to push the tapestry aside, yes —there—God!

Ah, it was grateful to get into the cool air of the street, and before him, only a short distance away, were the towers of the Embassy. Would he never reach them? The way had been so long—could it be that his footsteps were already echoing on the marble floor which led to that chamber? Yes, and the perfume of that jasmine-laden room was stealing over his senses, and the woman he loved was in his arms. How the golden sunset lay on the domes and minarets below! How sonorous sounded the voices of the muezzins as they called the people to prayer! There was music somewhere, or was it the wails for the dead down in Galata? It was all like a part of a dream, and the outlines were blurred and

confused—What was that? A thunderclap? Why were he and Sionèd lying prostrate there, she with horror in her wide open, glassy eyes, he with the arms which had held her lying limply on the blood stained floor beside him? He seemed to see them both as he hovered above. It was death? Well, what matter? She had gone out with him, and in some cloud-walled castle, murmurous with harmonies of quiring spheres, and gleaming with their radiance, they would dwell together. Human vengeance could not reach them there, and for love there is no death. The soul cannot die, and love, its chiefest offspring, shares its immortality. It persists throughout the ages, like the waves of music that never cease. He would take her hand and lead her upward—Where was she? Surely she must be by his side. But he could see no one, feel no presence. God! had he lost her? Had she been borne upward and away, while he had lingered, fascinated with the empty clay that a moment since had been throbbing with life and keenest happiness? But he would find her—even did he go to the confines of Eternity. But where was he? He could see the lifeless shells no longer. He was roaming—on—on—in a vast, grey, pathless land, without light, without sound, unpeopled, forsaken. These were the plains of Eternity!—the measureless, boundless, sun-forgotten region, whose monarch was Death, and whose avenging angel—Silence! An eternal twilight more desolate than the blackness of night, a twilight as of myriads of ghostly lanterns shedding their colorless rays upon an awful, echoless solitude He would never find her here The dead of ages were about him—the troubled spirits who had approached the pale, stern gates of the Hereafter with rapture, and found within their portals not rest, but a ceaseless, weary, purposeless wandering, the world tired souls of aged men pursuing their never-ending quest in meek, faltering wonder, and longing for the goal which surely they must reach at last, the white, unquestioning souls of children floating like heavenly strains of unheard music in the void immensity, but one and all invisible imponderable. They were there, the monarchs of buried centuries and the thousands who had knelt at their thrones, the high and the low, the outcast and the shrived, but each as alone as if the solitary inhabitant of all Space And *he*, who would have fled from his fellow-men on earth, must long in vain for the sound of human voice or the rapture of human touch He must go on —on—in these colorless, shadowless, haunted plains, until the last trumpet-blast should awaken the echoes of the Universe and summon him to confront his Maker and be judged Oh! if but once more he could see the earth he had scorned! Was it spinning on its way still, that dark, tiny ball? How long since he had given that last glance of farewell? It must be years and years and years, as reckoned by the time of men, for in Eternity there is no time. And Sionèd—where was she? Desolate and abandoned, shrieked at by sudden winds, flying

terrified and helpless over level, horizonless plains only to fling herself upon the grey waves of Death's noiseless ocean? Oh, if he could but find her and make her forget! Together, what would matter death and silence and everlasting unrest? All would be forgot, all but the exquisite pain of the regret for the years he had wasted on earth, and for the solitary heritage he had left the world. Those children of his brain! They were with him still. Would that he had left them below to sing his name down through the ages! They were a torment to him here, in their futility and inaction. They could not sing to these shapeless ghosts about him; their voices would be unheeded music; nor would any strain sweep downward to that world whose tears he might have drawn, whose mirth provoked, whose passions played upon at his will. The one grand thing he had done must alone speak for him. There was in it neither pathos nor mirth; it had sprung to the cloud-capped point of human genius, and its sublimity would prove its barrier to the world's approval. But it would give him fame when—God! what was that thought? The manuscript of that poem had lain in the room where he had met his death. Had the hand that had slain him executed a more terrible vengeance still? Oh, it could not be! No man would be so base. And yet, what mercy had he the right to expect? And the nature of the man—cold—relentless—To consign the man who had wronged him to eternal oblivion—would he not feel as he watched the ashes in the brazier, that such vengeance was sweeter than even the power to kill? And he was impotent! He was a waif tossed about in the chaos of eternity, with no power to smite the man whose crime had—perhaps—been greater than the thrusting of two lives from existence a few years before their time. He was as powerless as the invisible beggar who floated at his side. And that man was on earth yet, perchance, coldly indifferent in his proud position, inwardly gloating at the fullness of his revenge….

Years, years, years! They slipped from his consciousness like water from the smooth surface of a rock. And yet each had pressed more heavily and stung more sharply than the last. Oh, if he could but know that his poem had been given to the world—that it had not been blotted from existence! This was what was meant by Hell. No torture that man had ever pictured could approach the torments of such regret, such uncertainty, such pitiable impotence. Truly, if his sin had been great, his punishment was greater.

But why was he going downward? What invisible hand was this which was resistlessly guiding him through the portals of the shadow land, past the great sun and worlds of other men, and down through this quivering ether? What? He was to be born again? A bit of clay needed an atom of animate force to quicken

it into life, and he must go again? And it was to the planet Earth he was going? Ah! his poem! his poem! He could write it again, and of what matter the wasted generations? And Sionèd—they would meet again. Sooner or later, she too must return, and on Earth they would find what had been denied them above. What was that? His past must become a blank? His soul must be shorn of its growth? He must go back to unremembering, unforseeing infancy, and grow through long, slow years to manhood again? Still, his genius and his intelligence in their elements would be the same, and with development would come at last the fruition of all his fondest hopes. And Sionèd? He would know her when they met. Their souls must be the same as when the great ocean of Force had tossed them up; and evolution could work no essential change. Ah! they had entered the blue atmosphere. And, yes—there lay the earth below them. How he remembered its green plains and white cities and blue waters! And that great island—yes, it was familiar enough. It was the land which had given him birth, and which should have knelt at his feet and granted him a resting-place amidst its illustrious dead. And this old castle they were descending upon? He did not remember it. Well, he was to be of the chosen of earth again. He would have a proud name to offer her, and this time it should be an unsullied one. This time the world should ring with his genius, not with his follies. This time—Oh, what was this? Stop! Stop! No; he could not part with it. The grand, trained intellect of which he had been so proud—the perfected genius which had been his glory—they should not strip them from him—they were part of himself; they were his very essence; he would not give them up! Oh, God! this horrible shrinking! This was Hell; this was not re-birth. Physical torture? The words were meaningless beside this warping, this tearing apart of spirit and mind—those precious children of his brain—limb from limb. Their shrieks for help!—their cries of anguish and horror! their clutches! their last spasmodic—despairing—weakening embrace! He *would* hold them! His clasp would defy all the powers of Earth and Air! No, they should not go—they should not. Oh! this cursed hand, with its nerves of steel. It would conquer yet, conquer and compress him down into an atom of impotence—There! it had wrenched them from him; they were gone—gone—forever. But no, they were there beside him; their moans for help filled the space about him; yes, moans—they were cries no longer—and they were growing fainter—they were fading—sinking—dying—and he was shrinking—

X.

Harold opened his eyes. The night had gone; the sun was struggling through the heavy curtains; the lamps and the fire had gone out, and the room was cold. He was faint and exhausted. His forehead was damp with horror, and his hands were shaking. That terrible struggle in which intellect and its attainments had been wrenched apart, in which the spirit and its memories had been torn asunder! He closed his eyes for a moment in obedience to his exhausted vitality. Then he rose slowly to his feet, went into his bedroom, and looked into the glass. Was it Harold Dartmouth or the dead poet who was reflected there? He went back, picked up the locket, and returned to the glass. He looked at the picture, then at his own face, and again at the picture. They were identical; there was not a line or curve or tint of difference. He returned to his chair and rested his head on his hand. Was he this man re-born? Did the dead come back and live again? Was it a dream, or had he actually lived over a chapter from a past existence? He was a practical man-of-the-world, not a vague dreamer—but all nature was a mystery; this would be no stranger than the general mystery of life itself. And he was not only this man reproduced in every line and feature; he had his nature as well. His grandmother had never mentioned her husband's name, but the Dartmouths had been less reticent. They were fond of reiterating anecdotes of Lionel Dartmouth's lawless youth, of his moody, melancholy temperament, and above all, of the infallible signs he had shown of great genius. That his genius had borne no fruit made no difference in their estimate; he had died too soon, that was all—died of fever in Constantinople, the story ran; there had never been a suggestion of scandal. And he had come back to earth to fulfill the promise of long ago, and to give to the world the one splendid achievement of that time. It had triumphed over death and crime and revenge—but—He recalled those nights of conflict in his mind. Would will and spirit ever conquer that mechanical defect in his brain which denied his genius speech?

He drew his hand across his forehead; he was so tired. He pushed the manuscript

and letters into a drawer of the desk, and turning the key upon them, opened the window and stepped out into the air. His vitality was at as low an ebb as if from physical overwork and fasting. He made no attempt to think, or to comment on the events just past. For the moment they lost their interest, and he strolled aimlessly about the park, his exhausted forces slowly recuperating. At the end of an hour he returned to the house and took a cold shower-bath and ate his breakfast. Then he felt more like himself. He had a strong desire to return to his study and the lost manuscript, but, with the wilful and pleasing procrastination of one who knows that satisfaction is within his grasp, he put the temptation aside for the present, and spent the day riding over his estates with his steward. He also gave his business affairs a minute attention which delighted his servant. After dinner he smoked a cigar, then went into his study and locked the door. He sat down before the desk, and for a moment experienced a feeling of dread. He wanted no more visions: would contact with those papers induce another? He would like to read that poem with the calm criticism of a trained and cultivated mind; he had no desire to be whirled back into his study at Constantinople, his brain throbbing and bursting with what was coming next. He shrugged his shoulders. It was a humiliating confession, but there were forces over which he had no control; there was nothing to do but resign himself to the inevitable.

He opened the drawer and took out the manuscript. To his unspeakable satisfaction he remained calm and unperturbed. He felt merely a cold-blooded content that he had balked his enemies and that his ambition was to be gratified. Once, before he opened the paper, he smiled at his readiness to accept the theory of reincarnation. It had taken complete possession of him, and he felt not the slightest desire to combat it. Did a doubt cross his mind, he had but to recall the park seen by his spiritual eyes, as he descended upon it to be born again. It was the park in which he, Harold Dartmouth, had played as a child during his annual visits to his parents; the park surrounding the castle in which he had been born, and which had belonged to his father's line for centuries. For the first time in his life he did not reason. It seemed to him that there was no corner or loophole for argument, nothing but a cold array of facts which must be unconditionally accepted or rejected.

He spread out the poem. It was in blank verse, and very long. He was struck at once with its beauty and power. Although his soul responded to the words as to the tone of a dear but long unheard voice, still he was spared the mental exaltation which would have clouded his judgment and destroyed his pleasure. He leaned his elbows on the desk, and, taking his head between his hands, read

on and on, scarcely drawing breath. Poets past and present had been his familiar friends, but in them he had found no such beauty as this. The grand sweep of the poem, the depth of its philosophy, the sublimity of its thought, the melody of its verse, the color, the radiant richness of its imagery, the sonorous swell of its lines, the classic purity of its style—Dartmouth felt as if an organ were pealing within his soul, lifting the song on its notes to the celestial choir which had sent it forth. Heavenly fingers were sweeping the keys, heavenly voices were quiring the melody they had with wanton hand flung into a mortal's brain. As Harold read on he felt that his spirit had dissolved and was flowing through the poem, to be blended, unified with it forever. He seemed to lose all physical sensation, not from the causes of the previous night, but from the spiritual exaltation and absorption induced by the beauty and grandeur of the theme. When he had finished, he flung out his arms upon the desk, buried his head in them, and burst into tears. The tears were the result, not so much of extreme nervous tension, as of the wonder and awe and ecstacy with which his own genius had filled him. In a few moments his emotion had subsided and was succeeded by a state less purely spiritual. He stood up, and leaning one hand on the desk, looked down at the poem, his soul filled with an exultant sense of power. Power was what he had gloried in all his life. His birth had given it to him socially, his money had lent its aid, and his personal fascination had completed the chapter. But he had wanted something more than the commonplace power which fate or fortune grants to many. He had wanted that power which lifts a man high above his fellow-men, condemning him to solitude, perhaps, but, in that fiercely beating light, revealing him to all men's gaze. If life had drifted by him, it had been because he was too much of a philosopher to attempt the impossible, too clever to publish his incompetence to the world.

His inactivity had not been the result of lack of ambition, and yet, as he stood there gazing down upon his work, it seemed to him that he had never felt the stirrings of that passion before. With the power to gratify his ambition, ambition sprang from glowing coals into a mighty flame which roared and swept about him, darted into every corner and crevice of his being, pulsated through his mind and spirit, and temporarily drove out every other instinct and desire. He threw back his head, his eyes flashing and his lips quivering. For the moment he looked inspired, as he registered a vow to have his name known in every corner of the civilized world. That he had so far been unable to accomplish anything in his present embodiment gave him no uneasiness at the moment. Sooner or later the imprisoned song would force its way through the solid masonry in which it was walled up—He gave a short laugh and came down to earth; his fancy was

running away with him.

He folded the poem compactly and put it in his breast pocket, determined that it should never leave him again until a copy was in the hands of the printer. It should be sent forth from Constantinople. The poem must be the apparent offspring of his present incarnation; and as he had never been in Constantinople he must go there and remain for several months before publication.

He went into the library and sat down before the fire. He closed his eyes and let his head fall back on the soft cushion, a pleasant languor and warmth stealing through his frame. What a future! Power, honor, adoration—the proudest pedestal a man can stand upon. And, as if this were not enough, an unquestioned happiness with the woman he loved with his whole heart. To her advent into his life he owed his complete and final severance from the petty but infinite distractions and temptations of the world. His present without flaw, and his future assured, what was to prevent his gifts from flowering thickly and unceasingly in their peaceful soil and atmosphere of calm? He remembered that his first irresistible impulse to write had come on the night he had met her. Would he owe to her his final power to speak, as he had owed to that other—

He sat suddenly erect, then leaned forward, gazing at the fire with eyes from which all languor had vanished. He felt as if a flash of lightning had been projected into his brain. That other? Who was that other?—why was she so marvellously like Weir? Her grandmother? Yes, but why had he felt for Weir that sense of recognition and spiritual kinship the moment he had seen her?

He sprang to his feet and strode to the middle of the room. Great God! Was Weir reëmbodied as well as himself? Lady Sionèd Penrhyn was indisputably the woman he had loved in his former existence—that was proved once for all by the scene in the gallery at Rhyd-Alwyn and by the letters he had found addressed to her. He recalled Weir's childhood experience. Had she really died, and the desperate, determined spirit of Sionèd Penrhyn taken possession of her body? Otherwise, why that sense of affinity, and her strange empire over him the night of their mutual vision? There was something more than racial resemblance in form and feature between Sionèd and Weir Penrhyn; there was absolute identity of soul and mind.

He strode rapidly from one end of the room to the other. Every nerve in his body seemed vibrating, but his mind acted rapidly and sequentially. He put the links

together one by one, until, from the moment of his last meeting with Sionèd Penrhyn at Constantinople to the climax of his vision in his study, the chain was complete. Love, then, as well as genius, had triumphed over the vengeance of Dafyd Penrhyn and Catherine Dartmouth. In that moment he felt no affection for his grandmother. She had worshipped and spoilt him, and had shown him only her better side; but the weakness and evil of her nature had done him incalculable injury, and he was not prepared to forgive her at once.

He returned to his seat. Truly they all were the victims of inexorable law, but the law was just, and if it took to-day it gave to-morrow. If he and Sionèd Penrhyn had been destined to short-lived happiness and tragic death in that other existence, there was not an obstacle or barrier between them in the present. And if—He pushed his chair suddenly back and brought his brows together. A thought had struck him which he did not like. He got up and put another log on the fire. Then he went over to the table and took up a book—a volume of Figuier. He sat down and read a few pages, then threw down the book, and drawing writing materials toward him, wrote a half-dozen business letters. When they were finished, together with a few lines to Weir, and no other correspondence suggested itself, he got up and walked the length of the room several times. Suddenly he brought his fist violently down on the table.

"I am a fool," he exclaimed. "The idea of a man with my experience with women —" And then his voice died away and his hand relaxed, an expression of disgust crossing his face. He sank into a chair by the table and leaned his head on his hand. It was true that he was a man of the world, and that for conventional morality he had felt the contempt it deserved. Nevertheless, in loving this girl the finest and highest instincts of his nature had been aroused. He had felt for her even more of sentiment than of passion. When a man loves a girl whose mental purity is as absolute as her physical, there is, intermingled with his love, a leavening quality of reverence, and the result is a certain purification of his own nature. That Dartmouth had found himself capable of such a love had been a source of keenest gratification to him. He had been lifted to a spiritual level which he had never touched before, and there he had determined to remain.

And to have this pure and exquisite love smirched with the memory of sin and vulgar crime! To take into his arms as his wife the woman on whose soul was written the record of temptation and of sin! It was like marrying one's mistress: as a matter of fact, what else was it? But Weir Penrhyn! To connect sin with her was monstrous. And yet, the vital spark called life—or soul, or intelligence, or

personal force; whatever name science or ignorance might give it—was unchanged in its elements, as his own chapter of memories had taught him. Every instinct in Sionèd's nature was unaltered. If these instincts were undeveloped in her present existence, it was because of Weir's sheltered life, and because she had met him this time before it was too late.

He sprang to his feet, almost overturning the chair. "I can think no more to-night," he exclaimed. "My head feels as if it would burst."

He went into his bedroom and poured out a dose of laudanum. When he was in bed he drank it, and he did not awake until late the next day.

XI.

In the life of every man there comes a time when he is brought face to face with the great problem of morality. The murderer undoubtedly comprehends the problem in all its significance when he is about to mount the scaffold, the faithless wife when she is dragged through the divorce court, and her family and friends are humbled to the dust.

Dartmouth worked it out the next night as he sat by his library fire. He had given the afternoon to his business affairs, but when night threw him back into the sole companionship of his thoughts, he doggedly faced the question which he had avoided all day.

What was sin? Could anyone tell, with the uneven standard set up by morality and religion? The world smiled upon a loveless marriage. What more degrading? It frowned upon a love perfect in all but the sanction of the Church, if the two had the courage to proclaim their love. It discreetly looked another way when the harlot of "Society" tripped by with her husband on one hand and her lover on the other. A man enriched himself at the expense of others by what he was pleased to call his business sharpness, and died revered as a philanthropist; the common thief was sent to jail.

Dartmouth threw back his head and clasped his hands behind it. Of what use rehearsing platitudes? The laws of morality were concocted to ensure the coherence and homogeneity of society; therefore, whatever deleteriously affected society was crime of less or greater magnitude. He and Sionèd Penrhyn had ruined the lives and happiness of two people, had made a murderer of the one, and irrevocably hardened the nature of the other: Catherine Dartmouth had lived to fourscore, and had died with unexpiated wrong on her conscience. They had left two children half-orphaned, and they had run the risk of disgracing two of the proudest families in Great Britain. Nothing, doubtless, but the cleverness and promptitude of Sir Dafyd Penrhyn, the secretive nature of Catherine

Dartmouth, the absence of rapid-news transit, and the semi-civilization of Constantinople at that time, had prevented the affair from becoming public scandal. Poor Weir! how that haughty head of hers would bend if she knew of her grandmother's sin, even did she learn nothing of her own and that sin's kinship!

Dartmouth got up and walked slowly down the long room, his hands clasped behind him, his head bent. Heaven knew his "sins" had been many; and if disaster had never ensued, it had been more by good luck than good management. And yet—he could trace a certain punishment in every case; the woman punished by the hardening of her nature and the probability of complete moral dementia; the man by satiety and an absolute loss of power to value what he possessed. Therefore, for the woman a sullen despair and its consequences; for the man a feverish striving for that which he could never find, or, if found, would have the gall in the nectar of having let slip the ability to unreservedly and innocently enjoy.

And if sin be measured by its punishment! He recalled those years in eternity, with their hell of impotence and inaction. He recalled the torment of spirit, the uncertainty worse than death. And Weir? Surely no two erring mortals had ever more terribly reaped the reward of their wrong-doing.

What did it signify? That he was to give her up? that a love which had begun in sin must not end in happiness? But his love had the strength of its generations; and the impatient, virile, control-disdaining nature of the man rebelled. Surely their punishment had been severe enough and long enough. Had they not been sent back to earth and almost thrown into each other's arms in token that guilt was expiated and vengeance satisfied? Dartmouth stopped suddenly as this solution presented itself, then impatiently thrust a chair out of his way and resumed his walk. The consciousness that their affection was the perpetuation of a lustful love disheartened and revolted him. Until that memory disappeared his punishment would not be over.

He stopped and leaned his hand on the table. "I thought I was a big enough man to rise above conventional morality," he said. "But I doubt if any man is when circumstances have combines to make him seriously face the question. He might, if born a red Indian, but not if saturated in his plastic days with the codes and dogmas of the world. They cling, they cling, and reason cannot oust them. The society in whose enveloping, penetrating atmosphere he has lived his life

decrees that it is a sin to seduce another man's wife or to live with a woman outside the pale of the Church. Therefore sin, down in the roots of his consciousness, he believes it; therefore, to perpetuate a sinful love—I am becoming a petty moralist," he broke off impatiently; "but I can't help it. I am a triumph of civilization."

He stood up and threw back his shoulders. "Let it go for the present," he said. "At another time I may look at it differently or reason myself out of it. Now I will try—"

He looked towards his study door with a flash in his eyes. He half turned away, then went quickly into the little room and sat down before the desk. Every day he would make the attempt to write, and finally that obstinate wedge in his brain would give way and his soul be set free.

He drew paper before him and took up a pen. For an hour he sat motionless, bending all his power of intellect, all the artistic instincts of his nature to the luring of his song-children from that closed wing in his brain. But he could not even hear their peremptory knocks as on the nights when he had turned from those summonses in agony and terror. He would have welcomed them now and dragged the visitants into the sunlight of his intelligence and forced the song from their throats.

He took the poem from his pocket and read it over. But it gave him no inspiration, it dulled his brain, rather, and made him feel baffled and helpless. But he would not give up; and dawn found him still with his pen in his hand. Then he went to bed and slept for a few hours. That day he gave little attention to his affairs. His melancholy, held at bay by the extraordinary experience through which he had passed, returned and claimed him. He shut himself up in his library until the following morning, and alternated the hours with fruitless attempts to write and equally fruitless attempts to solve the problem in regard to Weir. The next day and night, with the exception of a few hours' restless sleep, were spent in the same way.

At the end of the third day not a word had flowed from his pen, not a step nearer had he drawn to Weir. A dull despair took possession of him. Had those song-children fled, discouraged, and was he to be withheld from the one consolation of earthly happiness? He pushed back the chair in which he had been sitting before his desk and went into the library. He opened one of the windows and

looked out. How quiet it was! He could hear the rising wind sighing through the yews, but all nature was elsewise asleep. What was she doing down at Rhyd-Alwyn? Sleeping calmly, or blindly striving to link the past with the present? He had heard from her but once since he left. Perhaps she too had had a revelation. He wondered if it were as quiet there as here, or if the waves at the foot of the castle still thundered unceasingly on. He wondered if she would shrink from him when the truth came to her. Doubtless, for she had been reared in the most rigid of moral conventions, and naturally catholic-minded as she was, right, to her, was right, and wrong was wrong. He closed the window and, throwing himself on a sofa, fell asleep. But his dreams were worse than his waking thoughts. He was wandering in eternal darkness looking for someone lost ages ago, and a voice beside him was murmuring that he would never find her, but must go on—on—forever; that the curse of some crime committed centuries ago was upon him, and that he must expiate it in countless existences and eternal torment. And far off, on the very confines of space, floated a wraith-like thing with the lithe grace of a woman whom he had loved on earth. And she was searching for him, but they described always the same circle and never met. And then, finally, after millions of years, an invisible hand clutched him and bore him upward onto a plane, hitherto unexplored, then left him to grope his way as he could. All was blackness and chaos. Around him, as he passed them, he saw that dark suns were burning, but there was nothing to conduct their light, and they shed no radiance on the horrors of their world. Below him was an abyss in which countless souls were struggling, blindly, helplessly, until they should again be called to duty in some sphere of material existence. The stillness at first was deathlike, oppressive; but soon he became aware of a dull, hissing noise, such as is produced on earth by the fusion of metals. The invisible furnaces were lost in the impenetrable darkness, but the heat was terrific; the internal fires of earth or those of the Bible's hell must be sickly and pale in comparison with this awful, invisible atmosphere of flame. Now and then a planet, which, obeying Nature's laws even here, revolved around its mockery of a sun, fell at his feet a river of fire. There was stillness no longer. The roaring and the exploding of the fusing metals, or whatever it might be, filled the vast region like the hoarse cries of wild beasts and the hissing of angry serpents. It was deafening, maddening. And there was no relief but to plunge into that abyss and drown individuality. He flew downward, and as he paused a moment on the brink, he looked across to the opposite bank and saw a figure about to take the leap like himself. It was a dim, shadowy shape, but even in the blackness he knew its waving grace. And she pointed down into the abyss of blind, helpless, unintelligent torment, and then—

XII.

Dartmouth suddenly found himself standing upright, his shoulders clutched in a pair of strong hands, and Hollington's anxious face a few inches from his own.

"What the devil is the matter with you, Hal?" exclaimed Hollington. "Have you set up a private lunatic asylum, or is it but prosaic dyspepsia?"

"Becky!" exclaimed Dartmouth, as he grasped the situation. "I *am* so glad to see you. Where did you come from?"

"You frightened your devoted Jones to death with one of your starvation moods, and he telegraphed for me. The idea of a man having the blues in the second month of his engagement to the most charming girl in Christendom!"

"Don't speak to me of her," exclaimed Dartmouth, throwing himself into a chair and covering his face with his hands.

"Whew! What's up? You haven't quarrelled already? Or won't the governor give his consent?"

"No," said Dartmouth, "that's not it."

"Then what the devil is the matter? Is—is she dead?"

"No."

"Was she married to some other man before?"

"No!"

"I beg your pardon; I was merely exhausting the field of conjecture.
Will you kindly enlighten me?"

"If I did, you would say I was a lunatic."

"I have been inclined to say so occasionally before—"

"Becky, Weir Penrhyn is my—" And then he stopped. The ludicrous side of the matter had never appealed to him, but he was none the less conscious of how ridiculous the thing would appear to another.

"Your what? Your wife? Are you married to her already, and do you want me to break it to the old gentleman? What kind of a character is he? Shall I go armed?"

"She is not my wife, thank God! If she were—"

"For heaven's sake, Harold, explain yourself. Can it be possible that Miss Penrhyn is like too many other women?"

Dartmouth sprang to his feet, his face white to the lips.

"How dare you say such a thing?" he exclaimed. "If it were any other man but you, I'd blow out his brains."

Hollington got up from the chair he had taken and, grasping Dartmouth by the shoulders, threw him back into his chair.

"Now look here, Harold," he said; "let us have no more damned nonsense. If you will indulge in lugubrious hints which have but one meaning, you must expect the consequences. I refuse to listen to another word unless you come out and speak plain English."

He resumed his seat, and Dartmouth clasped his hands behind his head and stared moodily at the fire. In a few moments he turned his eyes and fixed them on Hollington.

"Very well," he said, "I will tell you the whole story from beginning to end. Heaven knows it is a relief to speak; but if you laugh, I believe I shall kill you."

"I will not laugh," said Hollington. "Whatever it is, I see it has gone hard with you."

Dartmouth began with the night of the first attempt of his suppressed poetical

genius to manifest itself, and gave Hollington a comprehensive account of each detail of his subsequent experiences, down to the reading of the letters and the spiritual retrospect they had induced. He did not tell the story dramatically; he had no fire left in him; he stated it in a matter-of-fact way, which was impressive because of the speaker's indisputable belief in his own words. Hollington felt no desire to laugh; on the contrary, he was seriously alarmed, and he determined to knock this insane freak of Harold's brain to atoms, if mortal power could do it, and regardless of consequences to himself.

When Dartmouth had finished, Hollington lit a cigar and puffed at it for a moment, meditatively regarding his friend meanwhile. Then he remarked, in a matter-of-fact tone:

"So you are your own grandfather, and Miss Penrhyn is her own grandmother."

Dartmouth moved uneasily. "It sounds ridiculous—but—don't chaff."

"My dear boy, I was never more serious in my life. I merely wanted to be sure that I had got it straight. It is A.B.C. by this time to you, but it has exploded in my face like a keg of gunpowder, and I am a trifle dazed. But, to come down to deadly earnest, will you allow me to speak to you from the medical point of view? You know I had some idea at one time of afflicting the community with one more physician, until we stumbled on those coal mines, and my prospective patients were spared premature acquaintance with the golden stairs. May I speak as an unfledged doctor, but still as one burdened with unused knowledge?"

"You can say what you like."

"Very well, then. You may or may not be aware that what you are pleased to call the blues, or moods, are, in your case, nothing more or less than melancholia. When they are at their worst they are the form known as melancholia attonita. In other words, you are not only steeped in melancholy, but your brain is in, a state of stupor: you are all but comatose. These attacks are not frequent, and are generally the result of a powerful mental shock or strain. I remember you had one once after you had crammed for two months for an examination and couldn't pull through. You scared the life out of the tutors and the boys, and it was not until I threatened to put you under the pump that you came to. Your ordinary attacks are not so alarming to your friends, but when indulged in too frequently, they are a good deal more dangerous."

He paused a moment, but Dartmouth made no reply, and he went on.

"Any man who yields habitually to melancholia may expect his brain, sooner or later, to degenerate from its original strength, and relax the toughness and compactness of its fibre. Absolute dementia may not be the result for some years, but there will be occasional and painful indications of the end for a long space before it arrives. The indications, as a rule, will assume the form of visions and dreams and wild imaginings of various sorts. Now do you understand me?"

"You mean," said Dartmouth, wheeling about and looking him directly in the eyes, "you mean that I am going mad?"

"I mean, my dear boy, that you will be a raving maniac inside of a month, unless you dislodge from your brain this horrible, unnatural, and ridiculous idea."

"Do I look like a madman?" demanded Dartmouth.

"Not at the present moment, no. You look remarkably sane. A man with as good a brain as yours does not let it go all at once. It will slide from you imperceptibly, bit by bit, until one day there will be a climax."

"I am not mad," said Dartmouth; "and if I were, my madness would be an effect, not a cause. What is more, I know enough about melancholia to know that it does not drift into dementia until middle age at least. Moreover, my brain is not relaxed in my ordinary attacks; my spirits are prostrate, and my disgust for life is absolute, but my brain—except when it has been over-exerted, as in one or two climaxes of this experience of mine—is as clear as a bell. I have done some of my best thinking with my hand on the butt of a pistol. But to return to the question we are discussing. You have left one or two of the main facts unexplained. What caused Weir's vision? She never had an attack of melancholia in her life."

"Telepathy, induction, but in the reverse order of your solution of the matter. Your calling her by her grandmother's name was natural enough in your condition—you have acknowledged that your melancholia had already taken possession of you. Miss Penrhyn had, for some reason best known to her sleeping self, got herself up to look like her grandmother, and, she being young and pretty, her semi-lunatic observer addressed her as Sionèd instead of heaven knows what jaw-breaking Welsh title. Then you went ahead and had the vision, which was quite in keeping with your general lunar condition. I believe you said

there was a moon."

Dartmouth frowned. "I asked you not to chaff," he said. "What is more, I have had melancholia all my life, but delusion never before. But let that pass. The impulse to write—what do you say to that?"

"The impulse was due to the genius which you have undoubtedly inherited from your grandfather. The inability to put your ideas into verbal form is due to amnesic aphasia. The portion of your brain through which your genius should find speech is either temporarily paralyzed or else deficient in composition. You had better go up and see Jackson. He can cure you if anyone can."

"Do you believe I can be cured?"

"You can certainly make the attempt."

Dartmouth threw back his head and covered his face with his hands. "O God!" he exclaimed, "if you knew the agony of the longing to feel the ecstasy of spiritual intoxication, and yet to feel as if your brain were a cloud-bank—of knowing that you are divinely gifted, that the world should be ringing with your name, and yet of being as mute as if screwed within a coffin!"

"My dear boy, it will all come out right in the end. Science and your own will can do much, and as for the rest, perhaps Miss Penrhyn will do for you what those letters intimate Sionèd did for your grandfather."

Dartmouth got up and leaned his elbow on the mantelpiece.

"I do not know that I shall marry Weir Penrhyn," he said.

"Why not? Because your grandfather had an intrigue with her grandmother?—which, by the way, is by no means clearly proved. That there was a plan on foot to that end the letters pretty well show, but—"

"I don't care a hang about the sins of my ancestors, or of Weir's either—if that were all. If I do not marry her it will be because I do not care to shatter an ideal into still smaller bits. I loved her with what little good was left in me. I placed her on a pedestal and rejoiced that I was able so to do. Now she is the woman whose guilty love sent us both to our death. I could never forget it. There would always be a spot on the sun."

"My God, Harold," exclaimed Hollington, "you *are* mad. Of all the insane, ridiculous, idiotic speeches that ever came from man's lips, that is the worst."

"I can't help it, Becky. The idea, the knowledge, is my very life and soul; and when you think it all over you will see that there are many things that cannot be explained—Weir's words in the gallery, for instance. They coincide exactly with the vision I had four nights later. And a dozen other things—you can think them out for yourself. When you do, you will understand that there is but one light in which to look at the question: Weir Penrhyn and I are Lionel Dartmouth and Sionèd Penrhyn reborn, and that is the end of the matter."

Hollington groaned, and threw himself back in his chair with an impatient gesture.

"Well," he said, after a few moments' silence, "accepting your remarkable premisses for the sake of argument, will you kindly enlighten me as to since when you became so beautifully complete and altogether puerile a moralist? Suppose you did sin with her some three-quarters of a century ago, have not time and suffering purified you both—or rather her? I suppose it does not make so much difference about you."

"It is not that. It is the idea that is revolting—that this girl should have been my mistress at any time—"

"But, great heaven! Harold, such a sin is a thing of the flesh, not of the spirit, and the physical part of Sionèd Penrhyn has enriched the soil of Constantinople these sixty years. She has committed no sin in her present embodiment."

"Sin is an impulse, a prompting, of the spirit," said Dartmouth.

Hollington threw one leg over the arm of the chair, half turning his back upon Dartmouth.

"Rot!" he said.

"Not at all. Otherwise, the dead could sin."

"I am gratified to perceive that you are still able to have the last word. All I can say is, that you have done what I thought no living man could do. I once read a novel by a famous American author in which one of the characters would not ask

the heroine to marry him after her husband's death because he had been guilty of the indelicacy of loving her (although mutely, and by her unsuspected) while she was a married woman. I thought then that moral senility could go no further, but you have got ahead of the American. Allow me to congratulate you."

"You can jibe all you like. I may be a fool, but I can't help it. I have got to that point where I am dominated by instinct, not by reason. The instincts may be wrong, because the outgrowth of a false civilization, but there they are, nevertheless, and of them I am the product. So are you, and some day you will find it out. I do not say positively that I will not marry Weir Penrhyn. I will talk it over with her, and then we can decide."

"A charming subject to discuss with a young girl. It would be kinder, and wiser, and more decent of you never to mention the matter to her. Of what use to make the poor girl miserable?"

"She half suspects now, and it would come out sooner or later."

"Then for heaven's sake do it at once, and have it over. Don't stay here by yourself any longer, whatever you do. Go to-morrow."

"Yes," said Dartmouth, "I will go to-morrow."

XIII.

When Dartmouth entered the drawing-room at Rhyd-Alwyn the next evening, a half hour after his arrival, he found Sir Iltyd alone, and received a warm greeting.

"My dear boy," the old gentleman exclaimed, "I am delighted to see you. It seems an age since you left, and your brief reports of your ill-health have worried me. As for poor Weir, she has been ill herself. She looks so wretched that I would have sent for a physician had she not, in her usual tyrannical fashion, forbidden me. I did not tell her you were expected to-night; I wanted to give her a pleasant surprise. Here she is now."

The door was pushed open and Weir entered the room. Dartmouth checked an involuntary exclamation and went forward to meet her. She had on a long white gown like that she had worn the morning he had asked her to marry him, but the similarity of dress only served to accentuate the change the intervening time had wrought. It was not merely that she had lost her color and that her face was haggard; it was an indefinable revolution in her personality, which made her look ten years older, and left her without a suggestion of girlishness. She still carried her head with her customary hauteur, but there was something in its poise which suggested defiance as well, and which was quite new. And the lanterns in her eyes had gone out; the storms had been too heavy for them. All she needed was the costume of the First Empire to look as if she had stepped out of the locket he had brought from Crumford Hall.

As she saw Dartmouth, the blood rushed over her face, dyeing it to the roots of her hair, then receded, leaving it whiter than her gown. When he reached her side she drew back a little, but he made no attempt to kiss her; he merely raised her hand to his lips. As he did so he could have sworn he saw the sun flashing on the domes beneath the window; and over his senses stole the perfume of jasmine. The roar without was not that of the ocean, but of a vast city, and—hark!—the

cry of the muezzin. How weird the tapestry looked in the firelight, and how the figures danced! And he had always liked her to wear white, better even than yellow. He roused himself suddenly and offered her his arm. The butler was announcing dinner.

They went into the dining-room, and Dartmouth and Sir Iltyd talked about the change of ministry and the Gladstone attitude on the Irish question for an hour and a quarter. Weir neither talked nor ate, but sat with her hands clasped tightly in her lap. Dartmouth understood and sympathized. He felt as if his own nerves were on the rack, as if his brain had been rolled into a cord whose tension was so strained that it might snap at any moment. But Sir Iltyd was considerate. He excused himself as soon as dessert was removed, on the plea of finishing an important historical work just issued, and the young people went directly to the drawing-room. As Dartmouth closed the door Weir turned to him, the color springing into her face.

"Tell me," she said, peremptorily; "have you discovered what it meant?"

He took her hand and led her over to the sofa. She sat down, but stood up again at once. "I cannot sit quietly," she said, "until I *know*. The enforced repression of the past week, the having no one to speak to, and the mystery of that dream have driven me nearly mad. It was cruel of you to stay away so long—but let that pass. There is only one thing I can think of now—do you know anything more than when you left?"

He folded his arms and looked down. "Why should you think I could have learned anything at Crumford Hall?" he demanded, with apparent evasion.

"Because of the restraint and sometimes incoherence of your letters. I knew that something had happened to you; you seemed hardly the same man. You seemed like—Oh, I do not know. For heaven's sake, tell me what it is."

"Weir," he said, raising his head and looking at her, "what do you think it is?"

She put up her hands and covered her face. "I do not know," she said, uncertainly. "If there is to be any explanation it must come from you. With me there is only the indefinable but persistent feeling that I am not Weir Penrhyn but the woman of that dream; that I have no right here in my father's castle, and no right to the position I hold in the world. To me sin has always seemed a horrible thing, and yet I feel as if my own soul were saturated with it; and what is worse,

I feel no repentance. It is as if I were being punished by some external power, not by my own conscience. As if—Oh, it is all too vague to put into words—Harold, *what* is it?"

"Let us sit down," he said, "and talk it over."

She allowed him to draw her down onto the sofa, and he looked at her for a moment. Then, suddenly, the purely human love triumphed. He forgot regret and disgust. He forgot the teachings of the world, and the ideal whose shattering he had mourned. He remembered nothing but that this woman so close to him was dearer than life or genius or ambition; that he loved her with all the strength and passion of which a man is capable. The past was gone, the future a blank; nothing remained but the glorious present, with its impulses which sprang straight from the heart of nature and which no creed could root out. He flung his arms about her, and the fierce joy of the moment thrilled and shook him as he kissed her. And for the moment she too forgot.

Then his arms slowly relaxed and he leaned forward, placing his elbow on his knee and covering his face with his hand. For a few moments he thought without speaking. He decided that he would tell her something to-night, but not all. He would give her a clue, and when she was alone she might work the rest out for herself. Then, together, they would decide what would be best to do. He took her hand.

"I have something to tell you," he said. "I did not tell you before I left because I thought it best not, but things have occurred since which make it desirable you should know. You do not know, I suppose, that on the night of our dream you got up in your sleep and wandered about the castle."

She leaned suddenly forward. "Yes?" she said, breathlessly. "I walked in my sleep? You saw me? Where?"

"In the gallery that overhangs the sea. I had gone there to watch the storm, and was about to return to my room when I saw you coming toward me. At first I thought you were the spirit of your grandmother—of Sionèd Penrhyn. In your sleep you had dressed yourself like the picture in the gallery, and the resemblance was complete. Then, strangely enough, I walked up to you and took your hand and called you 'Sionèd'—"

"Go on!"

"Then you told me that you were dead, and had been wandering in the hereafter and looking for me; that you could not find me there, and so had come back to earth and entered into the body of a dead child, and given it life, and grown to womanhood again, and found me at last. And then you put your cold arms about me and drew me down onto a seat. I suddenly lost all consciousness of the present, and we were together in a scene which was like a page from a past existence. The page was that of the dream we have found so difficult a problem, and you read it with me, not alone in your room—Weir! What is the matter?"

She had pushed him violently from her and sprung to her feet, and she stood before him with wide-open, terror-stricken eyes, and quivering in every limb. She tried to speak, but no words came; her lips were white and shrivelled, and her tongue clove to the roof of her mouth. Then she threw up her arms and fell heavily to the floor.

XIV.

After Weir had been carried up-stairs, and he had ascertained that she was again conscious, Dartmouth went to his own room, knowing he could not see her again that night. He did not go to bed; there was no possibility of sleep for hours, and he preferred the slight distraction of pacing up and down the room. After a time he paused in front of the fireplace, and mechanically straightened one of the andirons with his foot. What had affected Weir so strangely? Had the whole thing burst suddenly upon her? He had hardly told her enough for that; but what else could it be? Poor child! And poor Sir Iltyd! How should he explain to him? What story could he concoct to satisfy him? It would be absurd to attempt the truth; no human being but himself and Weir could comprehend it; Sir Iltyd would only think them both mad. He unconsciously drew in a long breath, expelling the air again with some violence, like a man whose chest is oppressed. And how his head ached! If he could only get a few hours sleep without that cursed laudanum. Hark! what was that? A storm was coming up. It almost shook the castle, solid and of stone as it was. But he was glad. A storm was more in tune with his mood than calm. He would go out into the gallery and watch it.

He left his room and went to the gallery to which he had gone to watch a storm a little over a week ago. A week? It seemed so remote that for the moment he could not recall the events of that last visit; his head ached so that everything but physical suffering was temporarily insignificant. There was no moon to-night. The sky was covered with black, scurrying clouds, and he could only hear the angry, boiling waters, not see them. He felt suffocated. He had felt so all the evening. Besides the pain in his head there was a pressure on his brain; he must have air; and he pulled open one of the windows and stood within it. The wind beat about his head, the sea-gulls screamed in his ears, and the roar of the sea was deafening; but it exhilarated him and eased his head for the moment. What a poem it would make, that black, storm-swept sky, those mighty, thundering waters, that granite, wind-torn coast! How he could have immortalized it once!

And he had it in him to immortalize it now, only that mechanical defect in his brain, no—that cruel iron hand, would not let him tell the world that he was greater than any to whom its people bent their knees. Ah, there it was at last! It had reawakened, and it was battling and struggling for speech as before. Perhaps this time it would succeed! It was strong enough to conquer in the end, and why should not the end have come? Surely the fire in his brain must have melted that iron hand. Surely, far away, *they* were singing again. Where were they? Within his brain?—or battling with the storm to reach him? What were those wraith-like things—those tiny forms dancing weirdly on the roaring waters? Ah, he knew. They were the elfins of his brain that had tormented him with their music and fled at his approach. They had flown from their little cells, and were holding court on the storm-waves like fairies on the green. It was like them to love the danger and the tumult and the night. It was like them to shout and bound with the intoxication of the hour, to scream with the gale, and to kiss with frantic rapture the waves that threatened them. Each was a Thought mightier than any known to living man, and in the bosom of maddened nature it had found its element. And they had not deserted him—they had fled but for the hour—they had turned suddenly and were holding out their arms to him. Ah! he would meet them half-way—

A pair of arms, strong with terror, were suddenly thrown about him, and he was dragged to the other side of the gallery.

"Harold!" cried Weir; "what is the matter with you? Are you mad?"

"I believe I am," he cried. "Come to the light. I have something to tell you."

He caught her by the wrists and pulled her down the gallery until they were under the lantern which burned in one of the windows on nights like this as a warning to mariners. She gave a faint scream of terror, and struggled to release herself.

"You look so strange," she cried. "Let me go."

"Not any more strange than you do," he said, rapidly. "You, too, have changed since that night in here, when the truth was told to both of us. You did not understand then, nor did I; but I know all now, and I will tell you."

And then, in a torrent of almost unintelligible words, he poured forth the tale of his discovery: what had come to him in the study at Crumford Hall, the locket he

had found, the letters he had read, the episode of his past he had lived over, the poem which had swept him up among the gods in its reading—all the sequence of facts whose constant reiteration during every unguarded moment had mechanically forced themselves into lasting coherence. She listened with head bent forward, and eyes through which terror, horror, despair, chased each other, then returned and fought together. "It is all true," he cried, in conclusion. "It is all true. Why don't you speak? Cannot you understand?"

She wrenched her hands from his grasp and flung her arms above her head. "Yes," she cried, "I understand. I am a woman for whose sin Time has no mercy; you are a madman, and I am alone!"

"What are you saying?" he demanded, thickly. "You are alone? There is no hope, then?"

"No, there is no hope," she said, "nor has the worst—" She sprang suddenly forward and caught him about the neck. "Oh, Harold!" she cried, "you are not mad. It cannot be! I cannot think of the sin, or care; I only know that I love you! love you! love you! and that if we can be together always the past can go; even —Oh, Harold, speak to me; don't look at me in that way!"

But his arms hung inertly at his sides, and he looked down into her agonized face with a smile. "No hope!" he whispered.

The poor girl dropped in a heap to the floor, as if the life had suddenly gone out of her. Harold gave a little laugh. "No hope!" he said.

She sprang to her feet and flew down the gallery. But he stood where she had left him. She reached the open window, then turned and for a moment faced him again. "No," she cried, "no hope, and no rest or peace;" and then the storm and the night closed over her.

He moved to the window after a moment, and leaning out, called her name. There was no answer but the shrieking of the storm. The black waters had greedily embraced her, and in their depths she would find rest at last. How would she look down there, in some quiet cave, with the sea-weed floating over her white gown, and the pearls in her beautiful hair? How exquisite a thing she would be! The very monsters of the deep would hold their breath as they passed, and leave her unmolested. And the eye of mortal man would never gaze upon her again. There was divinest ecstacy in the thought! Ah! how lovely she was!

What a face—what a form!

He staggered back from the window and gave a loud laugh. At last it had been vanquished and broken—that iron hand. He had heard it snap that moment within his brain. And it was pouring upward, that river of song. The elfins had come back, and were quiring like the immortals. She would hear them down there, in her cold, nameless grave, with the ceaseless requiem of the waters above her, and smile and rejoice that death had come to her to give him speech. His brain was the very cathedral of heaven, and there was music in every part of it. The glad shout was ringing throughout nave and transept like the glorious greeting of Christmas morning. "Her face! Her form!" No, no; not that again. They were no part of the burning flood of song which was writhing and surging in his brain. They were not the words which would tell the world—Ah! what was it? "Her face! Her form!—"

He groped his way to and fro like a blind man seeking some object to guide him. "Her eyes! Her hair!" No, no. Oh, what was this? Why was he falling—falling? —What was that terror-stricken cry? that wild, white face of an old man above him? Where had this water come from that was boiling and thundering in his ears? What was that tossed aloft by the wave beyond? If he could but reach her! —She had gone! Cruel Night had caught her in its black arms and was laughing at his efforts to reach her. That mocking, hideous laughter! how it shrieked above the storm, its dissonance as eternal as his fate! There she was again!—Sionèd! No, she had gone, and he was beating with impotent fury those devouring—But who was this bending over him?—the Night Queen, with the stars in her hair? And what was she pressing into his arms? At last! Sionèd! Sionèd!

THE END.

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