

Then she was gone, and as he went down the steps of the mansion he saw the carriage rolling away towards Piccadilly. As he walked back home a new comprehension of life came. For the first time in his life he was disposed to envy the loungers in Bond Street, and all that throng of well-dressed flaneurs in Piccadilly and the Park. What did she think of it all, of all the pageantry of that world which looked so charming, so glowing that summer—that world in the town with its early mornings of brilliancy, its opening hotels and re-awakening to life, its thought? And yet there was trouble there as well—there was fighting beyond seas; there were sail scenes on the great routes.

He walked home and dreamt of that experience, thinking it all out again, and the references he had to jot down for Lord Pymont's magnum opus were forgotten. He was passing it all in review that evening till so late that his old landlady brought up his dinner with the observation: "As you did not ring, sir, I thought you must have forgotten it." So he had forgotten it—completely.

When should he see her again? On the following day the inclination for work had partly returned but it went again as quickly as it came. Everything that spoke of her was interesting to him; the streets where she had driven seemed to excite an additional curiosity, and Baden, where she was going, was a place which now stood out clearly in his imagination apart from all other Continental resorts. For two days he reflected and did nothing; ambition might have been lead. She had spoken of a horse; then evidently she rode, and on the third day he left his chambers and walked into the West End. It was too early in the day, being July, eleven in the morning, for the crowd of vehicles to be very great at Hyde Park Corner; he passed through into the Park, stopping a moment just inside where there were phalanxes of empty green chairs. In the Row there were a few riders cantering along under the trees.

And as fate willed it he saw her that morning, mounted on a fine horse and riding in his direction. As he saw her the thought of his possible advance, the memory of February days in town, of little cub-de-sac of regret at seaside places and elsewhere all vanished.

He only saw her sitting her horse so well, and riding superbly; the groom was far behind. That meeting was for long a point of departure with him. He lifted his hat and she brought her horse to a stop, reaching out her hand.

"You, Mr Hockhampton, of all people in the world! I didn't know that you were frivolous enough to spend your mornings in the Park."

"Oh, sometimes I come."

"You do well," she answered. "Have you been getting on?"

"No, I fear not."

"How is that?"

"Because," he began, and then he stopped.

"You have been ill; you work too hard."

She spoke with precipitation.

"No," he replied. "I have not been ill. It is only because I have thought of you."

"Of me?"

He nodded.

"That was kind. Do you know that I also have thought of you."

He looked up at her eagerly as she sat there smiling down at him.

"I thought you would be coming again."

"Your father did not write."

"Oh, my father gets so immersed in his work that he forgets all about what he should do. But come and see us again. Will you?"

"Yes," he replied.

"When can you come?"

"I am free, he said.

"Well, come this afternoon if you will, at about half past three. Will that suit you?"

"I shall be delighted."

"Then that is arranged. Good-bye—till this afternoon."

She waved her hand and trotted off and left him standing there looking

at rhododendrons and at the file of carriages entering the Park. And for a while he forgot where he was, what he was doing, why he was doing it, and the matter of the Richebieu fol'os faded entirely from his mind.

Why had he not a fortune? Why was he only an heir of prospects which were poor things at best?

The world was rushing on and he might be swept away out of the main stream into some eddy of oblivion if he did not take care. Yet in place of going back to the lists to continue the struggle, he only had one real wish—and that was to see her, and to listen to her, to ask her what she thought of things, of the river in summer time, of the theatres, of the war.

V.

At half-past three that afternoon he was shown into a room which he had not seen before, a room in white and blue—a place heavy with the scent of flowers.

He had been there less than a minute when the door opened and Adrienne appeared, followed by the old lady in black who knitted as she walked.

"I am glad you kept your promise," she said, and then her companion shook hands with him gravely and settled down in a roomy arm-chair.

The girl began to talk eagerly. She said:

"I think your life must be so deeply interesting."

"Do you think that?" he said wonderingly.

"Well, is it not?"

"Ah, perhaps sometimes, I can't say, but just now it seems poor and foolish and ridiculously empty."

"How strangely you talk!" she said. "How absurd to think such a thing."

And then he had gone on to talk naively, enthusiastically as though they were alone in the world, and in a fit of expansion such as entails an aftermath of regret.

Madame Ernestine had simmered into a nap, and until tea was brought

in there was no interruption. He could still hear her saying "It must be so nice to have an ambition, to be looking forward to being in Parliament and to making a great name."

But was it so nice? He was not quite sure. There were attendant disadvantages there.

Suddenly she jumped up from her chair and said:

"Perhaps you would like some music."

"Very much."

She went over to the piano and played some old German airs—airs which suggested sleepy old German cities, and burgomasters, and musicians dreaming of great conceptions as they sat and played.

When tea was brought she did not awaken the old lady who slumbered on.

He saw her again a few mornings after in the Park, and then it became almost an accepted thing to see her. One day she said pointedly:

"I shall be at the Flower Show tomorrow."

Of course he went there too, and they walked through the tents together with the old governante lingering behind, looking at dinner centres.

At one moment everything seemed to be going well; at the next he was at the brink of despair. One morning in the Park she dismounted and gave the horse to the groom and they walked along by the grotto over the grass, stopping to look at the peacocks.

"You are going away," he said.

"The thought makes me feel mad."

"How extravagant you are!"

"But you are going."

"Yes, I am going. Father wishes me to go to Baden."

"I shall count the days until you return."

"It will not be for long."

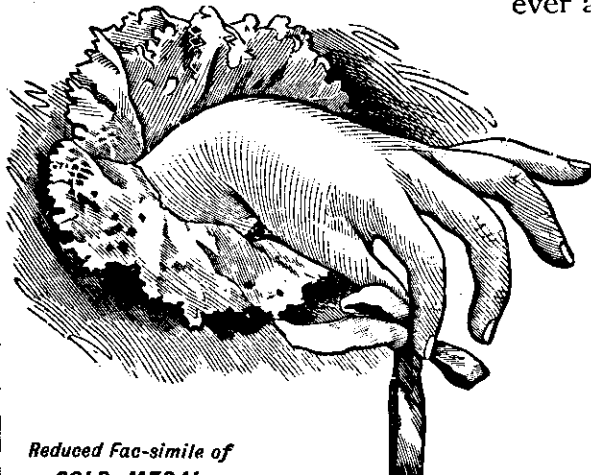
"If it were only into the country that you were going!"

"Oh, Baden will be more amusing."

He glanced at her figure in its triff habit, at her black hat. How exquisite she looked walking there in the

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