

excitement. 'It has been so easy to speak of taking the plunge when two years of student life lay definitely before me, but now that the moment has arrived the water looked very cold.' All their arguments passed sharply across her brain – a neat selection of platitudes, altruisms, aphorisms. 'Will they wear? Will they hold good?' she thought, and then cried 'Yes, yes . . . I have the Key in my hands. Shall I unlock the door and get through and then shut it again, bang it again, with all the old Life outside, and Pearl and I alone at last?' She sat down at the table and took up her pen, then wrote rapidly. 'Pearl I am coming. Understand I answer now for good and for all . . . I don't know why I have hesitated so long. Ought I to be grateful to you for taking me? I don't think I am, dear, because I would do exactly the same if the circumstances were reversed. You realise that I want to find out what everything is worth – and you too, my friend. What has held me back from coming has been I think, principally, the thought that we are not to be together for a week or a month or a year even but for all times. It is rather immense and requires consideration. So to bed. I am lonely. J.'

When the seven o'clock dressing bell rang Juliet woke to the full consciousness of a nervous headache. She knew from experience that it was of no earthly use to attempt to do anything except succumb and lie still. So she slipped into her kimono and went along the stone passage to Miss Grimwood's bedroom. That lady on a seat before the glass tastefully decorated<sup>10</sup> her head with her three soft switches, and when Juliet came in she enmeshed herself in a salmon pink fascination with no small measure of confusion and embarrassment. 'I am afraid I shall have to stay in bed all day' said Juliet. Then, in answer to numerous significant inquiries and nods, 'No, nothing thank you. Merely a headache. Meals? No thank you. Yes, tea perhaps, if I might have it very strong. If I can just lie still . . . O, no, quite unnecessary. I shall take some phenacetin. If I might be left alone. Overwork? O, by no means. They are quite a common occurrence.' Then she went back to her room and pulled down the blinds and crept into bed. The hours pulsed slowly on. After an immeasurable length of time she saw Pearl standing beside her, tall and grave in her black frock with a white feather boa around her throat. 'This is good' said Juliet, sitting up with her hands clasped round her knees. 'What is the time?' 'Just four.' Pearl smiled. 'How do you feel?' 'Rather damnable.' 'Can you talk?' 'My dear, yes. I feel better for the sight of you. Give me that pink carnation you're wearing and sit on the bed here.' 'I got your letter this afternoon, Juliet, by the two o'clock post, and came straightway to your room, my dear.' They suddenly held each other's hand. 'To the devil with my relations' said Juliet. 'To the devil with our Past Life' said Pearl. 'All the way here I have been quoting Oscar's "Relations are a very tedious set of people". You know, it has been like a charm.'<sup>24</sup> (pp106a–110a)