CHAPTER IV

It was past four o'clock before I left the house, together with Mills. Mr. Blunt, still in his riding costume, escorted us to the very door. He asked us to send him the first fiacre we met on our way to town. "It's impossible to walk in this get-up through the streets," he remarked, with his brilliant smile.

At this point I propose to transcribe some notes I made at the time in little black books which I have hunted up in the litter of the past; very cheap, common little note-books that by the lapse of years have acquired a touching dimness of aspect, the frayed, worn-out dignity of documents.

Expression on paper has never been my forte. My life had been a thing of outward manifestations. I never had been secret or even systematically taciturn about my simple occupations which might have been foolish but had never required either caution or mystery. But in those four hours since midday a complete change had come over me. For good or evil I left that house committed to an enterprise that could not be talked about; which would have appeared to many senseless and perhaps ridiculous, but was certainly full of risks, and, apart from that, commanded discretion on the ground of simple loyalty. It would not only close my lips but it would to a certain extent cut me off from my usual haunts and from the society of my friends; especially of the light-hearted, young, harum-scarum kind. This was unavoidable. It was because I felt myself thrown back upon my own thoughts and forbidden to seek relief amongst other lives—it was perhaps only for that reason at first I started an irregular, fragmentary record of my days.

I made these notes not so much to preserve the memory (one cared not for any to-morrow then) but to help me to keep a better hold of the actuality. I scribbled them on shore and I scribbled them on the sea; and in both cases they are concerned not only with the nature of the facts but with the intensity of my sensations. It may be, too, that I learned to love the sea for itself only at that time. Woman and the sea revealed themselves to me together, as it were: two mistresses of life's values. The illimitable greatness of the one, the unfathomable seduction of the other working their immemorial spells from generation to generation fell upon my heart at last: a common fortune, an unforgettable memory of the sea's formless might and of the sovereign charm in that woman's form wherein there seemed to beat the pulse of divinity rather than blood.

I begin here with the notes written at the end of that very day.

—Parted with Mills on the quay. We had walked side by side in absolute silence. The fact is he is too old for me to talk to him freely. For all his sympathy and seriousness I don't know what note to strike and I am not at all certain what he thinks of all this. As we shook hands at parting, I asked him how much longer he expected to stay. And he answered me that it depended on R. She was making arrangements for him to cross the frontier. He wanted to see the very ground on which the Principle of Legitimacy was actually asserting itself arms in hand. It sounded to my positive mind the most fantastic thing in the world, this elimination of personalities from what seemed but the merest political, dynastic adventure. So it wasn't Doña Rita, it wasn't Blunt, it wasn't the Pretender with his big infectious laugh, it wasn't all that lot of politicians, archbishops, and generals, of monks, guerrilleros, and smugglers by sea and land, of dubious agents and shady speculators and undoubted swindlers, who were pushing their fortunes at the risk of their precious skins. No. It was the Legitimist Principle asserting itself! Well, I would accept the view but with one reservation. All the others might have been merged into the idea, but I, the latest recruit, I would not be merged in the Legitimist Principle. Mine was an act of independent assertion. Never before had I felt so intensely aware of my personality. But I said nothing of that to Mills. I only told him I thought we had better not be seen very often together in the streets. He agreed. Hearty handshake. Looked affectionately after his broad back. It never occurred to him to turn his head. What was I in comparison with the Principle of Legitimacy?

Late that night I went in search of Dominic. That Mediterranean sailor was just the man I wanted. He had a great experience of all unlawful things that can be done on the seas and he brought to the practice of them much wisdom and audacity. That I didn't know where he lived was nothing since I knew where he loved. The proprietor of a small, quiet café on the quay, a certain Madame Léonore, a woman of thirty-five with an open Roman face and intelligent black eyes, had captivated his heart years ago. In that café with our heads close together over a marble table, Dominic and I held an earnest and endless confabulation while Madame Léonore, rustling a black silk skirt, with gold earrings, with her raven hair elaborately dressed and something nonchalant in her movements, would take occasion, in passing to and fro, to rest her hand for a moment on Dominic's shoulder. Later when the little café had emptied itself of its habitual customers, mostly people connected with the work of ships and cargoes, she came quietly to sit at our table and looking at me very hard with her black, sparkling eyes asked Dominic familiarly what had happened to his Signorino. It was her name for me. I was Dominic's Signorino. She knew me by no other; and our connection has always been somewhat of a riddle to her. She said that I was somehow changed since she saw me last. In her rich voice she urged Dominic only to look at my eyes. I must have had some piece of luck come to me either in love or at cards, she bantered. But Dominic answered half in scorn that I was

not of the sort that runs after that kind of luck. He stated generally that there were some young gentlemen very clever in inventing new ways of getting rid of their time and their money. However, if they needed a sensible man to help them he had no objection himself to lend a hand. Dominic's general scorn for the beliefs, and activities, and abilities of upper-class people covered the Principle of Legitimacy amply; but he could not resist the opportunity to exercise his special faculties in a field he knew of old. He had been a desperate smuggler in his younger days. We settled the purchase of a fast sailing craft. Agreed that it must be a balancelle and something altogether out of the common. He knew of one suitable but she was in Corsica. Offered to start for Bastia by mail-boat in the morning. All the time the handsome and mature Madame Léonore sat by, smiling faintly, amused at her great man joining like this in a frolic of boys. She said the last words of that evening: "You men never grow up," touching lightly the grey hair above his temple.

A fortnight later.

. . . In the afternoon to the Prado. Beautiful day. At the moment of ringing at the door a strong emotion of an anxious kind. Why? Down the length of the dining-room in the rotunda part full of afternoon light Doña R., sitting cross-legged on the divan in the attitude of a very old idol or a very young child and surrounded by many cushions, waves her hand from afar pleasantly surprised, exclaiming: "What! Back already!" I give her all the details and we talk for two hours across a large brass bowl containing a little water placed between us, lighting cigarettes and dropping them, innumerable, puffed at, yet untasted in the overwhelming interest of the conversation. Found her very quick in taking the points and very intelligent in her suggestions. All formality soon vanished between us and before very long I discovered myself sitting cross-legged, too, while I held forth on the qualities of different Mediterranean sailing craft and on the romantic qualifications of Dominic for the task. I believe I gave her the whole history of the man, mentioning even the existence of Madame Léonore, since the little café would have to be the headquarters of the marine part of the plot.

She murmured, "Ah! Une belle Romaine," thoughtfully. She told me that she liked to hear people of that sort spoken of in terms of our common humanity. She observed also that she wished to see Dominic some day; to set her eyes for once on a man who could be absolutely depended on. She wanted to know whether he had engaged himself in this adventure solely for my sake.

I said that no doubt it was partly that. We had been very close associates in the West Indies from where we had returned together, and he had a notion that I could be depended on, too. But mainly, I suppose, it was from taste. And there was in him also a fine carelessness as to what he did and a love of venturesome

enterprise.

“And you,” she said. “Is it carelessness, too?”

“In a measure,” I said. “Within limits.”

“And very soon you will get tired.”

“When I do I will tell you. But I may also get frightened. I suppose you know there are risks, I mean apart from the risk of life.”

“As for instance,” she said.

“For instance, being captured, tried, and sentenced to what they call ‘the galleys,’ in Ceuta.”

“And all this from that love for . . .”

“Not for Legitimacy,” I interrupted the inquiry lightly. “But what’s the use asking such questions? It’s like asking the veiled figure of fate. It doesn’t know its own mind nor its own heart. It has no heart. But what if I were to start asking you—who have a heart and are not veiled to my sight?” She dropped her charming adolescent head, so firm in modelling, so gentle in expression. Her uncovered neck was round like the shaft of a column. She wore the same wrapper of thick blue silk. At that time she seemed to live either in her riding habit or in that wrapper folded tightly round her and open low to a point in front. Because of the absence of all trimming round the neck and from the deep view of her bare arms in the wide sleeve this garment seemed to be put directly on her skin and gave one the impression of one’s nearness to her body which would have been troubling but for the perfect unconsciousness of her manner. That day she carried no barbarous arrow in her hair. It was parted on one side, brushed back severely, and tied with a black ribbon, without any bronze mist about her forehead or temple. This smoothness added to the many varieties of her expression also that of child-like innocence.

Great progress in our intimacy brought about unconsciously by our enthusiastic interest in the matter of our discourse and, in the moments of silence, by the sympathetic current of our thoughts. And this rapidly growing familiarity (truly, she had a terrible gift for it) had all the varieties of earnestness: serious, excited, ardent, and even gay. She laughed in contralto; but her laugh was never very long; and when it had ceased, the silence of the room with the light dying in all its many windows seemed to lie about me warmed by its vibration.

As I was preparing to take my leave after a longish pause into which we had fallen as into a vague dream, she came out of it with a start and a quiet sigh. She said, "I had forgotten myself." I took her hand and was raising it naturally, without premeditation, when I felt suddenly the arm to which it belonged become insensible, passive, like a stuffed limb, and the whole woman go inanimate all over! Brusquely I dropped the hand before it reached my lips; and it was so lifeless that it fell heavily on to the divan.

I remained standing before her. She raised to me not her eyes but her whole face, inquisitively—perhaps in appeal.

"No! This isn't good enough for me," I said.

The last of the light gleamed in her long enigmatic eyes as if they were precious enamel in that shadowy head which in its immobility suggested a creation of a distant past: immortal art, not transient life. Her voice had a profound quietness. She excused herself.

"It's only habit—or instinct—or what you like. I have had to practise that in self-defence lest I should be tempted sometimes to cut the arm off."

I remembered the way she had abandoned this very arm and hand to the white-haired ruffian. It rendered me gloomy and idiotically obstinate.

"Very ingenious. But this sort of thing is of no use to me," I declared.

"Make it up," suggested her mysterious voice, while her shadowy figure remained unmoved, indifferent amongst the cushions.

I didn't stir either. I refused in the same low tone.

"No. Not before you give it to me yourself some day."

"Yes—some day," she repeated in a breath in which there was no irony but rather hesitation, reluctance what did I know?

I walked away from the house in a curious state of gloomy satisfaction with myself.

* * * * *

And this is the last extract. A month afterwards.

—This afternoon going up to the Villa I was for the first time accompanied in my way by some misgivings. To-morrow I sail.

First trip and therefore in the nature of a trial trip; and I can't overcome a certain gnawing emotion, for it is a trip that mustn't fail. In that sort of enterprise there is no room for mistakes. Of all the individuals engaged in it will every one be intelligent enough, faithful enough, bold enough? Looking upon them as a whole it seems impossible; but as each has got only a limited part to play they may be found sufficient each for his particular trust. And will they be all punctual, I wonder? An enterprise that hangs on the punctuality of many people, no matter how well disposed and even heroic, hangs on a thread. This I have perceived to be also the greatest of Dominic's concerns. He, too, wonders. And when he breathes his doubts the smile lurking under the dark curl of his moustaches is not reassuring.

But there is also something exciting in such speculations and the road to the Villa seemed to me shorter than ever before.

Let in by the silent, ever-active, dark lady's maid, who is always on the spot and always on the way somewhere else, opening the door with one hand, while she passes on, turning on one for a moment her quick, black eyes, which just miss being lustrous, as if some one had breathed on them lightly.

On entering the long room I perceive Mills established in an armchair which he had dragged in front of the divan. I do the same to another and there we sit side by side facing R., tenderly amiable yet somehow distant among her cushions, with an immemorial seriousness in her long, shaded eyes and her fugitive smile hovering about but never settling on her lips. Mills, who is just back from over the frontier, must have been asking R. whether she had been worried again by her devoted friend with the white hair. At least I concluded so because I found them talking of the heart-broken Azzolati. And after having answered their greetings I sit and listen to Rita addressing Mills earnestly.

"No, I assure you Azzolati had done nothing to me. I knew him. He was a frequent visitor at the Pavilion, though I, personally, never talked with him very much in Henry Allègre's lifetime. Other men were more interesting, and he himself was rather reserved in his manner to me. He was an international politician and financier—a nobody. He, like many others, was admitted only to feed and amuse Henry Allègre's scorn of the world, which was insatiable—I tell you."

"Yes," said Mills. "I can imagine."

"But I know. Often when we were alone Henry Allègre used to pour it into my ears. If ever anybody saw mankind stripped of its clothes as the child sees the king in the German fairy tale, it's I! Into my ears! A child's! Too young to die of fright. Certainly not old enough to understand—or even to believe. But then his arm was about me. I used to laugh, sometimes. Laugh! At this destruction—at these ruins!"

"Yes," said Mills, very steady before her fire. "But you have at your service the everlasting charm of life; you are a part of the indestructible."

"Am I? . . . But there is no arm about me now. The laugh! Where is my laugh? Give me back my laugh. . . ."

And she laughed a little on a low note. I don't know about Mills, but the subdued shadowy vibration of it echoed in my breast which felt empty for a moment and like a large space that makes one giddy.

"The laugh is gone out of my heart, which at any rate used to feel protected. That feeling's gone, too. And I myself will have to die some day."

"Certainly," said Mills in an unaltered voice. "As to this body you . . ."

"Oh, yes! Thanks. It's a very poor jest. Change from body to body as travellers used to change horses at post houses. I've heard of this before. . . ."

"I've no doubt you have," Mills put on a submissive air. "But are we to hear any more about Azzolati?"

"You shall. Listen. I had heard that he was invited to shoot at Rambouillet—a quiet party, not one of these great shoots. I hear a lot of things. I wanted to have a certain information, also certain hints conveyed to a diplomatic personage who was to be there, too. A personage that would never let me get in touch with him though I had tried many times."

"Incredible!" mocked Mills solemnly.

"The personage mistrusts his own susceptibility. Born cautious," explained Doña Rita crisply with the slightest possible quiver of her lips. "Suddenly I had the inspiration to make use of Azzolati, who had been reminding me by a constant stream of messages that he was an old friend. I never took any notice of those pathetic appeals before. But in this emergency I sat down and wrote a note asking him to come and dine with me in my hotel. I suppose you know I don't live in the Pavilion. I can't bear the Pavilion now. When I have to go there I begin

to feel after an hour or so that it is haunted. I seem to catch sight of somebody I know behind columns, passing through doorways, vanishing here and there. I hear light footsteps behind closed doors. . . My own!"

Her eyes, her half-parted lips, remained fixed till Mills suggested softly, "Yes, but Azzolati."

Her rigidity vanished like a flake of snow in the sunshine. "Oh! Azzolati. It was a most solemn affair. It had occurred to me to make a very elaborate toilet. It was most successful. Azzolati looked positively scared for a moment as though he had got into the wrong suite of rooms. He had never before seen me en toilette, you understand. In the old days once out of my riding habit I would never dress. I draped myself, you remember, Monsieur Mills. To go about like that suited my indolence, my longing to feel free in my body, as at that time when I used to herd goats. . . But never mind. My aim was to impress Azzolati. I wanted to talk to him seriously."

There was something whimsical in the quick beat of her eyelids and in the subtle quiver of her lips. "And behold! the same notion had occurred to Azzolati. Imagine that for this tête-à-tête dinner the creature had got himself up as if for a reception at court. He displayed a brochette of all sorts of decorations on the lapel of his frac and had a broad ribbon of some order across his shirt front. An orange ribbon. Bavarian, I should say. Great Roman Catholic, Azzolati. It was always his ambition to be the banker of all the Bourbons in the world. The last remnants of his hair were dyed jet black and the ends of his moustache were like knitting needles. He was disposed to be as soft as wax in my hands. Unfortunately I had had some irritating interviews during the day. I was keeping down sudden impulses to smash a glass, throw a plate on the floor, do something violent to relieve my feelings. His submissive attitude made me still more nervous. He was ready to do anything in the world for me providing that I would promise him that he would never find my door shut against him as long as he lived. You understand the impudence of it, don't you? And his tone was positively abject, too. I snapped back at him that I had no door, that I was a nomad. He bowed ironically till his nose nearly touched his plate but begged me to remember that to his personal knowledge I had four houses of my own about the world. And you know this made me feel a homeless outcast more than ever—like a little dog lost in the street—not knowing where to go. I was ready to cry and there the creature sat in front of me with an imbecile smile as much as to say 'here is a poser for you. . . .' I gnashed my teeth at him. Quietly, you know . . . I suppose you two think that I am stupid."

She paused as if expecting an answer but we made no sound and she continued with a remark.

"I have days like that. Often one must listen to false protestations, empty words, strings of lies all day long, so that in the evening one is not fit for anything, not even for truth if it comes in one's way. That idiot treated me to a piece of brazen sincerity which I couldn't stand. First of all he began to take me into his confidence; he boasted of his great affairs, then started groaning about his overstrained life which left him no time for the amenities of existence, for beauty, or sentiment, or any sort of ease of heart. His heart! He wanted me to sympathize with his sorrows. Of course I ought to have listened. One must pay for service. Only I was nervous and tired. He bored me. I told him at last that I was surprised that a man of such immense wealth should still keep on going like this reaching for more and more. I suppose he must have been sipping a good deal of wine while we talked and all at once he let out an atrocity which was too much for me. He had been moaning and sentimentalizing but then suddenly he showed me his fangs. 'No,' he cries, 'you can't imagine what a satisfaction it is to feel all that penniless, beggarly lot of the dear, honest, meritorious poor wriggling and slobbering under one's boots.' You may tell me that he is a contemptible animal anyhow, but you should have heard the tone! I felt my bare arms go cold like ice. A moment before I had been hot and faint with sheer boredom. I jumped up from the table, rang for Rose, and told her to bring me my fur cloak. He remained in his chair leering at me curiously. When I had the fur on my shoulders and the girl had gone out of the room I gave him the surprise of his life. 'Take yourself off instantly,' I said. 'Go trample on the poor if you like but never dare speak to me again.' At this he leaned his head on his arm and sat so long at the table shading his eyes with his hand that I had to ask, calmly—you know—whether he wanted me to have him turned out into the corridor. He fetched an enormous sigh. 'I have only tried to be honest with you, Rita.' But by the time he got to the door he had regained some of his impudence. 'You know how to trample on a poor fellow, too,' he said. 'But I don't mind being made to wriggle under your pretty shoes, Rita. I forgive you. I thought you were free from all vulgar sentimentalism and that you had a more independent mind. I was mistaken in you, that's all.' With that he pretends to dash a tear from his eye-crocodile!—-and goes out, leaving me in my fur by the blazing fire, my teeth going like castanets. . . Did you ever hear of anything so stupid as this affair?" she concluded in a tone of extreme candour and a profound unreadable stare that went far beyond us both. And the stillness of her lips was so perfect directly she ceased speaking that I wondered whether all this had come through them or only had formed itself in my mind.

Presently she continued as if speaking for herself only.

"It's like taking the lids off boxes and seeing ugly toads staring at you. In every one. Every one. That's what it is having to do with men more than mere—Good-

morning—Good evening. And if you try to avoid meddling with their lids, some of them will take them off themselves. And they don't even know, they don't even suspect what they are showing you. Certain confidences—they don't see it—are the bitterest kind of insult. I suppose Azzolati imagines himself a noble beast of prey. Just as some others imagine themselves to be most delicate, noble, and refined gentlemen. And as likely as not they would trade on a woman's troubles—and in the end make nothing of that either. Idiots!"

The utter absence of all anger in this spoken meditation gave it a character of touching simplicity. And as if it had been truly only a meditation we conducted ourselves as though we had not heard it. Mills began to speak of his experiences during his visit to the army of the Legitimist King. And I discovered in his speeches that this man of books could be graphic and picturesque. His admiration for the devotion and bravery of the army was combined with the greatest distaste for what he had seen of the way its great qualities were misused. In the conduct of this great enterprise he had seen a deplorable levity of outlook, a fatal lack of decision, an absence of any reasoned plan.

He shook his head.

"I feel that you of all people, Doña Rita, ought to be told the truth. I don't know exactly what you have at stake."

She was rosy like some impassive statue in a desert in the flush of the dawn.

"Not my heart," she said quietly. "You must believe that."

"I do. Perhaps it would have been better if you. . . "

"No, Monsieur le Philosophe. It would not have been better. Don't make that serious face at me," she went on with tenderness in a playful note, as if tenderness had been her inheritance of all time and playfulness the very fibre of her being. "I suppose you think that a woman who has acted as I did and has not staked her heart on it is . . . How do you know to what the heart responds as it beats from day to day?"

"I wouldn't judge you. What am I before the knowledge you were born to? You are as old as the world."

She accepted this with a smile. I who was innocently watching them was amazed to discover how much a fleeting thing like that could hold of seduction without the help of any other feature and with that unchanging glance.

"With me it is pun d'onor. To my first independent friend."

"You were soon parted," ventured Mills, while I sat still under a sense of oppression.

"Don't think for a moment that I have been scared off," she said. "It is they who were frightened. I suppose you heard a lot of Headquarters gossip?"

"Oh, yes," Mills said meaningly. "The fair and the dark are succeeding each other like leaves blown in the wind dancing in and out. I suppose you have noticed that leaves blown in the wind have a look of happiness."

"Yes," she said, "that sort of leaf is dead. Then why shouldn't it look happy? And so I suppose there is no uneasiness, no occasion for fears amongst the 'responsibles.'"

"Upon the whole not. Now and then a leaf seems as if it would stick. There is for instance Madame . . ."

"Oh, I don't want to know, I understand it all, I am as old as the world."

"Yes," said Mills thoughtfully, "you are not a leaf, you might have been a tornado yourself."

"Upon my word," she said, "there was a time that they thought I could carry him off, away from them all—beyond them all. Verily, I am not very proud of their fears. There was nothing reckless there worthy of a great passion. There was nothing sad there worthy of a great tenderness."

"And is this the word of the Venetian riddle?" asked Mills, fixing her with his keen eyes.

"If it pleases you to think so, Señor," she said indifferently. The movement of her eyes, their veiled gleam became mischievous when she asked, "And Don Juan Blunt, have you seen him over there?"

"I fancy he avoided me. Moreover, he is always with his regiment at the outposts. He is a most valorous captain. I heard some people describe him as foolhardy."

"Oh, he needn't seek death," she said in an indefinable tone. "I mean as a refuge. There will be nothing in his life great enough for that."

"You are angry. You miss him, I believe, Doña Rita."

"Angry? No! Weary. But of course it's very inconvenient. I can't very well ride out alone. A solitary amazon swallowing the dust and the salt spray of the Corniche promenade would attract too much attention. And then I don't mind you two knowing that I am afraid of going out alone."

"Afraid?" we both exclaimed together.

"You men are extraordinary. Why do you want me to be courageous? Why shouldn't I be afraid? Is it because there is no one in the world to care what would happen to me?"

There was a deep-down vibration in her tone for the first time. We had not a word to say. And she added after a long silence:

"There is a very good reason. There is a danger."

With wonderful insight Mills affirmed at once:

"Something ugly."

She nodded slightly several times. Then Mills said with conviction:

"Ah! Then it can't be anything in yourself. And if so . . . "

I was moved to extravagant advice.

"You should come out with me to sea then. There may be some danger there but there's nothing ugly to fear."

She gave me a startled glance quite unusual with her, more than wonderful to me; and suddenly as though she had seen me for the first time she exclaimed in a tone of compunction:

"Oh! And there is this one, too! Why! Oh, why should he run his head into danger for those things that will all crumble into dust before long?"

I said: "You won't crumble into dust." And Mills chimed in:

"That young enthusiast will always have his sea."

We were all standing up now. She kept her eyes on me, and repeated with a sort of whimsical enviousness:

"The sea! The violet sea—and he is longing to rejoin it! . . . At night! Under the stars! . . . A lovers' meeting," she went on, thrilling me from head to foot with those two words, accompanied by a wistful smile pointed by a suspicion of mockery. She turned away.

"And you, Monsieur Mills?" she asked.

"I am going back to my books," he declared with a very serious face. "My adventure is over."

"Each one to his love," she bantered us gently. "Didn't I love books, too, at one time! They seemed to contain all wisdom and hold a magic power, too. Tell me, Monsieur Mills, have you found amongst them in some black-letter volume the power of foretelling a poor mortal's destiny, the power to look into the future? Anybody's future . . ." Mills shook his head. . . "What, not even mine?" she coaxed as if she really believed in a magic power to be found in books.

Mills shook his head again. "No, I have not the power," he said. "I am no more a great magician, than you are a poor mortal. You have your ancient spells. You are as old as the world. Of us two it's you that are more fit to foretell the future of the poor mortals on whom you happen to cast your eyes."

At these words she cast her eyes down and in the moment of deep silence I watched the slight rising and falling of her breast. Then Mills pronounced distinctly: "Good-bye, old Enchantress."

They shook hands cordially. "Good-bye, poor Magician," she said.

Mills made as if to speak but seemed to think better of it. Doña Rita returned my distant bow with a slight, charmingly ceremonious inclination of her body.

"Bon voyage and a happy return," she said formally.

I was following Mills through the door when I heard her voice behind us raised in recall:

"Oh, a moment . . . I forgot . . ."

I turned round. The call was for me, and I walked slowly back wondering what she could have forgotten. She waited in the middle of the room with lowered head, with a mute gleam in her deep blue eyes. When I was near enough she extended to me without a word her bare white arm and suddenly pressed the

back of her hand against my lips. I was too startled to seize it with rapture. It detached itself from my lips and fell slowly by her side. We had made it up and there was nothing to say. She turned away to the window and I hurried out of the room.