

## BOOK THE THIRD

### THE NEW WORLD

#### CHAPTER THE FIRST

##### LOVE AFTER THE CHANGE

###### Section 1

So far I have said nothing of Nettie. I have departed widely from my individual story. I have tried to give you the effect of the change in relation to the general framework of human life, its effect of swift, magnificent dawn, of an overpowering letting in and inundation of light, and the spirit of living. In my memory all my life before the Change has the quality of a dark passage, with the dimmest side gleams of beauty that come and go. The rest is dull pain and darkness. Then suddenly the walls, the bitter confines, are smitten and vanish, and I walk, blinded, perplexed, and yet rejoicing, in this sweet, beautiful world, in its fair incessant variety, its satisfaction, its opportunities, exultant in this glorious

gift of life. Had I the power of music I would make a world-wide motif swell and amplify, gather to itself this theme and that, and rise at last to sheer ecstasy of triumph and rejoicing. It should be all sound, all pride, all the hope of outsetting in the morning brightness, all the glee of unexpected happenings, all the gladness of painful effort suddenly come to its reward; it should be like blossoms new opened and the happy play of children, like tearful, happy mothers holding their first-born, like cities building to the sound of music, and great ships, all hung with flags and wine bespattered, gliding down through cheering multitudes to their first meeting with the sea. Through it all should march Hope, confident Hope, radiant and invincible, until at last it would be the triumph march of Hope the conqueror, coming with trumpetings and banners through the wide-flung gates of the world.

And then out of that luminous haze of gladness comes Nettie, transfigured.

So she came again to me--amazing, a thing incredibly forgotten.

She comes back, and Verrall is in her company. She comes back into my memories now, just as she came back then, rather quaintly at first--at first not seen very clearly, a little distorted by intervening things, seen with a doubt, as I saw her through the slightly discolored panes of crinkled glass in the window of the Menton post-office and grocer's shop. It was on the second day

after the Change, and I had been sending telegrams for Melmount, who was making arrangements for his departure for Downing Street. I saw the two of them at first as small, flawed figures. The glass made them seem curved, and it enhanced and altered their gestures and paces. I felt it became me to say "Peace" to them, and I went out, to the jangling of the door-bell. At the sight of me they stopped short, and Verrall cried with the note of one who has sought, "Here he is!" And Nettie cried, "Willie!"

I went toward them, and all the perspectives of my reconstructed universe altered as I did so.

I seemed to see these two for the first time; how fine they were, how graceful and human. It was as though I had never really looked at them before, and, indeed, always before I had beheld them through a mist of selfish passion. They had shared the universal darkness and dwarfing of the former time; they shared the universal exaltation of the new. Now suddenly Nettie, and the love of Nettie, a great passion for Nettie, lived again in me. This change which had enlarged men's hearts had made no end to love. Indeed, it had enormously enlarged and glorified love. She stepped into the center of that dream of world reconstruction that filled my mind and took possession of it all. A little wisp of hair had blown across her cheek, her lips fell apart in that sweet smile of hers; her eyes were full of wonder, of a welcoming scrutiny, of an infinitely courageous friendliness.

I took her outstretched hand, and wonder overwhelmed me. "I wanted to kill you," I said simply, trying to grasp that idea. It seemed now like stabbing the stars, or murdering the sunlight.

"Afterward we looked for you," said Verrall; "and we could not find you. . . . We heard another shot."

I turned my eyes to him, and Nettie's hand fell from me. It was then I thought of how they had fallen together, and what it must have been to have awakened in that dawn with Nettie by one's side. I had a vision of them as I had glimpsed them last amidst the thickening vapors, close together, hand in hand. The green hawks of the Change spread their darkling wings above their last stumbling paces. So they fell. And awoke--lovers together in a morning of Paradise. Who can tell how bright the sunshine was to them, how fair the flowers, how sweet the singing of the birds? . . .

This was the thought of my heart. But my lips were saying, "When I awoke I threw my pistol away." Sheer blankness kept my thoughts silent for a little while; I said empty things. "I am very glad I did not kill you--that you are here, so fair and well. . . ."

"I am going away back to Clayton on the day after to-morrow," I said, breaking away to explanations. "I have been writing shorthand here for Melmount, but that is almost over now. . . ."

Neither of them said a word, and though all facts had suddenly ceased to matter anything, I went on informatively, "He is to be taken to Downing Street where there is a proper staff, so that there will be no need of me. . . . Of course, you're a little perplexed at my being with Melmount. You see I met him--by accident--directly I recovered. I found him with a broken ankle--in that lane. . . . I am to go now to the Four Towns to help prepare a report. So that I am glad to see you both again"--I found a catch in my voice--"to say good-bye to you, and wish you well."

This was after the quality of what had come into my mind when first I saw them through the grocer's window, but it was not what I felt and thought as I said it. I went on saying it because otherwise there would have been a gap. It had come to me that it was going to be hard to part from Nettie. My words sounded with an effect of unreality. I stopped, and we stood for a moment in silence looking at one another.

It was I, I think, who was discovering most. I was realizing for the first time how little the Change had altered in my essential nature. I had forgotten this business of love for a time in a world of wonder. That was all. Nothing was lost from my nature, nothing had gone, only the power of thought and restraint had been wonderfully increased and new interests had been forced upon me. The Green Vapors had passed, our minds were swept and garnished, but

we were ourselves still, though living in a new and finer air. My affinities were unchanged; Nettie's personal charm for me was only quickened by the enhancement of my perceptions. In her presence, meeting her eyes, instantly my desire, no longer frantic but sane, was awake again.

It was just like going to Checkshill in the old time, after writing about socialism. . . .

I relinquished her hand. It was absurd to part in these terms.

So we all felt it. We hung awkwardly over our sense of that. It was Verrall, I think, who shaped the thought for me, and said that to-morrow then we must meet and say good-bye, and so turned our encounter into a transitory making of arrangements. We settled we would come to the inn at Menton, all three of us, and take our midday meal together. . . .

Yes, it was clear that was all we had to say now. . . .

We parted a little awkwardly. I went on down the village street, not looking back, surprised at myself, and infinitely perplexed.

It was as if I had discovered something overlooked that disarranged all my plans, something entirely disconcerting. For the first time I went back preoccupied and without eagerness to Melmount's work.

I wanted to go on thinking about Nettie; my mind had suddenly become

voluminously productive concerning her and Verrall.

## Section 2

The talk we three had together in the dawn of the new time is very strongly impressed upon my memory. There was something fresh and simple about it, something young and flushed and exalted. We took up, we handled with a certain naive timidity, the most difficult questions the Change had raised for men to solve. I recall we made little of them. All the old scheme of human life had dissolved and passed away, the narrow competitiveness, the greed and base aggression, the jealous aloofness of soul from soul. Where had it left us? That was what we and a thousand million others were discussing. . . .

It chances that this last meeting with Nettie is inseparably associated--I don't know why--with the landlady of the Menton inn.

The Menton inn was one of the rare pleasant corners of the old order; it was an inn of an unusual prosperity, much frequented by visitors from Shaphambury, and given to the serving of lunches and teas. It had a broad mossy bowling-green, and round about it were creeper-covered arbors amidst beds of snap-dragon, and hollyhock, and blue delphinium, and many such tall familiar summer flowers.

These stood out against a background of laurels and holly, and above these again rose the gables of the inn and its signpost--a white-horsed George slaying the dragon--against copper beeches under the sky.

While I waited for Nettie and Verrall in this agreeable trysting place, I talked to the landlady--a broad-shouldered, smiling, freckled woman--about the morning of the Change. That motherly, abundant, red-haired figure of health was buoyantly sure that everything in the world was now to be changed for the better. That confidence, and something in her voice, made me love her as I talked to her. "Now we're awake," she said, "all sorts of things will be put right that hadn't any sense in them. Why? Oh! I'm sure of it."

Her kind blue eyes met mine in an infinitude of friendliness. Her lips in her pauses shaped in a pretty faint smile.

Old tradition was strong in us; all English inns in those days charged the unexpected, and I asked what our lunch was to cost.

"Pay or not," she said, "and what you like. It's holiday these days. I suppose we'll still have paying and charging, however we manage it, but it won't be the worry it has been--that I feel sure. It's the part I never had no fancy for. Many a time I peeped through the bushes worrying to think what was just and right to me and mine,



and what would send 'em away satisfied. It isn't the money I care for. There'll be mighty changes, be sure of that; but here I'll stay, and make people happy--them that go by on the roads. It's a pleasant place here when people are merry; it's only when they're jealous, or mean, or tired, or eat up beyond any stomach's digesting, or when they got the drink in 'em that Satan comes into this garden. Many's the happy face I've seen here, and many that come again like friends, but nothing to equal what's going to be, now things are being set right."

She smiled, that bounteous woman, with the joy of life and hope. "You shall have an omelet," she said, "you and your friends; such an omelet--like they'll have 'em in heaven! I feel there's cooking in me these days like I've never cooked before. I'm rejoiced to have it to do. . . ."

It was just then that Nettie and Verrall appeared under a rustic archway of crimson roses that led out from the inn. Nettie wore white and a sun-hat, and Verrall was a figure of gray. "Here are my friends," I said; but for all the magic of the Change, something passed athwart the sunlight in my soul like the passing of the shadow of a cloud. "A pretty couple," said the landlady, as they crossed the velvet green toward us. . . .

They were indeed a pretty couple, but that did not greatly gladden me. No--I winced a little at that.

### Section 3

This old newspaper, this first reissue of the New Paper, dessicated last relic of a vanished age, is like the little piece of identification the superstitious of the old days--those queer religionists who brought a certain black-clad Mrs. Piper to the help of Christ--used to put into the hand of a clairvoyant. At the crisp touch of it I look across a gulf of fifty years and see again the three of us sitting about that table in the arbor, and I smell again the smell of the sweet-briar that filled the air about us, and hear in our long pauses the abundant murmuring of bees among the heliotrope of the borders.

It is the dawn of the new time, but we bear, all three of us, the marks and liveries of the old.

I see myself, a dark, ill-dressed youth, with the bruise Lord Redcar gave me still blue and yellow beneath my jaw; and young Verrall sits cornerwise to me, better grown, better dressed, fair and quiet, two years my senior indeed, but looking no older than I because of his light complexion; and opposite me is Nettie, with dark eyes upon my face, graver and more beautiful than I had ever seen her in the former time. Her dress is still that white one she had worn when

I came upon her in the park, and still about her dainty neck she wears her string of pearls and that little coin of gold. She is so much the same, she is so changed; a girl then and now a woman--and all my agony and all the marvel of the Change between! Over the end of the green table about which we sit, a spotless cloth is spread, it bears a pleasant lunch spread out with a simple equipage. Behind me is the liberal sunshine of the green and various garden. I see it all. Again I sit there, eating awkwardly, this paper lies upon the table and Verrall talks of the Change.

"You can't imagine," he says in his sure, fine accents, "how much the Change has destroyed of me. I still don't feel awake. Men of my sort are so tremendously MADE; I never suspected it before."

He leans over the table toward me with an evident desire to make himself perfectly understood. "I find myself like some creature that is taken out of its shell--soft and new. I was trained to dress in a certain way, to behave in a certain way, to think in a certain way; I see now it's all wrong and narrow--most of it anyhow--a system of class shibboleths. We were decent to each other in order to be a gang to the rest of the world. Gentlemen indeed! But it's perplexing-----"

I can hear his voice saying that now, and see the lift of his eyebrows and his pleasant smile.

He paused. He had wanted to say that, but it was not the thing we had to say.

I leant forward a little and took hold of my glass very tightly.

"You two," I said, "will marry?"

They looked at one another.

Nettie spoke very softly. "I did not mean to marry when I came away," she said.

"I know," I answered. I looked up with a sense of effort and met Verrall's eyes.

He answered me. "I think we two have joined our lives. . . . But the thing that took us was a sort of madness."

I nodded. "All passion," I said, "is madness." Then I fell into a doubting of those words.

"Why did we do these things?" he said, turning to her suddenly.

Her hands were clasped under her chin, her eyes downcast.

"We HAD to," she said, with her old trick of inadequate expression.

Then she seemed to open out suddenly.

"Willie," she cried with a sudden directness, with her eyes appealing to me, "I didn't mean to treat you badly--indeed I didn't. I kept thinking of you--and of father and mother, all the time. Only it didn't seem to move me. It didn't move me not one bit from the way I had chosen."

"Chosen!" I said.

"Something seemed to have hold of me," she admitted. "It's all so unaccountable. . . ."

She gave a little gesture of despair.

Verrall's fingers played on the cloth for a space. Then he turned his face to me again.

"Something said 'Take her.' Everything. It was a raging desire--for her. I don't know. Everything contributed to that--or counted for nothing. You-----"

"Go on," said I.

"When I knew of you-----"

I looked at Nettie. "You never told him about me?" I said, feeling, as it were, a sting out of the old time.

Verrall answered for her. "No. But things dropped; I saw you that night, my instincts were all awake. I knew it was you."

"You triumphed over me? . . . If I could I would have triumphed over you," I said. "But go on!"

"Everything conspired to make it the finest thing in life. It had an air of generous recklessness. It meant mischief, it might mean failure in that life of politics and affairs, for which I was trained, which it was my honor to follow. That made it all the finer. It meant ruin or misery for Nettie. That made it all the finer. No sane or decent man would have approved of what we did. That made it more splendid than ever. I had all the advantages of position and used them basely. That mattered not at all."

"Yes," I said; "it is true. And the same dark wave that lifted you, swept me on to follow. With that revolver--and blubbering with hate. And the word to you, Nettie, what was it? 'Give?' Hurl yourself down the steep?"

Nettie's hands fell upon the table. "I can't tell what it was," she said, speaking bare-hearted straight to me. "Girls aren't trained as men are trained to look into their minds. I can't see it yet.

All sorts of mean little motives were there--over and above the 'must.' Mean motives. I kept thinking of his clothes." She smiled--a flash of brightness at Verrall. "I kept thinking of being like a lady and sitting in an hotel--with men like butlers waiting. It's the dreadful truth, Willie. Things as mean as that! Things meaner than that!"

I can see her now pleading with me, speaking with a frankness as bright and amazing as the dawn of the first great morning.

"It wasn't all mean," I said slowly, after a pause.

"No!" They spoke together.

"But a woman chooses more than a man does," Nettie added. "I saw it all in little bright pictures. Do you know--that jacket--there's something----- You won't mind my telling you? But you won't now!"

I nodded, "No."

She spoke as if she spoke to my soul, very quietly and very earnestly, seeking to give the truth. "Something cottony in that cloth of yours," she said. "I know there's something horrible in being swung round by things like that, but they did swing me round. In the old time--to have confessed that! And I hated Clayton--and the grime of it. That kitchen! Your mother's dreadful kitchen!"

And besides, Willie, I was afraid of you. I didn't understand you and I did him. It's different now--but then I knew what he meant. And there was his voice."

"Yes," I said to Verrall, making these discoveries quietly, "yes, Verrall, you have a good voice. Queer I never thought of that before!"

We sat silently for a time before our vivisected passions.

"Gods!" I cried, "and there was our poor little top-hamper of intelligence on all these waves of instinct and wordless desire, these foaming things of touch and sight and feeling, like--like a coop of hens washed overboard and clucking amidst the seas."

Verrall laughed approval of the image I had struck out. "A week ago," he said, trying it further, "we were clinging to our chicken coops and going with the heave and pour. That was true enough a week ago. But to-day-----?"

"To-day," I said, "the wind has fallen. The world storm is over. And each chicken coop has changed by a miracle to a vessel that makes head against the sea."



## Section 4

"What are we to do?" asked Verrall.

Nettie drew a deep crimson carnation from the bowl before us, and began very neatly and deliberately to turn down the sepals of its calyx and remove, one by one, its petals. I remember that went on through all our talk. She put those ragged crimson shreds in a long row and adjusted them and readjusted them. When at last I was alone with these vestiges the pattern was still incomplete.

"Well," said I, "the matter seems fairly simple. You two"--I swallowed it--"love one another."

I paused. They answered me by silence, by a thoughtful silence.

"You belong to each other. I have thought it over and looked at it from many points of view. I happened to want--impossible things. . . . I behaved badly. I had no right to pursue you." I turned to Verrall. "You hold yourself bound to her?"

He nodded assent.

"No social influence, no fading out of all this generous clearness in the air--for that might happen--will change you back . . . ?"

He answered me with honest eyes meeting mine, "No, Leadford, no!"

"I did not know you," I said. "I thought of you as something very different from this."

"I was," he interpolated.

"Now," I said, "it is all changed."

Then I halted--for my thread had slipped away from me.

"As for me," I went on, and glanced at Nettie's downcast face, and then sat forward with my eyes upon the flowers between us, "since I am swayed and shall be swayed by an affection for Nettie, since that affection is rich with the seeds of desire, since to see her yours and wholly yours is not to be endured by me--I must turn about and go from you; you must avoid me and I you. . . . We must divide the world like Jacob and Esau. . . . I must direct myself with all the will I have to other things. After all--this passion is not life! It is perhaps for brutes and savages, but for men. No! We must part and I must forget. What else is there but that?"

I did not look up, I sat very tense with the red petals printing an indelible memory in my brain, but I felt the assent of Verrall's pose. There were some moments of silence. Then Nettie spoke.

"But-----" she said, and ceased.

I waited for a little while. I sighed and leant back in my chair.

"It is perfectly simple," I smiled, "now that we have cool heads."

"But IS it simple?" asked Nettie, and slashed my discourse out of being.

I looked up and found her with her eyes on Verrall. "You see," she said, "I like Willie. It's hard to say what one feels--but I don't want him to go away like that."

"But then," objected Verrall, "how-----?"

"No," said Nettie, and swept her half-arranged carnation petals back into a heap of confusion. She began to arrange them very quickly into one long straight line.

"It's so difficult----- I've never before in all my life tried to get to the bottom of my mind. For one thing, I've not treated Willie properly. He--he counted on me. I know he did. I was his hope. I was a promised delight--something, something to crown life--better than anything he had ever had. And a secret pride. . . . He lived upon me. I knew--when we two began to meet together, you and I----- It was a sort of treachery to him-----"

"Treachery!" I said. "You were only feeling your way through all

these perplexities."

"You thought it treachery."

"I don't now."

"I did. In a sense I think so still. For you had need of me."

I made a slight protest at this doctrine and fell thinking.

"And even when he was trying to kill us," she said to her lover,

"I felt for him down in the bottom of my mind. I can understand all the horrible things, the humiliation--the humiliation! he went through."

"Yes," I said, "but I don't see-----"

"I don't see. I'm only trying to see. But you know, Willie, you are a part of my life. I have known you longer than I have known Edward. I know you better. Indeed I know you with all my heart. You think all your talk was thrown away upon me, that I never understood that side of you, or your ambitions or anything. I did. More than I thought at the time. Now--now it is all clear to me. What I had to understand in you was something deeper than Edward brought me. I have it now. . . . You are a part of my life, and I don't want to cut all that off from me now I have comprehended it,

and throw it away."

"But you love Verrall."

"Love is such a queer thing! . . . Is there one love? I mean, only one love?" She turned to Verrall. "I know I love you. I can speak out about that now. Before this morning I couldn't have done. It's just as though my mind had got out of a scented prison. But what is it, this love for you? It's a mass of fancies--things about you--ways you look, ways you have. It's the senses--and the senses of certain beauties. Flattery too, things you said, hopes and deceptions for myself. And all that had rolled up together and taken to itself the wild help of those deep emotions that slumbered in my body; it seemed everything. But it wasn't. How can I describe it? It was like having a very bright lamp with a thick shade--everything else in the room was hidden. But you take the shade off and there they are--it is the same light--still there! Only it lights every one!"

Her voice ceased. For awhile no one spoke, and Nettie, with a quick movement, swept the petals into the shape of a pyramid.

Figures of speech always distract me, and it ran through my mind like some puzzling refrain, "It is still the same light. . . ."

"No woman believes these things," she asserted abruptly.

"What things?"

"No woman ever has believed them."

"You have to choose a man," said Verrall, apprehending her before I did.

"We're brought up to that. We're told--it's in books, in stories, in the way people look, in the way they behave--one day there will come a man. He will be everything, no one else will be anything. Leave everything else; live in him."

"And a man, too, is taught that of some woman," said Verrall.

"Only men don't believe it! They have more obstinate minds. . . . Men have never behaved as though they believed it. One need not be old to know that. By nature they don't believe it. But a woman believes nothing by nature. She goes into a mold hiding her secret thoughts almost from herself."

"She used to," I said.

"You haven't," said Verrall, "anyhow."

"I've come out. It's this comet. And Willie. And because I never

really believed in the mold at all--even if I thought I did. It's stupid to send Willie off--shamed, cast out, never to see him again--when I like him as much as I do. It is cruel, it is wicked and ugly, to prance over him as if he was a defeated enemy, and pretend I'm going to be happy just the same. There's no sense in a rule of life that prescribes that. It's selfish. It's brutish. It's like something that has no sense. I-----" there was a sob in her voice: "Willie! I WON'T."

I sat lowering, I mused with my eyes upon her quick fingers.

"It IS brutish," I said at last, with a careful unemotional deliberation. "Nevertheless--it is in the nature of things. . . . No! . . . You see, after all, we are still half brutes, Nettie. And men, as you say, are more obstinate than women. The comet hasn't altered that; it's only made it clearer. We have come into being through a tumult of blind forces. . . . I come back to what I said just now; we have found our poor reasonable minds, our wills to live well, ourselves, adrift on a wash of instincts, passions, instinctive prejudices, half animal stupidities. . . . Here we are like people clinging to something--like people awakening--upon a raft."

"We come back at last to my question," said Verrall, softly; "what are we to do?"

"Part," I said. "You see, Nettie, these bodies of ours are not the bodies of angels. They are the same bodies----- I have read somewhere that in our bodies you can find evidence of the lowliest ancestry; that about our inward ears--I think it is--and about our teeth, there remains still something of the fish, that there are bones that recall little--what is it?--marsupial forebears--and a hundred traces of the ape. Even your beautiful body, Nettie, carries this taint. No! Hear me out." I leant forward earnestly.

"Our emotions, our passions, our desires, the substance of them, like the substance of our bodies, is an animal, a competing thing, as well as a desiring thing. You speak to us now a mind to minds--one can do that when one has had exercise and when one has eaten, when one is not doing anything--but when one turns to live, one turns again to matter."

"Yes," said Nettie, slowly following me, "but you control it."

"Only through a measure of obedience. There is no magic in the business--to conquer matter, we must divide the enemy, and take matter as an ally. Nowadays it is indeed true, by faith a man can remove mountains; he can say to a mountain, Be thou removed and be thou cast into the sea; but he does it because he helps and trusts his brother men, because he has the wit and patience and courage to win over to his side iron, steel, obedience, dynamite, cranes, trucks, the money of other people. . . . To conquer my desire for you, I must not perpetually thwart it by your presence; I must go



away so that I may not see you, I must take up other interests, thrust myself into struggles and discussions-----"

"And forget?" said Nettie.

"Not forget," I said; "but anyhow--cease to brood upon you."

She hung on that for some moments.

"No," she said, demolished her last pattern and looked up at Verrall as he stirred.

Verrall leant forward on the table, elbows upon it, and the fingers of his two hands intertwined.

"You know," he said, "I haven't thought much of these things. At school and the university, one doesn't. . . . It was part of the system to prevent it. They'll alter all that, no doubt. We seem"--he thought--"to be skating about over questions that one came to at last in Greek--with variorum readings--in Plato, but which it never occurred to any one to translate out of a dead language into living realities. . . ." He halted and answered some unspoken question from his own mind with, "No. I think with Leadford, Nettie, that, as he put it, it is in the nature of things for men to be exclusive. . . . Minds are free things and go about the world, but only one man can possess a woman. You must dismiss rivals. We are made for

the struggle for existence--we ARE the struggle for existence; the things that live are the struggle for existence incarnate--and that works out that the men struggle for their mates; for each woman one prevails. The others go away."

"Like animals," said Nettie.

"Yes. . . ."

"There are many things in life," I said, "but that is the rough universal truth."

"But," said Nettie, "you don't struggle. That has been altered because men have minds."

"You choose," I said.

"If I don't choose to choose?"

"You have chosen."

She gave a little impatient "Oh! Why are women always the slaves of sex? Is this great age of Reason and Light that has come to alter nothing of that? And men too! I think it is all--stupid. I do not believe this is the right solution of the thing, or anything but the bad habits of the time that was. . . Instinct! You don't let

your instincts rule you in a lot of other things. Here am I between you. Here is Edward. I--love him because he is gay and pleasant, and because--because I LIKE him! Here is Willie--a part of me--my first secret, my oldest friend! Why must I not have both? Am I not a mind that you must think of me as nothing but a woman? imagine me always as a thing to struggle for?" She paused; then she made her distressful proposition to me. "Let us three keep together," she said. "Let us not part. To part is hate, Willie. Why should we not anyhow keep friends? Meet and talk?"

"Talk?" I said. "About this sort of thing?"

I looked across at Verrall and met his eyes, and we studied one another. It was the clean, straight scrutiny of honest antagonism. "No," I decided. "Between us, nothing of that sort can be."

"Ever?" said Nettie.

"Never," I said, convinced.

I made an effort within myself. "We cannot tamper with the law and customs of these things," I said; "these passions are too close to one's essential self. Better surgery than a lingering disease! From Nettie my love--asks all. A man's love is not devotion--it is a demand, a challenge. And besides"--and here I forced my theme--"I have given myself now to a new mistress--and it is I, Nettie, who

am unfaithful. Behind you and above you rises the coming City of the World, and I am in that building. Dear heart! you are only happiness--and that-----Indeed that calls! If it is only that my life blood shall christen the foundation stones--I could almost hope that should be my part, Nettie--I will join myself in that." I threw all the conviction I could into these words. . . . "No conflict of passion." I added a little lamely, "must distract me."

There was a pause.

"Then we must part," said Nettie, with the eyes of a woman one strikes in the face.

I nodded assent. . . .

There was a little pause, and then I stood up. We stood up, all three. We parted almost sullenly, with no more memorable words, and I was left presently in the arbor alone.

I do not think I watched them go. I only remember myself left there somehow--horribly empty and alone. I sat down again and fell into a deep shapeless musing.

Section 5

Suddenly I looked up. Nettie had come back and stood looking down at me.

"Since we talked I have been thinking," she said. "Edward has let me come to you alone. And I feel perhaps I can talk better to you alone."

I said nothing and that embarrassed her.

"I don't think we ought to part," she said.

"No--I don't think we ought to part," she repeated.

"One lives," she said, "in different ways. I wonder if you will understand what I am saying, Willie. It is hard to say what I feel. But I want it said. If we are to part for ever I want it said--very plainly. Always before I have had the woman's instinct and the woman's training which makes one hide. But----- Edward is not all of me. Think of what I am saying--Edward is not all of me. . . . I wish I could tell you better how I see it. I am not all of myself. You, at any rate, are a part of me and I cannot bear to leave you. And I cannot see why I should leave you. There is a sort of blood link between us, Willie. We grew together. We are in one another's bones. I understand you. Now indeed I understand. In some way I have come to an understanding at a stride. Indeed I understand

you and your dream. I want to help you. Edward--Edward has no dreams.  
. . . It is dreadful to me, Willie, to think we two are to part."

"But we have settled that--part we must."

"But WHY?"

"I love you."

"Well, and why should I hide it Willie?--I love you. . . ." Our eyes met. She flushed, she went on resolutely: "You are stupid. The whole thing is stupid. I love you both."

I said, "You do not understand what you say. No!"

"You mean that I must go."

"Yes, yes. Go!"

For a moment we looked at one another, mute, as though deep down in the unfathomable darkness below the surface and present reality of things dumb meanings strove to be. She made to speak and desisted.

"But MUST I go?" she said at last, with quivering lips, and the tears in her eyes were stars. Then she began, "Willie-----"

"Go!" I interrupted her. . . . "Yes."

Then again we were still.

She stood there, a tearful figure of pity, longing for me, pitying me. Something of that wider love, that will carry our descendants at last out of all the limits, the hard, clear obligations of our personal life, moved us, like the first breath of a coming wind out of heaven that stirs and passes away. I had an impulse to take her hand and kiss it, and then a trembling came to me, and I knew that if I touched her, my strength would all pass from me. . . .

And so, standing at a distance one from the other, we parted, and Nettie went, reluctant and looking back, with the man she had chosen, to the lot she had chosen, out of my life--like the sunlight out of my life. . . .

Then, you know, I suppose I folded up this newspaper and put it in my pocket. But my memory of that meeting ends with the face of Nettie turning to go.

## Section 6

I remember all that very distinctly to this day. I could almost

vouch for the words I have put into our several mouths. Then comes a blank. I have a dim memory of being back in the house near the Links and the bustle of Melmount's departure, of finding Parker's energy distasteful, and of going away down the road with a strong desire to say good-bye to Melmount alone.

Perhaps I was already doubting my decision to part for ever from Nettie, for I think I had it in mind to tell him all that had been said and done. . . .

I don't think I had a word with him or anything but a hurried hand clasp. I am not sure. It has gone out of my mind. But I have a very clear and certain memory of my phase of bleak desolation as I watched his car recede and climb and vanish over Mapleborough Hill, and that I got there my first full and definite intimation that, after all, this great Change and my new wide aims in life, were not to mean indiscriminate happiness for me. I had a sense of protest, as against extreme unfairness, as I saw him go. "It is too soon," I said to myself, "to leave me alone."

I felt I had sacrificed too much, that after I had said good-bye to the hot immediate life of passion, to Nettie and desire, to physical and personal rivalry, to all that was most intensely myself, it was wrong to leave me alone and sore hearted, to go on at once with these steely cold duties of the wider life. I felt new born, and naked, and at a loss.



"Work!" I said with an effort at the heroic, and turned about with a sigh, and I was glad that the way I had to go would at least take me to my mother. . . .

But, curiously enough, I remember myself as being fairly cheerful in the town of Birmingham that night, I recall an active and interested mood. I spent the night in Birmingham because the train service on was disarranged, and I could not get on. I went to listen to a band that was playing its brassy old-world music in the public park, and I fell into conversation with a man who said he had been a reporter upon one of their minor local papers. He was full and keen upon all the plans of reconstruction that were now shaping over the lives of humanity, and I know that something of that noble dream came back to me with his words and phrases. We walked up to a place called Bourneville by moonlight, and talked of the new social groupings that must replace the old isolated homes, and how the people would be housed.

This Bourneville was germane to that matter. It had been an attempt on the part of a private firm of manufacturers to improve the housing of their workers. To our ideas to-day it would seem the feeblest of benevolent efforts, but at the time it was extraordinary and famous, and people came long journeys to see its trim cottages with baths sunk under the kitchen floors (of all conceivable places), and other brilliant inventions. No one seemed to see the

danger to liberty in that aggressive age, that might arise through making workpeople tenants and debtors of their employer, though an Act called the Truck Act had long ago intervened to prevent minor developments in the same direction. . . . But I and my chance acquaintance seemed that night always to have been aware of that possibility, and we had no doubt in our minds of the public nature of the housing duty. Our interest lay rather in the possibility of common nurseries and kitchens and public rooms that should economize toil and give people space and freedom.

It was very interesting, but still a little cheerless, and when I lay in bed that night I thought of Nettie and the queer modifications of preference she had made, and among other things and in a way, I prayed. I prayed that night, let me confess it, to an image I had set up in my heart, an image that still serves with me as a symbol for things inconceivable, to a Master Artificer, the unseen captain of all who go about the building of the world, the making of mankind.

But before and after I prayed I imagined I was talking and reasoning and meeting again with Nettie. . . . She never came into the temple of that worshiping with me.