CHAPTER THE THIRTEENTH

THE SAPPHIRE RING

Part 1

For a time that ring set with sapphires seemed to be, after all, the satisfactory solution of Ann Veronica's difficulties. It was like pouring a strong acid over dulled metal. A tarnish of constraint that had recently spread over her intercourse with Capes vanished again. They embarked upon an open and declared friendship. They even talked about friendship. They went to the Zoological Gardens together one Saturday to see for themselves a point of morphological interest about the toucan's bill--that friendly and entertaining bird--and they spent the rest of the afternoon walking about and elaborating in general terms this theme and the superiority of intellectual fellowship to all merely passionate relationships. Upon this topic Capes was heavy and conscientious, but that seemed to her to be just exactly what he ought to be. He was also, had she known it, more than a little insincere. "We are only in the dawn of the Age of Friendship," he said, "when interest, I suppose, will take the place of passions. Either you have had to love people or hate them--which is a sort of love, too, in its way--to get anything out of them. Now, more and more, we're going to be interested in them, to be

curious about them and--quite mildly-experimental with them." He seemed to be elaborating ideas as he talked. They watched the chimpanzees in the new apes' house, and admired the gentle humanity of their eyes--"so much more human than human beings"--and they watched the Agile Gibbon in the next apartment doing wonderful leaps and aerial somersaults.

"I wonder which of us enjoys that most," said Capes--"does he, or do we?"

"He seems to get a zest--"

"He does it and forgets it. We remember it. These joyful bounds just lace into the stuff of my memories and stay there forever. Living's just material."

"It's very good to be alive."

"It's better to know life than be life."

"One may do both," said Ann Veronica.

She was in a very uncritical state that afternoon. When he said, "Let's go and see the wart-hog," she thought no one ever had had so quick a flow of good ideas as he; and when he explained that sugar and not buns was the talisman of popularity among the animals, she marvelled at his practical omniscience.

Finally, at the exit into Regent's Park, they ran against Miss Klegg.
It was the expression of Miss Klegg's face that put the idea into Ann Veronica's head of showing Manning at the College one day, an idea which she didn't for some reason or other carry out for a fortnight.

Part 2

When at last she did so, the sapphire ring took on a new quality in the imagination of Capes. It ceased to be the symbol of liberty and a remote and quite abstracted person, and became suddenly and very disagreeably the token of a large and portentous body visible and tangible.

Manning appeared just at the end of the afternoon's work, and the biologist was going through some perplexities the Scotchman had created by a metaphysical treatment of the skulls of Hyrax and a young African elephant. He was clearing up these difficulties by tracing a partially obliterated suture the Scotchman had overlooked when the door from the passage opened, and Manning came into his universe.

Seen down the length of the laboratory, Manning looked a very handsome and shapely gentleman indeed, and, at the sight of his eager advance to his fiancee, Miss Klegg replaced one long-cherished romance about Ann

Veronica by one more normal and simple. He carried a cane and a silk hat with a mourning-band in one gray-gloved hand; his frock-coat and trousers were admirable; his handsome face, his black mustache, his prominent brow conveyed an eager solicitude.

"I want," he said, with a white hand outstretched, "to take you out to tea."

"I've been clearing up," said Ann Veronica, brightly.

"All your dreadful scientific things?" he said, with a smile that Miss Klegg thought extraordinarily kindly.

"All my dreadful scientific things," said Ann Veronica.

He stood back, smiling with an air of proprietorship, and looking about him at the business-like equipment of the room. The low ceiling made him seem abnormally tall. Ann Veronica wiped a scalpel, put a card over a watch-glass containing thin shreds of embryonic guinea-pig swimming in mauve stain, and dismantled her microscope.

"I wish I understood more of biology," said Manning.

"I'm ready," said Ann Veronica, closing her microscope-box with a click, and looking for one brief instant up the laboratory. "We have no airs and graces here, and my hat hangs from a peg in the passage."

She led the way to the door, and Manning passed behind her and round her and opened the door for her. When Capes glanced up at them for a moment, Manning seemed to be holding his arms all about her, and there was nothing but quiet acquiescence in her bearing.

After Capes had finished the Scotchman's troubles he went back into the preparation-room. He sat down on the sill of the open window, folded his arms, and stared straight before him for a long time over the wilderness of tiles and chimney-pots into a sky that was blue and empty. He was not addicted to monologue, and the only audible comment he permitted himself at first upon a universe that was evidently anything but satisfactory to him that afternoon, was one compact and entirely unassigned "Damn!"

The word must have had some gratifying quality, because he repeated it. Then he stood up and repeated it again. "The fool I have been!" he cried; and now speech was coming to him. He tried this sentence with expletives. "Ass!" he went on, still warming. "Muck-headed moral ass! I ought to have done anything.

"I ought to have done anything!

"What's a man for?

"Friendship!"

He doubled up his fist, and seemed to contemplate thrusting it through the window. He turned his back on that temptation. Then suddenly he seized a new preparation bottle that stood upon his table and contained the better part of a week's work--a displayed dissection of a snail, beautifully done--and hurled it across the room, to smash resoundingly upon the cemented floor under the bookcase; then, without either haste or pause, he swept his arm along a shelf of re-agents and sent them to mingle with the debris on the floor. They fell in a diapason of smashes. "H'm!" he said, regarding the wreckage with a calmer visage. "Silly!" he remarked after a pause. "One hardly knows--all the time."

He put his hands in his pockets, his mouth puckered to a whistle, and he went to the door of the outer preparation-room and stood there, looking, save for the faintest intensification of his natural ruddiness, the embodiment of blond serenity.

"Gellett," he called, "just come and clear up a mess, will you? I've smashed some things."

Part 3

There was one serious flaw in Ann Veronica's arrangements for self-rehabilitation, and that was Ramage. He hung over her--he and his

loan to her and his connection with her and that terrible evening--a vague, disconcerting possibility of annoyance and exposure. She could not see any relief from this anxiety except repayment, and repayment seemed impossible. The raising of twenty-five pounds was a task altogether beyond her powers. Her birthday was four months away, and that, at its extremist point, might give her another five pounds.

The thing rankled in her mind night and day. She would wake in the night to repeat her bitter cry: "Oh, why did I burn those notes?"

It added greatly to the annoyance of the situation that she had twice seen Ramage in the Avenue since her return to the shelter of her father's roof. He had saluted her with elaborate civility, his eyes distended with indecipherable meanings.

She felt she was bound in honor to tell the whole affair to Manning sooner or later. Indeed, it seemed inevitable that she must clear it up with his assistance, or not at all. And when Manning was not about the thing seemed simple enough. She would compose extremely lucid and honorable explanations. But when it came to broaching them, it proved to be much more difficult than she had supposed.

They went down the great staircase of the building, and, while she sought in her mind for a beginning, he broke into appreciation of her simple dress and self-congratulations upon their engagement.

"It makes me feel," he said, "that nothing is impossible--to have you here beside me. I said, that day at Surbiton, 'There's many good things in life, but there's only one best, and that's the wild-haired girl who's pulling away at that oar. I will make her my Grail, and some day, perhaps, if God wills, she shall become my wife!'"

He looked very hard before him as he said this, and his voice was full of deep feeling.

"Grail!" said Ann Veronica, and then: "Oh, yes--of course! Anything but a holy one, I'm afraid."

"Altogether holy, Ann Veronica. Ah! but you can't imagine what you are to me and what you mean to me! I suppose there is something mystical and wonderful about all women."

"There is something mystical and wonderful about all human beings. I don't see that men need bank it with the women."

"A man does," said Manning--"a true man, anyhow. And for me there is only one treasure-house. By Jove! When I think of it I want to leap and shout!"

"It would astonish that man with the barrow."

"It astonishes me that I don't," said Manning, in a tone of intense

self-enjoyment.

"I think," began Ann Veronica, "that you don't realize--"

He disregarded her entirely. He waved an arm and spoke with a peculiar resonance. "I feel like a giant! I believe now I shall do great things. Gods! what it must be to pour out strong, splendid verse--mighty lines! mighty lines! If I do, Ann Veronica, it will be you. It will be altogether you. I will dedicate my books to you. I will lay them all at your feet."

He beamed upon her.

"I don't think you realize," Ann Veronica began again, "that I am rather a defective human being."

"I don't want to," said Manning. "They say there are spots on the sun. Not for me. It warms me, and lights me, and fills my world with flowers. Why should I peep at it through smoked glass to see things that don't affect me?" He smiled his delight at his companion.

"I've got bad faults."

He shook his head slowly, smiling mysteriously.

"But perhaps I want to confess them."

"I grant you absolution."

"I don't want absolution. I want to make myself visible to you."

"I wish I could make you visible to yourself. I don't believe in the faults. They're just a joyous softening of the outline--more beautiful than perfection. Like the flaws of an old marble. If you talk of your faults, I shall talk of your splendors."

"I do want to tell you things, nevertheless."

"We'll have, thank God! ten myriad days to tell each other things. When I think of it--"

"But these are things I want to tell you now!"

"I made a little song of it. Let me say it to you. I've no name for it yet. Epithalamy might do.

"Like him who stood on Darien
I view uncharted sea
Ten thousand days, ten thousand nights
Before my Queen and me.

"And that only brings me up to about sixty-five!

"A glittering wilderness of time
That to the sunset reaches
No keel as yet its waves has ploughed
Or gritted on its beaches.

"And we will sail that splendor wide,
From day to day together,
From isle to isle of happiness
Through year's of God's own weather."

"Yes," said his prospective fellow-sailor, "that's very pretty." She stopped short, full of things un-said. Pretty! Ten thousand days, ten thousand nights!

"You shall tell me your faults," said Manning. "If they matter to you, they matter."

"It isn't precisely faults," said Ann Veronica. "It's something that bothers me." Ten thousand! Put that way it seemed so different.

"Then assuredly!" said Manning.

She found a little difficulty in beginning. She was glad when he went on: "I want to be your city of refuge from every sort of bother. I want to stand between you and all the force and vileness of the world. I want

to make you feel that here is a place where the crowd does not clamor nor ill-winds blow."

"That is all very well," said Ann Veronica, unheeded.

"That is my dream of you," said Manning, warming. "I want my life to be beaten gold just in order to make it a fitting setting for yours. There you will be, in an inner temple. I want to enrich it with hangings and gladden it with verses. I want to fill it with fine and precious things. And by degrees, perhaps, that maiden distrust of yours that makes you shrink from my kisses, will vanish.... Forgive me if a certain warmth creeps into my words! The Park is green and gray to-day, but I am glowing pink and gold.... It is difficult to express these things."

Part 4

They sat with tea and strawberries and cream before them at a little table in front of the pavilion in Regent's Park. Her confession was still unmade. Manning leaned forward on the table, talking discursively on the probable brilliance of their married life. Ann Veronica sat back in an attitude of inattention, her eyes on a distant game of cricket, her mind perplexed and busy. She was recalling the circumstances under which she had engaged herself to Manning, and trying to understand a

curious development of the quality of this relationship.

The particulars of her engagement were very clear in her memory. She had taken care he should have this momentous talk with her on a garden-seat commanded by the windows of the house. They had been playing tennis, with his manifest intention looming over her.

"Let us sit down for a moment," he had said. He made his speech a little elaborately. She plucked at the knots of her racket and heard him to the end, then spoke in a restrained undertone.

"You ask me to be engaged to you, Mr. Manning," she began.

"I want to lay all my life at your feet."

"Mr. Manning, I do not think I love you.... I want to be very plain with you. I have nothing, nothing that can possibly be passion for you. I am sure. Nothing at all."

He was silent for some moments.

"Perhaps that is only sleeping," he said. "How can you know?"

"I think--perhaps I am rather a cold-blooded person."

She stopped. He remained listening attentively.

"You have been very kind to me," she said.

"I would give my life for you."

Her heart had warmed toward him. It had seemed to her that life might be very good indeed with his kindliness and sacrifice about her. She thought of him as always courteous and helpful, as realizing, indeed, his ideal of protection and service, as chivalrously leaving her free to live her own life, rejoicing with an infinite generosity in every detail of her irresponsive being. She twanged the catgut under her fingers.

"It seems so unfair," she said, "to take all you offer me and give so little in return."

"It is all the world to me. And we are not traders looking at equivalents."

"You know, Mr. Manning, I do not really want to marry."

"No."

"It seems so--so unworthy"--she picked among her phrases "of the noble love you give--"

She stopped, through the difficulty she found in expressing herself.

"But I am judge of that," said Manning.

"Would you wait for me?"

Manning was silent for a space. "As my lady wills."

"Would you let me go on studying for a time?"

"If you order patience."

"I think, Mr. Manning... I do not know. It is so difficult. When I think of the love you give me--One ought to give you back love."

"You like me?"

"Yes. And I am grateful to you...."

Manning tapped with his racket on the turf through some moments of silence. "You are the most perfect, the most glorious of created things--tender, frank intellectual, brave, beautiful. I am your servitor. I am ready to wait for you, to wait your pleasure, to give all my life to winning it. Let me only wear your livery. Give me but leave to try. You want to think for a time, to be free for a time. That is so like you, Diana--Pallas Athene! (Pallas Athene is better.) You are all the slender goddesses. I understand. Let me engage myself. That is all I

ask."

She looked at him; his face, downcast and in profile, was handsome and strong. Her gratitude swelled within her.

"You are too good for me," she said in a low voice.

"Then you--you will?"

A long pause.

"It isn't fair...."

"But will you?"

"YES."

For some seconds he had remained quite still.

"If I sit here," he said, standing up before her abruptly, "I shall have to shout. Let us walk about. Tum, tum, tirray, tum, tum, tum, te-tum--that thing of Mendelssohn's! If making one human being absolutely happy is any satisfaction to you--"

He held out his hands, and she also stood up.

He drew her close up to him with a strong, steady pull. Then suddenly, in front of all those windows, he folded her in his arms and pressed her to him, and kissed her unresisting face.

"Don't!" cried Ann Veronica, struggling faintly, and he released her.

"Forgive me," he said. "But I am at singing-pitch."

She had a moment of sheer panic at the thing she had done. "Mr. Manning," she said, "for a time--Will you tell no one? Will you keep this--our secret? I'm doubtful--Will you please not even tell my aunt?"

"As you will," he said. "But if my manner tells! I cannot help it if that shows. You only mean a secret for a little time?"

"Just for a little time," she said; "yes...."

But the ring, and her aunt's triumphant eye, and a note of approval in her father's manner, and a novel disposition in him to praise Manning in a just, impartial voice had soon placed very definite qualifications upon that covenanted secrecy.

Part 5

At first the quality of her relationship to Manning seemed moving and beautiful to Ann Veronica. She admired and rather pitied him, and she was unfeignedly grateful to him. She even thought that perhaps she might come to love him, in spite of that faint indefinable flavor of absurdity that pervaded his courtly bearing. She would never love him as she loved Capes, of course, but there are grades and qualities of love. For Manning it would be a more temperate love altogether. Much more temperate; the discreet and joyless love of a virtuous, reluctant, condescending wife. She had been quite convinced that an engagement with him and at last a marriage had exactly that quality of compromise which distinguishes the ways of the wise. It would be the wrappered world almost at its best. She saw herself building up a life upon that--a life restrained, kindly, beautiful, a little pathetic and altogether dignified; a life of great disciplines and suppressions and extensive reserves...

But the Ramage affair needed clearing up, of course; it was a flaw upon that project. She had to explain about and pay off that forty pounds....

Then, quite insensibly, her queenliness had declined. She was never able to trace the changes her attitude had undergone, from the time when she believed herself to be the pampered Queen of Fortune, the crown of a good man's love (and secretly, but nobly, worshipping some one else), to the time when she realized she was in fact just a mannequin for her lover's imagination, and that he cared no more for the realities of her

being, for the things she felt and desired, for the passions and dreams that might move her, than a child cares for the sawdust in its doll. She was the actress his whim had chosen to play a passive part....

It was one of the most educational disillusionments in Ann Veronica's career.

But did many women get anything better?

This afternoon, when she was urgent to explain her hampering and tainting complication with Ramage, the realization of this alien quality in her relationship with Manning became acute. Hitherto it had been qualified by her conception of all life as a compromise, by her new effort to be unexacting of life. But she perceived that to tell Manning of her Ramage adventures as they had happened would be like tarring figures upon a water-color. They were in different key, they had a different timbre. How could she tell him what indeed already began to puzzle herself, why she had borrowed that money at all? The plain fact was that she had grabbed a bait. She had grabbed! She became less and less attentive to his meditative, self-complacent fragments of talk as she told herself this. Her secret thoughts made some hasty, half-hearted excursions into the possibility of telling the thing in romantic tones--Ramage was as a black villain, she as a white, fantastically white, maiden.... She doubted if Manning would even listen to that. He would refuse to listen and absolve her unshriven.

Then it came to her with a shock, as an extraordinary oversight, that she could never tell Manning about Ramage--never.

She dismissed the idea of doing so. But that still left the forty pounds!...

Her mind went on generalizing. So it would always be between herself and Manning. She saw her life before her robbed of all generous illusions, the wrappered life unwrappered forever, vistas of dull responses, crises of make-believe, years of exacting mutual disregard in a misty garden of fine sentiments.

But did any woman get anything better from a man? Perhaps every woman conceals herself from a man perforce!...

She thought of Capes. She could not help thinking of Capes. Surely Capes was different. Capes looked at one and not over one, spoke to one, treated one as a visible concrete fact. Capes saw her, felt for her, cared for her greatly, even if he did not love her. Anyhow, he did not sentimentalize her. And she had been doubting since that walk in the Zoological Gardens whether, indeed, he did simply care for her. Little things, almost impalpable, had happened to justify that doubt; something in his manner had belied his words. Did he not look for her in the morning when she entered--come very quickly to her? She thought of him as she had last seen him looking down the length of the laboratory to see her go. Why had he glanced up--quite in that way?...

The thought of Capes flooded her being like long-veiled sunlight breaking again through clouds. It came to her like a dear thing rediscovered, that she loved Capes. It came to her that to marry any one but Capes was impossible. If she could not marry him, she would not marry any one. She would end this sham with Manning. It ought never to have begun. It was cheating, pitiful cheating. And then if some day Capes wanted her--saw fit to alter his views upon friendship....

Dim possibilities that she would not seem to look at even to herself gesticulated in the twilight background of her mind.

She leaped suddenly at a desperate resolution, and in one moment had made it into a new self. She flung aside every plan she had in life, every discretion. Of course, why not? She would be honest, anyhow!

She turned her eyes to Manning.

He was sitting back from the table now, with one arm over the back of his green chair and the other resting on the little table. He was smiling under his heavy mustache, and his head was a little on one side as he looked at her.

"And what was that dreadful confession you had to make?" he was saying. His quiet, kindly smile implied his serene disbelief in any confessible thing. Ann Veronica pushed aside a tea-cup and the vestiges of her

strawberries and cream, and put her elbows before her on the table. "Mr. Manning," she said, "I HAVE a confession to make."

"I wish you would use my Christian name," he said.

She attended to that, and then dismissed it as unimportant.

Something in her voice and manner conveyed an effect of unwonted gravity to him. For the first time he seemed to wonder what it might be that she had to confess. His smile faded.

"I don't think our engagement can go on," she plunged, and felt exactly that loss of breath that comes with a dive into icy water.

"But, how," he said, sitting up astonished beyond measure, "not go on?"

"I have been thinking while you have been talking. You see--I didn't understand."

She stared hard at her finger-nails. "It is hard to express one's self, but I do want to be honest with you. When I promised to marry you I thought I could; I thought it was a possible arrangement. I did think it could be done. I admired your chivalry. I was grateful."

She paused.

"Go on," he said.

She moved her elbow nearer to him and spoke in a still lower tone. "I told you I did not love you."

"I know," said Manning, nodding gravely. "It was fine and brave of you."

"But there is something more."

She paused again.

"I--I am sorry--I didn't explain. These things are difficult. It wasn't clear to me that I had to explain.... I love some one else."

They remained looking at each other for three or four seconds. Then Manning flopped back in his chair and dropped his chin like a man shot. There was a long silence between them.

"My God!" he said at last, with tremendous feeling, and then again, "My God!"

Now that this thing was said her mind was clear and calm. She heard this standard expression of a strong soul wrung with a critical coldness that astonished herself. She realized dimly that there was no personal thing behind his cry, that countless myriads of Mannings had "My God!"-ed with an equal gusto at situations as flatly apprehended. This mitigated

her remorse enormously. He rested his brow on his hand and conveyed magnificent tragedy by his pose.

"But why," he said in the gasping voice of one subduing an agony, and looked at her from under a pain-wrinkled brow, "why did you not tell me this before?"

"I didn't know--I thought I might be able to control myself."

"And you can't?"

"I don't think I ought to control myself."

"And I have been dreaming and thinking--"

"I am frightfully sorry...."

"But--This bolt from the blue! My God! Ann Veronica, you don't understand. This--this shatters a world!"

She tried to feel sorry, but her sense of his immense egotism was strong and clear.

He went on with intense urgency.

"Why did you ever let me love you? Why did you ever let me peep through

the gates of Paradise? Oh! my God! I don't begin to feel and realize this yet. It seems to me just talk; it seems to me like the fancy of a dream. Tell me I haven't heard. This is a joke of yours." He made his voice very low and full, and looked closely into her face.

She twisted her fingers tightly. "It isn't a joke," she said. "I feel shabby and disgraced.... I ought never to have thought of it. Of you, I mean...."

He fell back in his chair with an expression of tremendous desolation. "My God!" he said again....

They became aware of the waitress standing over them with book and pencil ready for their bill. "Never mind the bill," said Manning tragically, standing up and thrusting a four-shilling piece into her hand, and turning a broad back on her astonishment. "Let us walk across the Park at least," he said to Ann Veronica. "Just at present my mind simply won't take hold of this at all.... I tell you--never mind the bill. Keep it! Keep it!"

Part 6

They walked a long way that afternoon. They crossed the Park to the

westward, and then turned back and walked round the circle about the Royal Botanical Gardens and then southwardly toward Waterloo. They trudged and talked, and Manning struggled, as he said, to "get the hang of it all."

It was a long, meandering talk, stupid, shameful, and unavoidable. Ann Veronica was apologetic to the bottom of her soul. At the same time she was wildly exultant at the resolution she had taken, the end she had made to her blunder. She had only to get through this, to solace Manning as much as she could, to put such clumsy plasterings on his wounds as were possible, and then, anyhow, she would be free--free to put her fate to the test. She made a few protests, a few excuses for her action in accepting him, a few lame explanations, but he did not heed them or care for them. Then she realized that it was her business to let Manning talk and impose his own interpretations upon the situation so far as he was concerned. She did her best to do this. But about his unknown rival he was acutely curious.

He made her tell him the core of the difficulty.

"I cannot say who he is," said Ann Veronica, "but he is a married man.... No! I do not even know that he cares for me. It is no good going into that. Only I just want him. I just want him, and no one else will do. It is no good arguing about a thing like that."

"But you thought you could forget him."

"I suppose I must have thought so. I didn't understand. Now I do."

"By God!" said Manning, making the most of the word, "I suppose it's fate. Fate! You are so frank so splendid!

"I'm taking this calmly now," he said, almost as if he apologized, "because I'm a little stunned."

Then he asked, "Tell me! has this man, has he DARED to make love to you?"

Ann Veronica had a vicious moment. "I wish he had," she said.

"But--"

The long inconsecutive conversation by that time was getting on her nerves. "When one wants a thing more than anything else in the world," she said with outrageous frankness, "one naturally wishes one had it."

She shocked him by that. She shattered the edifice he was building up of himself as a devoted lover, waiting only his chance to win her from a hopeless and consuming passion.

"Mr. Manning," she said, "I warned you not to idealize me. Men ought not to idealize any woman. We aren't worth it. We've done nothing to deserve

it. And it hampers us. You don't know the thoughts we have; the things we can do and say. You are a sisterless man; you have never heard the ordinary talk that goes on at a girls' boarding-school."

"Oh! but you ARE splendid and open and fearless! As if I couldn't allow! What are all these little things? Nothing! Nothing! You can't sully yourself. You can't! I tell you frankly you may break off your engagement to me--I shall hold myself still engaged to you, yours just the same. As for this infatuation--it's like some obsession, some magic thing laid upon you. It's not you--not a bit. It's a thing that's happened to you. It is like some accident. I don't care. In a sense I don't care. It makes no difference.... All the same, I wish I had that fellow by the throat! Just the virile, unregenerate man in me wishes that....

"I suppose I should let go if I had.

"You know," he went on, "this doesn't seem to me to end anything.

"I'm rather a persistent person. I'm the sort of dog, if you turn it out of the room it lies down on the mat at the door. I'm not a lovesick boy. I'm a man, and I know what I mean. It's a tremendous blow, of course--but it doesn't kill me. And the situation it makes!--the situation!"

Thus Manning, egotistical, inconsecutive, unreal. And Ann Veronica

walked beside him, trying in vain to soften her heart to him by the thought of how she had ill-used him, and all the time, as her feet and mind grew weary together, rejoicing more and more that at the cost of this one interminable walk she escaped the prospect of--what was it?--"Ten thousand days, ten thousand nights" in his company. Whatever happened she need never return to that possibility.

"For me," Manning went on, "this isn't final. In a sense it alters nothing. I shall still wear your favor--even if it is a stolen and forbidden favor--in my casque.... I shall still believe in you. Trust you."

He repeated several times that he would trust her, though it remained obscure just exactly where the trust came in.

"Look here," he cried out of a silence, with a sudden flash of understanding, "did you mean to throw me over when you came out with me this afternoon?"

Ann Veronica hesitated, and with a startled mind realized the truth.
"No," she answered, reluctantly.

"Very well," said Manning. "Then I don't take this as final. That's all. I've bored you or something.... You think you love this other man! No doubt you do love him. Before you have lived--"

He became darkly prophetic. He thrust out a rhetorical hand.

"I will MAKE you love me! Until he has faded--faded into a memory..."

He saw her into the train at Waterloo, and stood, a tall, grave figure, with hat upraised, as the carriage moved forward slowly and hid him. Ann Veronica sat back with a sigh of relief. Manning might go on now idealizing her as much as he liked. She was no longer a confederate in that. He might go on as the devoted lover until he tired. She had done forever with the Age of Chivalry, and her own base adaptations of its traditions to the compromising life. She was honest again.

But when she turned her thoughts to Morningside Park she perceived the tangled skein of life was now to be further complicated by his romantic importunity.