

CHAPTER THE ELEVENTH

THE LAST CRISIS

§1

It would be quite easy for anyone with the knack of reserve to go on from this point with a history of Lady Harman that would present her as practically a pure philanthropist. For from these beginnings she was destined to proceed to more and more knowledge and understanding and clear purpose and capable work in this interesting process of collective regrouping, this process which may even at last justify Mr. Brumley's courageous interpretations and prove to be an early experiment in the beginning of a new social order. Perhaps some day there will be an official biography, another addition to the inscrutable records of British public lives, in which all these things will be set out with tact and dignity. Horatio Blenker or Adolphus Blenker may survive to be entrusted with this congenial task. She will be represented as a tall inanimate person pursuing one clear benevolent purpose in life from her very beginning, and Sir Isaac and her relations with Sir Isaac will be rescued from reality. The book will be illustrated by a number of carefully posed photographer's photographs of her, studies of the Putney house and perhaps an unappetizing woodcut of her early home at Penge. The aim of all British biography is to conceal. A great deal of what we have already told will certainly not figure in any such biography, and

still more certainly will the things we have yet to tell be missing.

Lady Harman was indeed only by the force of circumstances and intermittently a pure philanthropist, and it is with the intercalary passages of less exalted humanity that we are here chiefly concerned. At times no doubt she did really come near to filling and fitting and becoming identical with that figure of the pure philanthropist which was her world-ward face, but for the most part that earnest and dignified figure concealed more or less extensive spaces of nothingness, while the errant soul of the woman within strayed into less exalted ways of thinking.

There were times when she was almost sure of herself--Mrs. Hubert Plessington could scarcely have been surer of herself, and times when the whole magnificent project of constructing a new urban social life out of those difficult hostels, a collective urban life that should be liberal and free, broke into grimacing pieces and was the most foolish of experiments. Her struggles with Mrs. Pembrose thereupon assumed a quality of mere bickering and she could even doubt whether Mrs. Pembrose wasn't justified in her attitude and wiser by her very want of generosity. She felt then something childish in the whole undertaking that otherwise escaped her, she was convicted of an absurd self-importance, she discovered herself an ignorant woman availing herself of her husband's power and wealth to attempt presumptuous experiments. In these moods of disillusionment, her mind went adrift and was driven to and fro from discontent to discontent; she would find

herself taking soundings and seeking an anchorage upon the strangest, most unfamiliar shoals. And in her relations and conflicts with her husband there was a smouldering shame for her submissions to him that needed only a phase of fatigue to become acute. So long as she believed in her hostels and her mission that might be endured, but forced back upon her more personal life its hideousness stood unclothed. Mr. Brumley could sometimes reassure her by a rhetorical effort upon the score of her hostels, but most of her more intimate and inner life was not, for very plain reasons, to be shown to him. He was full of the intention of generous self-denials, but she had long since come to measure the limits of his self-denial....

Mr. Brumley was a friend in whom smouldered a love, capable she knew quite clearly of tormented and tormenting jealousies. It would be difficult to tell, and she certainly could never have told how far she knew of this by instinct, how far it came out of rapid intuitions from things seen and heard. But she understood that she dared not let a single breath of encouragement, a hint of physical confidence, reach that banked-up glow. A sentinel discretion in her brain was always on the watch for that danger, and that restraint, that added deliberate inexpressiveness, kept them most apart, when most her spirit cried out for companionship.

The common quality of all these moods of lassitude was a desolating loneliness. She had at times a need that almost overwhelmed her to be intimate, to be comforted and taken up out of the bleak harsh

disappointments and stresses of her customary life. At times after Sir Isaac had either been too unloving or too loving, or when the girls or the matrons had achieved some new tangle of mutual unreasonableness, or when her faith failed, she would lie in the darkness of her own room with her soul crying out for--how can one put it?--the touch of other soul-stuff. And perhaps it was the constant drift of Mr. Brumley's talk, the little suggestions that fell drop by drop into her mind from his, that disposed her to believe that this aching sense of solitude in the void was to be assuaged by love, by some marvel of close exaltation that one might reach through a lover. She had told Mr. Brumley long ago that she would never let herself think of love, she still maintained to him that attitude of resolute aloofness, but almost without noting what she did, she was tampering now in her solitude with the seals of that locked chamber. She became secretly curious about love. Perhaps there was something in it of which she knew nothing. She found herself drawn towards poetry, found a new attraction in romance; more and more did she dally with the idea that there was some unknown beauty in the world, something to which her eyes might presently open, something deeper and sweeter than any thing she had ever known, close at hand, something to put all the world into proportion for her.

In a little while she no longer merely tampered with these seals, for quite silently the door had opened and she was craning in. This love it seemed to her might after all be so strange a thing that it goes unsuspected and yet fills the whole world of a human soul. An odd grotesque passage in a novel by Wilkins gave her that idea. He compared

love to electricity, of all things in the world; that throbbing life amidst the atoms that we now draw upon for light, warmth, connexion, the satisfaction of a thousand wants and the cure of a thousand ills. There it is and always has been in the life of man, and yet until a century ago it worked unsuspected, was known only for a disregarded oddity of amber, a crackling in frost-dry hair and thunder....

And then she remembered how Mr. Brumley had once broken into a panegyric of love. "It makes life a different thing. It is like the home-coming of something lost. All this dispersed perplexing world centres. Think what true love means; to live always in the mind of another and to have that other living always in your mind.... Only there can be no restraints, no reserves, no admission of prior rights. One must feel safe of one's welcome and freedoms...."

Wasn't it worth the risk of almost any breach of boundaries to get to such a light as that?...

She hid these musings from every human being, she was so shy with them, she hid them almost from herself. Rarely did they have their way with her and when they did, presently she would accuse herself of slackness and dismiss them and urge herself to fresh practicalities in her work. But her work was not always at hand, Sir Isaac's frequent relapses took her abroad to places where she found herself in the midst of beautiful scenery with little to do and little to distract her from these questionings. Then such thoughts would inundate her.

This feeling of the unsatisfactoriness of life, of incompleteness and solitariness, was not of that fixed sort that definitely indicates its demand. Under its oppression she tried the idea of love, but she also tried certain other ideas. Very often this vague appeal had the quality of a person, sometimes a person shrouded in night, a soundless whisper, the unseen lover who came to Psyche in the darkness. And sometimes that person became more distinct, less mystic and more companionable. Perhaps because imaginations have a way of following the line of least resistance, it took upon itself something of the form, something of the voice and bearing of Mr. Brumley. She recoiled from her own thoughts when she discovered herself wondering what manner of lover Mr. Brumley might make--if suddenly she lowered her defences, freed his suffocating pleading, took him to herself.

In my anxiety to draw Mr. Brumley as he was, I have perhaps a little neglected to show him as Lady Harman saw him. We have employed the inconsiderate verisimilitude of a novelist repudiating romance in his portrayal; towards her he kept a better face. He was at least a very honest lover and there was little disingenuousness in the flow of fine mental attitudes that met her; the thought and presence of her made him fine; as soon could he have turned his shady side towards the sun. And she was very ready and eager to credit him with generous qualities. We of his club and circle, a little assisted perhaps by Max Beerbohm's diabolical index finger, may have found and been not unwilling to find his face chiefly expressive of a kind of empty alertness; but when it

was turned to her its quite pleasantly modelled features glowed and it was transfigured. So far as she was concerned, with Sir Isaac as foil, he was real enough and good enough for her. And by the virtue of that unlovely contrast even a certain ineffectiveness--became infinite delicacy....

The thought of Mr. Brumley in that relation and to that extent of clearness came but rarely into her consciousness, and when it did it was almost immediately dismissed again. It was the most fugitive of proffered consolations. And it is to be remarked that it made its most successful apparitions when Mr. Brumley was far away, and by some weeks or months of separation a little blurred and forgotten....

And sometimes this unrest of her spirit, this unhappiness turned her in quite another direction as it seemed and she had thoughts of religion. With a deepened shame she would go seeking into that other, that greater indelicacy, from which her upbringing had divorced her mind. She would even secretly pray. Greatly daring she fled on several occasions from her visitation of the hostels or slipped out of her home, and evading Mr. Brumley, went once to the Brompton Oratory, once or twice to the Westminster Cathedral and then having discovered Saint Paul's, to Saint Paul's in search of this nameless need. It was a need that no plain and ugly little place of worship would satisfy. It was a need that demanded choir and organ. She went to Saint Paul's haphazard when her mood and opportunity chanced together and there in the afternoons she found a wonder of great music and chanting voices, and she would kneel looking

up into those divine shadows and perfect archings and feel for a time assuaged, wonderfully assuaged. Sometimes, there, she seemed to be upon the very verge of grasping that hidden reality which makes all things plain. Sometimes it seemed to her that this very indulgence was the hidden reality.

She could never be sure in her mind whether these secret worshippings helped or hampered her in her daily living. They helped her to a certain disregard of annoyances and indignities and so far they were good, but they also helped towards a more general indifference. She might have told these last experiences to Mr. Brumley if she had not felt them to be indescribable. They could not be half told. They had to be told completely or they were altogether untellable. So she had them hid, and at once accepted and distrusted the consolation they brought her, and went on with the duties and philanthropies that she had chosen as her task in the world.

§2

One day in Lent--it was nearly three years after the opening of the first hostel--she went to Saint Paul's.

She was in a mood of great discouragement; the struggle between Mrs. Pembrose and the Bloomsbury girls had suddenly reopened in an acute form and Sir Isaac, who was sickening again after a period of better health,

had become strangely restless and irritable and hostile to her. He had thwarted her unusually and taken the side of the matrons in a conflict in which Susan Burnet's sister Alice was now distinguished as the chief of the malcontents. The new trouble seemed to Lady Harman to be traceable in one direction to that ardent Unionist, Miss Babs Wheeler, under the spell of whose round-faced, blue-eyed, distraught personality Alice had altogether fallen. Miss Babs Wheeler was fighting for the Union; she herself lived at Highbury with her mother, and Alice was her chosen instrument in the hostels. The Union had always been a little against the lady-like instincts of many of the waitresses; they felt strikes were vulgar and impaired their social standing, and this feeling had been greatly strengthened by irruptions of large contingents of shop assistants from various department stores. The Bloomsbury Hostel in particular now accommodated a hundred refined and elegant hands--they ought rather to be called figures--from the great Oxford Street costume house of Eustace and Mills, young people with a tall sweeping movement and an elevation of chin that had become nearly instinctive, and a silent yet evident intention to find the International girls "low" at the slightest provocation. It is only too easy for poor humanity under the irritation of that tacit superiority to respond with just the provocation anticipated. What one must regretfully speak of as the vulgar section of the International girls had already put itself in the wrong by a number of aggressive acts before the case came to Lady Harman's attention. Mrs. Pembrose seized the occasion for weeding on a courageous scale, and Miss Alice Burnet and three of her dearest friends were invited to vacate their rooms "pending redecoration".

With only too much plausibility the threatened young women interpreted this as an expulsion, and declined to remove their boxes and personal belongings. Miss Babs Wheeler thereupon entered the Bloomsbury Hostel, and in the teeth of three express prohibitions from Mrs. Pembrose, went a little up the staircase and addressed a confused meeting in the central hall. There was loud and continuous cheering for Lady Harman at intervals during this incident. Thereupon Mrs. Pembrose demanded sweeping dismissals, not only from the Hostels but the shops as an alternative to her resignation, and Lady Harman found herself more perplexed than ever....

Georgina Sawbridge had contrived to mingle herself in an entirely characteristic way in these troubles by listening for a brief period to an abstract of her sister's perplexities, then demanding to be made Director-General of the whole affair, refusing to believe this simple step impossible and retiring in great dudgeon to begin a series of letters of even more than sisterly bitterness. And Mr. Brumley when consulted had become dangerously sentimental. Under these circumstances Lady Harman's visit to Saint Paul's had much of the quality of a flight.

It was with an unwonted sense of refuge that she came from the sombre stress and roar of London without into the large hushed spaces of the cathedral. The door closed behind her--and all things changed. Here was meaning, coherence, unity. Here instead of a pelting confusion of movements and motives was a quiet concentration upon the little focus of

light about the choir, the gentle complete dominance of a voice intoning. She slipped along the aisle and into the nave and made her way to a seat. How good this was! Outside she had felt large, awkwardly responsible, accessible to missiles, a distressed conspicuous thing; within this living peace she suddenly became no more than one of a tranquil hushed community of small black-clad Lenten people; she found a chair and knelt and felt she vanished even from her own consciousness....

How beautiful was this place! She looked up presently at the great shadowy arcs far above her, so easy, so gracious that it seemed they had not so much been built by men as shaped by circling flights of angels. The service, a little clustering advance of voices unsustained by any organ, mingled in her mind with the many-pointed glow of candles. And then into this great dome of worship and beauty, like a bed of voices breaking into flower, like a springtime breeze of sound, came Allegri's Miserere....

Her spirit clung to this mood of refuge. It seemed as though the disorderly, pugnacious, misunderstanding universe had opened and shown her luminous mysteries. She had a sense of penetration. All that conflict, that jar of purposes and motives, was merely superficial; she had left it behind her. For a time she had no sense of effort in keeping hold of this, only of attainment, she drifted happily upon the sweet sustaining sounds, and then--then the music ceased. She came back into herself. Close to her a seated man stirred and sighed. She tried to get

back her hold upon that revelation but it had gone. Inexorably, opaque, impenetrable doors closed softly on her moment of vision....

All about her was the stir of departure.

She walked out slowly into the cold March daylight, to the leaden greys, the hurrying black shapes, the chaotic afternoon traffic of London. She paused on the steps, still but half reawakened. A passing omnibus obtruded the familiar inscription, "International Stores for Staminol Bread."

She turned like one who remembers, to where her chauffeur stood waiting.

§3

As her motor car, with a swift smoothness, carried her along the Embankment towards the lattice bar of Charing Cross bridge and the remoter towers of the Houses of Parliament, grey now and unsubstantial against the bright western sky, her mind came back slowly to her particular issues in life. But they were no longer the big exasperatingly important things that had seemed to hold her life by a hundred painful hooks before she went into the cathedral. They were small still under this dome of evening, small even by the measure of the grey buildings to the right of her and the warm lit river to her left, by the measure of the clustering dark barges, the teeming trams, the

streaming crowds of people, the note of the human process that sounds so loud there. She felt small even to herself, for the touch of beauty saves us from our own personalities, makes Gods of us to our own littleness. She passed under the railway bridge at Charing Cross, watched the square cluster of Westminster's pinnacles rise above her until they were out of sight overhead, ran up the little incline and round into Parliament Square, and was presently out on the riverside embankment again with the great chimneys of Chelsea smoking athwart the evening gold. And thence with a sudden effect of skies shut and curtains drawn she came by devious ways to the Fulham Road and the crowding traffic of Putney Bridge and Putney High Street and so home.

Snagsby, assisted by a new under-butler, a lean white-faced young man with red hair, received her ceremoniously and hovered serviceably about her. On the hall table lay three or four visiting cards of no importance, some circulars and two letters. She threw the circulars into the basket placed for them and opened her first letter. It was from Georgina; it was on several sheets and it began, "I still cannot believe that you refuse to give me the opportunity the director-generalship of your hostels means to me. It is not as if you yourself had either the time or the abilities necessary for them yourself; you haven't, and there is something almost dog-in-the-manger-ish to my mind in the way in which you will not give me my chance, the chance I have always been longing for----"

At this point Lady Harman put down this letter for subsequent perusal

and took its companion, which was addressed in an unfamiliar hand. It was from Alice Burnet and it was written in that sprawling hand and diffused style natural to a not very well educated person with a complicated story to tell in a state of unusual emotion. But the gist was in the first few sentences which announced that Alice had been evicted from the hostel. "I found my things on the pavement," wrote Alice.

Lady Harman became aware of Snagsby still hovering at hand.

"Mrs. Pembrose, my lady, came here this afternoon," he said, when he had secured her attention.

"Came here."

"She asked for you, my lady, and when I told her you were not at 'ome, she asked if she might see Sir Isaac."

"And did she?"

"Sir Isaac saw her, my lady. They 'ad tea in the study."

"I wish I had been at home to see her," said Lady Harman, after a brief interval of reflection.

She took her two letters and turned to the staircase. They were still in

her hand when presently she came into her husband's study. "I don't want a light," he said, as she put out her hand to the electric switch. His voice had a note of discontent, but he was sitting in the armchair against the window so that she could not see his features.

"How are you feeling this afternoon?" she asked.

"I'm feeling all right," he answered testily. He seemed to dislike inquiries after his health almost as much as he disliked neglect.

She came and stood by him and looked out from the dusk of the room into the garden darkening under a red-barred sky. "There is fresh trouble between Mrs. Pembrose and the girls," she said.

"She's been telling me about it."

"She's been here?"

"Pretty nearly an hour," said Sir Isaac.

Lady Harman tried to imagine that hour's interview on the spur of the moment and failed. She came to her immediate business. "I think," she said, "that she has been--high-handed...."

"You would," said Sir Isaac after an interval.

His tone was hostile, so hostile that it startled her.

"Don't you?"

He shook his head. "My ideas and your ideas--or anyhow the ideas you've got hold of--somewhere--somehow----I don't know where you get your ideas. We haven't got the same ideas, anyhow. You got to keep order in these places--anyhow...."

She perceived that she was in face of a prepared position. "I don't think," she threw out, "that she does keep order. She represses--and irritates. She gets an idea that certain girls are against her...."

"And you get an idea she's against certain girls...."

"Practically she expels them. She has in fact just turned one out into the street."

"You got to expel 'em. You got to. You can't run these places on sugar and water. There's a sort of girl, a sort of man, who makes trouble. There's a sort makes strikes, makes mischief, gets up grievances. You got to get rid of 'em somehow. You got to be practical somewhere. You can't go running these places on a lot of littry ideas and all that. It's no good."

The phrase "littry ideas" held Lady Harman's attention for a moment. But

she could not follow it up to its implications, because she wanted to get on with the issue she had in hand.

"I want to be consulted about these expulsions. Girl after girl has been sent away----"

Sir Isaac's silhouette was obstinate.

"She knows her business," he said.

He seemed to feel the need of a justification. "They shouldn't make trouble."

On that they rested for a little while in silence. She began to realize with a gathering emotion that this matter was far more crucial than she had supposed. She had been thinking only of the reinstatement of Alice Burnet, she hadn't yet estimated just what that overriding of Mrs. Pembrose might involve.

"I don't want to have any girl go until I have looked into her case. It's----It's vital."

"She says she can't run the show unless she has some power."

Neither spoke for some seconds. She had the feeling of hopeless vexation that might come to a child that has wandered into a trap. "I thought,"

she began. "These hostels----"

She stopped short.

Sir Isaac's hand tightened on the arm of his chair. "I started 'em to please you," he said. "I didn't start 'em to please your friends."

She turned her eyes quickly to his grey up-looking face.

"I didn't start them for you and that chap Brumley to play about with," he amplified. "And now you know about it, Elly."

The thing had found her unprepared. "As if----" she said at last.

"As if!" he mocked.

She stood quite still staring blankly at this unmanageable situation. He was the first to break silence. He lifted one hand and dropped it again with a dead impact on the arm of his chair. "I got the things," he said, "and there they are. Anyhow,--they got to be run in a proper way."

She made no immediate answer. She was seeking desperately for phrases that escaped her. "Do you think," she began at last. "Do you really think----?"

He stared out of the window. He answered in tones of excessive

reasonableness: "I didn't start these hostels to be run by you and your--friend." He gave the sentence the quality of an ultimatum, an irreducible minimum.

"He's my friend," she explained, "only--because he does work--for the hostels."

Sir Isaac seemed for a moment to attempt to consider that. Then he relapsed upon his predetermined attitude. "God!" he exclaimed, "but I have been a fool!"

She decided that that must be ignored.

"I care more for those hostels than I care for anything--anything else in the world," she told him. "I want them to work--I want them to succeed.... And then----"

He listened in sceptical silence.

"Mr. Brumley is nothing to me but a helper. He----How can you imagine, Isaac----? ! How can you dare? To suggest----!"

"Very well," said Sir Isaac and reflected and made his old familiar sound with his teeth. "Run the hostels without him, Elly," he propounded. "Then I'll believe."

She perceived that suddenly she was faced by a test or a bargain. In the background of her mind the figure of Mr. Brumley, as she had seen him last, in brown and with a tie rather to one side, protested vainly. She did what she could for him on the spur of the moment. "But," she said, "he's so helpful. He's so--harmless."

"That's as may be," said Sir Isaac and breathed heavily.

"How can one suddenly turn on a friend?"

"I don't see that you ever wanted a friend," said Sir Isaac.

"He's been so good. It isn't reasonable, Isaac. When anyone has--slaved."

"I don't say he isn't a good sort of chap," said Sir Isaac, with that same note of almost superhuman rationality, "only--he isn't going to run my hostels."

"But what do you mean, Isaac?"

"I mean you got to choose."

He waited as if he expected her to speak and then went on.

"What it comes to is this, Elly, I'm about sick of that chap. I'm sick

of him." He paused for a moment because his breath was short. "If you go on with the hostels he's--Phew--got to mizzle. Then--I don't mind--if you want that girl Burnet brought back in triumph.... It'll make Mrs. Pembrose chuck the whole blessed show, you know, but I say--I don't mind.... Only in that case, I don't want to see or hear--or hear about--Phew--or hear about your Mr. Brumley again. And I don't want you to, either.... I'm being pretty reasonable and pretty patient over this, with people--people--talking right and left. Still,--there's a limit.... You've been going on--if I didn't know you were an innocent--in a way ... I don't want to talk about that. There you are, Elly."

It seemed to her that she had always expected this to happen. But however much she had expected it to happen she was still quite unprepared with any course of action. She wanted with an equal want of limitation to keep both Mr. Brumley and her hostels.

"But Isaac," she said. "What do you suspect? What do you think? This friendship has been going on----How can I end it suddenly?"

"Don't you be too innocent, Elly. You know and I know perfectly well what there is between men and women. I don't make out I know--anything I don't know. I don't pretend you are anything but straight. Only----"

He suddenly gave way to his irritation. His self-control vanished. "Damn it!" he cried, and his panting breath quickened; "the thing's got to end. As if I didn't understand! As if I didn't understand!"

She would have protested again but his voice held her. "It's got to end. It's got to end. Of course you haven't done anything, of course you don't know anything or think of anything.... Only here I am ill.... You wouldn't be sorry if I got worse.... You can wait; you can.... All right! All right! And there you stand, irritating me--arguing. You know--it chokes me.... Got to end, I tell you.... Got to end...."

He beat at the arms of his chair and then put a hand to his throat.

"Go away," he cried to her. "Go to hell!"

§4

I cannot tell whether the reader is a person of swift decisions or one of the newer race of doubters; if he be the latter he will the better understand how Lady Harman did in the next two days make up her mind definitely and conclusively to two entirely opposed lines of action. She decided that her relations with Mr. Brumley, innocent as they were, must cease in the interests of the hostels and her struggle with Mrs. Pembrose, and she decided with quite equal certainty that her husband's sudden veto upon these relations was an intolerable tyranny that must be resisted with passionate indignation. Also she was surprised to find how difficult it was now to think of parting from Mr. Brumley. She made her way to these precarious conclusions and on from whichever it was to the

other through a jungle of conflicting considerations and feelings. When she thought of Mrs. Pembrose and more particularly of the probable share of Mrs. Pembrose in her husband's objection to Mr. Brumley her indignation kindled. She perceived Mrs. Pembrose as a purely evil personality, as a spirit of espionage, distrust, calculated treachery and malignant intervention, as all that is evil in rule and officialism, and a vast wave of responsibility for all those difficult and feeble and likeable young women who elbowed and giggled and misunderstood and blundered and tried to live happily under the commanding stresses of Mrs. Pembrose's austerity carried her away. She had her duty to do to them and it overrode every other duty. If a certain separation from Mr. Brumley's assiduous aid was demanded, was it too great a sacrifice? And no sooner was that settled than the whole question reopened with her indignant demand why anyone at any price had the right to prohibit a friendship that she had so conscientiously kept innocent. If she gave way to this outrageous restriction to-day, what fresh limitations might not Sir Isaac impose to-morrow? And now, she was so embarrassed in her struggle by his health. She could not go to him and have things out with him, she could not directly defy him, because that might mean a suffocating seizure for him....

It was entirely illogical, no doubt, but extremely natural for Lady Harman to decide that she must communicate her decision, whichever one it was, to Mr. Brumley in a personal interview. She wrote to him and arranged to meet and talk to him in Kew Gardens, and with a feeling of discretion went thither not in the automobile but in a taxi-cab. And so

delicately now were her two irrevocable decisions balanced in her mind that twice on her way to Kew she swayed over from one to the other.

Arrived at the gardens she found herself quite disinclined to begin the announcement of either decision. She was quite exceptionally glad to see Mr. Brumley; he was dressed in a new suit of lighter brown that became him very well indeed, the day was warm and bright, a day of scyllas and daffodils and snow-upon-the-mountains and green-powdered trees and frank sunshine,--and the warmth of her feelings for her friend merged indistinguishably with the springtime stir and glow. They walked across the bright turf together in a state of unjustifiable happiness, purring little admirations at the ingenious elegance of creation at its best as gardeners set it out for our edification, and the whole tenor of Lady Harman's mind was to make this occasion an escape from the particular business that had brought her thither.

"We'll look for daffodils away there towards the river under the trees," said Mr. Brumley, and it seemed preposterous not to enjoy those daffodils at least before she broached the great issue between an irresistible force and an immovable post, that occupied her mental background.

Mr. Brumley was quite at his best that afternoon. He was happy, gay and deferential; he made her realize by his every tone and movement that if he had his choice of the whole world that afternoon and all its inhabitants and everything, there was no other place in which he would

be, no other companion, no other occupation than this he had. He talked of spring and flowers, quoted poets and added the treasures of a well-stored mind to the amenities of the day. "It's good to take a holiday at times," he said, and after that it was more difficult than ever to talk about the trouble of the hostels.

She was able to do this at last while they were having tea in the little pavilion near the pagoda. It was the old pavilion, the one that Miss Alimony's suffragettes were afterwards to burn down in order to demonstrate the relentless logic of women. They did it in the same eventful week when Miss Alimony was, she declared, so nearly carried off by White Slave Traders (disguised as nurses but, fortunately for her, smelling of brandy) from the Brixton Temperance Bazaar. But in those simpler days the pavilion still existed; it was tended by agreeable waiters whose evening dress was mitigated by cheerful little straw hats, and an enormous multitude of valiant and smutty Cockney sparrows chirped and squeaked and begged and fluttered and fought, venturing to the very tables and feet of the visitors. And here, a little sobered from their first elation by much walking about and the presence of jam and watercress, Mr. Brumley and Lady Harman could think again of the work they were doing for the reconstitution of society upon collective lines.

She began to tell him of the conflict between Mrs. Pembrose and Alice Burnet that threatened the latter with extinction. She found it more convenient to talk at first as though the strands of decision were still all in her hands; afterwards she could go on to the peculiar

complication of the situation through the unexpected weakening of her position in relation to Mrs. Pembrose. She described the particular of the new trouble, the perplexing issue between the "lady-like," for which as a feminine ideal there was so much to be said on the one hand and the "genial," which was also an admirable quality, on the other. "You see," she said, "it's very rude to cough at people and make noises, but then it's so difficult to explain to the others that it's equally rude to go past people and pretend not to see or hear them. Girls of that sort always seem so much more underbred when they are trying to be superior than when they are not; they get so stiff and--exasperating. And this keeping out of the Union because it isn't genteel, it's the very essence of the trouble with all these employees. We've discussed that so often. Those drapers' girls seem full of such cold, selfish, base, pretentious notions; much more full even than our refreshment girls. And then as if it wasn't all difficult enough comes Mrs. Pembrose and her wardresses doing all sorts of hard, clumsy things, and one can't tell them just how little they are qualified to judge good behaviour. Their one idea of discipline is to speak to people as if they were servants and to be distant and crushing. And long before one can do anything come trouble and tart replies and reports of "gross impertinence" and expulsion. We keep on expelling girls. This is the fourth time girls have had to go. What is to become of them? I know this Burnet girl quite well as you know. She's just a human, kindly little woman.... She'll feel disgraced.... How can I let a thing like that occur?"

She spread her hands apart over the tea things.

Mr. Brumley held his chin in his hand and said "Um" and looked judicial, and admired Lady Harman very much, and tried to grasp the whole trouble and wring out a solution. He made some admirable generalizations about the development of a new social feeling in response to changed conditions, but apart from a remark that Mrs. Pembrose was all organization and no psychology, and quite the wrong person for her position, he said nothing in the slightest degree contributory to the particular drama under consideration. From that utterance, however, Lady Harman would no doubt have gone on to the slow, tentative but finally conclusive statement of the new difficulty that had arisen out of her husband's jealousy and to the discussion of the more fundamental decisions it forced upon her, if a peculiar blight had not fallen upon their conversation and robbed it at last of even an appearance of ease.

This blight crept upon their minds.... It began first with Mr. Brumley.

Mr. Brumley was rarely free from self-consciousness. Whenever he was in a restaurant or any such place of assembly, then whatever he did or whatever he said he had a kind of surplus attention, a quickening of the ears, a wandering of the eyes, to the groups and individuals round about him. And while he had seemed entirely occupied with Lady Harman, he had nevertheless been aware from the outset that a dingy and inappropriate-looking man in a bowler hat and a ready-made suit of grey, was listening to their conversation from an adjacent table.

This man had entered the pavilion oddly. He had seemed to dodge in and hesitate. Then he had chosen his table rather deliberately--and he kept looking, and trying not to seem to look.

That was not all. Mr. Brumley's expression was overcast by the effort to recall something. He sat elbows on table and leant forward towards Lady Harman and at the blossom-laden trees outside the pavilion and trifled with two fingers on his lips and spoke between them in a voice that was speculative and confidential and muffled and mysterious. "Where have I seen our friend to the left before?"

She had been aware of his distraction for some time.

She glanced at the man and found nothing remarkable in him. She tried to go on with her explanations.

Mr. Brumley appeared attentive and then he said again: "But where have I seen him?"

And from that point their talk was blighted; the heart seemed to go out of her. Mr. Brumley she felt was no longer taking in what she was saying. At the time she couldn't in any way share his preoccupation. But what had been difficult before became hopeless and she could no longer feel that even presently she would be able to make him understand the peculiar alternatives before her. They drifted back by the great

conservatory and the ornamental water, aripple with ducks and swans, to the gates where his taxi waited.

Even then it occurred to her that she ought to tell him something of the new situation. But now their time was running out, she would have to be concise, and what wife could ever say abruptly and offhand that frequent fact, "Oh, by the by, my husband is jealous of you"? Then she had an impulse to tell him simply, without any explanation at all, that for a time he must not meet her. And while she gathered herself together for that, his preoccupations intervened again.

He stood up in the open taxi-cab and looked back.

"That chap," he said, "is following us."

§5

The effect of this futile interview upon Lady Harman was remarkable. She took to herself an absurd conviction that this inconclusiveness had been an achievement. Confronted by a dilemma, she had chosen neither horn and assumed an attitude of inoffensive defiance. Springs in England vary greatly in their character; some are easterly and quarrelsome, some are north-westerly and wetly disastrous, a bleak invasion from the ocean; some are but the broken beginnings of what are not so much years as stretches of meteorological indecision. This particular spring was

essentially a south-westerly spring, good and friendly, showery but in the lightest way and so softly reassuring as to be gently hilarious. It was a spring to get into the blood of anyone; it gave Lady Harman the feeling that Mrs. Pembrose would certainly be dealt with properly and without unreasonable delay by Heaven, and that meanwhile it was well to take the good things of existence as cheerfully as possible. The good things she took were very innocent things. Feeling unusually well and enjoying great draughts of spring air and sunshine were the chief. And she took them only for three brief days. She carried the children down to Black Strand to see her daffodils, and her daffodils surpassed expectation. There was a delirium of blackthorn in the new wild garden she had annexed from the woods and a close carpet of encouraged wild primroses. Even the Putney garden was full of happy surprises. The afternoon following her visit to Black Strand was so warm that she had tea with her family in great gaiety on the lawn under the cedar. Her offspring were unusually sweet that day, they had new blue cotton sunbonnets, and Baby and Annette at least succeeded in being pretty. And Millicent, under the new Swiss governess, had acquired, it seemed quite suddenly, a glib colloquial French that somehow reconciled one to the extreme thinness and shapelessness of her legs.

Then an amazing new fact broke into this gleam of irrational contentment, a shattering new fact. She found she was being watched. She discovered that dingy man in the grey suit following her.

The thing came upon her one afternoon. She was starting out for a talk

with Georgina. She felt so well, so confident of the world that it was intolerable to think of Georgina harbouring resentment; she resolved she would go and have things out with her and make it clear just how impossible it was to impose a Director-General upon her husband. She became aware of the man in grey as she walked down Putney Hill.

She recognized him at once. He was at the corner of Redfern Road and still unaware of her existence. He was leaning against the wall with the habituated pose of one who is frequently obliged to lean against walls for long periods of time, and he was conversing in an elucidatory manner with the elderly crossing-sweeper who still braves the motor-cars at that point. He became aware of her emergence with a start, he ceased to lean and became observant.

He was one of those men whose face suggests the word "muzzle," with an erect combative nose and a forward slant of the body from the rather inturned feet. He wore an observant bowler hat a little too small for him, and there is something about the tail of his jacket--as though he had been docked.

She passed at a stride to the acceptance of Mr. Brumley's hitherto incredible suspicion. Her pulses quickened. It came into her head to see how far this man would go in following her. She went on demurely down the hill leaving him quite unaware that she had seen him.

She was amazed, and after her first belief incredulous again. Could

Isaac be going mad? At the corner she satisfied herself of the grey man's proximity and hailed a taxi-cab. The man in grey came nosing across to listen to her directions and hear where she was going.

"Please drive up the hill until I tell you," she said, "slowly"--and had the satisfaction, if one may call it a satisfaction, of seeing the grey man dive towards the taxi-cab rank. Then she gave herself up to hasty scheming.

She turned her taxi-cab abruptly when she was certain of being followed, went back into London, turned again and made for Westridge's great stores in Oxford Street. The grey man ticked up two pences in pursuit. All along the Brompton Road he pursued her with his nose like the jib of a ship.

She was excited and interested, and not nearly so shocked as she ought to have been. It didn't somehow jar as it ought to have jarred with her idea of Sir Isaac. Watched by a detective! This then was the completion of the conditional freedom she had won by smashing that window. She might have known....

She was astonished and indignant but not nearly so entirely indignant as a noble heroine should have been. She was certainly not nearly so queenly as Mrs. Sawbridge would have shown herself under such circumstances. It may have been due to some plebeian strain in her father's blood that over and above her proper indignation she was

extremely interested. She wanted to know what manner of man it was whose nose was just appearing above the window edge of the taxi-cab behind. In her inexperienced inattention she had never yet thought it was possible that men could be hired to follow women.

She sat a little forward, thinking.

How far would he follow her and was it possible to shake him off? Or are such followers so expert that once upon a scent, they are like the Indian hunting dog, inevitable. She must see.

She paid off her taxi at Westridge's and, with the skill of her sex, observed him by the window reflection, counting the many doors of the establishment. Would he try to watch them all? There were also some round the corner. No, he was going to follow her in. She had a sudden desire, an unreasonable desire, perhaps an instinctive desire to see that man among baby-linen. It was in her power for a time to wreath him with incongruous objects. This was the sort of fancy a woman must control....

He stalked her with an unreal sang-froid. He ambushed behind a display of infants' socks. Driven to buy by a saleswoman he appeared to be demanding improbable varieties of infant's socks.

Are these watchers and trackers sometimes driven to buying things in shops? If so, strange items must figure in accounts of expenses. If he

bought those socks, would they appear in Sir Isaac's bill? She felt a sudden craving for the sight of Sir Isaac's Private Detective Account. And as for the articles themselves, what became of them? She knew her husband well enough to feel sure that if he paid for anything he would insist upon having it. But where--where did he keep them?...

But now the man's back was turned; he was no doubt improvising paternity and an extreme fastidiousness in baby's footwear----Now for it!--through departments of deepening indelicacy to the lift!

But he had considered that possibility of embarrassment; he got round by some other way, he was just in time to hear the lift gate clash upon a calmly preoccupied lady, who still seemed as unaware of his existence as the sky.

He was running upstairs, when she descended again, without getting out; he stopped at the sight of her shooting past him, their eyes met and there was something appealing in his. He was very moist and his bowler was flagging. He had evidently started out in the morning with misconceptions about the weather. And it was clear he felt he had blundered in coming into Westridge's. Before she could get a taxi he was on the pavement behind her, hot but pursuing.

She sought in her mind for corner shops, with doors on this street and that. She exercised him upon Peter Robinson's and Debenham and Freebody's and then started for the monument. But on her way to the

monument she thought of the moving staircase at Harrod's. If she went up and down on this, she wanted to know what he would do, would he run up and down the fixed flight? He did. Several times. And then she bethought herself of the Piccadilly tube; she got in at Brompton road and got out at Down Street and then got in again and went to South Kensington and he darted in and out of adjacent carriages and got into lifts by curious retrograde movements, being apparently under the erroneous impression that his back was less characteristic than his face.

By this time he was evidently no longer unaware of her intelligent interest in his movements. It was clear too that he had received a false impression that she wanted to shake him off and that all the sleuth in him was aroused. He was dishevelled and breathing hard and getting a little close and coarse in his pursuit, but he was sticking to it with a puckered intensified resolution. He came up into the South Kensington air open-mouthed and sniffing curiously, but invincible.

She discovered suddenly that she did not like him at all and that she wanted to go home.

She took a taxi, and then away in the wilds of the Fulham Road she had her crowning idea. She stopped the cab at a dingy little furniture shop, paid the driver exorbitantly and instructed him to go right back to South Kensington station, buy her an evening paper and return for her. The pursuer drew up thirty yards away, fell into her trap, paid off his cab and feigned to be interested by a small window full of penny toys,

cheap chocolate and cocoanut ice. She bought herself a brass door weight, paid for it hastily and posted herself just within the furniture-shop door.

Then you see her cab returned suddenly and she got in at once and left him stranded.

He made a desperate effort to get a motor omnibus. She saw him rushing across the traffic gesticulating. Then he collided with a boy with a basket on a bicycle--not so far as she could see injuriously, they seemed to leap at once into a crowd and an argument, and then he was hidden from her by a bend in the road.

§6

For a little while her mind was full of fragments of speculation about this man. Was he a married man? Was he very much away from home? What did he earn? Were there ever disputes about his expenses?...

She must ask Isaac. For she was determined to go home and challenge her husband. She felt buoyed up by indignation and the consciousness of innocence....

And then she felt an odd little doubt whether her innocence was quite so manifest as she supposed?

That doubt grew to uncomfortable proportions.

For two years she had been meeting Mr. Brumley as confidently as though they had been invisible beings, and now she had to rack her brains for just what might be mistaken, what might be misconstrued. There was nothing, she told herself, nothing, it was all as open as the day, and still her mind groped about for some forgotten circumstance, something gone almost out of memory that would bear misinterpretation.... How should she begin? "Isaac," she would say, "I am being followed about London." Suppose he denied his complicity! How could he deny his complicity?

The cab ran in through the gates of her home and stopped at the door. Snagsby came hurrying down the steps with a face of consternation. "Sir Isaac, my lady, has come home in a very sad state indeed."

Beyond Snagsby in the hall she came upon a lost-looking round-eyed Florence.

"Daddy's ill again," said Florence.

"You run to the nursery," said Lady Harman.

"I thought I might help," said Florence. "I don't want to play with the others."

"No, run away to the nursery."

"I want to see the ossygen let out," said Florence petulantly to her mother's unsympathetic back. "I never see the ossygen let out. Mum--my!..."

Lady Harman found her husband on the couch in his bedroom. He was propped up in a sitting position with every available cushion and pillow. His coat and waistcoat and collar had been taken off, and his shirt and vest torn open. The nearest doctor, Almsworth, was in attendance, but oxygen had not arrived, and Sir Isaac with an expression of bitter malignity upon his face was fighting desperately for breath. If anything his malignity deepened at the sight of his wife. "Damned climate," he gasped. "Wouldn't have come back--except for your foolery."

It seemed to help him to say that. He took a deep inhalation, pressed his lips tightly together, and nodded at her to confirm his words.

"If he's fanciful," said Almsworth. "If in any way your presence irritates him----"

"Let her stay," said Sir Isaac. "It--pleases her...."

Almsworth's colleague entered with the long-desired oxygen cylinder.

§7

And now every other interest in life was dominated, and every other issue postponed by the immense urgencies of Sir Isaac's illness. It had entered upon a new phase. It was manifest that he could no longer live in England, that he must go to some warm and kindly climate. There and with due precautions and observances Almsworth assured Lady Harman he might survive for many years--"an invalid, of course, but a capable one."

For some time the business of the International Stores had been preparing itself for this withdrawal. Sir Isaac had been entrusting his managers with increased responsibility and making things ready for the flotation of a company that would take the whole network of enterprises off his hands. Charterson was associated with him in this, and everything was sufficiently definite to be managed from any continental resort to which his doctors chose to send him. They chose to send him to Santa Margherita on the Ligurian coast near Rapallo and Porto Fino.

It was old Bergener of Marienbad who chose this place. Sir Isaac had wanted to go to Marienbad, his first resort abroad; he had a lively and indeed an exaggerated memory of his Kur there; his growing disposition to distrust had turned him against his London specialist, and he had caused Lady Harman to send gigantic telegrams of inquiry to old Bergener

before he would be content. But Bergener would not have him at Marienbad; it wasn't the place, it was the wrong time of year, there was the very thing for them at the Regency Hotel at Santa Margherita, an entire dépendance in a beautiful garden right on the sea, admirably furnished and adapted in every way to Sir Isaac's peculiar needs. There, declared Doctor Bergener, with a proper attendant, due precaution, occasional oxygen and no excitement he would live indefinitely, that is to say eight or ten years. And attracted by the eight or ten years, which was three more than the London specialist offered, Sir Isaac finally gave in and consented to be taken to Santa Margherita.

He was to go as soon as possible, and he went in a special train and with an immense elaboration of attendance and comforts. They took with them a young doctor their specialist at Marienbad had recommended, a bright young Bavarian with a perfectly square blond head, an incurable frock coat, the manners of the less kindly type of hotel-porter and luggage which apparently consisted entirely of apparatus, an arsenal of strange-shaped shining black cases. He joined them in London and went right through with them. From Genoa at his request they obtained the services of a trained nurse, an amiable fluent-shaped woman who knew only Italian and German. For reasons that he declined to give, but which apparently had something to do with the suffrage agitation, he would have nothing to do with an English trained nurse. They had also a stenographer and typist for Sir Isaac's correspondence, and Lady Harman had a secretary, a young lady with glasses named Summersly Satchell who obviously reserved opinions of a harshly intellectual kind and had

previously been in the service of the late Lady Mary Justin. She established unfriendly relations with the young doctor at an early date by attempting, he said, to learn German from him. Then there was a maid for Lady Harman, an assistant maid, and a valet-attendant for Sir Isaac. The rest of the service in the dépendance was supplied by the hotel management.

It took some weeks to assemble this expedition and transport it to its place of exile. Arrangements had to be made for closing the Putney house and establishing the children with Mrs. Harman at Black Strand. There was an exceptional amount of packing up to do, for this time Lady Harman felt she was not coming back--it might be for years. They were going out to warmth and sunlight for the rest of Sir Isaac's life.

He was entering upon the last phase in the slow disorganization of his secretions and the progressive hardening of his arterial tissues that had become his essential history. His appearance had altered much in the last few months; he had become visibly smaller, his face in particular had become sharp and little-featured. It was more and more necessary for him to sit up in order to breathe with comfort, he slept sitting up; and his senses were affected, he complained of strange tastes in his food, quarrelled with the cook and had fits of sickness. Sometimes, latterly, he had complained of strange sounds, like air whistling in water-pipes, he said, that had no existence outside his ears. Moreover, he was steadily more irritable and more suspicious and less able to control himself when angry. A long-hidden vein of vile and abusive language,

hidden, perhaps, since the days of Mr. Gambard's college at Ealing, came to the surface....

For some days after his seizure Lady Harman was glad to find in the stress of his necessities an excuse for disregarding altogether the crisis in the hostels and the perplexing problem of her relations to Mr. Brumley. She wrote two brief notes to the latter gentleman breaking appointments and pleading pressure of business. Then, at first during intervals of sleeplessness at night, and presently during the day, the danger and ugliness of her outlook began to trouble her. She was still, she perceived, being watched, but whether that was because her husband had failed to change whatever orders he had given, or because he was still keeping himself minutely informed of her movements, she could not tell. She was now constantly with him, and except for small spiteful outbreaks and occasional intervals of still and silent malignity, he tolerated and utilized her attentions. It was clear his jealousy of her rankled, a jealousy that made him even resentful at her health and ready to complain of any brightness of eye or vigour of movement. They had drifted far apart from the possibility of any real discussion of the hostels since that talk in the twilight study. To re-open that now or to complain of the shadowing pursuer who dogged her steps abroad would have been to precipitate Mr. Brumley's dismissal.

Even at the cost of letting things drift at the hostels for a time she wished to avoid that question. She would not see him, but she would not shut the door upon him. So far as the detective was concerned she could

avoid discussion by pretending to be unaware of his existence, and as for the hostels--the hostels each day were left until the morrow.

She had learnt many things since the days of her first rebellion, and she knew now that this matter of the man friend and nothing else in the world is the central issue in the emancipation of women. The difficulty of him is latent in every other restriction of which women complain. The complete emancipation of women will come with complete emancipation of humanity from jealousy--and no sooner. All other emancipations are shams until a woman may go about as freely with this man as with that, and nothing remains for emancipation when she can. In the innocence of her first revolt this question of friendship had seemed to Lady Harman the simplest, most reasonable of minor concessions, but that was simply because Mr. Brumley hadn't in those days been talking of love to her, nor she been peeping through that once locked door. Now she perceived how entirely Sir Isaac was by his standards justified.

And after all that was recognized she remained indisposed to give up Mr. Brumley.

Yet her sense of evil things happening in the hostels was a deepening distress. It troubled her so much that she took the disagreeable step of asking Mrs. Pembrose to meet her at the Bloomsbury Hostel and talk out the expulsions. She found that lady alertly defensive, entrenched behind expert knowledge and pretension generally. Her little blue eyes seemed harder than ever, the metallic resonance in her voice more marked, the

lisp stronger. "Of course, Lady Harman, if you were to have some practical experience of control----" and "Three times I have given these girls every opportunity--every opportunity."

"It seems so hard to drive these girls out," repeated Lady Harman.

"They're such human creatures."

"You have to think of the ones who remain. You must--think of the Institution as a Whole."

"I wonder," said Lady Harman, peering down into profundities for a moment. Below the great truth glimmered and vanished that Institutions were made for man and not man for Institutions.

"You see," she went on, rather to herself than to Mrs. Pembrose, "we shall be away now for a long time."

Mrs. Pembrose betrayed no excesses of grief.

"It's no good for me to interfere and then leave everything...."

"That way spells utter disorganization," said Mrs. Pembrose.

"But I wish something could be done to lessen the harshness--to save the pride--of such a girl as Alice Burnet. Practically you tell her she isn't fit to associate with--the other girls."

"She's had her choice and warning after warning."

"I daresay she's--stiff. Oh!--she's difficult. But--being expelled is bitter."

"I've not expelled her--technically."

"She thinks she's expelled...."

"You'd rather perhaps, Lady Harman, that I was expelled."

The dark lady lifted her eyes to the little bridling figure in front of her for a moment and dropped them again. She had had an unspeakable thought, that Mrs. Pembrose wasn't a gentlewoman, and that this sort of thing was a business for the gentle and for nobody else in the world.

"I'm only anxious not to hurt anyone if I can help it," said Lady Harman.

She went on with her attempt to find some way of compromise with Mrs. Pembrose that should save the spirit of the new malcontents. She was much too concerned on account of the things that lay ahead of them to care for her own pride with Mrs. Pembrose. But that good lady had all the meagre inflexibilities of her class and at last Lady Harman ceased.

She came out into the great hall of the handsome staircase, ushered by

Mrs. Pembrose as a guest is ushered by a host. She looked at the spacious proportion of the architecture and thought of the hopes and imaginations she had allowed to centre upon this place. It was to have been a glowing home of happy people, and over it all brooded the chill stillness of rules and regulations and methodical suppressions and tactful discouragement. It was an Institution, it had the empty orderliness of an Institution, Mrs. Pembrose had just called it an Institution, and so Susan Burnet had prophesied it would become five years or more ago. It was a dream subjugated to reality.

So it seemed to Lady Harman must all dreams be subjugated to reality, and the tossing spring greenery of the square, the sunshine, the tumult of sparrows and the confused sound of distant traffic, framed as it was in the hard dark outline of the entrance door, was as near as the promise of joy could ever come to her. "Caught and spoilt," that seemed to be the very essential of her life; just as it was of these Hostels, all the hopes, the imaginings, the sweet large anticipations, the generousities, and stirring warm desires....

Perhaps Lady Harman had been a little overworking with her preparations for exile. Because as these unhappy thoughts passed through her mind she realized that she was likely to weep. It was extremely undesirable that Mrs. Pembrose should see her weeping.

But Mrs. Pembrose did see her weeping, saw her dark eyes swimming with uncontrollable tears, watched her walk past her and out, without a word

or a gesture of farewell.

A kind of perplexity came upon the soul of Mrs. Pembrose. She watched the tall figure descend to her car and enter it and dispose itself gracefully and depart....

"Hysterical," whispered Mrs. Pembrose at last and was greatly comforted.

"Childish," said Mrs. Pembrose sipping further consolation for an unwonted spiritual discomfort.

"Besides," said Mrs. Pembrose, "what else can one do?"

§8

Sir Isaac was greatly fatigued by his long journey to Santa Margherita in spite of every expensive precaution to relieve him; but as soon as the effect of that wore off, his recovery under the system Bergener had prescribed was for a time remarkable. In a little while he was out of bed again and in an armchair. Then the young doctor began to talk of drives. They had no car with them, so he went into Genoa and spent an energetic day securing the sweetest-running automobile he could find and having it refitted for Sir Isaac's peculiar needs. In this they made a number of excursions through the hot beauty of the Italian afternoons, eastward to Genoa, westward to Sestri and northward towards Montallegro.

Then they went up to the summit of the Monte de Porto Fino and Sir Isaac descended and walked about and looked at the view and praised Bergener. After that he was encouraged to visit the gracious old monastery that overhangs the road to Porto Fino.

At first Lady Harman did her duty of control and association with an apathetic resignation. This had to go on--for eight or ten years. Then her imagination began to stir again. There came a friendly letter from Mr. Brumley and she answered with a description of the colour of the sea and the charm and wonder of its tideless shore. The three elder children wrote queer little letters and she answered them. She went into Rapallo and got herself a carriageful of Tauchnitz books....

That visit to the monastery on the Porto Fino road was like a pleasant little glimpse into the brighter realities of the Middle Ages. The place, which is used as a home of rest for convalescent Carthusians, chanced to be quite empty and deserted; the Bavarian rang a jangling bell again and again and at last gained the attention of an old gardener working in the vineyard above, an unkempt, unshaven, ungainly creature dressed in scarce decent rags of brown, who was yet courteous-minded and, albeit crack-voiced, with his yellow-fanged mouth full of gracious polysyllables. He hobbled off to get a key and returned through the still heat of the cobbled yard outside the monastery gates, and took them into cool airy rooms and showed them clean and simple cells in shady corridors, and a delightful orangery, and led them to a beautiful terrace that looked out upon the glowing quivering sea. And he became

very anxious to tell them something about "Francesco"; they could not understand him until the doctor caught "Battaglia" and "Pavia" and had an inspiration. Francis the First, he explained in clumsy but understandable English, slept here, when he was a prisoner of the Emperor and all was lost but honour. They looked at the slender pillars and graceful archings about them.

"Chust as it was now," the young doctor said, his imagination touched for a moment by mere unscientific things....

They returned to their dépendance in a state of mutual contentment, Sir Isaac scarcely tired, and Lady Harman ran upstairs to change her dusty dress for a fresher muslin, while he went upon the doctor's arm to the balcony where tea was to be served to them.

She came down to find her world revolutionized.

On the table in the balcony the letters had been lying convenient to his chair and he--it may be without troubling to read the address, had seized the uppermost and torn it open.

He was holding that letter now a little crumpled in his hand.

She had walked close up to the table before she realized the change. The little eyes that met hers were afire with hatred, his lips were white and pressed together tightly, his nostrils were dilated in his struggle

for breath. "I knew it," he gasped.

She clung to her dignity though she felt suddenly weak within. "That letter," she said, "was addressed to me."

There was a gleam of derision in his eyes.

"Look at it!" he said, and flung it towards her.

"My private letter!"

"Look at it!" he repeated.

"What right have you to open my letter?"

"Friendship!" he said. "Harmless friendship! Look what your--friend says!"

"Whatever there was in my letter----"

"Oh!" cried Sir Isaac. "Don't come that over me! Don't you try it! Oooh! phew--" He struggled for breath for a time. "He's so harmless. He's so helpful. He----Read it, you----"

He hesitated and then hurled a strange word at her.

She glanced at the letter on the table but made no movement to touch it. Then she saw that her husband's face was reddening and that his arm waved helplessly. His eyes, deprived abruptly of all the fury of conflict, implored assistance.

She darted to the French window that opened into the dining-room from the balcony. "Doctor Greve!" she cried. "Doctor Greve!"

Behind her the patient was making distressful sounds. "Doctor Greve," she screamed, and from above she heard the Bavarian shouting and then the noise of his coming down the stairs.

He shouted some direction in German as he ran past her. By an inspiration she guessed he wanted the nurse.

Miss Summersley Satchell appeared in the doorway and became helpful.

Then everyone in the house seemed to be converging upon the balcony.

It was an hour before Sir Isaac was in bed and sufficiently allayed for her to go to her own room. Then she thought of Mr. Brumley's letter, and recovered it from the table on the balcony where it had been left in the tumult of her husband's seizure.

It was twilight and the lights were on. She stood under one of them and read with two moths circling about her....

Mr. Brumley had had a mood of impassioned declaration. He had alluded to his "last moments of happiness at Kew." He said he would rather kiss the hem of her garment than be the "lord of any other woman's life."

It was all so understandable--looked at in the proper light. It was all so impossible to explain. And why had she let it happen? Why had she let it happen?

§9

The young doctor was a little puzzled and rather offended by Sir Isaac's relapse. He seemed to consider it incorrect and was on the whole disposed to blame Lady Harman. He might have had such a seizure, the young doctor said, later, but not now. He would be thrown back for some weeks, then he would begin to mend again and then whatever he said, whatever he did, Lady Harman must do nothing to contradict him. For a whole day Sir Isaac lay inert, in a cold sweat. He consented once to attempt eating, but sickness overcame him. He seemed so ill that all the young doctor's reassurances could not convince Lady Harman that he would recover. Then suddenly towards evening his arrested vitality was flowing again, the young doctor ceased to be anxious for his own assertions, the patient could sit up against a pile of pillows and breathe and attend to affairs. There was only one affair he really seemed anxious to attend to. His first thought when he realized his

returning strength was of his wife. But the young doctor would not let him talk that night.

Next morning he seemed still stronger. He was restless and at last demanded Lady Harman again.

This time the young doctor transmitted the message.

She came to him forthwith and found him, white-faced and unfamiliar-looking, his hands gripping the quilt and his eyes burning with hatred.

"You thought I'd forgotten," was his greeting.

"Don't argue," signalled the doctor from the end of Sir Isaac's bed.

"I've been thinking it out," said Sir Isaac. "When you were thinking I was too ill to think.... I know better now."

He sucked in his lips and then went on. "You've got to send for old Crappen," he said. "I'm going to alter things. I had a plan. But that would have been letting you off too easy. See? So--you send for old Crappen."

"What do you mean to do?"

"Never you mind, my lady, never you mind. You send for old Crappen."

She waited for a moment. "Is that all you want me to do?"

"I'm going to make it all right about those Hostels. Don't you fear. You and your Hostels! You shan't touch those hostels ever again. Ever.

Mrs. Pembrose go! Why! You ain't worthy to touch the heel of her shoe!

Mrs. Pembrose!"

He gathered together all his forces and suddenly expelled with rousing force the word he had already applied to her on the day of the intercepted letter.

He found it seemed great satisfaction in the sound and taste of it. He repeated it thrice. "Zut," cried the doctor, "Sssh!"

Then Sir Isaac intimated his sense that calm was imperative. "You send for Crappen," he said with a quiet earnestness.

She had become now so used to terms of infamy during the last year or so, so accustomed to forgive them as part of his suffering, that she seemed not to hear the insult.

"Do you want him at once?" she asked. "Shall I telegraph?"

"Want him at once!" He dropped his voice to a whisper. "Yes, you

fool--yes. Telegraph. (Phew.) Telegraph.... I mustn't get angry, you know. You--telegraph."

He became suddenly still. But his eyes were active with hate.

She glanced at the doctor, then moved to the door.

"I will send a telegram," she said, and left him still malignant.

She closed the door softly and walked down the long cool passage towards her own room....

§10

She had to be patient. She had to be patient. This sort of thing had to go on from crisis to crisis. It might go on for years. She could see no remedy and no escape.

What else was there to do but be patient? It was all amazing unjust, but to be a married woman she was beginning to understand is to be outside justice. It is autocracy. She had once imagined otherwise, and most of her life had been the slow unlearning of that initial error. She had imagined that the hostels were hers simply because he had put it in that way. They had never been anything but his, and now it was manifest he would do what he liked with his own. The law takes no cognizance of the

unwritten terms of a domestic reconciliation.

She sat down at the writing-table the hotel management had improvised for her.

She rested her chin on her hand and tried to think out her position. But what was there to think out, seeing that nature and law and custom have conspired together to put women altogether under the power of jealous and acquisitive men?

She drew the telegram form towards her.

She was going to write a telegram that she knew would bring Crappen headlong--to disinherit her absolutely. And--it suddenly struck her--her husband had trusted her to write it. She was going to do what he had trusted her to do.... But it was absurd.

She sat making patterns of little dots with her pencil point upon the telegram form, and there was a faint smile of amusement upon her lips.

It was absurd--and everything was absurd. What more was to be said or thought about it? This was the lot of woman. She had made her struggle, rebelled her little bit of rebellion. Most other women no doubt had done as much. It made no difference in the long run.

But it was hard to give up the hostels. She had been foolish of course,

but she had not let them make her feel real. And she wasn't real. She was a wife--just this....

She sighed and bestirred herself and began to write.

Then abruptly she stopped writing.

For three years her excuse for standing--everything, had been these hostels. If now the hostels were to be wrenched out of her hands, if at her husband's death she was to be stripped of every possession and left a helpless dependant on her own children, if for all her good behaviour she was to be insulted by his frantic suspicions so long as he lived and then disgraced by his posthumous mistrust; was there any reason why she should go on standing anything any more? Away there in England was Mr. Brumley, her man, ready with service and devotion....

It was a profoundly comforting thing to think of him there as hers. He was hers. He'd given so much and on the whole so well. If at last she were to go to him....

Yet when she came to imagine the reality of the step that was in her mind, it took upon itself a chill and forbidding strangeness. It was like stepping out of a familiar house into empty space. What could it be like? To take some odd trunks with her, meet him somewhere, travel, travel through the evening, travel past nightfall? The bleak strangeness of that going out never to return!

Her imagination could give her no figure of Mr. Brumley as intimate, as habitual. She could as easily imagine his skeleton. He remained in all this queer speculation something friendly, something incidental, more than a trifle disembodied, entirely devoted of course in that hovering way--but hovering....

And she wanted to be free. It wasn't Mr. Brumley she wanted; he was but a means--if indeed he was a means--to an end. The person she wanted, the person she had always wanted--was herself. Could Mr. Brumley give her that? Would Mr. Brumley give her that? Was it conceivable he would carry sacrifice to such a pitch as that?...

And what nonsense was this dream! Here was her husband needing her. And the children, whose inherent ungainliness, whose ungracious spirits demanded a perpetual palliation of culture and instilled deperiment. What honest over-nurse was there for him or helper and guide and friend for them, if she withdrew? There was something undignified in a flight for mere happiness. There was something vindictive in flight from mere insult. To go, because she was disinherited, because her hostels were shattered,--No! And in short--she couldn't do it....

If Sir Isaac wanted to disinherit her he must disinherit her. If he wanted to go on seizing and reading her letters, then he could. There was nothing in the whole scheme of things to stop him if he did not want to stop himself, nothing at all. She was caught. This was the lot of

women. She was a wife. What else in honour was there but to be a wife up to the hilt?...

She finished writing her telegram.

§11

Suddenly came a running in the passage outside, a rap at the door and the nurse entered, scared, voluble in Italian, but with gestures that translated her.

Lady Harman rose, realized the gravity and urgency of the moment and hurried with her along the passage. "Est-il mauvais?" the poor lady attempted, "Est-il----"

Oh! what words are there for "taken worse"?

The woman attempted English and failed. She resorted to her native Italian and exclaimed about the "povero signore." She conveyed a sense of pitiful extremities. Could it be he was in pain again? What was it? What was it? Ten minutes ago he had been so grimly angry.

At the door of the sick room the nurse laid a warning hand on the arm of Lady Harman and made an apprehensive gesture. They entered almost noiselessly.

The Bavarian doctor turned his face from the bed at their entrance. He was bending over Sir Isaac. He held up one hand as if to arrest them; his other was engaged with his patient. "No," he said. His attention went back to the sick man, and he remained very still in that position, leaving Lady Harman to note for the first time how broad and flat he was both between his shoulders and between his ears. Then his face came round slowly, he relinquished something heavy, stood up, held up a hand. "Zu spät," he whispered, as though he too was surprised. He sought in his mind for English and then found his phrase: "He has gone!"

"Gone?"

"In one instant."

"Dead?"

"So. In one instant."

On the bed lay Sir Isaac. His hand was thrust out as though he grasped at some invisible thing. His open eyes stared hard at his wife, and as she met his eyes he snored noisily in his nose and throat.

She looked from the doctor to the nurse. It seemed to her that both these people must be mad. Never had she seen anything less like death.

"But he's not dead!" she protested, still standing in the middle of the

room.

"It iss chust the air in his throat," the doctor said. "He went--so!
In one instant as I was helping him."

He waited to see some symptom of feminine weakness. There was a quality in his bearing--as though this event did him credit.

"But--Isaac!"

It was astounding. The noise in his throat ceased. But he still stared at her. And then the nurse made a kind of assault upon Lady Harman, caught her--even if she didn't fall. It was no doubt the proper formula to collapse. Or to fling oneself upon the deceased. Lady Harman resisted this assistance, disentangled herself and remained amazed; the nurse a little disconcerted but still ready behind her.

"But," said Lady Harman slowly, not advancing and pointing incredulously at the unwinking stare that met her own, "is he dead? Is he really dead? Like that?"

The doctor's gesture to the nurse betrayed his sense of the fine quick scene this want of confidence had ruined. Under no circumstances in life did English people really seem to know how to behave or what was expected of them. He answered with something bordering upon irony.

"Madam," he said, with a slight bow, "he is really det."

"But--like that!" cried Lady Harman.

"Like that," repeated the doctor.

She went three steps nearer and stopped, open-eyed, wonder-struck, her lips compressed.

§12

For a time astonishment overwhelmed her mind. She did not think of Sir Isaac, she did not think of herself, her whole being was filled by this marvel of death and cessation. Like that!

Death!

Never before had she seen it. She had expected an extreme dignity, an almost ceremonial sinking back, a slow ebbing, but this was like a shot from a bow. It stunned her. And for some time she remained stunned, while the doctor and her secretary and the hotel people did all that they deemed seemly on this great occasion. She let them send her into another room; she watched with detached indifference a post-mortem consultation in whispers with a doctor from Rapallo. Then came a great closing of shutters. The nurse and her maid hovered about her, ready to assist her when the sorrowing began. But she had no sorrow. The long

moments lengthened out, and he was still dead and she was still only amazement. It seemed part of the extraordinary, the perennial surprisingness of Sir Isaac that he should end in this way. Dead! She didn't feel for some hours that he had in any way ended. He had died with such emphasis that she felt now that he was capable of anything. What mightn't he do next? When she heard movements in the chamber of death it seemed to her that of all the people there, most probably it was he who made them. She would not have been amazed if he had suddenly appeared in the doorway of her room, anger-white and his hand quiveringly extended, spluttering some complaint.

He might have cried: "Here I am dead! And it's you, damn you--it's you!"

It was after distinct efforts, after repeated visits to the room in which he lay, that she began to realize that death was death, that death goes on, that there was no more any Sir Isaac, but only a still body he had left behind, that was being moulded now into a stiff image of peace.

Then for a time she roused herself to some control of their proceedings. The doctor came to Lady Harman to ask her about the meals for the day, the hotel manager was in entanglements of tactful consideration, and then the nurse came for instructions upon some trivial matter. They had done what usage prescribes and now, in the absence of other direction, they appealed to her wishes. She remarked that everyone was going on tiptoe and speaking in undertones....

She realized duties. What does one have to do when one's husband is dead? People would have to be told. She would begin by sending off telegrams to various people, to his mother, to her own, to his lawyer. She remembered she had already written a telegram--that very morning to Crappen. Should she still let the lawyer come out? He was her lawyer now. Perhaps he had better come, but instead of that telegram, which still lay upon the desk, she would wire the news of the death to him....

Does one send to the papers? How does one send to the papers?

She took Miss Summersly Satchell who was hovering outside in the sunshine on the balcony, into her room, and sat pale and businesslike and very careful about details, while Miss Summersly Satchell offered practical advice and took notes and wrote telegrams and letters....

There came a hush over everything as the day crept towards noon, and the widowed woman sat in her own room with an inactive mind, watching thin bars of sunlight burn their slow way across the floor. He was dead. It was going on now more steadfastly than ever. He was keeping dead. He was dead at last for good and her married life was over, that life that had always seemed the only possible life, and this stunning incident, this thing that was like the blinding of eyes or the bursting of eardrums, was to be the beginning of strange new experiences.

She was afraid at first at their possible strangeness. And then, you

know, in spite of a weak protesting compunction she began to feel glad....

She would not admit to herself that she was glad, that she was anything but a woman stunned, she maintained her still despondent attitude as long as she could, but gladness broke upon her soul as the day breaks, and a sense of release swam up to the horizons of her mind and rose upon her, flooding every ripple of her being, as the sun rises over water in a clear sky. Presently she could sit there no longer, she had to stand up. She walked to the closed Venetians to look out upon the world and checked herself upon the very verge of flinging them open. He was dead and it was all over for ever. Of course!--it was all over! Her marriage was finished and done. Miss Satchell came to summon her to lunch. Throughout that meal Lady Harman maintained a sombre bearing, and listened with attention to the young doctor's comments on the manner of Sir Isaac's going. And then,--it was impossible to go back to her room.

"My head aches," she said, "I must go down and sit by the sea," and her maid, a little shocked, brought her not only her sunshade, but needless wraps--as though a new-made widow must necessarily be very sensitive to the air. She would not let her maid come with her, she went down to the beach alone. She sat on some rocks near the very edge of the transparent water and fought her gladness for a time and presently yielded to it. He was dead. One thought filled her mind, for a while so filled her mind, that no other thought it seemed could follow it, it had an effect of being final; it so filled her mind that it filled the whole world; the

broad sapphire distances of the sea, the lapping waves amidst the rocks at her feet, the blazing sun, the dark headland of Porto Fino and a small sailing boat that hung beyond came all within it like things enclosed within a golden globe. She forgot all the days of nursing and discomfort and pity behind her, all the duties and ceremonies before her, forgot all the details and circumstances of life in this one luminous realization. She was free at last. She was a free woman.

Never more would he make a sound or lift a finger against her life, never more would he contradict her or flout her; never more would he come peeping through that papered panel between his room and hers, never more could hateful and humiliating demands be made upon her as his right; no more strange distresses of the body nor raw discomfort of the nerves could trouble her--for ever. And no more detectives, no more suspicions, no more accusations. That last blow he had meant to aim was frozen before it could strike her. And she would have the Hostels in her hands, secure and undisputed, she could deal as she liked with Mrs. Pembrose, take such advisers as she pleased.... She was free.

She found herself planning the regeneration of those difficult and disputed hostels, plans that were all coloured by the sun and sky of Italy. The manacles had gone; her hands were free. She would make this her supreme occupation. She had learnt her lesson now she felt, she knew something of the mingling of control and affectionate regard that was needed to weld the warring uneasy units of her new community. And she could do it, now as she was and unencumbered, she knew this power was

in her. When everything seemed lost to her, suddenly it was all back in her hands....

She discovered the golden serenity of her mind with a sudden astonishment and horror. She was amazed and shocked that she should be glad. She struggled against it and sought to subdue her spirit to a becoming grief. One should be sorrowful at death in any case, one should be grieved. She tried to think of Sir Isaac with affection, to recall touching generousities, to remember kind things and tender and sweet things and she could not do so. Nothing would come back but the white intensities of his face, nothing but his hatred, his suspicion and his pitiless mean mastery. From which she was freed.

She could not feel sorry. She did her utmost to feel sorry; presently when she went back into the dépendance, she had to check her feet to a regretful pace; she dreaded the eyes of the hotel visitors she passed in the garden lest they should detect the liberation of her soul. But the hotel visitors being English were for the most part too preoccupied with manifestations of a sympathy that should be at once heart-felt and quite unobtrusive and altogether in the best possible taste, to have any attention free for the soul of Lady Harman.

The sense of her freedom came and went like the sunlight of a day in spring, though she attempted her utmost to remain overcast. After dinner that night she was invaded by a vision of the great open years before her, at first hopeful but growing at last to fear and a wild

restlessness, so that in defiance of possible hotel opinion, she wandered out into the moonlight and remained for a long time standing by the boat landing, dreaming, recovering, drinking in the white serenities of sea and sky. There was no hurry now. She might stay there as long as she chose. She need account for herself to no one; she was free. She might go where she pleased, do what she pleased, there was no urgency any more....

There was Mr. Brumley. Mr. Brumley made a very little figure at first in the great prospect before her.... Then he grew larger in her thoughts. She recalled his devotions, his services, his self-control. It was good to have one understanding friend in this great limitless world....

She would have to keep that friendship....

But the glorious thing was freedom, to live untrammelled....

Through the stillness a little breeze came stirring, and she awoke out of her dream and turned and faced the shuttered dépendance. A solitary dim light was showing on the verandah. All the rest of the building was a shapeless mass of grey. The long pale front of the hotel seen through a grove of orange trees was lit now at every other window with people going to bed. Beyond, a black hillside clambered up to the edge of the sky.

Far away out of the darkneses a man with a clear strong voice was

singing to a tinkling accompaniment.

In the black orange trees swam and drifted a score of fireflies, and there was a distant clamour of nightingales when presently the unseen voice had done.

§13

When she was in her room again she began to think of Sir Isaac and more particularly of that last fixed stare of his....

She was impelled to go and see him, to see for herself that he was peaceful and no longer a figure of astonishment. She went slowly along the corridor and very softly into his room--it remained, she felt, his room. They had put candles about him, and the outline of his face, showing dimly through the linen that veiled it, was like the face of one who sleeps very peacefully. Very gently she uncovered it.

He was not simply still, he was immensely still. He was more still and white than the moonlight outside, remoter than moon or stars.... She stood surveying him.

He looked small and pinched and as though he had been very tired. Life was over for him, altogether over. Never had she seen anything that seemed so finished. Once, when she was a girl she had thought that death

might be but the opening of a door upon a more generous feast of living than this cramped world could give, but now she knew, she saw, that death can be death.

Life was over. She felt she had never before realized the meaning of death. That beautiful night outside, and all the beautiful nights and days that were still to come and all the sweet and wonderful things of God's world could be nothing to him now for ever. There was no dream in him that could ever live again, there was no desire, no hope in him.

And had he ever had his desire or his hope, or felt the intensities of life?

There was this beauty she had been discovering in the last few years, this mystery of love,--all that had been hidden from him.

She began to realize something sorrowful and pitiful in his quality, in his hardness, his narrowness, his bickering suspicions, his malignant refusals of all things generous and beautiful. He made her feel, as sometimes the children made her feel, the infinite pity of perversity and resistance to the bounties and kindness of life.

The shadow of sorrow for him came to her at last.

Yet how obstinate he looked, the little frozen white thing that had been Sir Isaac Harman! And satisfied, wilfully satisfied; his lips were

compressed and his mouth a little drawn in at the corners as if he would not betray any other feeling than content with the bargain he had made with life. She did not touch him; not for the world would she ever touch that cold waxen thing that had so lately clasped her life, but she stood for a long time by the side of his quiet, immersed in the wonder of death....

He had been such a hard little man, such a pursuing little man, so unreasonable and difficult a master, and now--he was such a poor shrunken little man for all his obstinacy! She had never realized before that he was pitiful.... Had she perhaps feared him too much, disliked him too much to deal fairly with him? Could she have helped him? Was there anything she could have done that she had not done? Might she not at least have saved him his suspicion? Behind his rages, perhaps he had been wretched.

Could anyone else have helped him? If perhaps someone had loved him more than she had ever pretended to do----

How strange that she should be so intimately in this room--and still so alien. So alien that she could feel nothing but detached wonder at his infinite loss.... Alien,--that was what she had always been, a captured alien in this man's household,--a girl he had taken. Had he ever suspected how alien? The true mourner, poor woman! was even now, in charge of Cook's couriers and interpreters, coming by express from London, to see with her own eyes this last still phase of the son she

had borne into the world and watched and sought to serve. She was his nearest; she indeed was the only near thing there had ever been in his life. Once at least he must have loved her? And even she had not been very near. No one had ever been very near his calculating suspicious heart. Had he ever said or thought any really sweet or tender thing--even about her? He had been generous to her in money matters, of course,--but out of a vast abundance....

How good it was to have a friend! How good it was to have even one single friend!...

At the thought of his mother Lady Harman's mind began to drift slowly from this stiff culmination of life before her. Presently she replaced the white cloth upon his face and turned slowly away. Her imagination had taken up the question of how that poor old lady was to be met, how she was to be consoled, what was to be said to her....

She began to plan arrangements. The room ought to be filled with flowers; Mrs. Harman would expect flowers, large heavy white flowers in great abundance. That would have to be seen to soon. One might get them in Rapallo. And afterwards,--they would have to take him to England, and have a fine great funeral, with every black circumstance his wealth and his position demanded. Mrs. Harman would need that, and so it must be done. Cabinet Ministers must follow him, members of Parliament, all Blenkerdom feeling self-consciously and, as far as possible, deeply, the Chartertons by way of friends, unfamiliar blood relations, a vast

retinue of employees....

How could one take him? Would he have to be embalmed? Embalming!--what a strange complement of death. She averted herself a little more from the quiet figure on the bed, and could not turn to it again. They might come here and do all sorts of things to it, mysterious, evil-seeming things with knives and drugs....

She must not think of that. She must learn exactly what Mrs. Harman thought and desired. Her own apathy with regard to her husband had given way completely now to a desire to anticipate and meet Mrs. Harman's every conceivable wish.