

## CHAPTER THE SECOND

### MR. BRITLING CONTINUES HIS EXPOSITION

#### Section 1

Mr. Direck found little reason to revise his dictum in the subsequent experiences of the afternoon. Indeed the afternoon and the next day were steadily consistent in confirming what a very good dictum it had been. The scenery was the traditional scenery of England, and all the people seemed quicker, more irresponsible, more chaotic, than any one could have anticipated, and entirely inexplicable by any recognised code of English relationships....

"You think that John Bull is dead and a strange generation is wearing his clothes," said Mr. Britling. "I think you'll find very soon it's the old John Bull. Perhaps not Mrs. Humphry Ward's John Bull, or Mrs. Henry Wood's John Bull but true essentially to Shakespeare, Fielding, Dickens, Meredith...."

"I suppose," he added, "there are changes. There's a new generation grown up...."

He looked at his barn and the swimming pool. "It's a good point of yours about the barn," he said. "What you say reminds me of that very jolly

thing of Kipling's about the old mill-wheel that began by grinding corn and ended by driving dynamos....

"Only I admit that barn doesn't exactly drive a dynamo....

"To be frank, it's just a pleasure barn....

"The country can afford it...."

## Section 2

He left it at that for the time, but throughout the afternoon Mr. Direck had the gratification of seeing his thought floating round and round in the back-waters of Mr. Britling's mental current. If it didn't itself get into the stream again its reflection at any rate appeared and reappeared. He was taken about with great assiduity throughout the afternoon, and he got no more than occasional glimpses of the rest of the Dower House circle until six o'clock in the evening.

Meanwhile the fountains of Mr. Britling's active and encyclopædic mind played steadily.

He was inordinately proud of England, and he abused her incessantly. He wanted to state England to Mr. Direck as the amiable summation of a grotesque assembly of faults. That was the view into which the comforts

and prosperities of his middle age had brought him from a radicalism that had in its earlier stages been angry and bitter. And for Mr. Britling England was "here." Essex was the county he knew. He took Mr. Direck out from his walled garden by a little door into a trim paddock with two white goals. "We play hockey here on Sundays," he said in a way that gave Mr. Direck no hint of the practically compulsory participation of every visitor to Matching's Easy in this violent and dangerous exercise, and thence they passed by a rich deep lane and into a high road that ran along the edge of the deer park of Claverings. "We will call in on Claverings later," said Mr. Britling. "Lady Homartyn has some people there for the week-end, and you ought to see the sort of thing it is and the sort of people they are. She wanted us to lunch there to-morrow, but I didn't accept that because of our afternoon hockey."

Mr. Direck received this reason uncritically.

The village reminded Mr. Direck of Abbey's pictures. There was an inn with a sign standing out in the road, a painted sign of the Clavering Arms; it had a water trough (such as Mr. Weller senior ducked the dissenter in) and a green painted table outside its inviting door. There were also a general shop and a number of very pleasant cottages, each marked with the Mainstay crest. All this was grouped about a green with real geese drilling thereon. Mr. Britling conducted his visitor (through a lych gate) into the church-yard, and there they found mossy, tumble-down tombstones, one with a skull and cross-bones upon it, that went back to the later seventeenth century. In the aisle of the church

were three huge hatchments, and there was a side chapel devoted to the Mainstay family and the Barons Homartyn, with a series of monuments that began with painted Tudor effigies and came down to a vast stained glass window of the vilest commercial Victorian. There were also mediæval brasses of parish priests, and a marble crusader and his lady of some extinguished family which had ruled Matching's Easy before the Mainstays came. And as the two gentlemen emerged from the church they ran against the perfect vicar, Mr. Dimple, ample and genial, with an embracing laugh and an enveloping voice. "Come to see the old country," he said to Mr. Direck. "So Good of you Americans to do that! So Good of you...."

There was some amiable sparring between the worthy man and Mr. Britling about bringing Mr. Direck to church on Sunday morning. "He's terribly Lax," said Mr. Dimple to Mr. Direck, smiling radiantly. "Terribly Lax. But then nowadays Everybody is so Lax. And he's very Good to my Coal Club; I don't know what we should do without him. So I just admonish him. And if he doesn't go to church, well, anyhow he doesn't go anywhere else. He may be a poor churchman, but anyhow he's not a dissenter...."

"In England, you see," Mr. Britling remarked, after they had parted from the reverend gentleman, "we have domesticated everything. We have even domesticated God."

For awhile Mr. Britling showed Mr. Direck English lanes, and then came back along narrow white paths across small fields of rising wheat, to the village and a little gate that led into the park.

"Well," said Mr. Direck, "what you say about domestication does seem to me to be very true indeed. Why! even those clouds up there look as though they had a shepherd and were grazing."

"Ready for shearing almost," said Mr. Britling.

"Indeed," said Mr. Direck, raising his voice a little, "I've seen scarcely anything in England that wasn't domesticated, unless it was some of your back streets in London."

Mr. Britling seemed to reflect for a moment. "They're an excrescence," he said....

### Section 3

The park had a trim wildness like nature in an old Italian picture; dappled fallow deer grouped close at hand and looked at the two men fearlessly; the path dropped through oak trees and some stunted bracken to a little loitering stream, that paused ever and again to play at ponds and waterfalls and bear a fleet of water-lily leaves; and then their way curved round in an indolent sweep towards the cedars and shrubberies of the great house. The house looked low and extensive to an American eye, and its red-brick chimneys rose like infantry in open order along its extended line. There was a glimpse of flower-bright

garden and terraces to the right as they came round the corner to the front of the house through a path cut in the laurel bushes.

Mr. Britling had a moment of exposition as they approached the entrance.

"I expect we shall find Philbert from the Home Office--or is it the Local Government Board?--and Sir Thomas Loot, the Treasury man. There may be some other people of that sort, the people we call the Governing Class. Wives also. And I rather fancy the Countess of Frensham is coming, she's strong on the Irish Question, and Lady Venetia Trumpington, who they say is a beauty--I've never seen her. It's Lady Homartyn's way to expect me to come in--not that I'm an important item at these week-end social feasts--but she likes to see me on the table--to be nibbled at if any one wants to do so--like the olives and the salted almonds. And she always asks me to lunch on Sunday and I always refuse--because of the hockey. So you see I put in an appearance on the Saturday afternoon...."

They had reached the big doorway.

It opened into a large cool hall adorned with the heads of hippopotami and rhinoceroses and a stuffed lion, and furnished chiefly with a vast table on which hats and sticks and newspapers were littered. A manservant with a subdued, semi-confidential manner, conveyed to Mr. Britling that her ladyship was on the terrace, and took the hats and sticks that were handed to him and led the way through the house. They

emerged upon a broad terrace looking out under great cedar trees upon flower beds and stone urns and tennis lawns and yew hedges that dipped to give a view of distant hills. On the terrace were grouped perhaps a dozen people for the most part holding teacups, they sat in deck chairs and folding seats about a little table that bore the tea-things. Lady Homartyn came forward to welcome the newcomers.

Mr. Direck was introduced as a travelling American gratified to see a typical English country house, and Lady Homartyn in an habituated way ran over the points of her Tudor specimen. Mr. Direck was not accustomed to titled people, and was suddenly in doubt whether you called a baroness "My Lady" or "Your Ladyship," so he wisely avoided any form of address until he had a lead from Mr. Britling. Mr. Britling presently called her "Lady Homartyn." She took Mr. Direck and sat him down beside a lady whose name he didn't catch, but who had had a lot to do with the British Embassy at Washington, and then she handed Mr. Britling over to the Rt. Honble. George Philbert, who was anxious to discuss certain points in the latest book of essays. The conversation of the lady from Washington was intelligent but not exacting, and Mr. Direck was able to give a certain amount of attention to the general effect of the scene.

He was a little disappointed to find that the servants didn't wear livery. In American magazine pictures and in American cinematograph films of English stories and in the houses of very rich Americans living in England, they do so. And the Mansion House is misleading; he had met a compatriot who had recently dined at the Mansion House, and who had

described "flunkeys" in hair-powder and cloth of gold--like Thackeray's Jeames Yellowplush. But here the only servants were two slim, discreet and attentive young gentlemen in black coats with a gentle piety in their manner instead of pride. And he was a little disappointed too by a certain lack of splendour in the company. The ladies affected him as being ill-dressed; there was none of the hard snap, the "There! and what do you say to it?" about them of the well-dressed American woman, and the men too were not so much tailored as unobtrusively and yet grammatically clothed.

#### Section 4

He was still only in the fragmentary stage of conversation when everything was thrown into commotion by the important arrival of Lady Frensham, and there was a general reshuffling of places. Lady Frensham had arrived from London by automobile; she appeared in veils and swathings and a tremendous dust cloak, with a sort of nephew in her train who had driven the car. She was manifestly a constitutionally triumphant woman. A certain afternoon lassitude vanished in the swirl of her arrival. Mr. Philbert removed wrappings and handed them to the manservant.

"I lunched with Sir Edward Carson to-day, my dear," she told Lady Homartyn, and rolled a belligerent eye at Philbert.



"And is he as obdurate as ever?" asked Sir Thomas.

"Obdurate! It's Redmond who's obdurate," cried Lady Frensham. "What do you say, Mr. Britling?"

"A plague on both your parties," said Mr. Britling.

"You can't keep out of things like that," said Lady Frensham with the utmost gusto, "when the country's on the very verge of civil war.... You people who try to pretend there isn't a grave crisis when there is one, will be more accountable than any one--when the civil war does come. It won't spare you. Mark my words!"

The party became a circle.

Mr. Direck found himself the interested auditor of a real English country-house week-end political conversation. This at any rate was like the England of which Mrs. Humphry Ward's novels had informed him, but yet not exactly like it. Perhaps that was due to the fact that for the most part these novels dealt with the England of the 'nineties, and things had lost a little in dignity since those days. But at any rate here were political figures and titled people, and they were talking about the "country."...

Was it possible that people of this sort did "run" the country, after all?... When he had read Mrs. Humphry Ward in America he had always

accepted this theory of the story quite easily, but now that he saw and heard them--!

But all governments and rulers and ruling classes when you look at them closely are incredible....

"I don't believe the country is on the verge of civil war," said Mr. Britling.

"Facts!" cried Lady Frensham, and seemed to wipe away delusions with a rapid gesture of her hands.

"You're interested in Ireland, Mr. Dirks?" asked Lady Homartyn.

"We see it first when we come over," said Mr. Direck rather neatly, and after that he was free to attend to the general discussion.

Lady Frensham, it was manifest, was one of that energetic body of aristocratic ladies who were taking up an irreconcilable attitude against Home Rule "in any shape or form" at that time. They were rapidly turning British politics into a system of bitter personal feuds in which all sense of imperial welfare was lost. A wild ambition to emulate the extremest suffragettes seems to have seized upon them. They insulted, they denounced, they refused every invitation lest they should meet that "traitor" the Prime Minister, they imitated the party hatreds of a fiercer age, and even now the moderate and politic Philbert found

himself treated as an invisible object. They were supported by the extremer section of the Tory press, and the most extraordinary writers were set up to froth like lunatics against the government as "traitors," as men who "insulted the King"; the Morning Post and the lighter-witted side of the Unionist press generally poured out a torrent of partisan nonsense it is now almost incredible to recall. Lady Frensham, bridling over Lady Homartyn's party, and for a time leaving Mr. Britling, hurried on to tell of the newest developments of the great feud. She had a wonderful description of Lady Londonderry sitting opposite "that old rascal, the Prime Minister," at a performance of Mozart's Zauberflöte.

"If looks could kill!" cried Lady Frensham with tremendous gusto.

"Sir Edward is quite firm that Ulster means to fight. They have machine-guns--ammunition. And I am sure the army is with us...."

"Where did they get those machine-guns and ammunition?" asked Mr. Britling suddenly.

"Ah! that's a secret," cried Lady Frensham.

"Um," said Mr. Britling.

"You see," said Lady Frensham; "it will be civil war! And yet you writing people who have influence do nothing to prevent it!"

"What are we to do, Lady Frensham?"

"Tell people how serious it is."

"You mean, tell the Irish Nationalists to lie down and be walked over. They won't be...."

"We'll see about that," cried Lady Frensham, "we'll see about that!"

She was a large and dignified person with a kind of figure-head nobility of carriage, but Mr. Direck was suddenly reminded of a girl cousin of his who had been expelled from college for some particularly elaborate and aimless rioting....

"May I say something to you, Lady Frensham," said Mr. Britling, "that you have just said to me? Do you realise that this Carsonite campaign is dragging these islands within a measurable distance of civil war?"

"It's the fault of your Lloyd George and his government. It's the fault of your Socialists and sentimentalists. You've made the mischief and you have to deal with it."

"Yes. But do you really figure to yourself what a civil war may mean for the empire? Surely there are other things in the world besides this quarrel between the 'loyalists' of Ulster and the Liberal government;

there are other interests in this big empire than party advantages? You think you are going to frighten this Home Rule government into some ridiculous sort of collapse that will bring in the Tories at the next election. Well, suppose you don't manage that. Suppose instead that you really do contrive to bring about a civil war. Very few people here or in Ireland want it--I was over there not a month ago--but when men have loaded guns in their hands they sometimes go off. And then people see red. Few people realise what an incurable sore opens when fighting begins. Suppose part of the army revolts and we get some extraordinary and demoralising fighting over there. India watches these things. Bengal may imitate Ireland. At that distance rebellion and treason are rebellion and treason whether they are coloured orange or green. And then suppose the Germans see fit to attack us!"

Lady Frensham had a woman's elusiveness. "Your Redmondites would welcome them with open arms."

"It isn't the Redmondites who invite them now, anyhow," said Mr. Britling, springing his mine. "The other day one of your 'loyalists,' Andrews, was talking in the Morning Post of preferring conquest by Germany to Home Rule; Craig has been at the same game; Major Crawford, the man who ran the German Mausers last April, boasted that he would transfer his allegiance to the German Emperor rather than see Redmond in power."

"Rhetoric!" said Lady Frensham. "Rhetoric!"

"But one of your Ulster papers has openly boasted that arrangements have been made for a 'powerful Continental monarch' to help an Ulster rebellion."

"Which paper?" snatched Lady Frensham.

Mr. Britling hesitated.

Mr. Philbert supplied the name. "I saw it. It was the Irish Churchman."

"You two have got your case up very well," said Lady Frensham. "I didn't know Mr. Britling was a party man."

"The Nationalists have been circulating copies," said Philbert.

"Naturally."

"They make it look worse than mere newspaper talk and speeches," Mr. Britling pressed. "Carson, it seems, was lunching with the German Emperor last autumn. A fine fuss you'd make if Redmond did that. All this gun-running, too, is German gun-running."

"What does it matter if it is?" said Lady Frensham, allowing a belligerent eye to rest for the first time on Philbert. "You drove us to it. One thing we are resolved upon at any cost. Johnny Redmond may rule

England if he likes; he shan't rule Ireland...."

Mr. Britling shrugged his shoulders, and his face betrayed despair.

"My one consolation," he said, "in this storm is a talk I had last month with a young Irishwoman in Meath. She was a young person of twelve, and she took a fancy to me--I think because I went with her in an alleged dangerous canoe she was forbidden to navigate alone. All day the eternal Irish Question had banged about over her observant head. When we were out on the water she suddenly decided to set me right upon a disregarded essential. 'You English,' she said, 'are just a bit disposed to take all this trouble seriously. Don't you fret yourself about it... Half the time we're just laffing at you. You'd best leave us all alone....'"

And then he went off at a tangent from his own anecdote.

"But look at this miserable spectacle!" he cried. "Here is a chance of getting something like a reconciliation of the old feud of English and Irish, and something like a settlement of these ancient distresses, and there seems no power, no conscience, no sanity in any of us, sufficient to save it from this cantankerous bitterness, this sheer wicked mischief of mutual exasperation.... Just when Ireland is getting a gleam of prosperity.... A murrain on both your parties!"

"I see, Mr. Britling, you'd hand us all over to Jim Larkin!"

"I'd hand you all over to Sir Horace Plunkett--"

"That doctrinaire dairyman!" cried Lady Frensham, with an air of quite conclusive repartee. "You're hopeless, Mr. Britling. You're hopeless."

And Lady Homartyn, seeing that the phase of mere personal verdicts drew near, created a diversion by giving Lady Frensham a second cup of tea, and fluttering like a cooling fan about the heated brows of the disputants. She suggested tennis....

## Section 5

Mr. Britling was still flushed and ruffled as he and his guest returned towards the Dower House. He criticised England himself unmercifully, but he hated to think that in any respect she fell short of perfection; even her defects he liked to imagine were just a subtler kind of power and wisdom. And Lady Frensham had stuck her voice and her gestures through all these amiable illusions. He was like a lover who calls his lady a foolish rogue, and is startled to find that facts and strangers do literally agree with him.

But it was so difficult to resolve Lady Frensham and the Irish squabble generally into anything better than idiotic mischief, that for a time he was unusually silent--wrestling with the problem, and Mr. Direck got the conversational initiative.



"To an American mind it's a little--startling," said Mr. Direck, "to hear ladies expressing such vigorous political opinions."

"I don't mind that," said Mr. Britling. "Women over here go into politics and into public-houses--I don't see why they shouldn't. If such things are good enough for men they are good enough for women; we haven't your sort of chivalry. But it's the peculiar malignant silliness of this sort of Toryism that's so discreditable. It's discreditable. There's no good in denying it. Those people you have heard and seen are a not unfair sample of our governing class--of a certain section of our governing class--as it is to-day. Not at all unfair. And you see how amazingly they haven't got hold of anything. There was a time when they could be politic.... Hidden away they have politic instincts even now.... But it makes me sick to think of this Irish business. Because, you know, it's true--we are drifting towards civil war there."

"You are of that opinion?" said Mr. Direck.

"Well, isn't it so? Here's all this Ulster gun-running--you heard how she talked of it? Isn't it enough to drive the south into open revolt?..."

"Is there very much, do you think, in the suggestion that some of this Ulster trouble is a German intrigue? You and Mr. Philbert were saying things--"

"I don't know," said Mr. Britling shortly.

"I don't know," he repeated. "But it isn't because I don't think our Unionists and their opponents aren't foolish enough for anything of the sort. It's only because I don't believe that the Germans are so stupid as to do such things.... Why should they?..."

"It makes me--expressionless with anger," said Mr. Britling after a pause, reverting to his main annoyance. "They won't consider any compromise. It's sheer love of quarrelling.... Those people there think that nothing can possibly happen. They are like children in a nursery playing at rebellion. Unscathed and heedless. Until there is death at their feet they will never realise they are playing with loaded guns...."

For a time he said no more; and listened perfunctorily while Mr. Direck tried to indicate the feeling in New England towards the Irish Question and the many difficult propositions an American politician has to face in that respect. And when Mr. Britling took up the thread of speech again it had little or no relation to Mr. Direck's observations.

"The psychology of all this recent insubordination and violence is--curious. Exasperating too.... I don't quite grasp it.... It's the same thing whether you look at the suffrage business or the labour people or at this Irish muddle. People may be too safe. You see we live

at the end of a series of secure generations in which none of the great things of life have changed materially. We've grown up with no sense of danger--that is to say, with no sense of responsibility. None of us, none of us--for though I talk my actions belie me--really believe that life can change very fundamentally any more forever. All this",--Mr. Britling waved his arm comprehensively--"looks as though it was bound to go on steadily forever. It seems incredible that the system could be smashed. It seems incredible that anything we can do will ever smash the system. Lady Homartyn, for example, is incapable of believing that she won't always be able to have week-end parties at Claverings, and that the letters and the tea won't come to her bedside in the morning. Or if her imagination goes to the point of supposing that some day she won't be there to receive the tea, it means merely that she supposes somebody else will be. Her pleasant butler may fear to lose his 'situation,' but nothing on earth could make him imagine a time when there will not be a 'situation' for him to lose. Old Asquith thinks that we always have got along, and that we always shall get along by being quietly artful and saying, 'Wait and see.' And it's just because we are all convinced that we are so safe against a general breakdown that we are able to be so recklessly violent in our special cases. Why shouldn't women have the vote? they argue. What does it matter? And bang goes a bomb in Westminster Abbey. Why shouldn't Ulster create an impossible position? And off trots some demented Carsonite to Germany to play at treason on some half word of the German Emperor's and buy half a million rifles....

"Exactly like children being very, very naughty....

"And," said Mr. Britling with a gesture to round off his discourse, "we do go on. We shall go on--until there is a spark right into the magazine. We have lost any belief we ever had that fundamental things happen. We are everlasting children in an everlasting nursery...."

And immediately he broke out again.

"The truth of the matter is that hardly any one has ever yet mastered the fact that the world is round. The world is round--like an orange. The thing is told us--like any old scandal--at school. For all practical purposes we forget it. Practically we all live in a world as flat as a pancake. Where time never ends and nothing changes. Who really believes in any world outside the circle of the horizon? Here we are and visibly nothing is changing. And so we go on to--nothing will ever change. It just goes on--in space, in time. If we could realise that round world beyond, then indeed we should go circumspectly.... If the world were like a whispering gallery, what whispers might we not hear now--from India, from Africa, from Germany, warnings from the past, intimations of the future...."

"We shouldn't heed them...."

Section 6

And indeed at the very moment when Mr. Britling was saying these words, in Sarajevo in Bosnia, where the hour was somewhat later, men whispered together, and one held nervously to a black parcel that had been given him and nodded as they repeated his instructions, a black parcel with certain unstable chemicals and a curious arrangement of detonators therein, a black parcel destined ultimately to shatter nearly every landmark of Mr. Britling's and Lady Frensham's cosmogony....

## Section 7

When Mr. Direck and Mr. Britling returned to the Dower House the guest was handed over to Mrs. Britling and Mr. Britling vanished, to reappear at supper time, for the Britlings had a supper in the evening instead of dinner. When Mr. Britling did reappear every trace of his vexation with the levities of British politics and the British ruling class had vanished altogether, and he was no longer thinking of all that might be happening in Germany or India....

While he was out of the way Mr. Direck extended his acquaintance with the Britling household. He was taken round the garden and shown the roses by Mrs. Britling, and beyond the rose garden in a little arbour they came upon Miss Corner reading a book. She looked very grave and pretty reading a book. Mr. Direck came to a pause in front of her, and Mrs. Britling stopped beside him. The young lady looked up and smiled.

"The last new novel?" asked Mr. Direck pleasantly.

"Campanella's 'City of the Sun.'"

"My word! but isn't that stiff reading?"

"You haven't read it," said Miss Corner.

"It's a dry old book anyhow."

"It's no good pretending you have," she said, and there Mr. Direck felt the conversation had to end.

"That's a very pleasant young lady to have about," he said to Mrs. Britling as they went on towards the barn court.

"She's all at loose ends," said Mrs. Britling. "And she reads like a--Whatever does read? One drinks like a fish. One eats like a wolf."

They found the German tutor in a little court playing Badminton with the two younger boys. He was a plump young man with glasses and compact gestures; the game progressed chiefly by misses and the score was counted in German. He won thoughtfully and chiefly through the ardour of the younger brother, whose enthusiastic returns invariably went out. Instantly the boys attacked Mrs. Britling with a concerted enthusiasm.

"Mummy! Is it to be dressing-up supper?"

Mrs. Britling considered, and it was manifest that Mr. Direck was material to her answer.

"We wrap ourselves up in curtains and bright things instead of dressing," she explained. "We have a sort of wardrobe of fancy dresses. Do you mind?"

Mr. Direck was delighted.

And this being settled, the two small boys went off with their mother upon some special decorative project they had conceived and Mr. Direck was left for a time to Herr Heinrich.

Herr Heinrich suggested a stroll in the rose garden, and as Mr. Direck had not hitherto been shown the rose garden by Herr Heinrich, he agreed. Sooner or later everybody, it was evident, had got to show him that rose garden.

"And how do you like living in an English household?" said Mr. Direck, getting to business at once. "It's interesting to an American to see this English establishment, and it must be still more interesting to a German."

"I find it very different from Pomerania," said Herr Heinrich. "In some respects it is more agreeable, in others less so. It is a pleasant life

but it is not a serious life.

"At any time," continued Herr Heinrich, "some one may say, 'Let us do this thing,' or 'Let us do that thing,' and then everything is disarranged.

"People walk into the house without ceremony. There is much kindness but no politeness. Mr. Britling will go away for three or four days, and when he returns and I come forward to greet him and bow, he will walk right past me, or he will say just like this, 'How do, Heinrich?'"

"Are you interested in Mr. Britling's writings?" Mr. Direck asked.

"There again I am puzzled. His work is known even in Germany. His articles are reprinted in German and Austrian reviews. You would expect him to have a certain authority of manner. You would expect there to be discussion at the table upon questions of philosophy and aesthetics.... It is not so. When I ask him questions it is often that they are not seriously answered. Sometimes it is as if he did not like the questions I askt of him. Yesterday I askt of him did he agree or did he not agree with Mr. Bernard Shaw. He just said--I wrote it down in my memoranda--he said: 'Oh! Mixt Pickles.' What can one understand of that?--Mixt Pickles!"...

The young man's sedulous blue eyes looked out of his pink face through his glasses at Mr. Direck, anxious for any light he could offer upon the



atmospheric vagueness of this England.

He was, he explained, a student of philology preparing for his doctorate. He had not yet done his year of military service. He was studying the dialects of East Anglia--

"You go about among the people?" Mr. Direck inquired.

"No, I do not do that. But I ask Mr. Carmine and Mrs. Britling and the boys many questions. And sometimes I talk to the gardener."

He explained how he would prepare his thesis and how it would be accepted, and the nature of his army service and the various stages by which he would subsequently ascend in the orderly professorial life to which he was destined. He confessed a certain lack of interest in philology, but, he said, "it is what I have to do." And so he was going to do it all his life through. For his own part he was interested in ideas of universal citizenship, in Esperanto and Ido and universal languages and such-like attacks upon the barriers between man and man. But the authorities at home did not favour cosmopolitan ideas, and so he was relinquishing them. "Here, it is as if there were no authorities," he said with a touch of envy.

Mr. Direck induced him to expand that idea.

Herr Heinrich made Mr. Britling his instance. If Mr. Britling were a

German he would certainly have some sort of title, a definite position, responsibility. Here he was not even called Herr Doktor. He said what he liked. Nobody rewarded him; nobody reprimanded him. When Herr Heinrich asked him of his position, whether he was above or below Mr. Bernard Shaw or Mr. Arnold White or Mr. Garvin or any other publicist, he made jokes. Nobody here seemed to have a title and nobody seemed to have a definite place. There was Mr. Lawrence Carmine; he was a student of Oriental questions; he had to do with some public institution in London that welcomed Indian students; he was a Geheimrath--

"Eh?" said Mr. Direck.

"It is--what do they call it? the Essex County Council." But nobody took any notice of that. And when Mr. Philbert, who was a minister in the government, came to lunch he was just like any one else. It was only after he had gone that Herr Heinrich had learnt by chance that he was a minister and "Right Honourable...."

"In Germany everything is definite. Every man knows his place, has his papers, is instructed what to do...."

"Yet," said Mr. Direck, with his eyes on the glowing roses, the neat arbour, the long line of the red wall of the vegetable garden and a distant gleam of cornfield, "it all looks orderly enough."

"It is as if it had been put in order ages ago," said Herr Heinrich.

"And was just going on by habit," said Mr. Direck, taking up the idea.

Their comparisons were interrupted by the appearance of "Teddy," the secretary, and the Indian young gentleman, damp and genial, as they explained, "from the boats." It seemed that "down below" somewhere was a pond with a punt and an island and a toy dinghy. And while they discussed swimming and boating, Mr. Carmine appeared from the direction of the park conversing gravely with the elder son. They had been for a walk and a talk together. There were proposals for a Badminton foursome. Mr. Direck emerged from the general interchange with Mr. Lawrence Carmine, and then strolled through the rose garden to see the sunset from the end. Mr. Direck took the opportunity to verify his impression that the elder son was the present Mrs. Britling's stepson, and he also contrived by a sudden admiration for a distant row of evening primroses to deflect their path past the arbour in which the evening light must now be getting a little too soft for Miss Corner's book.

Miss Corner was drawn into the sunset party. She talked to Mr. Carmine and displayed, Mr. Direck thought, great originality of mind. She said "The City of the Sun" was like the cities the boys sometimes made on the playroom floor. She said it was the dearest little city, and gave some amusing particulars. She described the painted walls that made the tour of the Civitas Solis a liberal education. She asked Mr. Carmine, who was an authority on Oriental literature, why there were no Indian nor Chinese Utopias.

Now it had never occurred to Mr. Direck to ask why there were no Indian nor Chinese Utopias, and even Mr. Carmine seemed surprised to discover this deficiency.

"The primitive patriarchal village is Utopia to India and China," said Mr. Carmine, when they had a little digested the inquiry. "Or at any rate it is their social ideal. They want no Utopias."

"Utopias came with cities," he said, considering the question. "And the first cities, as distinguished from courts and autocratic capitals, came with ships. India and China belong to an earlier age. Ships, trade, disorder, strange relationships, unofficial literature, criticism--and then this idea of some novel remaking of society...."

## Section 8

Then Mr. Direck fell into the hands of Hugh, the eldest son, and anticipating the inevitable, said that he liked to walk in the rose garden. So they walked in the rose garden.

"Do you read Utopias?" said Mr. Direck, cutting any preface, in the English manner.

"Oh, rather!" said Hugh, and became at once friendly and confidential.

"We all do," he explained. "In England everybody talks of change and nothing ever changes."

"I found Miss Corner reading--what was it? the Sun People?--some old classical Italian work."

"Campanella," said Hugh, without betraying the slightest interest in Miss Corner. "Nothing changes in England, because the people who want to change things change their minds before they change anything else. I've been in London talking for the last half-year. Studying art they call it. Before that I was a science student, and I want to be one again. Don't you think, Sir, there's something about science--it's steadier than anything else in the world?"

Mr. Direck thought that the moral truths of human nature were steadier than science, and they had one of those little discussions of real life that begin about a difference inadequately apprehended, and do not so much end as are abandoned. Hugh struck him as being more speculative and detached than any American college youth of his age that he knew--but that might not be a national difference but only the Britling strain. He seemed to have read more and more independently, and to be doing less. And he was rather more restrained and self-possessed.

Before Mr. Direck could begin a proper inquiry into the young man's work and outlook, he had got the conversation upon America. He wanted

tremendously to see America. "The dad says in one of his books that over here we are being and that over there you are beginning. It must be tremendously stimulating to think that your country is still being made...."

Mr. Direck thought that an interesting point of view. "Unless something tumbles down here, we never think of altering it," the young man remarked. "And even then we just shore it up."

His remarks had the effect of floating off from some busy mill of thought within him. Hitherto Mr. Direck had been inclined to think this silent observant youth, with his hands in his pockets and his shoulders a little humped, as probably shy and adolescently ineffective. But the head was manifestly quite busy....

"Miss Corner," he began, taking the first thing that came into his head, and then he remembered that he had already made the remark he was going to make not five minutes ago.

"What form of art," he asked, "are you contemplating in your studies at the present time in London?"....

Before this question could be dealt with at all adequately, the two small boys became active in the garden beating in everybody to "dress-up" before supper. The secretary, Teddy, came in a fatherly way to look after Mr. Direck and see to his draperies.

## Section 9

Mr. Direck gave his very best attention to this business of draping himself, for he had not the slightest intention of appearing ridiculous in the eyes of Miss Corner. Teddy came with an armful of stuff that he thought "might do."

"What'll I come as?" asked Mr. Direck.

"We don't wear costumes," said Teddy. "We just put on all the brightest things we fancy. If it's any costume at all, it's Futurist."

"And surely why shouldn't one?" asked Mr. Direck, greatly struck by this idea. "Why should we always be tied by the fashions and periods of the past?"

He rejected a rather Mephistopheles-like costume of crimson and a scheme for a brigand-like ensemble based upon what was evidently an old bolero of Mrs. Britling's, and after some reflection he accepted some black silk tights. His legs were not legs to be ashamed of. Over this he tried various brilliant wrappings from the Dower House armoire, and chose at last, after some hesitation in the direction of a piece of gold and purple brocade, a big square of green silk curtain stuff adorned with golden pheasants and other large and dignified ornaments; this he wore

toga fashion over his light silken under-vest--Teddy had insisted on the abandonment of his shirt "if you want to dance at all"--and fastened with a large green glass-jewelled brooch. From this his head and neck projected, he felt, with a tolerable dignity. Teddy suggested a fillet of green ribbon, and this Mr. Direck tried, but after prolonged reflection before the glass rejected. He was still weighing the effect of this fillet upon the mind of Miss Corner when Teddy left him to make his own modest preparations. Teddy's departure gave him a chance for profile studies by means of an arrangement of the long mirror and the table looking-glass that he had been too shy to attempt in the presence of the secretary. The general effect was quite satisfactory.

"Wa-a-a-l," he said with a quaver of laughter, "now who'd have thought it?" and smiled a consciously American smile at himself before going down.

The company was assembling in the panelled hall, and made a brilliant show in the light of the acetylene candles against the dark background. Mr. Britling in a black velvet cloak and black silk tights was a deeper shade among the shadows; the high lights were Miss Corner and her sister, in glittering garments of peacock green and silver that gave a snake-like quality to their lithe bodies. They were talking to the German tutor, who had become a sort of cotton Cossack, a spectacled Cossack in buff and bright green. Mrs. Britling was dignified and beautiful in a purple djibbah, and her stepson had become a handsome still figure of black and crimson. Teddy had contrived something



elaborate and effective in the Egyptian style, with a fish-basket and a cuirass of that thin matting one finds behind washstands; the small boys were brigands, with immensely baggy breeches and cummerbunds in which they had stuck a selection of paper-knives and toy pistols and similar weapons. Mr. Carmine and his young man had come provided with real Indian costumes; the feeling of the company was that Mr. Carmine was a mullah. The aunt-like lady with the noble nose stood out amidst these levities in a black silk costume with a gold chain. She refused, it seemed, to make herself absurd, though she encouraged the others to extravagance by nods and enigmatical smiles. Nevertheless she had put pink ribbons in her cap. A family of father, golden-haired mother, and two young daughters, sympathetically attired, had just arrived, and were discarding their outer wrappings with the assistance of host and hostess.

It was all just exactly what Mr. Direck had never expected in England, and equally unexpected was the supper on a long candle-lit table without a cloth. No servants were present, but on a sideboard stood a cold salmon and cold joints and kalter aufschnitt and kartoffel salat, and a variety of other comestibles, and many bottles of beer and wine and whisky. One helped oneself and anybody else one could, and Mr. Direck did his best to be very attentive to Mrs. Britling and Miss Corner, and was greatly assisted by the latter.

Everybody seemed unusually gay and bright-eyed. Mr. Direck found something exhilarating and oddly exciting in all this unusual bright

costume and in this easy mutual service; it made everybody seem franker and simpler. Even Mr. Britling had revealed a sturdy handsomeness that had not been apparent to Mr. Direck before, and young Britling left no doubts now about his good looks. Mr. Direck forgot his mission and his position, and indeed things generally, in an irrational satisfaction that his golden pheasants harmonised with the glitter of the warm and smiling girl beside him. And he sat down beside her--"You sit anywhere," said Mrs. Britling--with far less compunction than in his ordinary costume he would have felt for so direct a confession of preference. And there was something in her eyes, it was quite indefinable and yet very satisfying, that told him that now he escaped from the stern square imperatives of his patriotic tailor in New York she had made a discovery of him.

Everybody chattered gaily, though Mr. Direck would have found it difficult to recall afterwards what it was they chattered about, except that somehow he acquired the valuable knowledge that Miss Corner was called Cecily, and her sister Letty, and then--so far old Essex custom held--the masculine section was left for a few minutes for some imaginary drinking, and a lighting of cigars and cigarettes, after which everybody went through interwoven moonlight and afterglow to the barn. Mr. Britling sat down to a pianola in the corner and began the familiar cadences of "Whistling Rufus."

"You dance?" said Miss Cecily Corner.

"I've never been much of a dancing man," said Mr. Direck. "What sort of dance is this?"

"Just anything. A two-step."

Mr. Direck hesitated and regretted a well-spent youth, and then Hugh came prancing forward with outstretched hands and swept her away.

Just for an instant Mr. Direck felt that this young man was a trifle superfluous....

But it was very amusing dancing.

It wasn't any sort of taught formal dancing. It was a spontaneous retort to the leaping American music that Mr. Britling footed out. You kept time, and for the rest you did as your nature prompted. If you had a partner you joined hands, you fluttered to and from one another, you paced down the long floor together, you involved yourselves in romantic pursuits and repulsions with other couples. There was no objection to your dancing alone. Teddy, for example, danced alone in order to develop certain Egyptian gestures that were germinating in his brain. There was no objection to your joining hands in a cheerful serpent....

Mr. Direck hung on to Cissie and her partner. They danced very well together; they seemed to like and understand each other. It was natural of course for two young people like that, thrown very much together, to

develop an affection for one another.... Still, she was older by three or four years.

It seemed unreasonable that the boy anyhow shouldn't be in love with her....

It seemed unreasonable that any one shouldn't be in love with her....

Then Mr. Direck remarked that Cissie was watching Teddy's manoeuvres over her partner's shoulder with real affection and admiration....

But then most refreshingly she picked up Mr. Direck's gaze and gave him the slightest of smiles. She hadn't forgotten him.

The music stopped with an effect of shock, and all the bobbing, whirling figures became walking glories.

"Now that's not difficult, is it?" said Miss Corner, glowing happily.

"Not when you do it," said Mr. Direck.

"I can't imagine an American not dancing a two-step. You must do the next with me. Listen! It's 'Away Down Indiana' ... ah! I knew you could."

Mr. Direck, too, understood now that he could, and they went off holding

hands rather after the fashion of two skaters.

"My word!" said Mr. Direck. "To think I'd be dancing."

But he said no more because he needed his breath.

He liked it, and he had another attempt with one of the visitor daughters, who danced rather more formally, and then Teddy took the pianola and Mr. Direck was astonished by the spectacle of an eminent British thinker in a whirl of black velvet and extremely active black legs engaged in a kind of Apache dance in pursuit of the visitor wife. In which Mr. Lawrence Carmine suddenly mingled.

"In Germany," said Herr Heinrich, "we do not dance like this. It could not be considered seemly. But it is very pleasant."

And then there was a waltz, and Herr Heinrich bowed to and took the visitor wife round three times, and returned her very punctually and exactly to the point whence he had taken her, and the Indian young gentleman (who must not be called "coloured") waltzed very well with Cecily. Mr. Direck tried to take a tolerant European view of this brown and white combination. But he secured her as soon as possible from this Asiatic entanglement, and danced with her again, and then he danced with her again.

"Come and look at the moonlight," cried Mrs. Britling.

And presently Mr. Direck found himself strolling through the rose garden with Cecily. She had the sweetest moonlight face, her white shining robe made her a thing of moonlight altogether. If Mr. Direck had not been in love with her before he was now altogether in love. Mamie Nelson, whose freakish unkindness had been rankling like a poisoned thorn in his heart all the way from Massachusetts, suddenly became Ancient History.

A tremendous desire for eloquence arose in Mr. Direck's soul, a desire so tremendous that no conceivable phrase he could imagine satisfied it. So he remained tongue-tied. And Cecily was tongue-tied, too. The scent of the roses just tinted the clear sweetness of the air they breathed.

Mr. Direck's mood was an immense solemnity, like a dark ocean beneath the vast dome of the sky, and something quivered in every fibre of his being, like moonlit ripples on the sea. He felt at the same time a portentous stillness and an immense enterprise....

Then suddenly the pianola, pounding a cake walk, burst out into ribald invitation....

"Come back to dance!" cried Cecily, like one from whom a spell has just been broken. And Mr. Direck, snatching at a vanishing scrap of everything he had not said, remarked, "I shall never forget this evening."

She did not seem to hear that.

They danced together again. And then Mr. Direck danced with the visitor lady, whose name he had never heard. And then he danced with Mrs. Britling, and then he danced with Letty. And then it seemed time for him to look for Miss Cecily again.

And so the cheerful evening passed until they were within a quarter of an hour of Sunday morning. Mrs. Britling went to exert a restraining influence upon the pianola.

"Oh! one dance more!" cried Cissie Corner.

"Oh! one dance more!" cried Letty.

"One dance more," Mr. Direck supported, and then things really had to end.

There was a rapid putting out of candles and a stowing away of things by Teddy and the sons, two chauffeurs appeared from the region of the kitchen and brought Mr. Lawrence Carmine's car and the visitor family's car to the front door, and everybody drifted gaily through the moonlight and the big trees to the front of the house. And Mr. Direck saw the perambulator waiting--the mysterious perambulator--a little in the dark beyond the front door.

The visitor family and Mr. Carmine and his young Indian departed. "Come to hockey!" shouted Mr. Britling to each departing car-load, and Mr. Carmine receding answered: "I'll bring three!"

Then Mr. Direck, in accordance with a habit that had been growing on him throughout the evening, looked around for Miss Cissie Corner and failed to find her. And then behold she was descending the staircase with the mysterious baby in her arms. She held up a warning finger, and then glanced at her sleeping burthen. She looked like a silvery Madonna. And Mr. Direck remembered that he was still in doubt about that baby....

Teddy, who was back in his flannels, seized upon the perambulator. There was much careful baby stowing on the part of Cecily; she displayed an infinitely maternal solicitude. Letty was away changing; she reappeared jauntily taking leave, disregarding the baby absolutely, and Teddy departed bigamously, wheeling the perambulator between the two sisters into the hazes of the moonlight. There was much crying of good nights. Mr. Direck's curiosities narrowed down to a point of great intensity....

Of course, Mr. Britling's circle must be a very "Advanced" circle....

## Section 10

Mr. Direck found he had taken leave of the rest of the company, and drifted into a little parlour with Mr. Britling and certain glasses and



siphons and a whisky decanter on a tray....

"It is a very curious thing," said Mr. Direck, "that in England I find myself more disposed to take stimulants and that I no longer have the need for iced water that one feels at home. I ascribe it to a greater humidity in the air. One is less dried and one is less braced. One is no longer pursued by a thirst, but one needs something to buck one up a little. Thank you. That is enough."

Mr. Direck took his glass of whisky and soda from Mr. Britling's hand.

Mr. Britling seated himself in an armchair by the fireplace and threw one leg carelessly over the arm. In his black velvet cloak and cap, and his black silk tights, he was very like a minor character, a court chamberlain for example, in some cloak and rapier drama. "I find this week-end dancing and kicking about wonderfully wholesome," he said. "That and our Sunday hockey. One starts the new week clear and bright about the mind. Friday is always my worst working day."

Mr. Direck leant against the table, wrapped in his golden pheasants, and appreciated the point.

"Your young people dance very cheerfully," he said.

"We all dance very cheerfully," said Mr. Britling.

"Then this Miss Corner," said Mr. Direck, "she is the sister, I presume, is she? of that pleasant young lady who is married--she is married, isn't she?--to the young man you call Teddy."

"I should have explained these young people. They're the sort of young people we are producing over here now in quite enormous quantity. They are the sort of equivalent of the Russian Intelligentsia, an irresponsible middle class with ideas. Teddy, you know, is my secretary. He's the son, I believe, of a Kilburn solicitor. He was recommended to me by Datcher of The Times. He came down here and lived in lodgings for a time. Then suddenly appeared the young lady."

"Miss Corner's sister?"

"Exactly. The village was a little startled. The cottager who had let the rooms came to me privately. Teddy is rather touchy on the point of his personal independence, he considers any demand for explanations as an insult, and probably all he had said to the old lady was, 'This is Letty--come to share my rooms.' I put the matter to him very gently. 'Oh, yes,' he said, rather in the manner of some one who has overlooked a trifle. 'I got married to her in the Christmas holidays. May I bring her along to see Mrs. Britling?' We induced him to go into a little cottage I rent. The wife was the daughter of a Colchester journalist and printer. I don't know if you talked to her."

"I've talked to the sister rather."

"Well, they're both idea'd. They're highly educated in the sense that they do really think for themselves. Almost fiercely. So does Teddy. If he thinks he hasn't thought anything he thinks for himself, he goes off and thinks it different. The sister is a teacher who wants to take the B.A. degree in London University. Meanwhile she pays the penalty of her sex."

"Meaning--?" asked Mr. Direck, startled.

"Oh! that she puts in a great deal too much of her time upon housework and minding her sister's baby."

"She's a very interesting and charming young lady indeed," said Mr. Direck. "With a sort of Western college freedom of mind--and something about her that isn't American at all."

Mr. Britling was following the train of his own thoughts.

"My household has some amusing contrasts," he said. "I don't know if you have talked to that German.

"He's always asking questions. And you tell him any old thing and he goes and writes it down in his room upstairs, and afterwards asks you another like it in order to perplex himself by the variety of your answers. He regards the whole world with a methodical distrust. He wants

to document it and pin it down. He suspects it only too justly of disorderly impulses, and a capacity for self-contradiction. He is the most extraordinary contrast to Teddy, whose confidence in the universe amounts almost to effrontery. Teddy carries our national laxness to a foolhardy extent. He is capable of leaving his watch in the middle of Claverings Park and expecting to find it a month later--being carefully taken care of by a squirrel, I suppose--when he happens to want it. He's rather like a squirrel himself--without the habit of hoarding. He is incapable of asking a question about anything; he would be quite sure it was all right anyhow. He would feel that asking questions betrayed a want of confidence--was a sort of incivility. But my German, if you notice,--his normal expression is one of grave solicitude. He is like a conscientious ticket-collector among his impressions. And did you notice how beautifully my pianola rolls are all numbered and catalogued? He did that. He set to work and did it as soon as he got here, just as a good cat when you bring it into the house sets to work and catches mice. Previously the pianola music was chaos. You took what God sent you.

"And he looks like a German," said Mr. Britling.

"He certainly does that," said Mr. Direck.

"He has the fair type of complexion, the rather full habit of body, the temperamental disposition, but in addition that close-cropped head, it is almost as if it were shaved, the plumpness, the glasses--those are things that are made. And the way he carries himself. And the way he

thinks. His meticulousness. When he arrived he was delightful, he was wearing a student's corps cap and a rucksack, he carried a violin; he seemed to have come out of a book. No one would ever dare to invent so German a German for a book. Now, a young Frenchman or a young Italian or a young Russian coming here might look like a foreigner, but he wouldn't have the distinctive national stamp a German has. He wouldn't be plainly French or Italian or Russian. Other peoples are not made; they are neither made nor created but proceeding--out of a thousand indefinable causes. The Germans are a triumph of directive will. I had to remark the other day that when my boys talked German they shouted. 'But when one talks German one must shout,' said Herr Heinrich. 'It is taught so in the schools.' And it is. They teach them to shout and to throw out their chests. Just as they teach them to read notice-boards and not think about politics. Their very ribs are not their own. My Herr Heinrich is comparatively a liberal thinker. He asked me the other day, 'But why should I give myself up to philology? But then,' he reflected, 'it is what I have to do.'

Mr. Britling seemed to have finished, and then just as Mr. Direck was planning a way of getting the talk back by way of Teddy to Miss Corner, he snuggled more deeply into his chair, reflected and broke out again.

"This contrast between Heinrich's carefulness and Teddy's easy-goingness, come to look at it, is I suppose one of the most fundamental in the world. It reaches to everything. It mixes up with education, statecraft, morals. Will you make or will you take? Those are

the two extreme courses in all such things. I suppose the answer of wisdom to that is, like all wise answers, a compromise. I suppose one must accept and then make all one can of it.... Have you talked at all to my eldest son?"

"He's a very interesting young man indeed," said Mr. Direck. "I should venture to say there's a very great deal in him. I was most impressed by the few words I had with him."

"There, for example, is one of my perplexities," said Mr. Britling.

Mr. Direck waited for some further light on this sudden transition.

"Ah! your troubles in life haven't begun yet. Wait till you're a father. That cuts to the bone. You have the most delicate thing in the world in hand, a young kindred mind. You feel responsible for it, you know you are responsible for it; and you lose touch with it. You can't get at it. Nowadays we've lost the old tradition of fatherhood by divine right--and we haven't got a new one. I've tried not to be a cramping ruler, a director, a domestic tyrant to that lad--and in effect it's meant his going his own way.... I don't dominate. I hoped to advise. But you see he loves my respect and good opinion. Too much. When things go well I know of them. When the world goes dark for him, then he keeps his trouble from me. Just when I would so eagerly go into it with him.... There's something the matter now, something--it may be grave. I feel he wants to tell me. And there it is!--it seems I am the last person to

whom he can humiliate himself by a confession of blundering, or weakness.... Something I should just laugh at and say, 'That's in the blood of all of us, dear Spit of myself. Let's see what's to be done.'..."

He paused and then went on, finding in the unfamiliarity and transitoriness of his visitor a freedom he might have failed to find in a close friend.

"I am frightened at times at all I don't know about in that boy's mind. I know nothing of his religiosities. He's my son and he must have religiosities. I know nothing of his ideas or of his knowledge about sex and all that side of life. I do not know of the things he finds beautiful. I can guess at times; that's all; when he betrays himself.... You see, you don't know really what love is until you have children. One doesn't love women. Indeed you don't! One gives and gets; it's a trade. One may have tremendous excitements and expectations and overwhelming desires. That's all very well in its way. But the love of children is an exquisite tenderness: it rends the heart. It's a thing of God. And I lie awake at nights and stretch out my hands in the darkness to this lad--who will never know--until his sons come in their time...."

He made one of his quick turns again.

"And that's where our English way makes for distresses. Mr. Prussian respects and fears his father; respects authorities, attends, obeys

and--his father has a hold upon him. But I said to myself at the outset, 'No, whatever happens, I will not usurp the place of God. I will not be the Priest-Patriarch of my children. They shall grow and I will grow beside them, helping but not cramping or overshadowing.' They grow more. But they blunder more. Life ceases to be a discipline and becomes an experiment...."

"That's very true," said Mr. Direck, to whom it seemed the time was ripe to say something. "This is the problem of America perhaps even more than of England. Though I have not had the parental experience you have undergone.... I can see very clearly that a son is a very serious proposition."

"The old system of life was organisation. That is where Germany is still the most ancient of European states. It's a reversion to a tribal cult. It's atavistic.... To organise or discipline, or mould characters or press authority, is to assume that you have reached finality in your general philosophy. It implies an assured end. Heinrich has his assured end, his philological professorship or thereabouts as a part of the Germanic machine. And that too has its assured end in German national assertion. Here, we have none of those convictions. We know we haven't finality, and so we are open and apologetic and receptive, rather than wilful.... You see all organisation, with its implication of finality, is death. We feel that. The Germans don't. What you organise you kill. Organised morals or organised religion or organised thought are dead morals and dead religion and dead thought. Yet some organisation you



must have. Organisation is like killing cattle. If you do not kill some the herd is just waste. But you musn't kill all or you kill the herd. The unkilld cattle are the herd, the continuation; the unorganised side of life is the real life. The reality of life is adventure, not performance. What isn't adventure isn't life. What can be ruled about can be machined. But priests and schoolmasters and bureaucrats get hold of life and try to make it all rules, all etiquette and regulation and correctitude.... And parents and the love of parents make for the same thing. It is all very well to experiment for oneself, but when one sees these dear things of one's own, so young and inexperienced and so capable of every sort of gallant foolishness, walking along the narrow plank, going down into dark jungles, ah! then it makes one want to wrap them in laws and foresight and fence them about with 'Verboten' boards in all the conceivable aspects...."

"In America of course we do set a certain store upon youthful self-reliance," said Mr. Direck.

"As we do here. It's in your blood and our blood. It's the instinct of the English and the Irish anyhow to suspect government and take the risks of the chancy way.... And manifestly the Russians, if you read their novelists, have the same twist in them.... When we get this young Prussian here, he's a marvel to us. He really believes in Law. He likes to obey. That seems a sort of joke to us. It's curious how foreign these Germans are--to all the rest of the world. Because of their docility. Scratch the Russian and you get the Tartar. Educate the

Russian or the American or the Englishman or the Irishman or Frenchman or any real northern European except the German, and you get the Anarchist, that is to say the man who dreams of order without organisation--of something beyond organisation....

"It's one o'clock," said Mr. Britling abruptly, perceiving a shade of fatigue upon the face of his hearer and realising that his thoughts had taken him too far, "and Sunday. Let's go to bed."

## Section 11

For a time Mr. Direck could not sleep. His mind had been too excited by this incessant day with all its novelties and all its provocations to comparison. The whole complicated spectacle grouped itself, with a naturalness and a complete want of logic that all who have been young will understand, about Cecily Corner.

She had to be in the picture, and so she came in as though she were the central figure, as though she were the quintessential England. There she was, the type, the blood, the likeness, of no end of Massachusetts families, the very same stuff indeed, and yet she was different....

For a time his thoughts hovered ineffectively about certain details of her ear and cheek, and one may doubt if his interest in these things was entirely international....

Then he found himself under way with an exposition of certain points to Mr. Britling. In the security of his bed he could imagine that he was talking very slowly and carefully while Mr. Britling listened; already he was more than half way to dreamland or he could not have supposed anything so incredible.

"There's a curious sort of difference," he was saying. "It is difficult to define, but on the whole I might express it by saying that such a gathering as this if it was in America would be drawn with harder lines, would show its bones more and have everything more emphatic. And just to take one illustrative point: in America in such a gathering as this there would be bound to be several jokes going on as it were, running jokes and running criticisms, from day to day and from week to week.... There would be jokes about your writing and your influence and jokes about Miss Corner's advanced reading.... You see, in America we pay much more attention to personal character. Here people, I notice, are not talked to about their personal characters at all, and many of them do not seem to be aware and do not seem to mind what personal characters they have....

"And another thing I find noteworthy is the way in which what I might call mature people seem to go on having a good time instead of standing by and applauding the young people having a good time.... And the young people do not seem to have set out to have a good time at all.... Now in America, a charming girl like Miss Corner would be distinctly more aware

of herself and her vitality than she is here, distinctly more. Her peculiarly charming sidelong look, if I might make so free with her--would have been called attention to. It's a perfectly beautiful look, the sort of look some great artist would have loved to make immortal. It's a look I shall find it hard to forget.... But she doesn't seem to be aware in the least of it. In America she would be aware of it. She would be distinctly aware of it. She would have been made aware of it. She would have been advised of it. It would be looked for and she would know it was looked for. She would give it as a singer gives her most popular song. Mamie Nelson, for example, used to give a peculiar little throw back of the chin and a laugh.... It was talked about. People came to see it....

"Of course Mamie Nelson was a very brilliant girl indeed. I suppose in England you would say we spoilt her. I suppose we did spoil her...."

It came into Mr. Direck's head that for a whole day he had scarcely given a thought to Mamie Nelson. And now he was thinking of her--calmly. Why shouldn't one think of Mamie Nelson calmly?

She was a proud imperious thing. There was something Southern in her. Very dark blue eyes she had, much darker than Miss Corner's....

But how tortuous she had been behind that outward pride of hers! For four years she had let him think he was the only man who really mattered in the world, and all the time quite clearly and definitely she had

deceived him. She had made a fool of him and she had made a fool of the others perhaps--just to have her retinue and play the queen in her world. And at last humiliation, bitter humiliation, and Mamie with her chin in the air and her bright triumphant smile looking down on him.

Hadn't he, she asked, had the privilege of loving her?

She took herself at the value they had set upon her.

Well--somehow--that wasn't right....

All the way across the Atlantic Mr. Direck had been trying to forget her downward glance with the chin up, during that last encounter--and other aspects of the same humiliation. The years he had spent upon her! The time! Always relying upon her assurance of a special preference for him. He tried to think he was suffering from the pangs of unrequited love, and to conceal from himself just how bitterly his pride and vanity had been rent by her ultimate rejection. There had been a time when she had given him reason to laugh in his sleeve at Booth Wilmington.

Perhaps Booth Wilmington had also had reason for laughing in his sleeve....

Had she even loved Booth Wilmington? Or had she just snatched at him?...

Wasn't he, Direck, as good a man as Booth Wilmington anyhow?...

For some moments the old sting of jealousy rankled again. He recalled the flaring rivalry that had ended in his defeat, the competition of gifts and treats.... A thing so open that all Carrierville knew of it, discussed it, took sides.... And over it all Mamie with her flashing smile had sailed like a processional goddess....

Why, they had made jokes about him in the newspapers!

One couldn't imagine such a contest in Matching's Easy. Yet surely even in Matching's Easy there are lovers.

Is it something in the air, something in the climate that makes things harder and clearer in America?...

Cissie--why shouldn't one call her Cissie in one's private thoughts anyhow?--would never be as hard and clear as Mamie. She had English eyes--merciful eyes....

That was the word--merciful!

The English light, the English air, are merciful....

Merciful....

They tolerate old things and slow things and imperfect apprehensions.

They aren't always getting at you....

They don't laugh at you.... At least--they laugh differently....

Was England the tolerant country? With its kind eyes and its wary sidelong look. Toleration. In which everything mellowed and nothing was destroyed. A soft country. A country with a passion for imperfection. A padded country....

England--all stuffed with soft feathers ... under one's ear. A pillow--with soft, kind Corners ... Beautiful rounded Corners.... Dear, dear Corners. Cissie Corners. Corners. Could there be a better family?

Massachusetts--but in heaven....

Harps playing two-steps, and kind angels wrapped in moonlight.

Very softly I and you,

One turn, two turn, three turn, too.

Off we go!....