So the spirited honeymoon passed its zenith.

11

The Benhams went as soon as possible down to Smyrna and thence by way of Uskub tortuously back to Italy. They recuperated at the best hotel of Locarno in golden November weather, and just before Christmas they turned their faces back to England.

Benham's plans were comprehensive but entirely vague; Amanda had not so much plans as intentions....

CHAPTER THE FIFTH ~~ THE ASSIZE OF JEALOUSY

1

It was very manifest in the disorder of papers amidst which White spent

so many evenings of interested perplexity before this novel began to be written that Benham had never made any systematic attempt at editing or revising his accumulation at all. There were not only overlapping documents, in which he had returned again to old ideas and restated them in the light of fresh facts and an apparent unconsciousness of his earlier effort, but there were mutually destructive papers, new views quite ousting the old had been tossed in upon the old, and the very definition of the second limitation, as it had first presented itself to the writer, had been abandoned. To begin with, this second division had been labelled "Sex," in places the heading remained, no effective substitute had been chosen for some time, but there was a closely-written memorandum, very much erased and written over and amended, which showed Benham's early dissatisfaction with that crude rendering of what he had in mind. This memorandum was tacked to an interrupted fragment of autobiography, a manuscript soliloquy in which Benham had been discussing his married life.

"It was not until I had been married for the better part of a year, and had spent more than six months in London, that I faced the plain issue between the aims I had set before myself and the claims and immediate necessities of my personal life. For all that time I struggled not so much to reconcile them as to serve them simultaneously...."

At that the autobiography stopped short, and the intercalary note began.

This intercalary note ran as follows:

"I suppose a mind of my sort cannot help but tend towards simplification, towards making all life turn upon some one dominant idea, complex perhaps in its reality but reducible at last to one consistent simple statement, a dominant idea which is essential as nothing else is essential, which makes and sustains and justifies. This is perhaps the innate disposition of the human mind, at least of the European mind--for I have some doubts about the Chinese. Theology drives obstinately towards an ultimate unity in God, science towards an ultimate unity in law, towards a fundamental element and a universal material truth from which all material truths evolve, and in matters of conduct there is the same tendency to refer to a universal moral law. Now this may be a simplification due to the need of the human mind to comprehend, and its inability to do so until the load is lightened by neglecting factors. William James has suggested that on account of this, theology may be obstinately working away from the truth, that the truth may be that there are several or many in compatible and incommensurable gods; science, in the same search for unity, may follow divergent methods of inquiry into ultimately uninterchangeable generalizations; and there may be not only not one universal moral law, but no effective reconciliation of the various rights and duties of a single individual. At any rate I find myself doubtful to this day about my own personal systems of right and wrong. I can never get all my life into one focus. It is exactly like examining a rather thick section with a microscope of small penetration; sometimes one level is clear and the rest foggy and monstrous, and sometimes another.

"Now the ruling ME, I do not doubt, is the man who has set his face

to this research after aristocracy, and from the standpoint of this research it is my duty to subordinate all other considerations to this work of clearing up the conception of rule and nobility in human affairs. This is my aristocratic self. What I did not grasp for a long time, and which now grows clearer and clearer to me, is firstly that this aristocratic self is not the whole of me, it has absolutely nothing to do with a pain in my ear or in my heart, with a scar on my hand or my memory, and secondly that it is not altogether mine. Whatever knowledge I have of the quality of science, whatever will I have towards right, is of it; but if from without, from the reasoning or demonstration or reproof of some one else, there comes to me clear knowledge, clarified will, that also is as it were a part of my aristocratic self coming home to me from the outside. How often have I not found my own mind in Prothero after I have failed to find it in myself? It is, to be paradoxical, my impersonal personality, this Being that I have in common with all scientific-spirited and aristocratic-spirited men. This it is that I am trying to get clear from the great limitations of humanity. When I assert a truth for the sake of truth to my own discomfort or injury, there again is this incompatibility of the aristocratic self and the accepted, confused, conglomerate self of the unanalyzed man. The two have a separate system of obligations. One's affections, compounded as they are in the strangest way of physical reactions and emotional associations, one's implicit pledges to particular people, one's involuntary reactions, one's pride and jealousy, all that one might call the dramatic side of one's life, may be in conflict with the definitely seen rightnesses of one's higher use...."

The writing changed at this point.

"All this seems to me at once as old as the hills and too new to be true. This is like the conflict of the Superior Man of Confucius to control himself, it is like the Christian battle of the spirit with the flesh, it savours of that eternal wrangle between the general and the particular which is metaphysics, it was for this aristocratic self, for righteousness' sake, that men have hungered and thirsted, and on this point men have left father and mother and child and wife and followed after salvation. This world-wide, ever-returning antagonism has filled the world in every age with hermits and lamas, recluses and teachers, devoted and segregated lives. It is a perpetual effort to get above the simplicity of barbarism. Whenever men have emerged from the primitive barbarism of the farm and the tribe, then straightway there has emerged this conception of a specialized life a little lifted off the earth; often, for the sake of freedom, celibate, usually disciplined, sometimes directed, having a generalized aim, beyond personal successes and bodily desires. So it is that the philosopher, the scientifically concentrated man, has appeared, often, I admit, quite ridiculously at first, setting out upon the long journey that will end only when the philosopher is king....

"At first I called my Second Limitation, Sex. But from the outset I meant more than mere sexual desire, lust and lustful imaginings, more than personal reactions to beauty and spirited living, more even than what is called love. On the one hand I had in mind many appetites that are not sexual yet turn to bodily pleasure, and on the other there are

elements of pride arising out of sex and passing into other regions, all the elements of rivalry for example, that have strained my first definition to the utmost. And I see now that this Second Limitation as I first imagined it spreads out without any definite boundary, to include one's rivalries with old schoolfellows, for example, one's generosities to beggars and dependents, one's desire to avenge an injured friend, one's point of honour, one's regard for the good opinion of an aunt and one's concern for the health of a pet cat. All these things may enrich, but they may also impede and limit the aristocratic scheme. I thought for a time I would call this ill-defined and miscellaneous wilderness of limitation the Personal Life. But at last I have decided to divide this vast territory of difficulties into two subdivisions and make one of these Indulgence, meaning thereby pleasurable indulgence of sense or feeling, and the other a great mass of self-regarding motives that will go with a little stretching under the heading of Jealousy. I admit motives are continually playing across the boundary of these two divisions, I should find it difficult to argue a case for my classification, but in practice these two groupings have a quite definite meaning for me. There is pride in the latter group of impulses and not in the former; the former are always a little apologetic. Fear, Indulgence, Jealousy, these are the First Three Limitations of the soul of man. And the greatest of these is Jealousy, because it can use pride. Over them the Life Aristocratic, as I conceive it, marches to its end. It saves itself for the truth rather than sacrifices itself romantically for a friend. It justifies vivisection if thereby knowledge is won for ever. It upholds that Brutus who killed his sons. It forbids devotion to women, courts of love and all such decay of the chivalrous idea. And it

resigns--so many things that no common Man of Spirit will resign. Its intention transcends these things. Over all the world it would maintain justice, order, a noble peace, and it would do this without indignation, without resentment, without mawkish tenderness or individualized enthusiasm or any queen of beauty. It is of a cold austere quality, commanding sometimes admiration but having small hold upon the affections of men. So that it is among its foremost distinctions that its heart is steeled...."

There this odd fragment ended and White was left to resume the interrupted autobiography.

2

What moods, what passions, what nights of despair and gathering storms of anger, what sudden cruelties and amazing tendernesses are buried and hidden and implied in every love story! What a waste is there of exquisite things! So each spring sees a million glorious beginnings, a sunlit heaven in every opening leaf, warm perfection in every stirring egg, hope and fear and beauty beyond computation in every forest tree; and in the autumn before the snows come they have all gone, of all that incalculable abundance of life, of all that hope and adventure, excitement and deliciousness, there is scarcely more to be found than a soiled twig, a dirty seed, a dead leaf, black mould or a rotting

feather....

White held the ten or twelve pencilled pages that told how Benham and Amanda drifted into antagonism and estrangement and as he held it he thought of the laughter and delight they must have had together, the exquisite excitements of her eye, the racing colour of her cheek, the gleams of light upon her skin, the flashes of wit between them, the sense of discovery, the high rare paths they had followed, the pools in which they had swum together. And now it was all gone into nothingness, there was nothing left of it, nothing at all, but just those sheets of statement, and it may be, stored away in one single mind, like things forgotten in an attic, a few neglected faded memories....

And even those few sheets of statement were more than most love leaves behind it. For a time White would not read them. They lay neglected on his knee as he sat back in Benham's most comfortable chair and enjoyed an entirely beautiful melancholy.

White too had seen and mourned the spring.

Indeed, poor dear! he had seen and mourned several springs....

With a sigh he took up the manuscript and read Benham's desiccated story of intellectual estrangement, and how in the end he had decided to leave his wife and go out alone upon that journey of inquiry he had been planning when first he met her.

3

Amanda had come back to England in a state of extravagantly vigorous womanhood. Benham's illness, though it lasted only two or three weeks, gave her a sense of power and leadership for which she had been struggling instinctively ever since they came together. For a time at Locarno he was lax-minded and indolent, and in that time she formed her bright and limited plans for London. Benham had no plans as yet but only a sense of divergence, as though he was being pulled in opposite directions by two irresistible forces. To her it was plain that he needed occupation, some distinguished occupation, and she could imagine nothing better for him than a political career. She perceived he had personality, that he stood out among men so that his very silences were effective. She loved him immensely, and she had tremendous ambitions for him and through him.

And also London, the very thought of London, filled her with appetite. Her soul thirsted for London. It was like some enormous juicy fruit waiting for her pretty white teeth, a place almost large enough to give her avidity the sense of enough. She felt it waiting for her, household, servants, a carriage, shops and the jolly delight of buying and possessing things, the opera, first-nights, picture exhibitions, great dinner-parties, brilliant lunch parties, crowds seen from a point of vantage, the carriage in a long string of fine carriages with the

lamplit multitude peering, Amanda in a thousand bright settings, in a thousand various dresses. She had had love; it had been glorious, it was still glorious, but her love-making became now at times almost perfunctory in the contemplation of these approaching delights and splendours and excitements.

She knew, indeed, that ideas were at work in Benham's head; but she was a realist. She did not see why ideas should stand in the way of a career. Ideas are a brightness, the good looks of the mind. One talks ideas, but THE THING THAT IS, IS THE THING THAT IS. And though she believed that Benham had a certain strength of character of his own, she had that sort of confidence in his love for her and in the power of her endearments that has in it the assurance of a faint contempt. She had mingled pride and sense in the glorious realization of the power over him that her wit and beauty gave her. She had held him faint with her divinity, intoxicated with the pride of her complete possession, and she did not dream that the moment when he should see clearly that she could deliberately use these ultimate delights to rule and influence him, would be the end of their splendour and her power. Her nature, which was just a nest of vigorous appetites, was incapable of suspecting his gathering disillusionment until it burst upon her.

Now with her attention set upon London ahead he could observe her. In the beginning he had never seemed to be observing her at all, they dazzled one another; it seemed extraordinary now to him to note how much he had been able to disregard. There were countless times still when he would have dropped his observation and resumed that mutual exaltation

very gladly, but always now other things possessed her mind....

There was still an immense pleasure for him in her vigour; there was something delightful in her pounce, even when she was pouncing on things superficial, vulgar or destructive. She made him understand and share the excitement of a big night at the opera, the glitter and prettiness of a smart restaurant, the clustering little acute adventures of a great reception of gay people, just as she had already made him understand and sympathize with dogs. She picked up the art world where he had laid it down, and she forced him to feel dense and slow before he rebelled against her multitudinous enthusiasms and admirations. South Harting had had its little group of artistic people; it is not one of your sleepy villages, and she slipped back at once into the movement. Those were the great days of John, the days before the Post Impressionist outbreak. John, Orpen, Tonks, she bought them with vigour. Artistic circles began to revolve about her. Very rapidly she was in possession.... And among other desirable things she had, it seemed, pounced upon and captured Lady Marayne.

At any rate it was clear that that awful hostile silence and aloofness was to end. Benham never quite mastered how it was done. But Amanda had gone in one morning to Desborough Street, very sweetly and chastely dressed, had abased herself and announced a possible (though subsequently disproved) grandchild. And she had appreciated the little lady so highly and openly, she had so instantly caught and reproduced her tone, that her success, though only temporary in its completeness, was immediate. In the afternoon Benham was amazed by the apparition of

his mother amidst the scattered unsettled furnishings of the new home Amanda had chosen in Lancaster Gate. He was in the hall, the door stood open awaiting packing-cases from a van without. In the open doorway she shone, looking the smallest of dainty things. There was no effect of her coming but only of her having arrived there, as a little blue butterfly will suddenly alight on a flower.

"Well, Poff!" said Lady Marayne, ignoring abysses, "What are you up to now, Poff? Come and embrace me...."

"No, not so," she said, "stiffest of sons...."

She laid hold of his ears in the old fashion and kissed one eye.

"Congratulations, dear little Poff. Oh! congratulations! In heaps. I'm so GLAD."

Now what was that for?

And then Amanda came out upon the landing upstairs, saw the encounter with an involuntary cry of joy, and came downstairs with arms wide open. It was the first intimation he had of their previous meeting. He was for some minutes a stunned, entirely inadequate Benham....

At first Amanda knew nobody in London, except a few people in the Hampstead Garden suburb that she had not the slightest wish to know, and then very quickly she seemed to know quite a lot of people. The artistic circle brought in people, Lady Marayne brought in people; they spread. It was manifest the Benhams were a very bright young couple; he would certainly do something considerable presently, and she was bright and daring, jolly to look at and excellent fun, and, when you came to talk to her, astonishingly well informed. They passed from one hostess's hand to another: they reciprocated. The Clynes people and the Rushtones took her up; Mr. Evesham was amused by her, Lady Beach Mandarin proclaimed her charm like a trumpet, the Young Liberal people made jealous advances, Lord Moggeridge found she listened well, she lit one of the brightest weekend parties Lady Marayne had ever gathered at Chexington. And her descriptions of recent danger and adventure in Albania not only entertained her hearers but gave her just that flavour of personal courage which completes the fascination of a young woman. People in the gaps of a halting dinner-table conversation would ask: "Have you met Mrs. Benham?"

Meanwhile Benham appeared to be talking. A smiling and successful young woman, who a year ago had been nothing more than a leggy girl with a good lot of miscellaneous reading in her head, and vaguely engaged, or at least friendly to the pitch of engagement, to Mr. Rathbone-Sanders, may be forgiven if in the full tide of her success she does not altogether grasp the intention of her husband's discourse. It seemed to

her that he was obsessed by a responsibility for civilization and the idea that he was aristocratic. (Secretly she was inclined to doubt whether he was justified in calling himself aristocratic; at the best his mother was county-stuff; but still if he did there was no great harm in it nowadays.) Clearly his line was Tory-Democracy, social reform through the House of Lords and friendly intimacy with the more spirited young peers. And it was only very slowly and reluctantly that she was forced to abandon this satisfactory solution of his problem. She reproduced all the equipment and comforts of his Finacue Street study in their new home, she declared constantly that she would rather forego any old social thing than interfere with his work, she never made him go anywhere with her without first asking if his work permitted it. To relieve him of the burthen of such social attentions she even made a fag or so. The making of fags out of manifestly stricken men, the keeping of tamed and hopeless admirers, seemed to her to be the most natural and reasonable of feminine privileges. They did their useful little services until it pleased the Lord Cheetah to come to his own. That was how she put it....

But at last he was talking to her in tones that could no longer be ignored. He was manifestly losing his temper with her. There was a novel austerity in his voice and a peculiar whiteness about his face on certain occasions that lingered in her memory.

He was indeed making elaborate explanations. He said that what he wanted to do was to understand "the collective life of the world," and that this was not to be done in a West-End study. He had an extraordinary

contempt, it seemed, for both sides in the drama of British politics. He had extravagant ideas of beginning in some much more fundamental way. He wanted to understand this "collective life of the world," because ultimately he wanted to help control it. (Was there ever such nonsense?) The practical side of this was serious enough, however; he was back at his old idea of going round the earth. Later on that might be rather a jolly thing to do, but not until they had struck root a little more surely in London.

And then with amazement, with incredulity, with indignation, she began to realize that he was proposing to go off by himself upon this vague extravagant research, that all this work she had been doing to make a social place for him in London was as nothing to him, that he was thinking of himself as separable from her....

"But, Cheetah! How can you leave your spotless leopard? You would howl in the lonely jungle!"

"Possibly I shall. But I am going."

"Then I shall come."

"No." He considered her reasons. "You see you are not interested."

"But I am."

"Not as I am. You would turn it all into a jolly holiday. You don't want

to see things as I want to do. You want romance. All the world is a show for you. As a show I can't endure it. I want to lay hands on it."

"But, Cheetah!" she said, "this is separation."

"You will have your life here. And I shall come back."

"But, Cheetah! How can we be separated?"

"We are separated," he said.

Her eyes became round with astonishment. Then her face puckered.

"Cheetah!" she cried in a voice of soft distress, "I love you. What do you mean?"

And she staggered forward, tear-blinded, and felt for his neck and shoulders, so that she might weep in his arms....

5

"Don't say we are separated," she whispered, putting her still wet face close to his.

"No. We're mates," he answered softly, with his arm about her.

"How could we ever keep away from each uvver?" she whispered.

He was silent.

"How COULD we?"

He answered aloud. "Amanda," he said, "I mean to go round the world."

She disentangled herself from his arm and sat up beside him.

"What is to become of me," she asked suddenly in a voice of despair, "while you go round the world? If you desert me in London," she said, "if you shame me by deserting me in London-- If you leave me, I will never forgive you, Cheetah! Never." Then in an almost breathless voice, and as if she spoke to herself, "Never in all my days."

6

It was after that that Amanda began to talk about children. There was nothing involuntary about Amanda. "Soon," she said, "we must begin to think of children. Not just now, but a little later. It's good to travel and have our fun, but life is unreal until there are children in the

background. No woman is really content until she is a mother...." And for nearly a fortnight nothing more was said about that solitary journey round the world.

But children were not the only new topic in Amanda's talk. She set herself with an ingenious subtlety to remind her husband that there were other men in the world. The convenient fags, sometimes a little embarrassed, found their inobtrusive services being brought into the light before Benham's eyes. Most of them were much older men than himself, elderly philanderers of whom it seemed to him no sane man need be jealous, men often of forty or more, but one was a contemporary, Sir Philip Easton, a man with a touch of Spanish blood and a suggestion of Spanish fire, who quite manifestly was very much in love with Amanda and of whom she spoke with a slight perceptible difference of manner that made Benham faintly uneasy. He was ashamed of the feeling. Easton it seemed was a man of a peculiarly fine honour, so that Amanda could trust herself with him to an extent that would have been inadvisable with men of a commoner substance, and he had a gift of understanding and sympathy that was almost feminine; he could cheer one up when one was lonely and despondent. For Amanda was so methodical in the arrangement of her time that even in the full rush of a London season she could find an hour now and then for being lonely and despondent. And he was a liberal and understanding purchaser of the ascendant painters; he understood that side of Amanda's interests, a side upon which Benham was notably deficient....

"Amanda seems to like that dark boy, Poff; what is his name?--Sir Philip

Easton?" said Lady Marayne.

Benham looked at her with a slightly hostile intelligence, and said nothing.

"When a man takes a wife, he has to keep her," said Lady Marayne.

"No," said Benham after consideration. "I don't intend to be a wife-herd."

"What?"

"Wife-herd--same as goat-herd."

"Coarse, you are sometimes, Poff--nowadays."

"It's exactly what I mean. I can understand the kind of curator's interest an Oriental finds in shepherding a large establishment, but to spend my days looking after one person who ought to be able to look after herself--"

"She's very young."

"She's quite grown up. Anyhow I'm not a moral nursemaid."

"If you leave her about and go abroad--"

"Has she been talking to you, mother?"

"The thing shows."

"But about my going abroad?"

"She said something, my little Poff."

Lady Marayne suddenly perceived that beneath Benham's indifference was something strung very tight, as though he had been thinking inordinately. He weighed his words before he spoke again. "If Amanda chooses to threaten me with a sort of conditional infidelity, I don't see that it ought to change the plans I have made for my life...."

7

"No aristocrat has any right to be jealous," Benham wrote. "If he chances to be mated with a woman who does not see his vision or naturally go his way, he has no right to expect her, much less to compel her to go his way. What is the use of dragging an unwilling companion through morasses of uncongenial thought to unsought ends? What is the use of dragging even a willing pretender, who has no inherent will to seek and live the aristocratic life?

"But that does not excuse him from obedience to his own call...."

He wrote that very early in his examination of the Third Limitation. Already he had thought out and judged Amanda. The very charm of her, the sweetness, the nearness and magic of her, was making him more grimly resolute to break away. All the elaborate process of thinking her over had gone on behind the mask of his silences while she had been preoccupied with her housing and establishment in London; it was with a sense of extraordinary injustice, of having had a march stolen upon her, of being unfairly trapped, that Amanda found herself faced by foregone conclusions. He was ready now even with the details of his project. She should go on with her life in London exactly as she had planned it. He would take fifteen hundred a year for himself and all the rest she might spend without check or stint as it pleased her. He was going round the world for one or two years. It was even possible he would not go alone. There was a man at Cambridge he might persuade to come with him, a don called Prothero who was peculiarly useful in helping him to hammer out his ideas....

To her it became commandingly necessary that none of these things should happen.

She tried to play upon his jealousy, but her quick instinct speedily told her that this only hardened his heart. She perceived that she must make a softer appeal. Now of a set intention she began to revive and imitate the spontaneous passion of the honeymoon; she perceived for the first time clearly how wise and righteous a thing it is for a woman to

bear a child. "He cannot go if I am going to have a child," she told herself. But that would mean illness, and for illness in herself or others Amanda had the intense disgust natural to her youth. Yet even illness would be better than this intolerable publication of her husband's ability to leave her side....

She had a wonderful facility of enthusiasm and she set herself forthwith to cultivate a philoprogenitive ambition, to communicate it to him. Her dread of illness disappeared; her desire for offspring grew.

"Yes," he said, "I want to have children, but I must go round the world none the less."

She argued with all the concentrated subtlety of her fine keen mind. She argued with persistence and repetition. And then suddenly so that she was astonished at herself, there came a moment when she ceased to argue.

She stood in the dusk in a window that looked out upon the park, and she was now so intent upon her purpose as to be still and self-forgetful; she was dressed in a dinner-dress of white and pale green, that set off her slim erect body and the strong clear lines of her neck and shoulders very beautifully, some greenish stones caught a light from without and flashed soft whispering gleams from amidst the misty darkness of her hair. She was going to Lady Marayne and the opera, and he was bound for a dinner at the House with some young Liberals at which he was to meet two representative Indians with a grievance from Bengal. Husband and wife had but a few moments together. She asked about his company and he

told her.

"They will tell you about India."

"Yes."

She stood for a moment looking out across the lights and the dark green trees, and then she turned to him.

"Why cannot I come with you?" she asked with sudden passion. "Why cannot I see the things you want to see?"

"I tell you you are not interested. You would only be interested through me. That would not help me. I should just be dealing out my premature ideas to you. If you cared as I care, if you wanted to know as I want to know, it would be different. But you don't. It isn't your fault that you don't. It happens so. And there is no good in forced interest, in prescribed discovery."

"Cheetah," she asked, "what is it that you want to know--that I don't care for?"

"I want to know about the world. I want to rule the world."

"So do I."

"No, you want to have the world."

"Isn't it the same?"

"No. You're a greedier thing than I am, you Black Leopard you--standing there in the dusk. You're a stronger thing. Don't you know you're stronger? When I am with you, you carry your point, because you are more concentrated, more definite, less scrupulous. When you run beside me you push me out of my path.... You've made me afraid of you.... And so I won't go with you, Leopard. I go alone. It isn't because I don't love you. I love you too well. It isn't because you aren't beautiful and wonderful...."

"But, Cheetah! nevertheless you care more for this that you want than you care for me."

Benham thought of it. "I suppose I do," he said.

"What is it that you want? Still I don't understand."

Her voice had the break of one who would keep reasonable in spite of pain.

"I ought to tell you."

"Yes, you ought to tell me."

"I wonder if I can tell you," he said very thoughtfully, and rested his

hands on his hips. "I shall seem ridiculous to you."

"You ought to tell me."

"I think what I want is to be king of the world."

She stood quite still staring at him.

"I do not know how I can tell you of it. Amanda, do you remember those bodies--you saw those bodies--those mutilated men?"

"I saw them," said Amanda.

"Well. Is it nothing to you that those things happen?"

"They must happen."

"No. They happen because there are no kings but pitiful kings. They happen because the kings love their Amandas and do not care."

"But what can YOU do, Cheetah?"

"Very little. But I can give my life and all my strength. I can give all I can give."

"But how? How can you help it--help things like that massacre?"

"I can do my utmost to find out what is wrong with my world and rule it and set it right."

"YOU! Alone."

"Other men do as much. Every one who does so helps others to do so. You see--... In this world one may wake in the night and one may resolve to be a king, and directly one has resolved one is a king. Does that sound foolishness to you? Anyhow, it's fair that I should tell you, though you count me a fool. This--this kingship--this dream of the night--is my life. It is the very core of me. Much more than you are. More than anything else can be. I mean to be a king in this earth. KING. I'm not mad.... I see the world staggering from misery to misery and there is little wisdom, less rule, folly, prejudice, limitation, the good things come by chance and the evil things recover and slay them, and it is my world and I am responsible. Every man to whom this light has come is responsible. As soon as this light comes to you, as soon as your kingship is plain to you, there is no more rest, no peace, no delight, except in work, in service, in utmost effort. As far as I can do it I will rule my world. I cannot abide in this smug city, I cannot endure its self-complacency, its routine, its gloss of success, its rottenness.... I shall do little, perhaps I shall do nothing, but what I can understand and what I can do I will do. Think of that wild beautiful country we saw, and the mean misery, the filth and the warring cruelty of the life that lives there, tragedy, tragedy without dignity; and think, too, of the limitless ugliness here, and of Russia slipping from disorder to massacre, and China, that sea of human beings,

sliding steadily to disaster. Do you think these are only things in the newspapers? To me at any rate they are not things in newspapers; they are pain and failure, they are torment, they are blood and dust and misery. They haunt me day and night. Even if it is utterly absurd I will still do my utmost. It IS absurd. I'm a madman and you and my mother are sensible people.... And I will go my way.... I don't care for the absurdity. I don't care a rap."

He stopped abruptly.

"There you have it, Amanda. It's rant, perhaps. Sometimes I feel it's rant. And yet it's the breath of life to me.... There you are.... At last I've been able to break silence and tell you...."

He stopped with something like a sob and stood regarding the dusky mystery of her face. She stood quite still, she was just a beautiful outline in the twilight, her face was an indistinctness under the black shadow of her hair, with eyes that were two patches of darkness.

He looked at his watch, lifting it close to his face to see the time. His voice changed. "Well--if you provoke a man enough, you see he makes speeches. Let it be a lesson to you, Amanda. Here we are talking instead of going to our dinners. The car has been waiting ten minutes."

Amanda, so still, was the most disconcerting of all Amandas....

A strange exaltation seized upon her very suddenly. In an instant she

had ceased to plot against him. A vast wave of emotion swept her forward to a resolution that astonished her.

"Cheetah!" she said, and the very quality of her voice had changed, "give me one thing. Stay until June with me."

"Why?" he asked.

Her answer came in a voice so low that it was almost a whisper.

"Because--now--no, I don't want to keep you any more--I am not trying to hold you any more.... I want...."

She came forward to him and looked up closely at his face.

"Cheetah," she whispered almost inaudibly, "Cheetah--I didn't understand. But now--. I want to bear your child."

He was astonished. "Old Leopard!" he said.

"No," she answered, putting her hands upon his shoulders and drawing very close to him, "Queen---if I can be--to your King."

"You want to bear me a child!" he whispered, profoundly moved.

8

The Hindu agitators at the cavernous dinner under the House of Commons came to the conclusion that Benham was a dreamer. And over against Amanda at her dinner-party sat Sir Sidney Umber, one of those men who know that their judgments are quoted.

"Who is the beautiful young woman who is seeing visions?" he asked of his neighbour in confidential undertones....

He tittered. "I think, you know, she ought to seem just SLIGHTLY aware that the man to her left is talking to her...."

9

A few days later Benham went down to Cambridge, where Prothero was now a fellow of Trinity and Brissenden Trust Lecturer....

All through Benham's writing there was manifest a persuasion that in some way Prothero was necessary to his mind. It was as if he looked to Prothero to keep him real. He suspected even while he obeyed that upward flourish which was his own essential characteristic. He had a peculiar feeling that somehow that upward bias would betray him; that from

exaltation he might presently float off, into the higher, the better, and so to complete unreality. He fled from priggishness and the terror of such sublimity alike to Prothero. Moreover, in relation to so many things Prothero in a peculiar distinctive manner SAW. He had less self-control than Benham, less integrity of purpose, less concentration, and things that were before his eyes were by the very virtue of these defects invariably visible to him. Things were able to insist upon themselves with him. Benham, on the other hand, when facts contradicted his purpose too stoutly, had a way of becoming blind to them. He repudiated inconvenient facts. He mastered and made his world; Prothero accepted and recorded his. Benham was a will towards the universe where Prothero was a perception and Amanda a confusing responsive activity. And it was because of his realization of this profound difference between them that he was possessed by the idea of taking Prothero with him about the world, as a detachable kind of vision--rather like that eye the Graiae used to hand one another....

After the busy sunlit streets of Maytime Cambridge, Prothero's rooms in Trinity, their windows full of Gothic perspectives and light-soaked blue sky, seemed cool and quiet. A flavour of scholarship pervaded them--a little blended with the flavour of innumerable breakfasts nearly but not completely forgotten. Prothero's door had been locked against the world, and he had appeared after a slight delay looking a little puffy and only apprehending who his visitor was after a resentful stare for the better part of a second. He might have been asleep, he might have been doing anything but the examination papers he appeared to be doing. The two men exchanged personal details; they had not met since some months before

Benham' s marriage, and the visitor's eye went meanwhile from his host to the room and back to his host's face as though they were all aspects of the thing he was after, the Prothero humour, the earthly touch, the distinctive Prothero flavour. Then his eye was caught by a large red, incongruous, meretricious-looking volume upon the couch that had an air of having been flung aside, VENUS IN GEM AND MARBLE, its cover proclaimed....

His host followed that glance and blushed. "They send me all sorts of inappropriate stuff to review," he remarked.

And then he was denouncing celibacy.

The transition wasn't very clear to Benham. His mind had been preoccupied by the problem of how to open his own large project. Meanwhile Prothero got, as it were, the conversational bit between his teeth and bolted. He began to say the most shocking things right away, so that Benham's attention was caught in spite of himself.

"Inflammatory classics."

"What's that?"

"Celibacy, my dear Benham, is maddening me," said Prothero. "I can't stand it any longer."

It seemed to Benham that somewhere, very far away, in another world,

such a statement might have been credible. Even in his own life,--it was now indeed a remote, forgotten stage--there had been something distantly akin....

"You're going to marry?"

"I must."

"Who's the lady, Billy?"

"I don't know. Venus."

His little red-brown eye met his friend's defiantly. "So far as I know, it is Venus Anadyomene." A flash of laughter passed across his face and left it still angrier, still more indecorously defiant. "I like her best, anyhow. I do, indeed. But, Lord! I feel that almost any of them--"

"Tut, tut!" said Benham.

Prothero flushed deeply but stuck to his discourse.

"Wasn't it always your principle, Benham, to look facts in the face? I am not pronouncing an immoral principle. Your manner suggests I am. I am telling you exactly how I feel. That is how I feel. I want--Venus. I don't want her to talk to or anything of that sort.... I have been studying that book, yes, that large, vulgar, red book, all the morning, instead of doing any work. Would you like to see it?... NO!...

"This spring, Benham, I tell you, is driving me mad. It is a peculiarly erotic spring. I cannot sleep, I cannot fix my mind, I cannot attend to ordinary conversation. These feelings, I understand, are by no means peculiar to myself.... No, don't interrupt me, Benham; let me talk now that the spirit of speech is upon me. When you came in you said, 'How are you?' I am telling you how I am. You brought it on yourself. Well--I am--inflamed. I have no strong moral or religious convictions to assist me either to endure or deny this--this urgency. And so why should I deny it? It's one of our chief problems here. The majority of my fellow dons who look at me with secretive faces in hall and court and combination-room are in just the same case as myself. The fever in oneself detects the fever in others. I know their hidden thoughts. Their fishy eyes defy me to challenge their hidden thoughts. Each covers his miserable secret under the cloak of a wholesome manly indifference. A tattered cloak.... Each tries to hide his abandonment to this horrible vice of continence--"

"Billy, what's the matter with you?"

Prothero grimaced impatience. "Shall I NEVER teach you not to be a humbug, Benham?" he screamed, and in screaming became calmer. "Nature taunts me, maddens me. My life is becoming a hell of shame. 'Get out from all these books,' says Nature, 'and serve the Flesh.' The Flesh, Benham. Yes--I insist--the Flesh. Do I look like a pure spirit? Is any man a pure spirit? And here am I at Cambridge like a lark in a cage, with too much port and no Aspasia. Not that I should have liked

Aspasia."

"Mutual, perhaps, Billy."

"Oh! you can sneer!"

"Well, clearly--Saint Paul is my authority--it's marriage, Billy."

Prothero had walked to the window. He turned round.

"I CAN'T marry," he said. "The trouble has gone too far. I've lost my nerve in the presence of women. I don't like them any more. They come at one--done up in a lot of ridiculous clothes, and chattering about all sorts of things that don't matter...." He surveyed his friend's thoughtful attitude. "I'm getting to hate women, Benham. I'm beginning now to understand the bitterness of spinsters against men. I'm beginning to grasp the unkindliness of priests. The perpetual denial. To you, happily married, a woman is just a human being. You can talk to her, like her, you can even admire her calmly; you've got, you see, no grudge against her...."

He sat down abruptly.

Benham, upon the hearthrug before the empty fireplace, considered him.

"Billy! this is delusion," he said. "What's come over you?"

"I'm telling you," said Prothero.

"No," said Benham.

Prothero awaited some further utterance.

"I'm looking for the cause of it. It's feeding, Billy. It's port and stimulants where there is no scope for action. It's idleness. I begin to see now how much fatter you are, how much coarser."

"Idleness! Look at this pile of examination answers. Look at that filing system like an arsenal of wisdom. Useless wisdom, I admit, but anyhow not idleness."

"There's still bodily idleness. No. That's your trouble. You're stuffy. You've enlarged your liver. You sit in this room of a warm morning after an extravagant breakfast--. And peep and covet."

"Just eggs and bacon!"

"Think of it! Coffee and toast it ought to be. Come out of it, Billy, and get aired."

"How can one?"

"Easily. Come out of it now. Come for a walk, you Pig!"

"It's an infernally warm morning.

"Walk with me to Grantchester."

"We might go by boat. You could row."

"WALK."

"I ought to do these papers."

"You weren't doing them."

"No...."

"Walk with me to Grantchester. All this affliction of yours is--horrid--and just nothing at all. Come out of it! I want you to come with me to Russia and about the world. I'm going to leave my wife--"

"Leave your wife!"

"Why not? And I came here hoping to find you clear-headed, and instead you are in this disgusting state. I've never met anything in my life so hot and red and shiny and shameless. Come out of it, man! How can one talk to you?"

"You pull things down to your own level," said Benham as they went through the heat to Grantchester.

"I pull them down to truth," panted Prothero.

"Truth! As though being full of gross appetites was truth, and discipline and training some sort of falsity!"

"Artificiality. And begetting pride, Benham, begetting a prig's pride."

For a time there was more than the heat of the day between them....

The things that Benham had come down to discuss were thrust into the background by the impassioned materialism of Prothero.

"I'm not talking of Love," he said, remaining persistently outrageous. "I'm talking of physical needs. That first. What is the good of arranging systems of morality and sentiment before you know what is physically possible....

"But how can one disentangle physical and moral necessities?"

"Then why don't we up and find out?" said Billy.

He had no patience with the secrecy, the ignorance, the emotion that surrounded these questions. We didn't worship our ancestors when it came to building bridges or working metals or curing disease or studying our indigestion, and why should we become breathless or wordless with awe and terror when it came to this fundamental affair? Why here in particular should we give way to Holy Fear and stifled submission to traditional suppressions and the wisdom of the ages? "What is the wisdom of the ages?" said Prothero. "Think of the corners where that wisdom was born.... Flea-bitten sages in stone-age hovels.... Wandering wise man with a rolling eye, a fakir under a tree, a Jewish sheik, an Arab epileptic...."

"Would you sweep away the experience of mankind?" protested Benham.

The experience of mankind in these matters had always been bitter experience. Most of it was better forgotten. It didn't convince. It had never worked things out. In this matter just as in every other matter that really signified things had still to be worked out. Nothing had been worked out hitherto. The wisdom of the ages was a Cant. People had been too busy quarrelling, fighting and running away. There wasn't any digested experience of the ages at all. Only the mis-remembered hankey-pankey of the Dead Old Man.

"Is this love-making a physical necessity for most men and women or isn't it?" Prothero demanded. "There's a simple question enough, and is there anything whatever in your confounded wisdom of the ages to tell me yes or no? Can an ordinary celibate be as healthy and vigorous as a

mated man? Is a spinster of thirty-eight a healthy human being? Can she be? I don't believe so. Then why in thunder do we let her be? Here am I at a centre of learning and wisdom and I don't believe so; and there is nothing in all our colleges, libraries and roomsfull of wiseacres here, to settle that plain question for me, plainly and finally. My life is a grubby torment of cravings because it isn't settled. If sexual activity IS a part of the balance of life, if it IS a necessity, well let's set about making it accessible and harmless and have done with it. Swedish exercises. That sort of thing. If it isn't, if it can be reduced and done without, then let us set about teaching people HOW to control themselves and reduce and get rid of this vehement passion. But all this muffled mystery, this pompous sneak's way we take with it!"

"But, Billy! How can one settle these things? It's a matter of idiosyncrasy. What is true for one man isn't true for another. There's infinite difference of temperaments!"

"Then why haven't we a classification of temperaments and a moral code for each sort? Why am I ruled by the way of life that is convenient for Rigdon the vegetarian and fits Bowler the saint like a glove? It isn't convenient for me. It fits me like a hair-shirt. Of course there are temperaments, but why can't we formulate them and exercise the elementary charity of recognizing that one man's health in these matters is another man's death? Some want love and gratification and some don't. There are people who want children and people who don't want to be bothered by children but who are full of vivid desires. There are people whose only happiness is chastity, and women who would rather

be courtesans than mothers. Some of us would concentrate upon a single passion or a single idea; others overflow with a miscellaneous--tenderness. Yes,--and you smile! Why spit upon and insult a miscellaneous tenderness, Benham? Why grin at it? Why try every one by the standards that suit oneself? We're savages, Benham, shamefaced savages, still. Shamefaced and persecuting.

"I was angry about sex by seventeen," he went on. "Every year I live I grow angrier."

His voice rose to a squeal of indignation as he talked.

"Think," he said, "of the amount of thinking and feeling about sex that is going on in Cambridge this morning. The hundreds out of these thousands full of it. A vast tank of cerebration. And we put none of it together; we work nothing out from that but poor little couplings and casual stories, patchings up of situations, misbehaviours, blunders, disease, trouble, escapes; and the next generation will start, and the next generation after that will start with nothing but your wisdom of the ages, which isn't wisdom at all, which is just awe and funk, taboos and mystery and the secretive cunning of the savage....

"What I really want to do is my work," said Prothero, going off quite unexpectedly again. "That is why all this business, this incessant craving and the shame of it and all makes me so infernally angry...."

11

"There I'm with you," cried Benham, struggling out of the thick torrent of Prothero's prepossessions. "What we want to do is our work."

He clung to his idea. He raised his voice to prevent Prothero getting the word again.

"It's this, that you call Work, that I call--what do I call it?--living the aristocratic life, which takes all the coarse simplicity out of this business. If it was only submission.... YOU think it is only submission--giving way.... It isn't only submission. We'd manage sex all right, we'd be the happy swine our senses would make us, if we didn't know all the time that there was something else to live for, something far more important. And different. Absolutely different and contradictory. So different that it cuts right across all these considerations. It won't fit in.... I don't know what this other thing is; it's what I want to talk about with you. But I know that it IS, in all my bones.... YOU know.... It demands control, it demands continence, it insists upon disregard."

But the ideas of continence and disregard were unpleasant ideas to Prothero that day.

"Mankind," said Benham, "is overcharged with this sex. It suffocates

us. It gives life only to consume it. We struggle out of the urgent necessities of a mere animal existence. We are not so much living as being married and given in marriage. All life is swamped in the love story...."

"Man is only overcharged because he is unsatisfied," said Prothero, sticking stoutly to his own view.

12

It was only as they sat at a little table in the orchard at Grantchester after their lunch that Benham could make head against Prothero and recover that largeness of outlook which had so easily touched the imagination of Amanda. And then he did not so much dispose of Prothero's troubles as soar over them. It is the last triumph of the human understanding to sympathize with desires we do not share, and to Benham who now believed himself to be loved beyond the chances of life, who was satisfied and tranquil and austerely content, it was impossible that Prothero's demands should seem anything more than the grotesque and squalid squealings of the beast that has to be overridden and rejected altogether. It is a freakish fact of our composition that these most intense feelings in life are just those that are most rapidly and completely forgotten; hate one may recall for years, but the magic of love and the flame of desire serve their purpose in our lives and

vanish, leaving no trace, like the snows of Venice. Benham was still not a year and a half from the meretricious delights of Mrs. Skelmersdale, and he looked at Prothero as a marble angel might look at a swine in its sty....

What he had now in mind was an expedition to Russia. When at last he could sufficiently release Prothero's attention, he unfolded the project that had been developing steadily in him since his honeymoon experience.

He had discovered a new reason for travelling. The last country we can see clearly, he had discovered, is our own country. It is as hard to see one's own country as it is to see the back of one's head. It is too much behind us, too much ourselves. But Russia is like England with everything larger, more vivid, cruder; one felt that directly one walked about St. Petersburg. St. Petersburg upon its Neva was like a savage untamed London on a larger Thames; they were seagull-haunted tidal cities, like no other capitals in Europe. The shipping and buildings mingled in their effects. Like London it looked over the heads of its own people to a limitless polyglot empire. And Russia was an aristocratic land, with a middle-class that had no pride in itself as a class; it had a British toughness and incompetence, a British disregard of logic and meticulous care. Russia, like England, was outside Catholic Christendom, it had a state church and the opposition to that church was not secularism but dissent. One could draw a score of such contrasted parallels. And now it was in a state of intolerable stress, that laid bare the elemental facts of a great social organization. It was having its South African war, its war at the other end of the earth, with a

certain defeat instead of a dubious victory....

"There is far more freedom for the personal life in Russia than in England," said Prothero, a little irrelevantly.

Benham went on with his discourse about Russia....

"At the college of Troitzka," said Prothero, "which I understand is a kind of monster Trinity unencumbered by a University, Binns tells me that although there is a profession of celibacy within the walls, the arrangements of the town and more particularly of the various hotels are conceived in a spirit of extreme liberality."

Benham hardly attended at all to these interruptions.

He went on to point out the elemental quality of the Russian situation. He led up to the assertion that to go to Russia, to see Russia, to try to grasp the broad outline of the Russian process, was the manifest duty of every responsible intelligence that was free to do as much. And so he was going, and if Prothero cared to come too--

"Yes," said Prothero, "I should like to go to Russia."

But throughout all their travel together that summer Benham was never able to lift Prothero away from his obsession. It was the substance of their talk as the Holland boat stood out past waiting destroyers and winking beacons and the lights of Harwich, into the smoothly undulating darkness of the North Sea; it rose upon them again as they sat over the cakes and cheese of a Dutch breakfast in the express for Berlin. Prothero filled the Sieges Allee with his complaints against nature and society, and distracted Benham in his contemplation of Polish agriculture from the windows of the train with turgid sexual liberalism. So that Benham, during this period until Prothero left him and until the tragic enormous spectacle of Russia in revolution took complete possession of him, was as it were thinking upon two floors. Upon the one he was thinking of the vast problems of a society of a hundred million people staggering on the verge of anarchy, and upon the other he was perplexed by the feverish inattention of Prothero to the tremendous things that were going on all about them. It was only presently when the serenity of his own private life began to be ruffled by disillusionment, that he began to realize the intimate connexion of these two systems of thought. Yet Prothero put it to him plainly enough.

"Inattentive," said Prothero, "of course I am inattentive. What is really the matter with all this--this social mess people are in here, is that nearly everybody is inattentive. These Big Things of yours, nobody is thinking of them really. Everybody is thinking about the Near Things that concern himself."

"The bombs they threw yesterday? The Cossacks and the whips?"

"Nudges. Gestures of inattention. If everybody was thinking of the Res Publica would there be any need for bombs?"

He pursued his advantage. "It's all nonsense to suppose people think of politics because they are in 'em. As well suppose that the passengers on a liner understand the engines, or soldiers a war. Before men can think of to-morrow, they must think of to-day. Before they can think of others, they must be sure about themselves. First of all, food; the private, the personal economic worry. Am I safe for food? Then sex, and until one is tranquil and not ashamed, not irritated and dissatisfied, how can one care for other people, or for next year or the Order of the World? How can one, Benham?"

He seized the illustration at hand. "Here we are in Warsaw--not a month after bomb-throwing and Cossack charging. Windows have still to be mended, smashed doors restored. There's blood-stains still on some of the houses. There are hundreds of people in the Citadel and in the Ochrana prison. This morning there were executions. Is it anything more than an eddy in the real life of the place? Watch the customers in the shops, the crowd in the streets, the men in the cafes who stare at the passing women. They are all swallowed up again in their own business. They just looked up as the Cossacks galloped past; they just shifted a bit when the bullets spat...."

And when the streets of Moscow were agog with the grotesque amazing

adventure of the Potemkin mutineers, Prothero was in the full tide of the private romance that severed him from Benham and sent him back to Cambridge--changed.

Before they reached Moscow Benham was already becoming accustomed to disregard Prothero. He was looking over him at the vast heaving trouble of Russia, which now was like a sea that tumbles under the hurrying darknesses of an approaching storm. In those days it looked as though it must be an overwhelming storm. He was drinking in the wide and massive Russian effects, the drifting crowds in the entangling streets, the houses with their strange lettering in black and gold, the innumerable barbaric churches, the wildly driven droshkys, the sombre red fortress of the Kremlin, with its bulbous churches clustering up into the sky, the crosses, the innumerable gold crosses, the mad church of St. Basil, carrying the Russian note beyond the pitch of permissible caricature, and in this setting the obscure drama of clustering, staring, sash-wearing peasants, long-haired students, sane-eyed women, a thousand varieties of uniform, a running and galloping to and fro of messengers, a flutter of little papers, whispers, shouts, shots, a drama elusive and portentous, a gathering of forces, an accumulation of tension going on to a perpetual clash and clamour of bells. Benham had brought letters of introduction to a variety of people, some had vanished, it seemed. They were "away," the porters said, and they continued to be "away,"--it was the formula, he learnt, for arrest; others were evasive, a few showed themselves extraordinarily anxious to inform him about things, to explain themselves and things about them exhaustively. One young student took him to various meetings and showed him in great detail the scene of

the recent murder of the Grand Duke Sergius. The buildings opposite the old French cannons were still under repair. "The assassin stood just here. The bomb fell there, look! right down there towards the gate; that was where they found his arm. He was torn to fragments. He was scraped up. He was mixed with the horses...."

Every one who talked spoke of the outbreak of revolution as a matter of days or at the utmost weeks. And whatever question Benham chose to ask these talkers were prepared to answer. Except one. "And after the revolution," he asked, "what then?..." Then they waved their hands, and failed to convey meanings by reassuring gestures.

He was absorbed in his effort to understand this universal ominous drift towards a conflict. He was trying to piece together a process, if it was one and the same process, which involved riots in Lodz, fighting at Libau, wild disorder at Odessa, remote colossal battlings in Manchuria, the obscure movements of a disastrous fleet lost somewhere now in the Indian seas, steaming clumsily to its fate, he was trying to rationalize it all in his mind, to comprehend its direction. He was struggling strenuously with the obscurities of the language in which these things were being discussed about him, a most difficult language demanding new sets of visual images because of its strange alphabet. Is it any wonder that for a time he failed to observe that Prothero was involved in some entirely disconnected affair.

They were staying at the big Cosmopolis bazaar in the Theatre Square. Thither, through the doors that are opened by distraught-looking men

with peacocks' feathers round their caps, came Benham's friends and guides to take him out and show him this and that. At first Prothero always accompanied Benham on these expeditions; then he began to make excuses. He would stay behind in the hotel. Then when Benham returned Prothero would have disappeared. When the porter was questioned about Prothero his nescience was profound.

One night no Prothero was discoverable at any hour, and Benham, who wanted to discuss a project for going on to Kieff and Odessa, was alarmed.

"Moscow is a late place," said Benham's student friend. "You need not be anxious until after four or five in the morning. It will be quite time--QUITE time to be anxious to-morrow. He may be--close at hand."

When Benham hunted up Prothero in his room next morning he found him sleepy and irritable.

"I don't trouble if YOU are late," said Prothero, sitting up in his bed with a red resentful face and crumpled hair. "I wasn't born yesterday."

"I wanted to talk about leaving Moscow."

"I don't want to leave Moscow."

"But Odessa--Odessa is the centre of interest just now."

"I want to stay in Moscow."

Benham looked baffled.

Prothero stuck up his knees and rested his night-shirted arms upon them. "I don't want to leave Moscow," he said, "and I'm not going to do so."

"But haven't we done--"

Prothero interrupted. "You may. But I haven't. We're not after the same things. Things that interest you, Benham, don't interest me. I've found--different things."

His expression was extraordinarily defiant.

"I want," he went on, "to put our affairs on a different footing. Now you've opened the matter we may as well go into it. You were good enough to bring me here.... There was a sort of understanding we were working together.... We aren't.... The long and short of it is, Benham, I want to pay you for my journey here and go on my own--independently."

His eye and voice achieved a fierceness that Benham found nearly incredible in him.

Something that had got itself overlooked in the press of other matters jerked back into Benham's memory. It popped back so suddenly that for an instant he wanted to laugh. He turned towards the window, picked his

way among Prothero's carelessly dropped garments, and stood for a moment staring into the square, with its drifting, assembling and dispersing fleet of trains and its long line of blue-coated IZVOSHTCHIKS. Then he turned.

"Billy," he said, "didn't I see you the other evening driving towards the Hermitage?"

"Yes," said Prothero, and added, "that's it."

"You were with a lady."

"And she IS a lady," said Prothero, so deeply moved that his face twitched as though he was going to weep.

"She's a Russian?"

"She had an English mother. Oh, you needn't stand there and look so damned ironical! She's--she's a woman. She's a thing of kindness...."

He was too full to go on.

"Billy, old boy," said Benham, distressed, "I don't want to be ironical--"

Prothero had got his voice again.

"You'd better know," he said, "you'd better know. She's one of those women who live in this hotel."

"Live in this hotel!"

"On the fourth floor. Didn't you know? It's the way in most of these big Russian hotels. They come down and sit about after lunch and dinner. A woman with a yellow ticket. Oh! I don't care. I don't care a rap. She's been kind to me; she's--she's dear to me. How are you to understand? I shall stop in Moscow. I shall take her to England. I can't live without her, Benham. And then-- And then you come worrying me to come to your damned Odessa!"

And suddenly this extraordinary young man put his hands to his face as though he feared to lose it and would hold it on, and after an apoplectic moment burst noisily into tears. They ran between his fingers. "Get out of my room," he shouted, suffocatingly. "What business have you to come prying on me?"

Benham sat down on a chair in the middle of the room and stared round-eyed at his friend. His hands were in his pockets. For a time he said nothing.

"Billy," he began at last, and stopped again. "Billy, in this country somehow one wants to talk like a Russian. Billy, my dear--I'm not your father, I'm not your judge. I'm--unreasonably fond of you. It's not my business to settle what is right or wrong for you. If you want to stay

in Moscow, stay in Moscow. Stay here, and stay as my guest...."

He stopped and remained staring at his friend for a little space.

"I didn't know," said Prothero brokenly; "I didn't know it was possible to get so fond of a person...."

Benham stood up. He had never found Prothero so attractive and so abominable in his life before.

"I shall go to Odessa alone, Billy. I'll make things all right here before I go...."

He closed the door behind him and went in a state of profound thought to his own room....

Presently Prothero came to him with a vague inopportune desire to explain what so evidently did not need explaining. He walked about the room trying ways of putting it, while Benham packed.

In an unaccountable way Prothero's bristling little mind seemed to have shrunken to something sleek and small.

"I wish," he said, "you could stay for a later train and have lunch and meet her. She's not the ordinary thing. She's--different."

Benham plumbed depths of wisdom. "Billy," he said, "no woman IS the

ordinary thing. They are all--different...."

14

For a time this affair of Prothero's seemed to be a matter as disconnected from the Research Magnificent as one could imagine any matter to be. While Benham went from Moscow and returned, and travelled hither and thither, and involved himself more and more in the endless tangled threads of the revolutionary movement in Russia, Prothero was lost to all those large issues in the development of his personal situation. He contributed nothing to Benham's thought except attempts at discouragement. He reiterated his declaration that all the vast stress and change of Russian national life was going on because it was universally disregarded. "I tell you, as I told you before, that nobody is attending. You think because all Moscow, all Russia, is in the picture, that everybody is concerned. Nobody is concerned. Nobody cares what is happening. Even the men who write in newspapers and talk at meetings about it don't care. They are thinking of their dinners, of their clothes, of their money, of their wives. They hurry home...."

That was his excuse.

Manifestly it was an excuse.

His situation developed into remarkable complications of jealousy and divided counsels that Benham found altogether incomprehensible. To Benham in those days everything was very simple in this business of love. The aristocrat had to love ideally; that was all. He had to love Amanda. He and Amanda were now very deeply in love again, more in love, he felt, than they had ever been before. They were now writing love-letters to each other and enjoying a separation that was almost voluptuous. She found in the epistolatory treatment of her surrender to him and to the natural fate of women, a delightful exercise for her very considerable powers of expression. Life pointed now wonderfully to the great time ahead when there would be a Cheetah cub in the world, and meanwhile the Cheetah loped about the wild world upon a mighty quest. In such terms she put it. Such foolishness written in her invincibly square and youthful hand went daily from London to Russia, and stacked up against his return in the porter's office at the Cosmopolis Bazaar or pursued him down through the jarring disorders of south-west Russia, or waited for him at ill-chosen post-offices that deflected his journeyings wastefully or in several instances went altogether astray. Perhaps they supplied self-educating young strikers in the postal service with useful exercises in the deciphering of manuscript English. He wrote back five hundred different ways of saying that he loved her extravagantly....

It seemed to Benham in those days that he had found the remedy and solution of all those sexual perplexities that distressed the world; Heroic Love to its highest note--and then you go about your business. It seemed impossible not to be happy and lift one's chin high and diffuse a bracing kindliness among the unfortunate multitudes who stewed in

affliction and hate because they had failed as yet to find this simple, culminating elucidation. And Prothero--Prothero, too, was now achieving the same grand elementariness, out of his lusts and protests and general physical squalor he had flowered into love. For a time it is true it made rather an ineffective companion of him, but this was the mere goose-stepping for the triumphal march; this way ultimately lay exaltation. Benham had had as yet but a passing glimpse of this Anglo-Russian, who was a lady and altogether unlike her fellows; he had seen her for a doubtful second or so as she and Prothero drove past him, and his impression was of a rather little creature, white-faced with dusky hair under a red cap, paler and smaller but with something in her, a quiet alertness, that gave her a touch of kinship with Amanda. And if she liked old Prothero-- And, indeed, she must like old Prothero or could she possibly have made him so deeply in love with her?

They must stick to each other, and then, presently, Prothero's soul would wake up and face the world again. What did it matter what she had been?

Through stray shots and red conflict, long tediums of strained anxiety and the physical dangers of a barbaric country staggering towards revolution, Benham went with his own love like a lamp within him and this affair of Prothero's reflecting its light, and he was quite prepared for the most sympathetic and liberal behaviour when he came back to Moscow to make the lady's acquaintance. He intended to help Prothero to marry and take her back to Cambridge, and to assist by every possible means in destroying and forgetting the official yellow ticket

that defined her status in Moscow. But he reckoned without either Prothero or the young lady in this expectation.

It only got to him slowly through his political preoccupations that there were obscure obstacles to this manifest course. Prothero hesitated; the lady expressed doubts.

On closer acquaintance her resemblance to Amanda diminished. It was chiefly a similarity of complexion. She had a more delicate face than Amanda, and its youthful brightness was deadened; she had none of Amanda's glow, and she spoke her mother's language with a pretty halting limp that was very different from Amanda's clear decisions.

She put her case compactly.

"I would not DO in Cambridge," she said with an infinitesimal glance at Prothero.

"Mr. Benham," she said, and her manner had the gravity of a woman of affairs, "now do you see me in Cambridge? Now do you see me? Kept outside the walls? In a little DATCHA? With no occupation? Just to amuse him."

And on another occasion when Prothero was not with her she achieved still completer lucidity.

"I would come if I thought he wanted me to come," she said. "But you see

if I came he would not want me to come. Because then he would have me and so he wouldn't want me. He would just have the trouble. And I am not sure if I should be happy in Cambridge. I am not sure I should be happy enough to make him happy. It is a very learned and intelligent and charming society, of course; but here, THINGS HAPPEN. At Cambridge nothing happens--there is only education. There is no revolution in Cambridge; there are not even sinful people to be sorry for.... And he says himself that Cambridge people are particular. He says they are liberal but very, very particular, and perhaps I could not always act my part well. Sometimes I am not always well behaved. When there is music I behave badly sometimes, or when I am bored. He says the Cambridge people are so liberal that they do not mind what you are, but he says they are so particular that they mind dreadfully how you are what you are.... So that it comes to exactly the same thing...."

"Anna Alexievna," said Benham suddenly, "are you in love with Prothero?"

Her manner became conscientiously scientific.

"He is very kind and very generous--too generous. He keeps sending for more money--hundreds of roubles, I try to prevent him."

"Were you EVER in love?"

"Of course. But it's all gone long ago. It was like being hungry. Only very fine hungry. Exquisite hungry.... And then being disgusted...."

"He is in love with you."

"What is love?" said Anna. "He is grateful. He is by nature grateful." She smiled a smile, like the smile of a pale Madonna who looks down on her bambino.

"And you love nothing?"

"I love Russia--and being alone, being completely alone. When I am dead perhaps I shall be alone. Not even my own body will touch me then."

Then she added, "But I shall be sorry when he goes."

Afterwards Benham talked to Prothero alone. "Your Anna," he said, "is rather wonderful. At first, I tell you now frankly I did not like her very much, I thought she looked 'used,' she drank vodka at lunch, she was gay, uneasily; she seemed a sham thing. All that was prejudice. She thinks; she's generous, she's fine."

"She's tragic," said Prothero as though it was the same thing.

He spoke as though he noted an objection. His next remark confirmed this impression. "That's why I can't take her back to Cambridge," he said.

"You see, Benham," he went on, "she's human. She's not really feminine. I mean, she's--unsexed. She isn't fitted to be a wife or a mother any more. We've talked about the possible life in England, very plainly.

I've explained what a household in Cambridge would mean.... It doesn't attract her.... In a way she's been let out from womanhood, forced out of womanhood, and I see now that when women are let out from womanhood there's no putting them back. I could give a lecture on Anna. I see now that if women are going to be wives and mothers and homekeepers and ladies, they must be got ready for it from the beginning, sheltered, never really let out into the wild chances of life. She has been. Bitterly. She's REALLY emancipated. And it's let her out into a sort of nothingness. She's no longer a woman, and she isn't a man. She ought to be able to go on her own--like a man. But I can't take her back to Cambridge. Even for her sake."

His perplexed eyes regarded Benham.

"You won't be happy in Cambridge--alone," said Benham.

"Oh, damnably not! But what can I do? I had at first some idea of coming to Moscow for good--teaching."

He paused. "Impossible. I'm worth nothing here. I couldn't have kept her."

"Then what are you going to do, Billy?"

"I don't KNOW what I'm going to do, I tell you. I live for the moment. To-morrow we are going out into the country."

"I don't understand," said Benham with a gesture of resignation. "It seems to me that if a man and woman love each other--well, they insist upon each other. What is to happen to her if you leave her in Moscow?"

"Damnation! Is there any need to ask that?"

"Take her to Cambridge, man. And if Cambridge objects, teach Cambridge better manners."

Prothero's face was suddenly transfigured with rage.

"I tell you she won't come!" he said.

"Billy!" said Benham, "you should make her!"

"I can't."

"If a man loves a woman he can make her do anything--"

"But I don't love her like that," said Prothero, shrill with anger. "I tell you I don't love her like that."

Then he lunged into further deeps. "It's the other men," he said, "it's the things that have been. Don't you understand? Can't you understand? The memories--she must have memories--they come between us. It's something deeper than reason. It's in one's spine and under one's nails. One could do anything, I perceive, for one's very own woman...."

"MAKE her your very own woman, said the exponent of heroic love.

"I shirk deeds, Benham, but you shirk facts. How could any man make her his very own woman now? You--you don't seem to understand--ANYTHING. She's nobody's woman--for ever. That--that might-have-been has gone for ever.... It's nerves--a passion of the nerves. There's a cruelty in life and-- She's KIND to me. She's so kind to me...."

And then again Prothero was weeping like a vexed child.

15

The end of Prothero's first love affair came to Benham in broken fragments in letters. When he looked for Anna Alexievna in December--he never learnt her surname--he found she had left the Cosmopolis Bazaar soon after Prothero's departure and he could not find whither she had gone. He never found her again. Moscow and Russia had swallowed her up.

Of course she and Prothero parted; that was a foregone conclusion. But Prothero's manner of parting succeeded in being at every phase a shock to Benham's ideas. It was clear he went off almost callously; it would seem there was very little crying. Towards the end it was evident that the two had quarrelled. The tears only came at the very end of all. It

was almost as if he had got through the passion and was glad to go. Then came regret, a regret that increased in geometrical proportion with every mile of distance.

In Warsaw it was that grief really came to Prothero. He had some hours there and he prowled the crowded streets, seeing girls and women happy with their lovers, abroad upon bright expeditions and full of delicious secrets, girls and women who ever and again flashed out some instant resemblance to Anna....

In Berlin he stopped a night and almost decided that he would go back. "But now I had the damned frontier," he wrote, "between us."

It was so entirely in the spirit of Prothero, Benham thought, to let the "damned frontier" tip the balance against him.

Then came a scrawl of passionate confession, so passionate that it seemed as if Prothero had been transfigured. "I can't stand this business," he wrote. "It has things in it, possibilities of emotional disturbance--you can have no idea! In the train--luckily I was alone in the compartment--I sat and thought, and suddenly, I could not help it, I was weeping--noisy weeping, an uproar! A beastly German came and stood in the corridor to stare. I had to get out of the train. It is disgraceful, it is monstrous we should be made like this....

"Here I am stranded in Hanover with nothing to do but to write to you about my dismal feelings...."

After that surely there was nothing before a broken-hearted Prothero but to go on with his trailing wing to Trinity and a life of inappeasable regrets; but again Benham reckoned without the invincible earthliness of his friend. Prothero stayed three nights in Paris.

"There is an extraordinary excitement about Paris," he wrote. "A levity. I suspect the gypsum in the subsoil--some as yet undescribed radiations. Suddenly the world looks brightly cynical.... None of those tear-compelling German emanations....

"And, Benham, I have found a friend.

"A woman. Of course you will laugh, you will sneer. You do not understand these things.... Yet they are so simple. It was the strangest accident brought us together. There was something that drew us together. A sort of instinct. Near the Boulevard Poissoniere...."

"Good heavens!" said Benham. "A sort of instinct!"

"I told her all about Anna!"

"Good Lord!" cried Benham.

"She understood. Perfectly. None of your so-called 'respectable' women could have understood.... At first I intended merely to talk to her...."

Benham crumpled the letter in his hand.

"Little Anna Alexievna!" he said, "you were too clean for him."

16

Benham had a vision of Prothero returning from all this foreign travel meekly, pensively, a little sadly, and yet not without a kind of relief, to the grey mildness of Trinity. He saw him, capped and gowned, and restored to academic dignity again, nodding greetings, resuming friendships.

The little man merged again into his rare company of discreet Benedicts and restrained celibates at the high tables. They ate on in their mature wisdom long after the undergraduates had fled. Presently they would withdraw processionally to the combination room....

There would be much to talk about over the wine.

Benham speculated what account Prothero would give of Moscow....

He laughed abruptly.

And with that laugh Prothero dropped out of Benham's world for a space

of years. There may have been other letters, but if so they were lost in the heaving troubles of a revolution-strained post-office. Perhaps to this day they linger sere and yellow in some forgotten pigeon-hole in Kishinev or Ekaterinoslav....

17

In November, after an adventure in the trader's quarter of Kieff which had brought him within an inch of death, and because an emotional wave had swept across him and across his correspondence with Amanda, Benham went back suddenly to England and her. He wanted very greatly to see her and also he wanted to make certain arrangements about his property. He returned by way of Hungary, and sent telegrams like shouts of excitement whenever the train stopped for a sufficient time. "Old Leopard, I am coming, I am coming," he telegraphed, announcing his coming for the fourth time. It was to be the briefest of visits, very passionate, the mutual refreshment of two noble lovers, and then he was returning to Russia again.

Amanda was at Chexington, and there he found her installed in the utmost dignity of expectant maternity. Like many other people he had been a little disposed to regard the bearing of children as a common human experience; at Chexington he came to think of it as a rare and sacramental function. Amanda had become very beautiful in quiet, grey,

dove-like tones; her sun-touched, boy's complexion had given way to a soft glow of the utmost loveliness, her brisk little neck that had always reminded him of the stalk of a flower was now softened and rounded; her eyes were tender, and she moved about the place in the manner of one who is vowed to a great sacrifice. She dominated the scene, and Lady Marayne, with a certain astonishment in her eyes and a smouldering disposition to irony, was the half-sympathetic, half-resentful priestess of her daughter-in-law's unparalleled immolation. The MOTIF of motherhood was everywhere, and at his bedside he found--it had been put there for him by Amanda--among much other exaltation of woman's mission, that most wonderful of all philoprogenitive stories, Hudson's CRYSTAL AGE.

Everybody at Chexington had an air of being grouped about the impending fact. An epidemic of internal troubles, it is true, kept Sir Godfrey in the depths of London society, but to make up for his absence Mrs. Morris had taken a little cottage down by the river and the Wilder girls were with her, both afire with fine and subtle feelings and both, it seemed, and more particularly Betty, prepared to be keenly critical of Benham's attitude.

He did a little miss his cue in these exaltations, because he had returned in a rather different vein of exaltation.

In missing it he was assisted by Amanda herself, who had at moments an effect upon him of a priestess confidentially disrobed. It was as if she put aside for him something official, something sincerely maintained,

necessary, but at times a little irksome. It was as if she was glad to take him into her confidence and unbend. Within the pre-natal Amanda an impish Amanda still lingered.

There were aspects of Amanda that it was manifest dear Betty must never know....

But the real Amanda of that November visit even in her most unpontifical moods did not quite come up to the imagined Amanda who had drawn him home across Europe. At times she was extraordinarily jolly. They had two or three happy walks about the Chexington woods; that year the golden weather of October had flowed over into November, and except for a carpet of green and gold under the horse-chestnuts most of the leaves were still on the trees. Gleams of her old wanton humour shone on him. And then would come something else, something like a shadow across the world, something he had quite forgotten since his idea of heroic love had flooded him, something that reminded him of those long explanations with Mr. Rathbone-Sanders that had never been explained, and of the curate in the doorway of the cottage and his unaccountable tears.

On the afternoon of his arrival at Chexington he was a little surprised to find Sir Philip Easton coming through the house into the garden, with an accustomed familiarity. Sir Philip perceived him with a start that was instantly controlled, and greeted him with unnatural ease.

Sir Philip, it seemed, was fishing and reading and playing cricket in the neighbourhood, which struck Benham as a poor way of spending the

summer, the sort of soft holiday a man learns to take from scholars and literary men. A man like Sir Philip, he thought, ought to have been aviating or travelling.

Moreover, when Sir Philip greeted Amanda it seemed to Benham that there was a flavour of established association in their manner. But then Sir Philip was also very assiduous with Lady Marayne. She called him "Pip," and afterwards Amanda called across the tennis-court to him, "Pip!" And then he called her "Amanda." When the Wilder girls came up to join the tennis he was just as brotherly....

The next day he came to lunch.

During that meal Benham became more aware than he had ever been before of the peculiar deep expressiveness of this young man's eyes. They watched him and they watched Amanda with a solicitude that seemed at once pained and tender. And there was something about Amanda, a kind of hard brightness, an impartiality and an air of something undefinably suspended, that gave Benham an intuitive certitude that that afternoon Sir Philip would be spoken to privately, and that then he would pack up and go away in a state of illumination from Chexington. But before he could be spoken to he contrived to speak to Benham.

They were left to smoke after lunch, and then it was he took advantage of a pause to commit his little indiscretion.

"Mrs. Benham," he said, "looks amazingly well--extraordinarily well,

don't you think?"

"Yes," said Benham, startled. "Yes. She certainly keeps very well."

"She misses you terribly," said Sir Philip; "it is a time when a woman misses her husband. But, of course, she does not want to hamper your work...."

Benham felt it was very kind of him to take so intimate an interest in these matters, but on the spur of the moment he could find no better expression for this than a grunt.

"You don't mind," said the young man with a slight catch in the breath that might have been apprehensive, "that I sometimes bring her books and flowers and things? Do what little I can to keep life interesting down here? It's not very congenial.... She's so wonderful--I think she is the most wonderful woman in the world."

Benham perceived that so far from being a modern aristocrat he was really a primitive barbarian in these matters.

"I've no doubt," he said, "that my wife has every reason to be grateful for your attentions."

In the little pause that followed Benham had a feeling that Sir Philip was engendering something still more personal. If so, he might be constrained to invert very gently but very firmly the bowl of

chrysanthemums over Sir Philip's head, or kick him in an improving manner. He had a ridiculous belief that Sir Philip would probably take anything of the sort very touchingly. He scrambled in his mind for some remark that would avert this possibility.

"Have you ever been in Russia?" he asked hastily. "It is the most wonderful country in Europe. I had an odd adventure near Kiev. During a pogrom."

And he drowned the developing situation in a flood of description....

But it was not so easy to drown the little things that were presently thrown out by Lady Marayne. They were so much more in the air....

18

Sir Philip suddenly got out of the picture even as Benham had foreseen.

"Easton has gone away," he remarked three days later to Amanda.

"I told him to go. He is a bore with you about. But otherwise he is rather a comfort, Cheetah." She meditated upon Sir Philip. "And he's an HONOURABLE man," she said. "He's safe...."

After that visit it was that the notes upon love and sex began in earnest. The scattered memoranda upon the perfectness of heroic love for the modern aristocrat ended abruptly. Instead there came the first draft for a study of jealousy. The note was written in pencil on Chexington notepaper and manifestly that had been supported on the ribbed cover of a book. There was a little computation in the corner, converting forty-five degrees Reaumur into degrees Fahrenheit, which made White guess it had been written in the Red Sea. But, indeed, it had been written in a rather amateurishly stoked corridor-train on Benham's journey to the gathering revolt in Moscow....

"I think I have been disposed to underrate the force of sexual jealousy.... I thought it was something essentially contemptible, something that one dismissed and put behind oneself in the mere effort to be aristocratic, but I begin to realize that it is not quite so easily settled with....

"One likes to know.... Possibly one wants to know too much.... In phases of fatigue, and particularly in phases of sleeplessness, when one is leaving all that one cares for behind, it becomes an irrational torment....

"And it is not only in oneself that I am astonished by the power of this base motive. I see, too, in the queer business of Prothero how strongly

jealousy, how strongly the sense of proprietorship, weighs with a man....

"There is no clear reason why one should insist upon another human being being one's ownest own--utterly one's own....

"There is, of course, no clear reason for most human motives....

"One does....

"There is something dishonouring in distrust--to both the distrusted and the one who distrusts...."

After that, apparently, it had been too hot and stuffy to continue.

20

Benham did not see Amanda again until after the birth of their child. He spent his Christmas in Moscow, watching the outbreak, the fitful fighting and the subsequent break-up, of the revolution, and taking care of a lost and helpless English family whose father had gone astray temporarily on the way home from Baku. Then he went southward to Rostov and thence to Astrakhan. Here he really began his travels. He determined to get to India by way of Herat and for the first time in his life rode out into an altogether lawless wilderness. He went on obstinately because he found himself disposed to funk the journey, and because discouragements were put in his way. He was soon quite cut off from all the ways of living he had known. He learnt what it is to be flea-bitten, saddle-sore, hungry and, above all, thirsty. He was haunted by a dread of fever, and so contrived strange torments for himself with overdoses of quinine. He ceased to be traceable from Chexington in March, and he reappeared in the form of a telegram from Karachi demanding news in May. He learnt he was the father of a man-child and that all was well with Amanda.

He had not expected to be so long away from any communication with the outer world, and something in the nature of a stricken conscience took him back to England. He found a second William Porphyry in the world, dominating Chexington, and Amanda tenderly triumphant and passionate, the Madonna enthroned. For William Porphyry he could feel no emotion. William Porphyry was very red and ugly and protesting, feeble and

aggressive, a matter for a skilled nurse. To see him was to ignore him and dispel a dream. It was to Amanda Benham turned again.

For some days he was content to adore his Madonna and listen to the familiar flatteries of her love. He was a leaner, riper man, Amanda said, and wiser, so that she was afraid of him....

And then he became aware that she was requiring him to stay at her side. "We have both had our adventures," she said, which struck him as an odd phrase.

It forced itself upon his obstinate incredulity that all those conceptions of heroic love and faithfulness he had supposed to be so clearly understood between them had vanished from her mind. She had absolutely forgotten that twilight moment at the window which had seemed to him the crowning instant, the real marriage of their lives. It had gone, it had left no recoverable trace in her. And upon his interpretations of that he had loved her passionately for a year. She was back at exactly the ideas and intentions that ruled her during their first settlement in London. She wanted a joint life in the social world of London, she demanded his presence, his attention, the daily practical evidences of love. It was all very well for him to be away when the child was coming, but now everything was different. Now he must stay by her.

This time he argued no case. These issues he had settled for ever. Even an indignant dissertation from Lady Marayne, a dissertation that began

with appeals and ended in taunts, did not move him. Behind these things now was India. The huge problems of India had laid an unshakeable hold upon his imagination. He had seen Russia, and he wanted to balance that picture by a vision of the east....

He saw Easton only once during a week-end at Chexington. The young man displayed no further disposition to be confidentially sentimental. But he seemed to have something on his mind. And Amanda said not a word about him. He was a young man above suspicion, Benham felt....

And from his departure the quality of the correspondence of these two larger carnivores began to change. Except for the repetition of accustomed endearments, they ceased to be love letters in any sense of the word. They dealt chiefly with the "Cub," and even there Benham felt presently that the enthusiasm diminished. A new amazing quality for Amanda appeared--triteness. The very writing of her letters changed as though it had suddenly lost backbone. Her habitual liveliness of phrasing lost its point. Had she lost her animation? Was she ill unknowingly? Where had the light gone? It was as if her attention was distracted.... As if every day when she wrote her mind was busy about something else.

Abruptly at last he understood. A fact that had never been stated, never formulated, never in any way admitted, was suddenly pointed to convergently by a thousand indicating fingers, and beyond question perceived to be THERE....

He left a record of that moment of realization.

"Suddenly one night I woke up and lay still, and it was as if I had never seen Amanda before. Now I saw her plainly, I saw her with that same dreadful clearness that sometimes comes at dawn, a pitiless, a scientific distinctness that has neither light nor shadow....

"Of course," I said, and then presently I got up very softly....

"I wanted to get out of my intolerable, close, personal cabin. I wanted to feel the largeness of the sky. I went out upon the deck. We were off the coast of Madras, and when I think of that moment, there comes back to me also the faint flavour of spice in the air, the low line of the coast, the cool flooding abundance of the Indian moonlight, the swish of the black water against the side of the ship. And a perception of infinite loss, as if the limitless heavens above this earth and below to the very uttermost star were just one boundless cavity from which delight had fled....

"Of course I had lost her. I knew it with absolute certainty. I knew it from her insecure temperament, her adventurousness, her needs. I knew it from every line she had written me in the last three months. I knew it intuitively. She had been unfaithful. She must have been unfaithful.

"What had I been dreaming about to think that it would not be so?"

"Now let me write down plainly what I think of these matters. Let me be at least honest with myself, whatever self-contradictions I may have been led into by force of my passions. Always I have despised jealousy....

"Only by the conquest of four natural limitations is the aristocratic life to be achieved. They come in a certain order, and in that order the spirit of man is armed against them less and less efficiently. Of fear and my struggle against fear I have told already. I am fearful. I am a physical coward until I can bring shame and anger to my assistance, but in overcoming fear I have been helped by the whole body of human tradition. Every one, the basest creatures, every Hottentot, every stunted creature that ever breathed poison in a slum, knows that the instinctive constitution of man is at fault here and that fear is shameful and must be subdued. The race is on one's side. And so there is a vast traditional support for a man against the Second Limitation, the limitation of physical indulgence. It is not so universal as the first, there is a grinning bawling humour on the side of grossness, but common pride is against it. And in this matter my temperament has been my help: I am fastidious, I eat little, drink little, and feel a shivering recoil from excess. It is no great virtue; it happens so; it is something in the nerves of my skin. I cannot endure myself unshaven or in any way unclean; I am tormented by dirty hands or dirty blood or dirty memories, and after I had once loved Amanda I could not--unless some irrational

impulse to get equal with her had caught me--have broken my faith to her, whatever breach there was in her faith to me....

"I see that in these matters I am cleaner than most men and more easily clean; and it may be that it is in the vein of just that distinctive virtue that I fell so readily into a passion of resentment and anger.

"I despised a jealous man. There is a traditional discredit of jealousy, not so strong as that against cowardice, but still very strong. But the general contempt of jealousy is curiously wrapped up with the supposition that there is no cause for jealousy, that it is unreasonable suspicion. Given a cause then tradition speaks with an uncertain voice....

"I see now that I despised jealousy because I assumed that it was impossible for Amanda to love any one but me; it was intolerable to imagine anything else, I insisted upon believing that she was as fastidious as myself and as faithful as myself, made indeed after my image, and I went on disregarding the most obvious intimations that she was not, until that still moment in the Indian Ocean, when silently, gently as a drowned body might rise out of the depths of a pool, that knowledge of love dead and honour gone for ever floated up into my consciousness.

"And then I felt that Amanda had cheated me! Outrageously. Abominably.

"Now, so far as my intelligence goes, there is not a cloud upon this

question. My demand upon Amanda was outrageous and I had no right whatever to her love or loyalty. I must have that very clear....

"This aristocratic life, as I conceive it, must be, except accidentally here and there, incompatible with the domestic life. It means going hither and thither in the universe of thought as much as in the universe of matter, it means adventure, it means movement and adventure that must needs be hopelessly encumbered by an inseparable associate, it means self-imposed responsibilities that will not fit into the welfare of a family. In all ages, directly society had risen above the level of a barbaric tribal village, this need of a release from the family for certain necessary types of people has been recognized. It was met sometimes informally, sometimes formally, by the growth and establishment of special classes and orders, of priests, monks, nuns, of pledged knights, of a great variety of non-family people, whose concern was the larger collective life that opens out beyond the simple necessities and duties and loyalties of the steading and of the craftsman's house. Sometimes, but not always, that release took the form of celibacy; but besides that there have been a hundred institutional variations of the common life to meet the need of the special man, the man who must go deep and the man who must go far. A vowed celibacy ceased to be a tolerable rule for an aristocracy directly the eugenic idea entered the mind of man, because a celibate aristocracy means the abandonment of the racial future to a proletariat of base unleaderly men. That was plain to Plato. It was plain to Campanelea. It was plain to the Protestant reformers. But the world has never yet gone on to the next step beyond that recognition, to the recognition of feminine

aristocrats, rulers and the mates of rulers, as untrammelled by domestic servitudes and family relationships as the men of their kind. That I see has always been my idea since in my undergraduate days I came under the spell of Plato. It was a matter of course that my first gift to Amanda should be his REPUBLIC. I loved Amanda transfigured in that dream....

"There are no such women....

"It is no excuse for me that I thought she was like-minded with myself. I had no sound reason for supposing that. I did suppose that. I did not perceive that not only was she younger than myself, but that while I had been going through a mill of steely education, kept close, severely exercised, polished by discussion, she had but the weak training of a not very good school, some scrappy reading, the vague discussions of village artists, and the draped and decorated novelties of the 'advanced.' It all went to nothing on the impact of the world.... She showed herself the woman the world has always known, no miracle, and the alternative was for me to give myself to her in the ancient way, to serve her happiness, to control her and delight and companion her, or to let her go.

"The normal woman centres upon herself; her mission is her own charm and her own beauty and her own setting; her place is her home. She demands the concentration of a man. Not to be able to command that is her failure. Not to give her that is to shame her. As I had shamed Amanda...."

"There are no such women." He had written this in and struck it out, and then at some later time written it in again. There it stayed now as his last persuasion, but it set White thinking and doubting. And, indeed, there was another sheet of pencilled broken stuff that seemed to glance at quite another type of womanhood.

"It is clear that the women aristocrats who must come to the remaking of the world will do so in spite of limitations at least as great as those from which the aristocratic spirit of man escapes. These women must become aristocratic through their own innate impulse, they must be self-called to their lives, exactly as men must be; there is no making an aristocrat without a predisposition for rule and nobility. And they have to discover and struggle against just exactly the limitations that we have to struggle against. They have to conquer not only fear but indulgence, indulgence of a softer, more insidious quality, and jealousy--proprietorship....

"It is as natural to want a mate as to want bread, and a thousand times in my work and in my wanderings I have thought of a mate and desired a mate. A mate--not a possession. It is a need almost naively simple. If only one could have a woman who thought of one and with one! Though she were on the other side of the world and busied about a thousand things....

"'WITH one,' I see it must be rather than 'OF one.' That 'of one' is just the unexpurgated egotistical demand coming back again....

"Man is a mating creature. It is not good to be alone. But mating means a mate....

"We should be lovers, of course; that goes without saying....

"And yet not specialized lovers, not devoted, ATTENDING lovers. 'Dancing attendance'--as they used to say. We should meet upon our ways as the great carnivores do....

"That at any rate was a sound idea. Though we only played with it.

"But that mate desire is just a longing that can have no possible satisfaction now for me. What is the good of dreaming? Life and chance have played a trick upon my body and soul. I am mated, though I am mated to a phantom. I loved and I love Arnanda, not Easton's Amanda, but Amanda in armour, the Amanda of my dreams. Sense, and particularly the sense of beauty, lies deeper than reason in us. There can be no mate for me now unless she comes with Amanda's voice and Amanda's face and Amanda's quick movements and her clever hands...."

"Why am I so ungrateful to her still for all the happiness she gave me?

"There were things between us two as lovers,--love, things more beautiful than anything else in the world, things that set the mind hunting among ineffectual images in a search for impossible expression, images of sunlight shining through blood-red petals, images of moonlight in a scented garden, of marble gleaming in the shade, of far-off wonderful music heard at dusk in a great stillness, of fairies dancing softly, of floating happiness and stirring delights, of joys as keen and sudden as the knife of an assassin, assassin's knives made out of tears, tears that are happiness, wordless things; and surprises, expectations, gratitudes, sudden moments of contemplation, the sight of a soft eyelid closed in sleep, shadowy tones in the sound of a voice heard unexpectedly; sweet, dear magical things that I can find no words for....

"If she was a goddess to me, should it be any affair of mine that she was not a goddess to herself; that she could hold all this that has been between us more cheaply than I did? It does not change one jot of it for me. At the time she did not hold it cheaply. She forgets where I do not forget...."

Such were the things that Benham could think and set down.

Yet for whole days he was possessed by the thought of killing Amanda and himself.

He did not at once turn homeward. It was in Ceylon that he dropped his work and came home. At Colombo he found a heap of letters awaiting him, and there were two of these that had started at the same time. They had been posted in London on one eventful afternoon. Lady Marayne and Amanda had quarrelled violently. Two earnest, flushed, quick-breathing women, full of neat but belated repartee, separated to write their simultaneous letters. Each letter trailed the atmosphere of that truncated encounter. Lady Marayne told her story ruthlessly. Amanda, on the other hand, generalized, and explained. Sir Philip's adoration of her was a love-friendship, it was beautiful, it was pure. Was there no trust nor courage in the world? She would defy all jealous scandal. She would not even banish him from her side. Surely the Cheetah could trust her. But the pitiless facts of Lady Marayne went beyond Amanda's explaining. The little lady's dignity had been stricken. "I have been used as a cloak," she wrote.

Her phrases were vivid. She quoted the very words of Amanda, words she had overheard at Chexington in the twilight. They were no invention. They were the very essence of Amanda, the lover. It was as sure as if

Benham had heard the sound of her voice, as if he had peeped and seen, as if she had crept by him, stooping and rustling softly. It brought back the living sense of her, excited, flushed, reckless; his wild-haired Amanda of infinite delight.... All day those words of hers pursued him. All night they flared across the black universe. He buried his face in the pillows and they whispered softly in his ear.

He walked his room in the darkness longing to smash and tear.

He went out from the house and shook his ineffectual fists at the stirring quiet of the stars.

He sent no notice of his coming back. Nor did he come back with a definite plan. But he wanted to get at Amanda.

It was with Amanda he had to reckon. Towards Easton he felt scarcely any anger at all. Easton he felt only existed for him because Amanda willed to have it so.

Such anger as Easton did arouse in him was a contemptuous anger. His devotion filled Benham with scorn. His determination to serve Amanda at any price, to bear the grossest humiliations and slights for her, his humility, his service and tenderness, his care for her moods and happiness, seemed to Benham a treachery to human nobility. That rage against Easton was like the rage of a trade-unionist against a blackleg. Are all the women to fall to the men who will be their master-slaves and keepers? But it was not simply that Benham felt men must be freed from this incessant attendance; women too must free themselves from their almost instinctive demand for an attendant....

His innate disposition was to treat women as responsible beings. Never in his life had he thought of a woman as a pretty thing to be fooled and won and competed for and fought over. So that it was Amanda he wanted to reach and reckon with now, Amanda who had mated and ruled his senses only to fling him into this intolerable pit of shame and jealous fury. But the forces that were driving him home now were the forces below the level of reason and ideas, organic forces compounded of hate and desire, profound aboriginal urgencies. He thought, indeed, very little as he lay in his berth or sulked on deck; his mind lay waste under a pitiless

invasion of exasperating images that ever and again would so wring him that his muscles would tighten and his hands clench or he would find himself restraining a snarl, the threat of the beast, in his throat.

Amanda grew upon his imagination until she overshadowed the whole world. She filled the skies. She bent over him and mocked him. She became a mystery of passion and dark beauty. She was the sin of the world. One breathed her in the winds of the sea. She had taken to herself the greatness of elemental things....

So that when at last he saw her he was amazed to see her, and see that she was just a creature of common size and quality, a rather tired and very frightened-looking white-faced young woman, in an evening-dress of unfamiliar fashion, with little common trinkets of gold and colour about her wrists and neck.

In that instant's confrontation he forgot all that had brought him homeward. He stared at her as one stares at a stranger whom one has greeted in mistake for an intimate friend.

For he saw that she was no more the Amanda he hated and desired to kill than she had ever been the Amanda he had loved.

He took them by surprise. It had been his intention to take them by surprise. Such is the inelegance of the jealous state.

He reached London in the afternoon and put up at a hotel near Charing Cross. In the evening about ten he appeared at the house in Lancaster Gate. The butler was deferentially amazed. Mrs. Benham was, he said, at a theatre with Sir Philip Easton, and he thought some other people also. He did not know when she would be back. She might go on to supper. It was not the custom for the servants to wait up for her.

Benham went into the study that reduplicated his former rooms in Finacue Street and sat down before the fire the butler lit for him. He sent the man to bed, and fell into profound meditation.

It was nearly two o'clock when he heard the sound of her latchkey and went out at once upon the landing.

The half-door stood open and Easton's car was outside. She stood in the middle of the hall and relieved Easton of the gloves and fan he was carrying.

"Good-night," she said, "I am so tired."

"My wonderful goddess," he said.

She yielded herself to his accustomed embrace, then started, stared, and wrenched herself out of his arms.

Benham stood at the top of the stairs looking down upon them, white-faced and inexpressive. Easton dropped back a pace. For a moment no one moved nor spoke, and then very quietly Easton shut the half-door and shut out the noises of the road.

For some seconds Benham regarded them, and as he did so his spirit changed....

Everything he had thought of saying and doing vanished out of his mind.

He stuck his hands into his pockets and descended the staircase. When he was five or six steps above them, he spoke. "Just sit down here," he said, with a gesture of one hand, and sat down himself upon the stairs. "DO sit down," he said with a sudden testiness as they continued standing. "I know all about this affair. Do please sit down and let us talk.... Everybody's gone to bed long ago."

"Cheetah!" she said. "Why have you come back like this?"

Then at his mute gesture she sat down at his feet.

"I wish you would sit down, Easton," he said in a voice of subdued savagery.

"Why have you come back?" Sir Philip Easton found his voice to ask.

"SIT down," Benham spat, and Easton obeyed unwillingly.

"I came back," Benham went on, "to see to all this. Why else? I don't--now I see you--feel very fierce about it. But it has distressed me. You look changed, Amanda, and fagged. And your hair is untidy. It's as if something had happened to you and made you a stranger.... You two people are lovers. Very natural and simple, but I want to get out of it. Yes, I want to get out of it. That wasn't quite my idea, but now I see it is. It's queer, but on the whole I feel sorry for you. All of us, poor humans--. There's reason to be sorry for all of us. We're full of lusts and uneasiness and resentments that we haven't the will to control. What do you two people want me to do to you? Would you like a divorce, Amanda? It's the clean, straight thing, isn't it? Or would the scandal hurt you?"

Amanda sat crouched together, with her eyes on Benham.

"Give us a divorce," said Easton, looking to her to confirm him.

Amanda shook her head.

"I don't want a divorce," she said.

"Then what do you want?" asked Benham with sudden asperity.

"I don't want a divorce," she repeated. "Why do you, after a long silence, come home like this, abruptly, with no notice?"

"It was the way it took me," said Benham, after a little interval.

"You have left me for long months."

"Yes. I was angry. And it was ridiculous to be angry. I thought I wanted to kill you, and now I see you I see that all I want to do is to help you out of this miserable mess--and then get away from you. You two would like to marry. You ought to be married."

"I would die to make Amanda happy," said Easton.

"Your business, it seems to me, is to live to make her happy. That you may find more of a strain. Less tragic and more tiresome. I, on the other hand, want neither to die nor live for her." Amanda moved sharply. "It's extraordinary what amazing vapours a lonely man may get into his head. If you don't want a divorce then I suppose things might go on as they are now."

"I hate things as they are now," said Easton. "I hate this falsehood and deception."

"You would hate the scandal just as much," said Amanda.

"I would not care what the scandal was unless it hurt you."

"It would be only a temporary inconvenience," said Benham. "Every one would sympathize with you.... The whole thing is so natural.... People would be glad to forget very soon. They did with my mother."

"No," said Amanda, "it isn't so easy as that."

She seemed to come to a decision.

"Pip," she said. "I want to talk to--HIM--alone."

Easton's brown eyes were filled with distress and perplexity. "But why?" he asked.

"I do," she said.

"But this is a thing for US."

"Pip, I want to talk to him alone. There is something--something I can't say before you...."

Sir Philip rose slowly to his feet.

"Shall I wait outside?"

"No, Pip. Go home. Yes,--there are some things you must leave to me."

She stood up too and turned so that she and Benham both faced the younger man. The strangest uneasiness mingled with his resolve to be at any cost splendid. He felt--and it was a most unexpected and disconcerting feeling--that he was no longer confederated with Amanda; that prior, more fundamental and greater associations prevailed over his little new grip upon her mind and senses. He stared at husband and wife aghast in this realization. Then his resolute romanticism came to his help. "I would trust you--" he began. "If you tell me to go--"

Amanda seemed to measure her hold upon him.

She laid her hand upon his arm. "Go, my dear Pip," she said. "Go."

He had a moment of hesitation, of anguish, and it seemed to Benham as though he eked himself out with unreality, as though somewhen, somewhere, he had seen something of the sort in a play and filled in a gap that otherwise he could not have supplied.

Then the door had closed upon him, and Amanda, pale and darkly dishevelled, faced her husband, silently and intensely.

"WELL?" said Benham.

She held out her arms to him.

"Why did you leave me, Cheetah? Why did you leave me?"

Benham affected to ignore those proffered arms. But they recalled in a swift rush the animal anger that had brought him back to England. To remind him of desire now was to revive an anger stronger than any desire. He spoke seeking to hurt her.

"I am wondering now," he said, "why the devil I came back."

"You had to come back to me."

"I could have written just as well about these things."

"CHEETAH," she said softly, and came towards him slowly, stooping forward and looking into his eyes, "you had to come back to see your old Leopard. Your wretched Leopard. Who has rolled in the dirt. And is still yours."

"Do you want a divorce? How are we to fix things, Amanda?"

"Cheetah, I will tell you how we will fix things."

She dropped upon the step below him. She laid her hands with a deliberate softness upon him, she gave a toss so that her disordered hair was a little more disordered, and brought her soft chin down to touch his knees. Her eyes implored him.

"Cheetah," she said. "You are going to forgive."

He sat rigid, meeting her eyes.

"Amanda," he said at last, "you would be astonished if I kicked you away from me and trampled over you to the door. That is what I want to do."

"Do it," she said, and the grip of her hands tightened. "Cheetah, dear! I would love you to kill me."

"I don't want to kill you."

Her eyes dilated. "Beat me."

"And I haven't the remotest intention of making love to you," he said, and pushed her soft face and hands away from him as if he would stand up.

She caught hold of him again. "Stay with me," she said.

He made no effort to shake off her grip. He looked at the dark cloud of her hair that had ruled him so magically, and the memory of old delights made him grip a great handful almost inadvertently as he spoke. "Dear Leopard," he said, "we humans are the most streaky of conceivable things. I thought I hated you. I do. I hate you like poison. And also I do not hate you at all."

Then abruptly he was standing over her.

She rose to her knees.

"Stay here, old Cheetah!" she said. "This is your house. I am your wife."

He went towards the unfastened front door.

"Cheetah!" she cried with a note of despair.

He halted at the door.

"Amanda, I will come to-morrow. I will come in the morning, in the sober London daylight, and then we will settle things."

He stared at her, and to her amazement he smiled. He spoke as one who remarks upon a quite unexpected fact....

"Never in my life, Amanda, have I seen a human being that I wanted so little to kill."

White found a fragment that might have been written within a week of those last encounters of Benham and Amanda.

"The thing that astonished me most in Amanda was the change in her mental quality.

"With me in the old days she had always been a sincere person; she had deceived me about facts, but she had never deceived me about herself. Her personal, stark frankness had been her essential strength. And it was gone. I came back to find Amanda an accomplished actress, a thing of poses and calculated effects. She was a surface, a sham, a Lorelei. Beneath that surface I could not discover anything individual at all. Fear and a grasping quality, such as God gave us all when he gave us hands; but the individual I knew, the humorous wilful Spotless Leopard was gone. Whither, I cannot imagine. An amazing disappearance. Clean out of space and time like a soul lost for ever.

"When I went to see her in the morning, she was made up for a scene, she acted an intricate part, never for a moment was she there in reality....

"I have got a remarkable persuasion that she lost herself in this way, by cheapening love, by making base love to a lover she despised.... There can be no inequality in love. Give and take must balance. One must be one's natural self or the whole business is an indecent trick, a vile

use of life! To use inferiors in love one must needs talk down to them, interpret oneself in their insufficient phrases, pretend, sentimentalize. And it is clear that unless oneself is to be lost, one must be content to leave alone all those people that one can reach only by sentimentalizing. But Amanda--and yet somehow I love her for it still--could not leave any one alone. So she was always feverishly weaving nets of false relationship. Until her very self was forgotten. So she will go on until the end. With Easton it had been necessary for her to key herself to a simple exalted romanticism that was entirely insincere. She had so accustomed herself to these poses that her innate gestures were forgotten. She could not recover them; she could not even reinvent them. Between us there were momentary gleams as though presently we should be our frank former selves again. They were never more than momentary...."

And that was all that this astonishing man had seen fit to tell of his last parting from his wife.

Perhaps he did Amanda injustice. Perhaps there was a stronger thread of reality in her desire to recover him than he supposed. Clearly he believed that under the circumstances Amanda would have tried to recover anybody.

She had dressed for that morning's encounter in a very becoming and intimate wrap of soft mauve and white silk, and she had washed and dried her dark hair so that it was a vapour about her face. She set herself with a single mind to persuade herself and Benham that they were

inseparable lovers, and she would not be deflected by his grim determination to discuss the conditions of their separation. When he asked her whether she wanted a divorce, she offered to throw over Sir Philip and banish him for ever as lightly as a great lady might sacrifice an objectionable poodle to her connubial peace.

Benham passed through perplexing phases, so that she herself began to feel that her practice with Easton had spoilt her hands. His initial grimness she could understand, and partially its breakdown into irritability. But she was puzzled by his laughter. For he laughed abruptly.

"You know, Amanda, I came home in a mood of tremendous tragedy. And really,--you are a Lark."

And then overriding her altogether, he told her what he meant to do about their future and the future of their little son.

"You don't want a divorce and a fuss. Then I'll leave things. I perceive I've no intention of marrying any more. But you'd better do the straight thing. People forget and forgive. Especially when there is no one about making a fuss against you.

"Perhaps, after all, there is something to be said for shirking it. We'll both be able to get at the boy then. You'll not hurt him, and I shall want to see him. It's better for the boy anyhow not to have a divorce.

"I'll not stand in your way. I'll get a little flat and I shan't come too much to London, and when I do, you can get out of town. You must be discreet about Easton, and if people say anything about him, send them to me. After all, this is our private affair.

"We'll go on about money matters as we have been going. I trust to you not to run me into overwhelming debts. And, of course, if at any time, you do want to marry--on account of children or anything--if nobody knows of this conversation we can be divorced then...."

Benham threw out these decisions in little dry sentences while Amanda gathered her forces for her last appeal.

It was an unsuccessful appeal, and at the end she flung herself down before him and clung to his knees. He struggled ridiculously to get himself clear, and when at last he succeeded she dropped prostrate on the floor with her dishevelled hair about her.

She heard the door close behind him, and still she lay there, a dark Guinevere, until with a start she heard a step upon the thick carpet without. He had come back. The door reopened. There was a slight pause, and then she raised her face and met the blank stare of the second housemaid. There are moments, suspended fragments of time rather than links in its succession, when the human eye is more intelligible than any words.

The housemaid made a rapid apologetic noise and vanished with a click of the door.

"DAMN!" said Amanda.

Then slowly she rose to her knees.

She meditated through vast moments.

"It's a cursed thing to be a woman," said Amanda. She stood up. She put her hand on the telephone in the corner and then she forgot about it. After another long interval of thought she spoke.

"Cheetah!" she said, "Old Cheetah!...

"I didn't THINK it of you...."

Then presently with the even joyless movements of one who does a reasonable business, with something indeed of the manner of one who packs a trunk, she rang up Sir Philip Easton.

The head chambermaid on the first floor of the Westwood Hotel in Danebury Street had a curious and perplexing glimpse of Benham's private processes the morning after this affair.

Benham had taken Room 27 on the afternoon of his return to London. She had seen him twice or three times, and he had struck her as a coldly decorous person, tall, white-faced, slow speaking; the last man to behave violently or surprise a head chambermaid in any way. On the morning of his departure she was told by the first-floor waiter that the occupant of Room 26 had complained of an uproar in the night, and almost immediately she was summoned to see Benham.

He was standing facing the door and in a position which did a little obscure the condition of the room behind him. He was carefully dressed, and his manner was more cold and decorous than ever. But one of his hands was tied up in a white bandage.

"I am going this morning," he said, "I am going down now to breakfast. I have had a few little accidents with some of the things in the room and I have cut my hand. I want you to tell the manager and see that they are properly charged for on the bill.... Thank you."

The head chambermaid was left to consider the accidents.

Benham's things were all packed up and the room had an air of having been straightened up neatly and methodically after a destructive cataclysm. One or two items that the chambermaid might possibly have overlooked in the normal course of things were carefully exhibited. For example, the sheet had been torn into half a dozen strips and they were lying side by side on the bed. The clock on the mantelpiece had been knocked into the fireplace and then pounded to pieces. All the looking-glasses in the room were smashed, apparently the electric lamp that stood on the night table by the bedside had been wrenched off and flung or hammered about amidst the other breakables. And there was a considerable amount of blood splashed about the room. The head chambermaid felt unequal to the perplexities of the spectacle and summoned her most convenient friend, the head chambermaid on the third floor, to her aid. The first-floor waiter joined their deliberations and several housemaids displayed a respectful interest in the matter. Finally they invoked the manager. He was still contemplating the scene of the disorder when the precipitate retreat of his subordinates warned him of Benham's return.

Benham was smoking a cigarette and his bearing was reassuringly tranquil.

"I had a kind of nightmare," he said. "I am fearfully sorry to have disarranged your room. You must charge me for the inconvenience as well as for the damage."

"An aristocrat cannot be a lover."

"One cannot serve at once the intricacies of the wider issues of life and the intricacies of another human being. I do not mean that one may not love. One loves the more because one does not concentrate one's love. One loves nations, the people passing in the street, beasts hurt by the wayside, troubled scoundrels and university dons in tears....

"But if one does not give one's whole love and life into a woman's hands I do not think one can expect to be loved.

"An aristocrat must do without close personal love...."

This much was written at the top of a sheet of paper. The writing ended halfway down the page. Manifestly it was an abandoned beginning. And it was, it seemed to White, the last page of all this confusion of matter that dealt with the Second and Third Limitations. Its incompleteness made its expression perfect....

There Benham's love experience ended. He turned to the great business of the world. Desire and Jealousy should deflect his life no more; like Fear they were to be dismissed as far as possible and subdued when they could not be altogether dismissed. Whatever stirrings of blood or imagination there were in him after that parting, whatever failures from

this resolution, they left no trace on the rest of his research, which was concerned with the hates of peoples and classes and war and peace and the possibilities science unveils and starry speculations of what mankind may do.

But Benham did not leave England again until he had had an encounter with Lady Marayne.

The little lady came to her son in a state of extraordinary anger and distress. Never had she seemed quite so resolute nor quite so hopelessly dispersed and mixed. And when for a moment it seemed to him that she was not as a matter of fact dispersed and mixed at all, then with an instant eagerness he dismissed that one elucidatory gleam. "What are you doing in England, Poff?" she demanded. "And what are you going to do?

"Nothing! And you are going to leave her in your house, with your property and a lover. If that's it, Poff, why did you ever come back? And why did you ever marry her? You might have known; her father was a swindler. She's begotten of deceit. She'll tell her own story while you are away, and a pretty story she'll make of it."

"Do you want me to divorce her and make a scandal?"

"I never wanted you to go away from her. If you'd stayed and watched her as a man should, as I begged you and implored you to do. Didn't I tell you, Poff? Didn't I warn you?"

"But now what am I to do?"

"There you are! That's just a man's way. You get yourself into this trouble, you follow your passions and your fancies and fads and then you turn to me! How can I help you now, Poff? If you'd listened to me before!"

Her blue eyes were demonstratively round.

"Yes, but--"

"I warned you," she interrupted. "I warned you. I've done all I could for you. It isn't that I haven't seen through her. When she came to me at first with that made-up story of a baby! And all about loving me like her own mother. But I did what I could. I thought we might still make the best of a bad job. And then--. I might have known she couldn't leave Pip alone.... But for weeks I didn't dream. I wouldn't dream. Right under my nose. The impudence of it!"

Her voice broke. "Such a horrid mess! Such a hopeless, horrid mess!"

She wiped away a bright little tear....

"It's all alike. It's your way with us. All of you. There isn't a man in the world deserves to have a woman in the world. We do all we can for you. We do all we can to amuse you, we dress for you and we talk for you. All the sweet, warm little women there are! And then you go away from us! There never was a woman yet who pleased and satisfied a man, who did not lose him. Give you everything and off you must go! Lovers,

mothers...."

It dawned upon Benham dimly that his mother's troubles did not deal exclusively with himself.

"But Amanda," he began.

"If you'd looked after her properly, it would have been right enough. Pip was as good as gold until she undermined him.... A woman can't wait about like an umbrella in a stand.... He was just a boy.... Only of course there she was--a novelty. It is perfectly easy to understand. She flattered him.... Men are such fools."

"Still--it's no good saying that now."

"But she'll spend all your money, Poff! She'll break your back with debts. What's to prevent her? With him living on her! For that's what it comes to practically."

"Well, what am I to do?"

"You aren't going back without tying her up, Poff? You ought to stop every farthing of her money--every farthing. It's your duty."

"I can't do things like that."

"But have you no Shame? To let that sort of thing go on!"

"If I don't feel the Shame of it-- And I don't."

"And that money--. I got you that money, Poff! It was my money."

Benham stared at her perplexed. "What am I to do?" he asked.

"Cut her off, you silly boy! Tie her up! Pay her through a solicitor. Say that if she sees him ONCE again--"

He reflected. "No," he said at last.

"Poff!" she cried, "every time I see you, you are more and more like your father. You're going off--just as he did. That baffled, MULISH look--priggish--solemn! Oh! it's strange the stuff a poor woman has to bring into the world. But you'll do nothing. I know you'll do nothing. You'll stand everything. You--you Cuckold! And she'll drive by me, she'll pass me in theatres with the money that ought to have been mine! Oh! Oh!"

She dabbed her handkerchief from one swimming eye to the other. But she went on talking. Faster and faster, less and less coherently; more and more wildly abusive. Presently in a brief pause of the storm Benham sighed profoundly....

It brought the scene to a painful end....

For weeks her distress pursued and perplexed him.

He had an extraordinary persuasion that in some obscure way he was in default, that he was to blame for her distress, that he owed her--he could never define what he owed her.

And yet, what on earth was one to do?

And something his mother had said gave him the odd idea that he had misjudged his father, that he had missed depths of perplexed and kindred goodwill. He went down to see him before he returned to India. But if there was a hidden well of feeling in Mr. Benham senior, it had been very carefully boarded over. The parental mind and attention were entirely engaged in a dispute in the SCHOOL WORLD about the heuristic method. Somebody had been disrespectful to Martindale House and the thing was rankling almost unendurably. It seemed to be a relief to him to show his son very fully the essentially illogical position of his assailant. He was entirely inattentive to Benham's carefully made conversational opportunities. He would be silent at times while Benham talked and then he would break out suddenly with: "What seems to me so unreasonable, so ridiculous, in the whole of that fellow's second argument--if one can call it an argument--.... A man who reasons as he does is bound to get laughed at. If people will only see it...."