CHAPTER THE SIXTH

THE ENCOUNTER AT STONEHENGE

Section 1

Next day in the early afternoon after a farewell walk over the downs round Avebury they went by way of Devizes and Netheravon and Amesbury to Stonehenge.

Dr. Martineau had seen this ancient monument before, but now, with Avebury fresh in his mind, he found it a poorer thing than he had remembered it to be. Sir Richmond was frankly disappointed. After the real greatness and mystery of the older place, it seemed a poor little heap of stones; it did not even dominate the landscape; it was some way from the crest of the swelling down on which it stood and it was further dwarfed by the colossal air-ship hangars and clustering offices of the air station that the great war had called into existence upon the slopes to the south-west. "It looks," Sir Richmond said, "as though some old giantess had left a discarded set of teeth on the hillside." Far more impressive than Stonehenge itself were the barrows that capped the neighbouring crests.

The sacred stones were fenced about, and our visitors had to pay for admission at a little kiosk by the gate. At the side of the road stood a travel-stained middle-class automobile, with a miscellany of dusty

luggage, rugs and luncheon things therein--a family automobile with father no doubt at the wheel. Sir Richmond left his own trim coupe at its tail.

They were impeded at the entrance by a difference of opinion between the keeper of the turnstile and a small but resolute boy of perhaps five or six who proposed to leave the enclosure. The custodian thought that it would be better if his nurse or his mother came out with him.

"She keeps on looking at it," said the small boy. "It isunt anything. I want to go and clean the car."

"You won't SEE Stonehenge every day, young man," said the custodian, a little piqued.

"It's only an old beach," said the small boy, with extreme conviction. "It's rocks like the seaside. And there isunt no sea."

The man at the turnstile mutely consulted the doctor.

"I don't see that he can get into any harm here," the doctor advised, and the small boy was released from archaeology.

He strolled to the family automobile, produced an EN-TOUT-CAS pocket-handkerchief and set himself to polish the lamps with great assiduity. The two gentlemen lingered at the turnstile for a moment or

so to watch his proceedings. "Modern child," said Sir Richmond. "Old stones are just old stones to him. But motor cars are gods."

"You can hardly expect him to understand--at his age," said the custodian, jealous for the honor of Stonehenge....

"Reminds me of Martin's little girl," said Sir Richmond, as he and Dr. Martineau went on towards the circle. "When she encountered her first dragon-fly she was greatly delighted. 'Oh, dee' lill' a'eplane,' she said."

As they approached the grey old stones they became aware of a certain agitation among them. A voice, an authoritative bass voice, was audible, crying, "Anthony!" A nurse appeared remotely going in the direction of the aeroplane sheds, and her cry of "Master Anthony" came faintly on the breeze. An extremely pretty young woman of five or six and twenty became visible standing on one of the great prostrate stones in the centre of the place. She was a black-haired, sun-burnt individual and she stood with her arms akimbo, quite frankly amused at the disappearance of Master Anthony, and offering no sort of help for his recovery. On the greensward before her stood the paterfamilias of the family automobile, and he was making a trumpet with his hands in order to repeat the name of Anthony with greater effect. A short lady in grey emerged from among the encircling megaliths, and one or two other feminine personalities produced effects of movement rather than of individuality as they flitted among the stones. "Well," said the lady in grey, with that

rising intonation of humorous conclusion which is so distinctively American, "those Druids have GOT him."

"He's hiding," said the automobilist, in a voice that promised chastisement to a hidden hearer. "That's what he is doing. He ought not to play tricks like this. A great boy who is almost six."

"If you are looking for a small, resolute boy of six," said Sir Richmond, addressing himself to the lady on the rock rather than to the angry parent below, "he's perfectly safe and happy. The Druids haven't got him. Indeed, they've failed altogether to get him. 'Stonehenge,' he says, 'is no good.' So he's gone back to clean the lamps of your car."

"Aa-oo. So THAT'S it!" said Papa. "Winnie, go and tell Price he's gone back to the car.... They oughtn't to have let him out of the enclosure...."

The excitement about Master Anthony collapsed. The rest of the people in the circles crystallized out into the central space as two apparent sisters and an apparent aunt and the nurse, who was packed off at once to supervise the lamp cleaning. The head of the family found some difficulty, it would seem, in readjusting his mind to the comparative innocence of Anthony, and Sir Richmond and the young lady on the rock sought as if by common impulse to establish a general conversation. There were faint traces of excitement in her manner, as though there had been some controversial passage between herself and the family

gentleman.

"We were discussing the age of this old place," she said, smiling in the frankest and friendliest way. "How old do YOU think it is?"

The father of Anthony intervened, also with a shadow of controversy in his manner. "I was explaining to the young lady that it dates from the early bronze age. Before chronology existed.... But she insists on dates."

"Nothing of bronze has ever been found here," said Sir Richmond.

"Well, when was this early bronze age, anyhow?" said the young lady.

Sir Richmond sought a recognizable datum. "Bronze got to Britain somewhere between the times of Moses and Solomon."

"Ah!" said the young lady, as who should say, 'This man at least talks sense.'

"But these stones are all shaped," said the father of the family. "It is difficult to see how that could have been done without something harder than stone."

"I don't SEE the place," said the young lady on the stone. "I can't imagine how they did it up--not one bit."

"Did it up!" exclaimed the father of the family in the tone of one accustomed to find a gentle sport in the intellectual frailties of his womenkind.

"It's just the bones of a place. They hung things round it. They draped it."

"But what things?" asked Sir Richmond.

"Oh! they had things all right. Skins perhaps. Mats of rushes. Bast cloth. Fibre of all sorts. Wadded stuff."

"Stonehenge draped! It's really a delightful idea;" said the father of the family, enjoying it.

"It's quite a possible one," said Sir Richmond.

"Or they may have used wicker," the young lady went on, undismayed. She seemed to concede a point. "Wicker IS likelier."

"But surely," said the father of the family with the expostulatory voice and gesture of one who would recall erring wits to sanity, "it is far more impressive standing out bare and noble as it does. In lonely splendour."

"But all this country may have been wooded then," said Sir Richmond. "In which case it wouldn't have stood out. It doesn't stand out so very much even now."

"You came to it through a grove," said the young lady, eagerly picking up the idea.

"Probably beech," said Sir Richmond.

"Which may have pointed to the midsummer sunrise," said Dr. Martineau, unheeded.

"These are NOVEL ideas," said the father of the family in the reproving tone of one who never allows a novel idea inside HIS doors if he can prevent it.

"Well," said the young lady, "I guess there was some sort of show here anyhow. And no human being ever had a show yet without trying to shut people out of it in order to make them come in. I guess this was covered in all right. A dark hunched old place in a wood. Beech stems, smooth, like pillars. And they came to it at night, in procession, beating drums, and scared half out of their wits. They came in THERE and went round the inner circle with their torches. And so they were shown. The torches were put out and the priests did their mysteries. Until dawn broke. That is how they worked it."

"But even you can't tell what the show was, V.V." said the lady in grey, who was standing now at Dr. Martineau's elbow.

"Something horrid," said Anthony's younger sister to her elder in a stage whisper.

"BLUGGY," agreed Anthony's elder sister to the younger, in a noiseless voice that certainly did not reach father. "SQUEALS!...."

This young lady who was addressed as "V.V." was perhaps one or two and twenty, Dr. Martineau thought,--he was not very good at feminine ages. She had a clear sun-browned complexion, with dark hair and smiling lips. Her features were finely modelled, with just that added touch of breadth in the brow and softness in the cheek bones, that faint flavour of the Amerindian, one sees at times in American women. Her voice was a very soft and pleasing voice, and she spoke persuasively and not assertively as so many American women do. Her determination to make the dry bones of Stonehenge live shamed the doctor's disappointment with the place. And when she had spoken, Dr. Martineau noted that she looked at Sir Richmond as if she expected him at least to confirm her vision. Sir Richmond was evidently prepared to confirm it.

With a queer little twinge of infringed proprietorship, the doctor saw Sir Richmond step up on the prostrate megalith and stand beside her, the better to appreciate her point of view. He smiled down at her. "Now why do you think they came in THERE?" he asked.

The young lady was not very clear about her directions. She did not know of the roadway running to the Avon river, nor of the alleged race course to the north, nor had she ever heard that the stones were supposed to be of two different periods and that some of them might possibly have been brought from a very great distance.

Section 2

Neither Dr. Martineau nor the father of the family found the imaginative reconstruction of the Stonehenge rituals quite so exciting as the two principals. The father of the family endured some further particulars with manifest impatience, no longer able, now that Sir Richmond was encouraging the girl, to keep her in check with the slightly derisive smile proper to her sex. Then he proclaimed in a fine loud tenor, "All this is very imaginative, I'm afraid." And to his family, "Time we were pressing on. Turps, we must go-o. Come, Phoebe!"

As he led his little flock towards the exit his voice came floating back. "Talking wanton nonsense.... Any professional archaeologist would laugh, simply laugh...."

He passed out of the world.

With a faint intimation of dismay Dr. Martineau realized that the two talkative ladies were not to be removed in the family automobile with

the rest of the party. Sir Richmond and the younger lady went on very cheerfully to the population, agriculture, housing and general scenery of the surrounding Downland during the later Stone Age. The shorter, less attractive lady, whose accent was distinctly American, came now and stood at the doctor's elbow. She seemed moved to play the part of chorus to the two upon the stone.

"When V.V. gets going," she remarked, "she makes things come alive."

Dr. Martineau hated to be addressed suddenly by strange ladies. He started, and his face assumed the distressed politeness of the moon at its full. "Your friend," he said, "interested in archaeology?"

"Interested!" said the stouter lady. "Why! She's a fiend at it. Ever since we came on Carnac."

"You've visited Carnac?"

"That's where the bug bit her." said the stout lady with a note of querulous humour. "Directly V.V. set eyes on Carnac, she just turned against all her up-bringing. 'Why wasn't I told of this before?' she said. 'What's Notre Dame to this? This is where we came from. This is the real starting point of the MAYFLOWER. Belinda,' she said, 'we've got to see all we can of this sort of thing before we go back to America. They've been keeping this from us.' And that's why we're here right now instead of being shopping in Paris or London like decent American

women."

The younger lady looked down on her companion with something of the calm expert attention that a plumber gives to a tap that is misbehaving, and like a plumber refrained from precipitate action. She stood with the backs of her hands resting on her hips.

"Well," she said slowly, giving most of the remark to Sir Richmond and the rest to the doctor. "It is nearer the beginnings of things than London or Paris."

"And nearer to us," said Sir Richmond.

"I call that just--paradoxical," said the shorter lady, who appeared to be called Belinda.

"Not paradoxical," Dr. Martineau contradicted gently. "Life is always beginning again. And this is a time of fresh beginnings."

"Now that's after V.V.'s own heart," cried the stout lady in grey. "She'll agree to all that. She's been saying it right across Europe. Rome, Paris, London; they're simply just done. They don't signify any more. They've got to be cleared away."

"You let me tell my own opinions, Belinda," said the young lady who was called V.V. "I said that if people went on building with fluted pillars

and Corinthian capitals for two thousand years, it was time they were cleared up and taken away."

"Corinthian capitals?" Sir Richmond considered it and laughed cheerfully. "I suppose Europe does rather overdo that sort of thing."

"The way she went on about the Victor Emmanuele Monument!" said the lady who answered to the name of Belinda. "It gave me cold shivers to think that those Italian officers might understand English."

The lady who was called V.V. smiled as if she smiled at herself, and explained herself to Sir Richmond. "When one is travelling about, one gets to think of history and politics in terms of architecture. I do anyhow. And those columns with Corinthian capitals have got to be a sort of symbol for me for everything in Europe that I don't want and have no sort of use for. It isn't a bad sort of capital in its way, florid and pretty, but not a patch on the Doric;--and that a whole continent should come up to it and stick at it and never get past it!..."

"It's the classical tradition."

"It puzzles me."

"It's the Roman Empire. That Corinthian column is a weed spread by the Romans all over western Europe."

"And it smothers the history of Europe. You can't see Europe because of it. Europe is obsessed by Rome. Everywhere Marble Arches and ARCS DE TRIOMPHE. You never get away from it. It is like some old gentleman who has lost his way in a speech and keeps on repeating the same thing. And can't sit down. 'The empire, gentlemen--the Empire. Empire.' Rome itself is perfectly frightful. It stares at you with its great round stupid arches as though it couldn't imagine that you could possibly want anything else for ever. Saint Peter's and that frightful Monument are just the same stuff as the Baths of Caracalla and the palaces of the Caesars. Just the same. They will make just the same sort of ruins. It goes on and goes on."

"AVE ROMA IMMORTALIS," said Dr. Martineau.

"This Roman empire seems to be Europe's first and last idea. A fixed idea. And such a poor idea!... America never came out of that. It's no good-telling me that it did. It escaped from it.... So I said to Belinda here, 'Let's burrow, if we can, under all this marble and find out what sort of people we were before this Roman empire and its acanthus weeds got hold of us.'"

"I seem to remember at Washington, something faintly Corinthian, something called the Capitol," Sir Richmond reflected. "And other buildings. A Treasury."

"That is different," said the young lady, so conclusively that it seemed

to leave nothing more to be said on that score.

"A last twinge of Europeanism," she vouchsafed. "We were young in those days."

"You are well beneath the marble here."

She assented cheerfully.

"A thousand years before it."

"Happy place! Happy people!"

"But even this place isn't the beginning of things here. Carnac was older than this. And older still is Avebury. Have you heard in America of Avebury? It may have predated this place, they think, by another thousand years."

"Avebury?" said the lady who was called Belinda.

"But what is this Avebury?" asked V.V. "I've never heard of the place."

"I thought it was a lord," said Belinda.

Sir Richmond, with occasional appeals to Dr. Martineau, embarked upon an account of the glory and wonder of Avebury. Possibly he exaggerated

Avebury....

It was Dr. Martineau who presently brought this disquisition upon Avebury to a stop by a very remarkable gesture. He looked at his watch. He drew it out ostentatiously, a thick, respectable gold watch, for the doctor was not the sort of man to wear his watch upon his wrist. He clicked it open and looked at it. Thereby he would have proclaimed his belief this encounter was an entirely unnecessary interruption of his healing duologue with Sir Richmond, which must now be resumed.

But this action had scarcely the effect he had intended it to have. It set the young lady who was called Belinda asking about ways and means of getting to Salisbury; it brought to light the distressing fact that V.V. had the beginnings of a chafed heel. Once he had set things going they moved much too quickly for the doctor to deflect their course. He found himself called upon to make personal sacrifices to facilitate the painless transport of the two ladies to Salisbury, where their luggage awaited them at the Old George Hotel. In some way too elusive to trace, it became evident that he and Sir Richmond were to stay at this same Old George Hotel. The luggage was to be shifted to the top of the coupe, the young lady called V.V. was to share the interior of the car with Sir Richmond, while the lady named Belinda, for whom Dr. Martineau was already developing a very strong dislike, was to be thrust into an extreme proximity with him and the balance of the luggage in the dicky seat behind.

Sir Richmond had never met with a young woman with a genuine historical imagination before, and he was evidently very greatly excited and resolved to get the utmost that there was to be got out of this encounter.

Section 3

Sir Richmond displayed a complete disregard of the sufferings of Dr. Martineau, shamefully compressed behind him. Of these he was to hear later. He ran his overcrowded little car, overcrowded so far as the dicky went, over the crest of the Down and down into Amesbury and on to Salisbury, stopping to alight and stretch the legs of the party when they came in sight of Old Sarum.

"Certainly they can do with a little stretching," said Dr. Martineau grimly.

This charming young woman had seized upon the imagination of Sir Richmond to the temporary exclusion of all other considerations. The long Downland gradients, quivering very slightly with the vibration of the road, came swiftly and easily to meet and pass the throbbing little car as he sat beside her and talked to her. He fell into that expository manner which comes so easily to the native entertaining the visitor from abroad.

"In England, it seems to me there are four main phases of history. Four.

Avebury, which I would love to take you to see to-morrow. Stonehenge. Old Sarum, which we shall see in a moment as a great grassy mound on our right as we come over one of these crests. Each of them represents about a thousand years. Old Sarum was Keltic; it, saw the Romans and the Saxons through, and for a time it was a Norman city. Now it is pasture for sheep. Latest as yet is Salisbury,--English, real English. It may last a few centuries still. It is little more than seven hundred years old. But when I think of those great hangars back there by Stonehenge, I feel that the next phase is already beginning. Of a world one will fly to the ends of, in a week or so. Our world still. Our people, your people and mine, who are going to take wing so soon now, were made in all these places. We are visiting the old homes. I am glad I came back to it just when you were doing the same thing."

"I'm lucky to have found a sympathetic fellow traveller," she said; "with a car."

"You're the first American I've ever met whose interest in history didn't seem--" He sought for an inoffensive word.

"Silly? Oh! I admit it. It's true of a lot of us. Most of us. We come over to Europe as if it hadn't anything to do with us except to supply us with old pictures and curios generally. We come sight-seeing. It's romantic. It's picturesque. We stare at the natives--like visitors at a Zoo. We don't realize that we belong.... I know our style.... But we aren't all like that. Some of us are learning a bit better than that.

We have one or two teachers over there to lighten our darkness. There's Professor Breasted for instance. He comes sometimes to my father's house. And there's James Harvey Robinson and Professor Hutton Webster. They've been trying to restore our memory."

"I've never heard of any of them," said Sir Richmond.

"You hear so little of America over here. It's quite a large country and all sorts of interesting things happen there nowadays. And we are waking up to history. Quite fast. We shan't always be the most ignorant people in the world. We are beginning to realize that quite a lot of things happened between Adam and the Mayflower that we ought to be told about. I allow it's a recent revival. The United States has been like one of those men you read about in the papers who go away from home and turn up in some distant place with their memories gone. They've forgotten what their names were or where they lived or what they did for a living; they've forgotten everything that matters. Often they have to begin again and settle down for a long time before their memories come back. That's how it has been with us. Our memory is just coming back to us."

"And what do you find you are?"

"Europeans. Who came away from kings and churches-@-and Corinthian capitals."

"You feel all this country belongs to you?"

"As much as it does to you." Sir Richmond smiled radiantly at her. "But if I say that America belongs to me as much as it does to you?"

"We are one people," she said.

"We?"

"Europe. These parts of Europe anyhow. And ourselves."

"You are the most civilized person I've met for weeks and weeks."

"Well, you are the first civilized person I've met in Europe for a long time. If I understand you."

"There are multitudes of reasonable, civilized people in Europe."

"I've heard or seen very little of them.

"They're scattered, I admit."

"And hard to find."

"So ours is a lucky meeting. I've wanted a serious talk to an American for some time. I want to know very badly what you think you are up to with the world,--our world."

"I'm equally anxious to know what England thinks she is doing. Her ways recently have been a little difficult to understand. On any hypothesis--that is honourable to her."

"H'm," said Sir Richmond.

"I assure you we don't like it. This Irish business. We feel a sort of ownership in England. It's like finding your dearest aunt torturing the cat."

"We must talk of that," said Sir Richmond.

"I wish you would."

"It is a cat and a dog--and they have been very naughty animals. And poor Aunt Britannia almost deliberately lost her temper. But I admit she hits about in a very nasty fashion."

"And favours the dog."

"She does."

"I want to know all you admit."

"You shall. And incidentally my friend and I may have the pleasure of

showing you Salisbury and Avebury. If you are free?"

"We're travelling together, just we two. We are wandering about the south of England on our way to Falmouth. Where I join a father in a few days' time, and I go on with him to Paris. And if you and your friend are coming to the Old George--"

"We are," said Sir Richmond.

"I see no great scandal in talking right on to bedtime. And seeing Avebury to-morrow. Why not? Perhaps if we did as the Germans do and gave our names now, it might mitigate something of the extreme informality of our behaviour."

"My name is Hardy. I've been a munition manufacturer. I was slightly wounded by a stray shell near Arras while I was inspecting some plant I had set up, and also I was hit by a stray knighthood. So my name is now Sir Richmond Hardy. My friend is a very distinguished Harley Street physician. Chiefly nervous and mental cases. His name is Dr. Martineau. He is quite as civilized as I am. He is also a philosophical writer. He is really a very wise and learned man indeed. He is full of ideas. He's stimulated me tremendously. You must talk to him."

Sir Richmond glanced over his shoulder at the subject of these commendations. Through the oval window glared an expression of malignity that made no impression whatever on his preoccupied mind.

"My name," said the young lady, "is Grammont. The war whirled me over to Europe on Red Cross work and since the peace I've been settling up things and travelling about Europe. My father is rather a big business man in New York."

"The oil Grammont?"

"He is rather deep in oil, I believe. He is coming over to Europe because he does not like the way your people are behaving in Mesopotamia. He is on his way to Paris now. Paris it seems is where everything is to be settled against you. Belinda is a sort of companion I have acquired for the purposes of independent travel. She was Red Cross too. I must have somebody and I cannot bear a maid. Her name is Belinda Seyffert. From Philadelphia originally. You have that? Seyffert, Grammont?"

"And Hardy?"

"Sir Richmond and Dr. Martineau."

"And--Ah!--That great green bank there just coming into sight must be Old Sarum. The little ancient city that faded away when Salisbury lifted its spire into the world. We will stop here for a little while...."

Then it was that Dr. Martineau was grim about the stretching of his

legs.

Section 4

The sudden prospect which now opened out before Sir Richmond of talking about history and suchlike topics with a charming companion for perhaps two whole days instead of going on with this tiresome, shamefaced, egotistical business of self-examination was so attractive to him that it took immediate possession of his mind, to the entire exclusion and disregard of Dr. Martineau's possible objections to any such modification of their original programme. When they arrived in Salisbury, the doctor did make some slight effort to suggest a different hotel from that in which the two ladies had engaged their rooms, but on the spur of the moment and in their presence he could produce no sufficient reason for refusing the accommodation the Old George had ready for him. He was reduced to a vague: "We don't want to inflict ourselves--" He could not get Sir Richmond aside for any adequate expression of his feelings about Miss Seyffert, before the four of them were seated together at tea amidst the mediaeval modernity of the Old George smoking-room. And only then did he begin to realize the depth and extent of the engagements to which Sir Richmond had committed himself.

"I was suggesting that we run back to Avebury to-morrow," said Sir Richmond. "These ladies were nearly missing it."

The thing took the doctor's breath away. For the moment he could say

nothing. He stared over his tea-cup dour-faced. An objection formulated itself very slowly. "But that dicky," he whispered.

His whisper went unnoted. Sir Richmond was talking of the completeness of Salisbury. From the very beginning it had been a cathedral city; it was essentially and purely that. The church at its best, in the full tide of its mediaeval ascendancy, had called it into being. He was making some extremely loose and inaccurate generalizations about the buildings and ruins each age had left for posterity, and Miss Grammont was countering with equally unsatisfactory qualifications. "Our age will leave the ruins of hotels," said Sir Richmond. "Railway arches and hotels."

"Baths and aqueducts," Miss Grammont compared. "Rome of the Empire comes nearest to it...."

As soon as tea was over, Dr. Martineau realized, they meant to walk round and about Salisbury. He foresaw that walk with the utmost clearness. In front and keeping just a little beyond the range of his intervention, Sir Richmond would go with Miss Grammont; he himself and Miss Seyffert would bring up the rear. "If I do," he muttered, "I'll be damned!" an unusually strong expression for him.

"You said--?" asked Miss Seyffert.

"That I have some writing to do--before the post goes," said the doctor

brightly.

"Oh! come and see the cathedral!" cried Sir Richmond with ill-concealed dismay. He was, if one may put it in such a fashion, not looking at Miss Seyffert in the directest fashion when he said this.

"I'm afraid," said the doctor mulishly. "Impossible."

(With the unspoken addition of, "You try her for a bit.")

Miss Grammont stood up. Everybody stood up. "We can go first to look for shops," she said. "There's those things you want to buy, Belinda; a fountain pen and the little books. We can all go together as far as that. And while you are shopping, if you wouldn't mind getting one or two things for me...."

It became clear to Dr. Martineau that Sir Richmond was to be let off Belinda. It seemed abominably unjust. And it was also clear to him that he must keep closely to his own room or he might find Miss Seyffert drifting back alone to the hotel and eager to resume with him....

Well, a quiet time in his room would not be disagreeable. He could think over his notes....

But in reality he thought over nothing but the little speeches he would presently make to Sir Richmond about the unwarrantable, the absolutely

unwarrantable, alterations that were being made without his consent in their common programme....

For a long time Sir Richmond had met no one so interesting and amusing as this frank-minded young woman from America. "Young woman" was how he thought of her; she didn't correspond to anything so prim and restrained and extensively reserved and withheld as a "young lady "; and though he judged her no older than five and twenty, the word "girl" with its associations of virginal ignorances, invisible purdah, and trite ideas newly discovered, seemed even less appropriate for her than the word "boy." She had an air of having in some obscure way graduated in life, as if so far she had lived each several year of her existence in a distinctive and conclusive manner with the utmost mental profit and no particular tarnish or injury. He could talk with her as if he talked with a man like himself--but with a zest no man could give him.

It was evident that the good things she had said at first came as the natural expression of a broad stream of alert thought; they were no mere display specimens from one of those jackdaw collections of bright things so many clever women waste their wits in accumulating. She was not talking for effect at all, she was talking because she was tremendously interested in her discovery of the spectacle of history, and delighted to find another person as possessed as she was.

Belinda having been conducted to her shops, the two made their way through the bright evening sunlight to the compact gracefulness of the

cathedral. A glimpse through a wrought-iron gate of a delightful garden of spring flowers, alyssum, aubrietia, snow-upon-the-mountains, daffodils, narcissus and the like, held them for a time, and then they came out upon the level, grassy space, surrounded by little ripe old houses, on which the cathedral stands. They stood for some moments surveying it.

"It's a perfect little lady of a cathedral," said Sir Richmond. "But why, I wonder, did we build it?"

"Your memory ought to be better than mine," she said, with her half-closed eyes blinking up at the sunlit spire sharp against the blue. "I've been away for so long-over there-that I forget altogether. Why DID we build it?"

She had fallen in quite early with this freak of speaking and thinking as if he and she were all mankind. It was as if her mind had been prepared for it by her own eager exploration in Europe. "My friend, the philosopher," he had said, "will not have it that we are really the individuals we think we are. You must talk to him--he is a very curious and subtle thinker. We are just thoughts in the Mind of the Race, he says, passing thoughts. We are--what does he call it?--Man on his Planet, taking control of life."

"Man and woman," she had amended.

But just as man on his planet taking control of life had failed altogether to remember why the ditch at Avebury was on the inside instead of the outside of the vallum, so now Miss Grammont and Sir Richmond found very great difficulty in recalling why they had built Salisbury Cathedral.

"We built temples by habit and tradition," said Sir Richmond. "But the impulse was losing its force."

She looked up at the spire and then at him with a faintly quizzical expression.

But he had his reply ready.

"We were beginning to feel our power over matter. We were already very clever engineers. What interested us here wasn't the old religion any more. We wanted to exercise and display our power over stone. We made it into reeds and branches. We squirted it up in all these spires and pinnacles. The priest and his altar were just an excuse. Do you think people have ever feared and worshipped in this--this artist's lark--as they did in Stonehenge?"

"I certainly do not remember that I ever worshipped here," she said.

Sir Richmond was in love with his idea. "The spirit of the Gothic cathedrals," he said, "is the spirit of the sky-scrapers. It is

architecture in a mood of flaming ambition. The Freemasons on the building could hardly refrain from jeering at the little priest they had left down below there, performing antiquated puerile mysteries at his altar. He was just their excuse for doing it all."

"Sky-scrapers?" she conceded. "An early display of the sky-scraper spirit.... You are doing your best to make me feel thoroughly at home."

"You are more at home here still than in that new country of ours over the Atlantic. But it seems to me now that I do begin to remember building this cathedral and all the other cathedrals we built in Europe.... It was the fun of building made us do it..."

"H'm," she said. "And my sky-scrapers?"

"Still the fun of building. That is the thing I envy most about America. It's still large enough, mentally and materially, to build all sorts of things.... Over here, the sites are frightfully crowded...."

"And what do you think we are building now? And what do you think you are building over here?"

"What are we building now? I believe we have almost grown up. I believe it is time we began to build in earnest. For good...."

"But are we building anything at all?"

"A new world."

"Show it me," she said.

"We're still only at the foundations," said Sir Richmond. "Nothing shows as yet."

"I wish I could believe they were foundations."

"But can you doubt we are scrapping the old?..."

It was too late in the afternoon to go into the cathedral, so they strolled to and fro round and about the west end and along the path under the trees towards the river, exchanging their ideas very frankly and freely about the things that had recently happened to the world and what they thought they ought to be doing in it.

Section 5

After dinner our four tourists sat late and talked in a corner of the smoking-room. The two ladies had vanished hastily at the first dinner gong and reappeared at the second, mysteriously and pleasantly changed from tweedy pedestrians to indoor company. They were quietly but definitely dressed, pretty alterations had happened to their coiffure, a silver band and deep red stones lit the dusk of Miss Grammont's hair

and a necklace of the same colourings kept the peace between her jolly sun-burnt cheek and her soft untanned neck. It was evident her recent uniform had included a collar of great severity. Miss Seyffert had revealed a plump forearm and proclaimed it with a clash of bangles. Dr. Martineau thought her evening throat much too confidential.

The conversation drifted from topic to topic. It had none of the steady continuity of Sir Richmond's duologue with Miss Grammont. Miss Seyffert's methods were too discursive and exclamatory. She broke every thread that appeared. The Old George at Salisbury is really old; it shows it, and Miss Seyffert laced the entire evening with her recognition of the fact. "Just look at that old beam!" she would cry suddenly. "To think it was exactly where it is before there was a Cabot in America!"

Miss Grammont let her companion pull the talk about as she chose. After the animation of the afternoon a sort of lazy contentment had taken possession of the younger lady. She sat deep in a basket chair and spoke now and then. Miss Seyffert gave her impressions of France and Italy. She talked of the cabmen of Naples and the beggars of Amalfi.

Apropos of beggars, Miss Grammont from the depths of her chair threw out the statement that Italy was frightfully overpopulated. "In some parts of Italy it is like mites on a cheese. Nobody seems to be living. Everyone is too busy keeping alive."

"Poor old women carrying loads big enough for mules," said Miss Seyffert.

"Little children working like slaves," said Miss Grammont.

"And everybody begging. Even the people at work by the roadside. Who ought to be getting wages--sufficient...."

"Begging--from foreigners--is just a sport in Italy," said Sir Richmond. "It doesn't imply want. But I agree that a large part of Italy is frightfully overpopulated. The whole world is. Don't you think so, Martineau?"

"Well--yes--for its present social organization."

"For any social organization," said Sir Richmond.

"I've no doubt of it," said Miss Seyffert, and added amazingly: "I'm out for Birth Control all the time."

A brief but active pause ensued. Dr. Martineau in a state of sudden distress attempted to drink out of a cold and empty coffee cup.

"The world swarms with cramped and undeveloped lives," said Sir Richmond. "Which amount to nothing. Which do not even represent happiness. And which help to use up the resources, the fuel and surplus

energy of the world."

"I suppose they have a sort of liking for their lives," Miss Grammont reflected.

"Does that matter? They do nothing to carry life on. They are just vain repetitions--imperfect dreary, blurred repetitions of one common life. All that they feel has been felt, all that they do has been done better before. Because they are crowded and hurried and underfed and undereducated. And as for liking their lives, they need never have had the chance."

"How many people are there in the world?" she asked abruptly.

"I don't know. Twelve hundred, fifteen hundred millions perhaps."

"And in your world?"

"I'd have two hundred and fifty millions, let us say. At most. It would be quite enough for this little planet, for a time, at any rate. Don't you think so, doctor?"

"I don't know," said Dr. Martineau. "Oddly enough, I have never thought about that question before. At least, not from this angle."

"But could you pick out two hundred and fifty million aristocrats?"

began Miss Grammont. "My native instinctive democracy--"

"Need not be outraged," said Sir Richmond. "Any two hundred and fifty million would do, They'd be able to develop fully, all of them. As things are, only a minority can do that. The rest never get a chance."

"That's what I always say," said Miss Seyffert.

"A New Age," said Dr. Martineau; "a New World. We may be coming to such a stage, when population, as much as fuel, will be under a world control. If one thing, why not the other? I admit that the movement of thought is away from haphazard towards control--"

"I'm for control all the time," Miss Seyffert injected, following up her previous success.

"I admit," the doctor began his broken sentence again with marked patience, "that the movement of thought is away from haphazard towards control--in things generally. But is the movement of events?"

"The eternal problem of man," said Sir Richmond. "Can our wills prevail?"

There came a little pause.

Miss Grammont smiled an enquiry at Miss Seyffert. "If YOU are," said

Belinda.

"I wish I could imagine your world," said Miss Grammont, rising, "of two hundred and fifty millions of fully developed human beings with room to live and breathe in and no need for wars. Will they live in palaces? Will they all be healthy?... Machines will wait on them. No! I can't imagine it. Perhaps I shall dream of it. My dreaming self may be cleverer."

She held out her hand to Sir Richmond. Just for a moment they stood hand in hand, appreciatively....

"Well!" said Dr. Martineau, as the door closed behind the two Americans, "This is a curious encounter."

"That young woman has brains," said Sir Richmond, standing before the fireplace. There was no doubt whatever which young woman he meant. But Dr. Martineau grunted.

"I don't like the American type," the doctor pronounced judicially.

"I do," Sir Richmond countered.

The doctor thought for a moment or so. "You are committed to the project of visiting Avebury?" he said.

"They ought to see Avebury," said Sir Richmond.

"H'm," said the doctor, ostentatiously amused by his thoughts and staring at the fire. "Birth Control! I NEVER did."

Sir Richmond smiled down on the top of the doctor's head and said nothing.

"I think," said the doctor and paused. "I shall leave this Avebury expedition to you."

"We can be back in the early afternoon," said Sir Richmond. "To give them a chance of seeing the cathedral. The chapter house here is not one to miss...."

"And then I suppose we shall go on?

"As you please," said Sir Richmond insincerely.

"I must confess that four people make the car at any rate seem tremendously overpopulated. And to tell the truth, I do not find this encounter so amusing as you seem to do.... I shall not be sorry when we have waved good-bye to those young ladies, and resume our interrupted conversation."

Sir Richmond considered something mulish in the doctor's averted face.

"I find Miss Grammont an extremely interesting--and stimulating human being.

"Evidently."

The doctor sighed, stood up and found himself delivering one of the sentences he had engendered during his solitary meditations in his room before dinner. He surprised himself by the plainness of his speech. "Let me be frank," he said, regarding Sir Richmond squarely. "Considering the general situation of things and your position, I do not care very greatly for the part of an accessory to what may easily develop, as you know very well, into a very serious flirtation. An absurd, mischievous, irrelevant flirtation. You may not like the word. You may pretend it is a conversation, an ordinary intellectual conversation. That is not the word. Simply that is not the word. You people eye one another.... Flirtation. I give the affair its proper name. That is all. Merely that. When I think--But we will not discuss it now.... Good night.... Forgive me if I put before you, rather bluntly, my particular point of view."

Sir Richmond found himself alone. With his eyebrows raised.

Section 6

After twenty-four eventful hours our two students of human motives found themselves together again by the fireplace in the Old George

smoking-room. They had resumed their overnight conversation, in a state of considerable tension.

"If you find the accommodation of the car insufficient," said Sir Richmond in a tone of extreme reasonableness, and I admit it is, we can easily hire a larger car in a place like this.

I would not care if you hired an omnibus, said Dr. Martineau. "I am not coming on if these young women are."

"But if you consider it scandalous--and really, Martineau, really! as one man to another, it does seem to me to be a bit pernickety of you, a broad and original thinker as you are--"

"Thought is one matter. Rash, inconsiderate action quite another. And above all, if I spend another day in or near the company of Miss Belinda Seyffert I shall--I shall be extremely rude to her."

"But," said Sir Richmond and bit his lower lip and considered.

"We might drop Belinda," he suggested turning to his friend and speaking in low, confidential tones. "She is quite a manageable person. Quite. She could--for example--be left behind with the luggage and sent on by train. I do not know if you realize how the land lies in that quarter. It needs only a word to Miss Grammont."

There was no immediate reply. For a moment he had a wild hope that his companion would agree, and then he perceived that the doctor's silence meant only the preparation of an ultimatum.

"I object to Miss Grammont and that side of the thing, more than I do to Miss Seyffert."

Sir Richmond said nothing.

"It may help you to see this affair from a slightly different angle if I tell you that twice today Miss Seyffert has asked me if you were a married man."

"And of course you told her I was."

"On the second occasion."

Sir Richmond smiled again.

"Frankly," said the doctor, "this adventure is altogether uncongenial to me. It is the sort of thing that has never happened in my life. This highway coupling--"

"Don't you think," said Sir Richmond, "that you are attaching rather too much--what shall I say--romantic?--flirtatious?--meaning to this affair? I don't mind that after my rather lavish confessions you should

consider me a rather oversexed person, but isn't your attitude rather unfair,--unjust, indeed, and almost insulting, to this Miss Grammont? After all, she's a young lady of very good social position indeed. She doesn't strike you--does she?--as an undignified or helpless human being. Her manners suggest a person of considerable self-control. And knowing less of me than you do, she probably regards me as almost as safe as--a maiden aunt say. I'm twice her age. We are a party of four. There are conventions, there are considerations.... Aren't you really, my dear Martineau, overdoing all this side of this very pleasant little enlargement of our interests."

"AM I?" said Dr. Martineau and brought a scrutinizing eye to bear on Sir Richmond's face.

"I want to go on talking to Miss Grammont for a day or so," Sir Richmond admitted.

"Then I shall prefer to leave your party."

There were some moments of silence.

"I am really very sorry to find myself in this dilemma," said Sir Richmond with a note of genuine regret in his voice.

"It is not a dilemma," said Dr. Martineau, with a corresponding loss of asperity. "I grant you we discover we differ upon a question of taste

and convenience. But before I suggested this trip, I had intended to spend a little time with my old friend Sir Kenelm Latter at Bournemouth. Nothing simpler than to go to him now...."

"I shall be sorry all the same."

"I could have wished," said the doctor, "that these ladies had happened a little later...."

The matter was settled. Nothing more of a practical nature remained to be said. But neither gentleman wished to break off with a harsh and bare decision.

"When the New Age is here," said Sir Richmond, "then, surely, a friendship between a man and a woman will not be subjected to the--the inconveniences your present code would set about it? They would travel about together as they chose?"

"The fundamental principle of the new age," said the doctor, "will be Honi soit qui mal y pense. In these matters. With perhaps Fay ce que vouldras as its next injunction. So long as other lives are not affected. In matters of personal behaviour the world will probably be much more free and individuals much more open in their conscience and honour than they have ever been before. In matters of property, economics and public conduct it will probably be just the reverse. Then, there will be much more collective control and much more insistence,

legal insistence, upon individual responsibility. But we are not living in a new age yet; we are living in the patched-up ruins of a very old one. And you--if you will forgive me--are living in the patched up remains of a life that had already had its complications. This young lady, whose charm and cleverness I admit, behaves as if the new age were already here. Well, that may be a very dangerous mistake both for her and for you.... This affair, if it goes on for a few days more, may involve very serious consequences indeed, with which I, for one, do not wish to be involved."

Sir Richmond, upon the hearthrug, had a curious feeling that he was back in the head master's study at Caxton.

Dr. Martineau went on with a lucidity that Sir Richmond found rather trying, to give his impression of Miss Grammont and her position in life.

"She is," he said, "manifestly a very expensively educated girl. And in many ways interesting. I have been watching her. I have not been favoured with very much of her attention, but that fact has enabled me to see her in profile. Miss Seyffert is a fairly crude mixture of frankness, insincerity and self-explanatory egotism, and I have been able to disregard a considerable amount of the conversation she has addressed to me. Now I guess this Miss Grammont has had no mother since she was quite little."

"Your guesses, doctor, are apt to be pretty good," said Sir Richmond.

"You know that?"

"She has told me as much."

"H'm. Well--She impressed me as having the air of a girl who has had to solve many problems for which the normal mother provides ready made solutions. That is how I inferred that there was no mother. I don't think there has been any stepmother, either friendly or hostile?
There hasn't been. I thought not. She has had various governesses and companions, ladies of birth and education, engaged to look after her and she has done exactly what she liked with them. Her manner with Miss Seyffert, an excellent manner for Miss Seyffert, by the bye, isn't the sort of manner anyone acquires in a day. Or for one person only. She is a very sure and commanding young woman."

Sir Richmond nodded.

"I suppose her father adores and neglects her, and whenever she has wanted a companion or governess butchered, the thing has been done.... These business Americans, I am told, neglect their womenkind, give them money and power, let them loose on the world.... It is a sort of moral laziness masquerading as affection.... Still I suppose custom and tradition kept this girl in her place and she was petted, honoured, amused, talked about but not in a harmful way, and rather bored right

up to the time when America came into the war. Theoretically she had a tremendously good time."

"I think this must be near the truth of her biography," said Sir Richmond.

"I suppose she has lovers."

"You don't mean--?"

"No, I don't. Though that is a matter that ought to have no special interest for you. I mean that she was surrounded by a retinue of men who wanted to marry her or who behaved as though they wanted to marry her or who made her happiness and her gratifications and her condescensions seem a matter of very great importance to them. She had the flattery of an extremely uncritical and unexacting admiration. That is the sort of thing that gratifies a silly woman extremely. Miss Grammont is not silly and all this homage and facile approval probably bored her more than she realized. To anyone too intelligent to be steadily excited by buying things and wearing things and dancing and playing games and going to places of entertainment, and being given flowers, sweets, jewellery, pet animals, and books bound in a special sort of leather, the prospect of being a rich man's only daughter until such time as it becomes advisable to change into a rich man's wealthy wife, is probably not nearly so amusing as envious people might suppose. I take it Miss Grammont had got all she could out of that sort of thing some time before the war, and

that she had already read and thought rather more than most young women in her position. Before she was twenty I guess she was already looking for something more interesting in the way of men than a rich admirer with an automobile full of presents. Those who seek find."

"What do you think she found?"

"What would a rich girl find out there in America? I don't know. I haven't the material to guess with. In London a girl might find a considerable variety of active, interesting men, rising politicians, university men of distinction, artists and writers even, men of science, men--there are still such men--active in the creative work of the empire.

"In America I suppose there is at least an equal variety, made up of rather different types. She would find that life was worth while to such people in a way that made the ordinary entertainments and amusements of her life a monstrous silly waste of time. With the facility of her sex she would pick up from one of them the idea that made life worth while for him. I am inclined to think there was someone in her case who did seem to promise a sort of life that was worth while. And that somehow the war came to alter the look of that promise.

"How?"

"I don't know. Perhaps I am only romancing. But for this young woman

I am convinced this expedition to Europe has meant experience, harsh educational experience and very profound mental disturbance. There have been love experiences; experiences that were something more than the treats and attentions and proposals that made up her life when she was sheltered over there. And something more than that. What it is I don't know. The war has turned an ugly face to her. She has seen death and suffering and ruin. Perhaps she has seen people she knew killed. Perhaps the man has been killed. Or she has met with cowardice or cruelty or treachery where she didn't expect it. She has been shocked out of the first confidence of youth. She has ceased to take the world for granted. It hasn't broken her but it has matured her. That I think is why history has become real to her. Which so attracts you in her. History, for her, has ceased to be a fabric of picturesque incidents; it is the study of a tragic struggle that still goes on. She sees history as you see it and I see it. She is a very grown-up young woman.

"It's just that," said Sir Richmond. "It's just that. If you see as much in Miss Grammont as all that, why don't you want to come on with us? You see the interest of her."

"I see a lot more than that. You don't know what an advantage it is to be as I am, rather cold and unresponsive to women and unattractive and negligible--negligible, that is the exact word--to them. YOU can't look at a woman for five minutes without losing sight of her in a mist of imaginative excitement. Because she looks back at you. I have the privilege of the negligible--which is a cool head. Miss Grammont has a

startled and matured mind, an original mind. Yes. And there is something more to be said. Her intelligence is better than her character."

"I don't quite see what you are driving at."

"The intelligence of all intelligent women is better than their characters. Goodness in a woman, as we understand it, seems to imply necessarily a certain imaginative fixity. Miss Grammont has an impulsive and adventurous character. And as I have been saying she was a spoilt child, with no discipline.... You also are a person of high intelligence and defective controls. She is very much at loose ends. You--on account of the illness of that rather forgotten lady, Miss Martin Leeds--"
"Aren't you rather abusing the secrets of the confessional?"

"This IS the confessional. It closes to-morrow morning but it is the confessional still. Look at the thing frankly. You, I say, are also at loose ends. Can you deny it? My dear sir, don't we both know that ever since we left London you have been ready to fall in love with any pretty thing in petticoats that seemed to promise you three ha'porth of kindness. A lost dog looking for a master! You're a stray man looking for a mistress. Miss Grammont being a woman is a little more selective than that. But if she's at a loose end as I suppose, she isn't protected by the sense of having made her selection. And she has no preconceptions of what she wants. You are a very interesting man in many ways. You carry marriage and entanglements lightly. With an air of being neither married nor entangled. She is quite prepared to fall in love with you."

"But you don't really think that?" said Sir Richmond, with an ill-concealed eagerness.

Dr. Martineau rolled his face towards Sir Richmond. "These miracles--grotesquely--happen," he said. "She knows nothing of Martin Leeds.... You must remember that....

"And then," he added, "if she and you fall in love, as the phrase goes, what is to follow?"

There was a pause.

Sir Richmond looked at his toes for a moment or so as if he took counsel with them and then decided to take offence.

"Really!" he said, "this is preposterous. You talk of falling in love as though it was impossible for a man and woman to be deeply interested in each other without that. And the gulf in our ages--in our quality! From the Psychologist of a New Age I find this amazing. Are men and women to go on for ever--separated by this possibility into two hardly communicating and yet interpenetrating worlds? Is there never to be friendship and companionship between men and women without passion?"

"You ought to know even better than I do that there is not. For such people as you two anyhow. And at present the world is not prepared to

tolerate friendship and companionship WITH that accompaniment. That is the core of this situation."

A pause fell between the two gentlemen. They had smoothed over the extreme harshness of their separation and there was very little more to be said.

"Well," said Sir Richmond in conclusion, "I am very sorry indeed, Martineau, that we have to part like this."