CHAPTER THE SEVENTH

COMPANIONSHIP

Section 1

"Well," said Dr. Martineau, extending his hand to Sir Richmond on the Salisbury station platform, "I leave you to it."

His round face betrayed little or no vestiges of his overnight irritation.

"Ought you to leave me to it?" smiled Sir Richmond.

"I shall be interested to learn what happens."

"But if you won't stay to see!"

"Now Sir, please," said the guard respectfully but firmly, and Dr. Martineau got in.

Sir Richmond walked thoughtfully down the platform towards the exit.

"What else could I do?" he asked aloud to nobody in particular.

For a little while he thought confusedly of the collapse of his

expedition into the secret places of his own heart with Dr. Martineau, and then his prepossession with Miss Grammont resumed possession of his mind. Dr. Martineau was forgotten.

Section 2

For the better part of forty hours, Sir Richmond had either been talking to Miss Grammont, or carrying on imaginary conversations with her in her absence, or sleeping and dreaming dreams in which she never failed to play a part, even if at times it was an altogether amazing and incongruous part. And as they were both very frank and expressive people, they already knew a very great deal about each other.

For an American Miss Grammont was by no means autobiographical. She gave no sketches of her idiosyncrasies, and she repeated no remembered comments and prophets of her contemporaries about herself. She either concealed or she had lost any great interest in her own personality. But she was interested in and curious about the people she had met in life, and her talk of them reflected a considerable amount of light upon her own upbringing and experiences. And her liking for Sir Richmond was pleasingly manifest. She liked his turn of thought, she watched him with a faint smile on her lips as he spoke, and she spread her opinions before him carefully in that soft voice of hers like a shy child showing its treasures to some suddenly trusted and favoured visitor.

Their ways of thought harmonized. They talked at first chiefly about the

history of the world and the extraordinary situation of aimlessness in a phase of ruin to which the Great War had brought all Europe, if not all mankind. The world excited them both in the same way; as a crisis in which they were called upon to do something--they did not yet clearly know what. Into this topic they peered as into some deep pool, side by side, and in it they saw each other reflected.

The visit to Avebury had been a great success. It had been a perfect springtime day, and the little inn had been delighted at the reappearance of Sir Richmond's car so soon after its departure. Its delight was particularly manifest in the cream and salad it produced for lunch. Both Miss Grammont and Miss Seyffert displayed an intelligent interest in their food. After lunch they had all gone out to the stones and the wall. Half a dozen sunburnt children were putting one of the partially overturned megaliths to a happy use by clambering to the top of it and sliding on their little behinds down its smooth and sloping side amidst much mirthful squealing.

Sir Richmond and Miss Grammont had walked round the old circumvallation together, but Belinda Seyffert had strayed away from them, professing an interest in flowers. It was not so much that she felt they had to be left together that made her do this as her own consciousness of being possessed by a devil who interrupted conversations.

When Miss Grammont was keenly interested in a conversation, then Belinda had learnt from experience that it was wiser to go off with her devil

out of the range of any temptation to interrupt.

"You really think," said Miss Grammont, "that it would be possible to take this confused old world and reshape it, set it marching towards that new world of yours--of two hundred and fifty million fully developed, beautiful and happy people?"

"Why not? Nobody is doing anything with the world except muddle about. Why not give it a direction?"

"You'd take it in your hands like clay?"

"Obdurate clay with a sort of recalcitrant, unintelligent life of its own."

Her imagination glowed in her eyes and warmed her voice. "I believe what you say is possible. If people dare."

"I am tired of following little motives that are like flames that go out when you get to them. I am tired of seeing all the world doing the same. I am tired of a world in which there is nothing great but great disasters. Here is something mankind can attempt, that we can attempt."

"And will?"

"I believe that as Mankind grows up this is the business Man has to

settle down to and will settle down to."

She considered that.

"I've been getting to believe something like this. But--... it frightens me. I suppose most of us have this same sort of dread of taking too much upon ourselves."

"So we just live like pigs. Sensible little piggywiggys. I've got a Committee full of that sort of thing. We live like little modest pigs. And let the world go hang. And pride ourselves upon our freedom from the sin of presumption.

"Not quite that!"

"Well! How do you put it?"

"We are afraid," she said. "It's too vast. We want bright little lives of our own."

"Exactly--sensible little piggy-wiggys."

"We have a right to life--and happiness.

"First," said Sir Richmond, "as much right as a pig has to food. But whether we get life and happiness or fail to get them we human beings

who have imaginations want something more nowadays.... Of course we want bright lives, of course we want happiness. Just as we want food, just as we want sleep. But when we have eaten, when we have slept, when we have jolly things about us--it is nothing. We have been made an exception of--and got our rations. The big thing confronts us still. It is vast, I agree, but vast as it is it is the thing we have to think about. I do not know why it should be so, but I am compelled by something in my nature to want to serve this idea of a new age for mankind. I want it as my culminating want. I want a world in order, a disciplined mankind going on to greater things. Don't you?"

"Now you tell me of it," she said with a smile, "I do."

"But before--?"

"No. You've made it clear. It wasn't clear before."

"I've been talking of this sort of thing with my friend Dr. Martineau. And I've been thinking as well as talking. That perhaps is why I'm so clear and positive."

"I don't complain that you are clear and positive. I've been coming along the same way.... It's refreshing to meet you."

"I found it refreshing to meet Martineau." A twinge of conscience about Dr. Martineau turned Sir Richmond into a new channel. "He's a most

interesting man," he said. "Rather shy in some respects. Devoted to his work. And he's writing a book which has saturated him in these ideas. Only two nights ago we stood here and talked about it. The Psychology of a New Age. The world, he believes, is entering upon a new phase in its history, the adolescence, so to speak, of mankind. It is an idea that seizes the imagination. There is a flow of new ideas abroad, he thinks, widening realizations, unprecedented hopes and fears. There is a consciousness of new powers and new responsibilities. We are sharing the adolescence of our race. It is giving history a new and more intimate meaning for us. It is bringing us into directer relation with public affairs,--making them matter as formerly they didn't seem to matter. That idea of the bright little private life has to go by the board."

"I suppose it has," she said, meditatively, as though she had been thinking over some such question before.

"The private life," she said, "has a way of coming aboard again."

Her reflections travelled fast and broke out now far ahead of him.

"You have some sort of work cut out for you," she said abruptly.

"Yes. Yes, I have."

"I haven't," she said.

"So that I go about," she added, "like someone who is looking for something. I'd like to know if it's not jabbing too searching a question at you--what you have found."

Sir Richmond considered. "Incidentally," he smiled, "I want to get a lasso over the neck of that very forcible and barbaric person, your father. I am doing my best to help lay the foundation of a scientific world control of fuel production and distribution. We have a Fuel Commission in London with rather wide powers of enquiry into the whole world problem of fuel. We shall come out to Washington presently with proposals."

Miss Grammont surveyed the landscape. "I suppose," she said, "poor father IS rather like an unbroken mule in business affairs. So many of our big business men in America are. He'll lash out at you."

"I don't mind if only he lashes out openly in the sight of all men."

She considered and turned on Sir Richmond gravely.

"Tell me what you want to do to him. You find out so many things for me that I seem to have been thinking about in a sort of almost invisible half-conscious way. I've been suspecting for a long time that Civilization wasn't much good unless it got people like my father under some sort of control. But controlling father--as distinguished from managing him!" She reviewed some private and amusing memories. "He is a

most intractable man."

Section 3

They had gone on to talk of her father and of the types of men who controlled international business. She had had plentiful opportunities for observation in their homes and her own. Gunter Lake, the big banker, she knew particularly well, because, it seemed, she had been engaged or was engaged to marry him. "All these people," she said, "are pushing things about, affecting millions of lives, hurting and disordering hundreds of thousands of people. They don't seem to know what they are doing. They have no plans in particular.... And you are getting something going that will be a plan and a direction and a conscience and a control for them? You will find my father extremely difficult, but some of our younger men would love it.

"And," she went on; "there are American women who'd love it too. We're petted. We're kept out of things. We aren't placed. We don't get enough to do. We're spenders and wasters--not always from choice. While these fathers and brothers and husbands of ours play about with the fuel and power and life and hope of the world as though it was a game of poker. With all the empty unspeakable solemnity of the male. And treat us as though we ought to be satisfied if they bring home part of the winnings.

"That can't go on," she said.

Her eyes went back to the long, low, undulating skyline of the downs. She spoke as though she took up the thread of some controversy that had played a large part in her life. "That isn't going on," she said with an effect of conclusive decision.

Sir Richmond recalled that little speech now as he returned from Salisbury station to the Old George after his farewell to Martineau. He recalled too the soft firmness of her profile and the delicate line of her lifted chin. He felt that this time at any rate he was not being deceived by the outward shows of a charming human being. This young woman had real firmness of character to back up her free and independent judgments. He smiled at the idea of any facile passion in the composition of so sure and gallant a personality. Martineau was very fine-minded in many respects, but he was an old maid; and like all old maids he saw man and woman in every encounter. But passion was a thing men and women fell back upon when they had nothing else in common. When they thought in the pleasantest harmony and every remark seemed to weave a fresh thread of common interest, then it wasn't so necessary. It might happen, but it wasn't so necessary.... If it did it would be a secondary thing to companionship. That's what she was,--a companion.

But a very lovely and wonderful companion, the companion one would not relinquish until the very last moment one could keep with her.

Her views about America and about her own place in the world seemed equally fresh and original to Sir Richmond.

"I realize I've got to be a responsible American citizen," she had said. That didn't mean that she attached very much importance to her recently acquired vote. She evidently classified voters into the irresponsible who just had votes and the responsible who also had a considerable amount of property as well. She had no illusions about the power of the former class. It didn't exist. They were steered to their decisions by people employed, directed or stimulated by "father" and his friends and associates, the owners of America, the real "responsible citizens." Or they fell a prey to the merely adventurous leading of "revolutionaries." But anyhow they were steered. She herself, it was clear, was bound to become a very responsible citizen indeed. She would some day, she laughed, be swimming in oil and such like property. Her interest in Sir Richmond's schemes for a scientific world management of fuel was therefore, she realized, a very direct one. But it was remarkable to find a young woman seeing it like that.

Father it seemed varied very much in his attitude towards her. He despised and distrusted women generally, and it was evident he had made it quite clear to her how grave an error it was on her part to persist in being a daughter and not a son. At moments it seemed to Sir Richmond that she was disposed to agree with father upon that. When Mr. Grammont's sense of her regrettable femininity was uppermost, then he gave his intelligence chiefly to schemes for tying her up against the machinations of adventurers by means of trustees, partners, lawyers, advisers, agreements and suchlike complications, or for acquiring a

workable son by marriage. To this last idea it would seem the importance in her life of the rather heavily named Gunter Lake was to be ascribed. But another mood of the old man's was distrust of anything that could not be spoken of as his "own flesh and blood," and then he would direct his attention to a kind of masculinization of his daughter and to schemes for giving her the completest control of all he had to leave her provided she never married nor fell under masculine sway. "After all," he would reflect as he hesitated over the practicability of his life's ideal, "there was Hetty Green."

This latter idea had reft her suddenly at the age of seventeen from the educational care of an English gentlewoman warranted to fit her for marriage with any prince in Europe, and thrust her for the mornings and a moiety of the afternoons of the better part of a year, after a swift but competent training, into a shirt waist and an office down town. She had been entrusted at first to a harvester concern independent of Mr. Grammont, because he feared his own people wouldn't train her hard. She had worked for ordinary wages and ordinary hours, and at the end of the day, she mentioned casually, a large automobile with two menservants and a trustworthy secretary used to pick her out from the torrent of undistinguished workers that poured out of the Synoptical Building. This masculinization idea had also sent her on a commission of enquiry into Mexico. There apparently she had really done responsible work.

But upon the question of labour Mr. Grammont was fierce, even for an American business man, and one night at a dinner party he discovered

his daughter displaying what he considered an improper familiarity with socialist ideas. This had produced a violent revulsion towards the purdah system and the idea of a matrimonial alliance with Gunter Lake. Gunter Lake, Sir Richmond gathered, wasn't half a bad fellow. Generally it would seem Miss Grammont liked him, and she had a way of speaking about him that suggested that in some way Mr. Lake had been rather hardly used and had acquired merit by his behaviour under bad treatment. There was some story, however, connected with her war services in Europe upon which Miss Grammont was evidently indisposed to dwell. About that story Sir Richmond was left at the end of his Avebury day and after his last talk with Dr. Martineau, still quite vaguely guessing.

So much fact about Miss Grammont as we have given had floated up in fragments and pieced itself together in Sir Richmond's mind in the course of a day and a half. The fragments came up as allusions or by way of illustration. The sustaining topic was this New Age Sir Richmond fore shadowed, this world under scientific control, the Utopia of fully developed people fully developing the resources of the earth. For a number of trivial reasons Sir Richmond found himself ascribing the project of this New Age almost wholly to Dr. Martineau, and presenting it as a much completer scheme than he was justified in doing. It was true that Dr. Martineau had not said many of the things Sir Richmond ascribed to him, but also it was true that they had not crystallized out in Sir Richmond's mind before his talks with Dr. Martineau. The idea of a New Age necessarily carries with it the idea of fresh rules of conduct and of different relationships between human beings. And it throws

those who talk about it into the companionship of a common enterprise. To-morrow the New Age will be here no doubt, but today it is the hope and adventure of only a few human beings.

So that it was natural for Miss Grammont and Sir Richmond to ask: "What are we to do with such types as father?" and to fall into an idiom that assumed a joint enterprise. They had agreed by a tacit consent to a common conception of the world they desired as a world scientifically ordered, an immense organization of mature commonsense, healthy and secure, gathering knowledge and power for creative adventures as yet beyond dreaming. They were prepared to think of the makers of the Avebury dyke as their yesterday selves, of the stone age savages as a phase, in their late childhood, and of this great world order Sir Richmond foresaw as a day where dawn was already at hand. And in such long perspectives, the states, governments and institutions of to-day became very temporary-looking and replaceable structures indeed. Both these two people found themselves thinking in this fashion with an unwonted courage and freedom because the other one had been disposed to think in this fashion before. Sir Richmond was still turning over in his mind the happy mutual release of the imagination this chance companionship had brought about when he found himself back again at the threshold of the Old George.

Section 4

Sir Richmond Hardy was not the only man who was thinking intently about

Miss Grammont at that particular moment. Two gentlemen were coming towards her across the Atlantic whose minds, it chanced, were very busily occupied by her affairs. One of these was her father, who was lying in his brass bed in his commodious cabin on the Hollandia, regretting his diminishing ability to sleep in the early morning now, even when he was in the strong and soothing air of mid-Atlantic, and thinking of V.V. because she had a way of coming into his mind when it was undefended; and the other was Mr. Gunter Lake on the Megantic, one day out from Sandy Hook, who found himself equally sleepless and preoccupied. And although Mr. Lake was a man of vast activities and complicated engagements he was coming now to Europe for the express purpose of seeing V.V. and having things out with her fully and completely because, in spite of all that had happened, she made such an endless series of delays in coming to America.

Old Grammont as he appeared upon the pillow of his bed by the light of a rose-shaded bedside lamp, was a small-headed, grey-haired gentleman with a wrinkled face and sunken brown eyes. Years of business experience, mitigated only by such exercise as the game of poker affords, had intensified an instinctive inexpressiveness. Under the most solitary circumstances old Grammont was still inexpressive, and the face that stared at the ceiling of his cabin and the problem of his daughter might have been the face of a pickled head in a museum, for any indication it betrayed of the flow of thought within. He lay on his back and his bent knees lifted the bed-clothes into a sharp mountain. He was not even trying to sleep.

Why, he meditated, had V.V. stayed on in Europe so much longer than she need have done? And why had Gunter Lake suddenly got into a state of mind about her? Why didn't the girl confide in her father at least about these things? What was afoot? She had thrown over Lake once and it seemed she was going to turn him down again. Well, if she was an ordinary female person that was a silly sort of thing to do. With her fortune and his--you could buy the world. But suppose she was not all ordinary female person.... Her mother hadn't been ordinary anyhow, whatever else you called her, and no one could call Grammont blood all ordinary fluid. ... Old Grammont had never had any delusions about Lake. If Lake's father hadn't been a big man Lake would never have counted for anything at all. Suppose she did turn him down. In itself that wasn't a thing to break her father's heart.

What did matter was not whether she threw Lake over but what she threw him over for. If it was because he wasn't man enough, well and good. But if it was for some other lover, some good-looking, worthless impostor, some European title or suchlike folly--!

At the thought of a lover for V.V. a sudden flood of anger poured across the old man's mind, behind the still mask of his face. It infuriated him even to think of V.V., his little V.V., his own girl, entertaining a lover, being possibly--most shameful thought--IN LOVE! Like some ordinary silly female, sinking to kisses, to the deeds one could buy and pay for. His V.V.! The idea infuriated and disgusted him. He fought

against it as a possibility. Once some woman in New York had ventured to hint something to him of some fellow, some affair with an artist, Caston; she had linked this Caston with V.V.'s red cross nursing in Europe.... Old Grammont had made that woman sorry she spoke. Afterwards he had caused enquiries to be made about this Caston, careful enquiries. It seems that he and V.V. had known each other, there had been something. But nothing that V.V. need be ashamed of. When old Grammont's enquiry man had come back with his report, old Grammont had been very particular about that. At first the fellow had not been very clear, rather muddled indeed as to how things were--no doubt he had wanted to make out there was something just to seem to earn his money. Old Grammont had struck the table sharply and the eyes that looked out of his mask had blazed. "What have you found out against her?" he had asked in a low even voice. "Absolutely nothing, Sir," said the agent, suddenly white to the lips....

Old Grammont stared at his memory of that moment for a while. That affair was all right, quite all right. Of course it was all right. And also, happily, Caston was among the dead. But it was well her broken engagement with Lake had been resumed as though it had never been broken off. If there had been any talk that fact answered it. And now that Lake had served his purpose old Grammont did not care in the least if he was shelved. V.V. could stand alone.

Old Grammont had got a phrase in his mind that looked like dominating the situation. He dreamt of saying to V.V.: "V.V., I'm going to make

a man of you--if you're man enough." That was a large proposition; it implied--oh! it implied all sorts of things. It meant that she would care as little for philandering as an able young business man. Perhaps some day, a long time ahead, she might marry. There wasn't much reason for it, but it might be she would not wish to be called a spinster. "Take a husband," thought old Grammont, "when I am gone, as one takes a butler, to make the household complete." In previous meditations on his daughter's outlook old Grammont had found much that was very suggestive in the precedent of Queen Victoria. She had had no husband of the lord and master type, so to speak, but only a Prince Consort, well in hand. Why shouldn't the Grammont heiress dominate her male belonging, if it came to that, in the same fashion? Why shouldn't one tie her up and tie the whole thing up, so far as any male belonging was concerned, leaving V.V. in all other respects free? How could one do it?

The speculative calm of the sunken brown eyes deepened.

His thoughts went back to the white face of the private enquiry agent. "Absolutely nothing, Sir." What had the fellow thought of hinting? Nothing of that kind in V.V.'s composition, never fear. Yet it was a curious anomaly that while one had a thousand ways of defending one's daughter and one's property against that daughter's husband, there was no power on earth by which a father could stretch his dead hand between that daughter and the undue influence of a lover. Unless you tied her up for good and all, lover or none....

One was left at the mercy of V.V.'s character....

"I ought to see more of her," he thought. "She gets away from me. Just as her mother did." A man need not suspect his womenkind but he should know what they are doing. It is duty, his protective duty to them. These companions, these Seyffert women and so forth, were all very well in their way; there wasn't much they kept from you if you got them cornered and asked them intently. But a father's eye is better. He must go about with the girl for a time, watch her with other men, give her chances to talk business with him and see if she took them. "V.V., I'm going to make a man of you," the phrase ran through his brain. The deep instinctive jealousy of the primordial father was still strong in old Grammont's blood. It would be pleasant to go about with her on his right hand in Paris, HIS girl, straight and lovely, desirable and unapproachable,--above that sort of nonsense, above all other masculine subjugation.

"V.V., I'm going to make a man of you...."

His mind grew calmer. Whatever she wanted in Paris should be hers. He'd just let her rip. They'd be like sweethearts together, he and his girl.

Old Grammont dozed off into dreamland.

Section 5

The imaginations of Mr. Gunter Lake, two days behind Mr. Grammont upon the Atlantic, were of a gentler, more romantic character. In them V.V. was no longer a daughter in the fierce focus of a father's jealousy, but the goddess enshrined in a good man's heart. Indeed the figure that the limelight of the reverie fell upon was not V.V. at all but Mr. Gunter Lake himself, in his favourite role of the perfect lover.

An interminable speech unfolded itself. "I ask for nothing in return. I've never worried you about that Caston business and I never will. Married to me you shall be as free as if you were unmarried. Don't I know, my dear girl, that you don't love me yet. Let that be as you wish. I want nothing you are not willing to give me, nothing at all. All I ask is the privilege of making life happy--and it shall be happy--for you.... All I ask. All I ask. Protect, guard, cherish...."

For to Mr. Gunter Lake it seemed there could be no lovelier thing in life than a wife "in name only" slowly warmed into a glow of passion by the steadfast devotion and the strength and wisdom of a mate at first despised. Until at last a day would come....

"My darling!" Mr. Gunter Lake whispered to the darkness. "My little guurl. IT HAS BEEN WORTH THE WAITING...."

Section 6

Miss Grammont met Sir Richmond in the bureau of the Old George with a

telegram in her hand. "My father reported his latitude and longitude by wireless last night. The London people think he will be off Falmouth in four days' time. He wants me to join his liner there and go on to Cherbourg and Paris. He's arranged that. He is the sort of man who can arrange things like that. There'll be someone at Falmouth to look after us and put us aboard the liner. I must wire them where I can pick up a telegram to-morrow."

"Wells in Somerset," said Sir Richmond.

His plans were already quite clear. He explained that he wanted her first to see Shaftesbury, a little old Wessex town that was three or four hundred years older than Salisbury, perched on a hill, a Saxon town, where Alfred had gathered his forces against the Danes and where Canute, who had ruled over all Scandinavia and Iceland and Greenland, and had come near ruling a patch of America, had died. It was a little sleepy place now, looking out dreamily over beautiful views. They would lunch in Shaftesbury and walk round it. Then they would go in the afternoon through the pleasant west country where the Celts had prevailed against the old folk of the Stonehenge temple and the Romans against the Celts and the Saxons against the Romanized Britons and the Danes against the Saxons, a war-scarred landscape, abounding in dykes and entrenchments and castles, sunken now into the deepest peace, to Glastonbury to see what there was to see of a marsh village the Celts had made for themselves three or four hundred years before the Romans came. And at Glastonbury also there were the ruins of a great

Benedictine church and abbey that had once rivalled Salisbury. Thence they would go on to Wells to see yet another great cathedral and to dine and sleep. Glastonbury Abbey and Wells Cathedral brought the story of Europe right up to Reformation times.

"That will be a good day for us," said Sir Richmond. "It will be like turning over the pages of the history of our family, to and fro. There will be nothing nearly so old as Avebury in it, but there will be something from almost every chapter that comes after Stonehenge. Rome will be poorly represented, but that may come the day after at Bath. And the next day too I want to show you something of our old River Severn. We will come right up to the present if we go through Bristol. There we shall have a whiff of America, our new find, from which the tobacco comes, and we shall be reminded of how we set sail thither--was it yesterday or the day before? You will understand at Bristol how it is that the energy has gone out of this dreaming land--to Africa and America and the whole wide world. It was the good men of Bristol, by the bye, with their trade from Africa to America, who gave you your colour problem. Bristol we may go through to-morrow and Gloucester, mother of I don't know how many American Gloucesters. Bath we'll get in somehow. And then as an Anglo-American showman I shall be tempted to run you northward a little way past Tewkesbury, just to go into a church here and there and show you monuments bearing little shields with the stars and stripes upon them, a few stars and a few stripes, the Washington family monuments."

"It was not only from England that America came," said Miss Grammont.

"But England takes an American memory back most easily and most fully--to Avebury and the Baltic Northmen, past the emperors and the Corinthian columns that smothered Latin Europe.... For you and me anyhow this is our past, this was our childhood, and this is our land." He interrupted laughing as she was about to reply. "Well, anyhow," he said, "it is a beautiful day and a pretty country before us with the ripest history in every grain of its soil. So we'll send a wire to your London people and tell them to send their instructions to Wells."

"I'll tell Belinda," she said, "to be quick with her packing."

Section 7

As Miss Grammont and Sir Richmond Hardy fulfilled the details of his excellent programme and revised their impressions of the past and their ideas about the future in the springtime sunlight of Wiltshire and Somerset, with Miss Seyffert acting the part of an almost ostentatiously discreet chorus, it was inevitable that their conversation should become, by imperceptible gradations, more personal and intimate. They kept up the pose, which was supposed to represent Dr. Martineau's philosophy, of being Man and Woman on their Planet considering its Future, but insensibly they developed the idiosyncrasies of their position. They might profess to be Man and Woman in the most general terms, but the facts that she was the daughter not of Everyman but old

Grammont and that Sir Richmond was the angry leader of a minority upon the Fuel Commission became more and more important. "What shall we do with this planet of ours?" gave way by the easiest transitions to "What are you and I doing and what have we got to do? How do you feel about it all? What do you desire and what do you dare?"

It was natural that Sir Richmond should talk of his Fuel Commission to a young woman whose interests in fuel were even greater than his own. He found that she was very much better read than he was in the recent literature of socialism, and that she had what he considered to be a most unfeminine grasp of economic ideas. He thought her attitude towards socialism a very sane one because it was also his own. So far as socialism involved the idea of a scientific control of natural resources as a common property administered in the common interest, she and he were very greatly attracted by it; but so far as it served as a form of expression for the merely insubordinate discontent of the many with the few, under any conditions, so long as it was a formula for class jealousy and warfare, they were both repelled by it. If she had had any illusions about the working class possessing as a class any profounder political wisdom or more generous public impulses than any other class, those illusions had long since departed. People were much the same, she thought, in every class; there was no stratification of either rightness or righteousness.

He found he could talk to her of his work and aims upon the Fuel Commission and of the conflict and failure of motives he found in

himself, as freely as he had done to Dr. Martineau and with a surer confidence of understanding. Perhaps his talks with the doctor had got his ideas into order and made them more readily expressible than they would have been otherwise. He argued against the belief that any class could be good as a class or bad as a class, and he instanced the conflict of motives he found in all the members of his Committee and most so in himself. He repeated the persuasion he had already confessed to Dr. Martineau that there was not a single member of the Fuel Commission but had a considerable drive towards doing the right thing about fuel, and not one who had a single-minded, unencumbered drive towards the right thing. "That," said Sir Richmond, "is what makes life so interesting and, in spite of a thousand tragic disappointments, so hopeful. Every man is a bad man, every man is a feeble man and every man is a good man. My motives come and go. Yours do the same. We vary in response to the circumstances about us. Given a proper atmosphere, most men will be public-spirited, right-living, generous. Given perplexities and darkness, most of us can be cowardly and vile. People say you cannot change human nature and perhaps that is true, but you can change its responses endlessly. The other day I was in Bohemia, discussing Silesian coal with Benes, and I went to see the Festival of the Bohemian Sokols. Opposite to where I sat, far away across the arena, was a great bank of men of the Sokol organizations, an unbroken brown mass wrapped in their brown uniform cloaks. Suddenly the sun came out and at a word the whole body flung back their cloaks, showed their Garibaldi shirts and became one solid blaze of red. It was an amazing transformation until one understood what had happened. Yet nothing material had changed but the

sunshine. And given a change in laws and prevailing ideas, and the very same people who are greedy traders, grasping owners and revolting workers to-day will all throw their cloaks aside and you will find them working together cheerfully, even generously, for a common end. They aren't traders and owners and workers and so forth by any inner necessity. Those are just the ugly parts they play in the present drama. Which is nearly at the end of its run."

"That's a hopeful view," said Miss Grammont. "I don't see the flaw in it--if there is a flaw."

"There isn't one," said Sir Richmond. "It is my chief discovery about life. I began with the question of fuel and the energy it affords mankind, and I have found that my generalization applies to all human affairs. Human beings are fools, weaklings, cowards, passionate idiots,--I grant you. That is the brown cloak side of them, so to speak. But they are not such fools and so forth that they can't do pretty well materially if once we hammer out a sane collective method of getting and using fuel. Which people generally will understand--in the place of our present methods of snatch and wrangle. Of that I am absolutely convinced. Some work, some help, some willingness you can get out of everybody. That's the red. And the same principle applies to most labour and property problems, to health, to education, to population, social relationships and war and peace. We haven't got the right system, we have inefficient half-baked systems, or no system at all, and a wild confusion and war of ideas in all these respects. But there is a right

system possible none the less. Let us only hammer our way through to the sane and reasonable organization in this and that and the other human affairs, and once we have got it, we shall have got it for good. We may not live to see even the beginnings of success, but the spirit of order, the spirit that has already produced organized science, if only there are a few faithful, persistent people to stick to the job, will in the long run certainly save mankind and make human life clean and splendid, happy work in a clear mind. If I could live to see it!"

"And as for us--in our time?"

"Measured by the end we serve, we don't matter. You know we don't matter."

"We have to find our fun in the building and in our confidence that we do really build."

"So long as our confidence lasts there is no great hardship," said Sir Richmond.

"So long as our confidence lasts," she repeated after him.

"Ah!" cried Sir Richmond. "There it is! So long as our confidence lasts! So long as one keeps one's mind steady. That is what I came away with Dr. Martineau to discuss. I went to him for advice. I haven't known him for more than a month. It's amusing to find myself preaching forth to

you. It was just faith I had lost. Suddenly I had lost my power of work. My confidence in the rightness of what I was doing evaporated. My will failed me. I don't know if you will understand what that means. It wasn't that my reason didn't assure me just as certainly as ever that what I was trying to do was the right thing to try to do. But somehow that seemed a cold and personally unimportant proposition. The life had gone out of it...."

He paused as if arrested by a momentary doubt.

"I don't know why I tell you these things," he said.

"You tell them me," she said.

"It's a little like a patient in a hydropath retailing his ailments."

"No. No. Go on."

"I began to think now that what took the go out of me as my work went on was the lack of any real fellowship in what I was doing. It was the pressure of the opposition in the Committee, day afterday. It was being up against men who didn't reason against me but who just showed by everything they did that the things I wanted to achieve didn't matter to them one rap. It was going back to a home, lunching in clubs, reading papers, going about a world in which all the organization, all the possibility of the organization I dream of is tacitly denied. I don't

know if it seems an extraordinary confession of weakness to you, but that steady refusal of the majority of my Committee to come into co-operation with me has beaten me--or at any rate has come very near to beating me. Most of them you know are such able men. You can FEEL their knowledge and commonsense. They, and everybody about me, seemed busy and intent upon more immediate things, that seemed more real to them than this remote, theoretical, PRIGGISH end I have set for myself...."

He paused.

"Go on," said Miss Grammont. "I think I understand this."

"And yet I know I am right."

"I know you are right. I'm certain. Go on.

"If one of those ten thousand members of the Sokol Society had thrown back his brown cloak and shown red when all the others still kept them selves cloaked--if he was a normal sensitive man--he might have felt something of a fool. He might have felt premature and presumptuous. Red he was and the others he knew were red also, but why show it? That is the peculiar distress of people like ourselves, who have some sense of history and some sense of a larger life within us than our merely personal life. We don't want to go on with the old story merely. We want to live somehow in that larger life and to live for its greater ends and lose something unbearable of ourselves, and in wanting to do that we are

only wanting to do what nearly everybody perhaps is ripe to do and will presently want to do. When the New Age Martineau talks about begins to come it may come very quickly--as the red came at Prague. But for the present everyone hesitates about throwing back the cloak."

"Until the cloak becomes unbearable," she said, repeating his word.

"I came upon this holiday in the queerest state. I thought I was ill. I thought I was overworked. But the real trouble was a loneliness that robbed me of all driving force. Nobody seemed thinking and feeling with me.... I have never realized until now what a gregarious beast man is. It needed only a day or so with Martineau, in the atmosphere of ideas and beliefs like my own, to begin my restoration. Now as I talk to you--That is why I have clutched at your company. Because here you are, coming from thousands of miles away, and you talk my ideas, you fall into my ways of thought as though we had gone to the same school."

"Perhaps we HAVE gone to the same school," she said.

"You mean?"

"Disappointment. Disillusionment. Having to find something better in life than the first things it promised us."

"But you--? Disappointed? I thought that in America people might be educating already on different lines--"

"Even in America," Miss Grammont said, "crops only grow on the ploughed land."

Section 8

Glastonbury in the afternoon was wonderful; they talked of Avalon and of that vanished legendary world of King Arthur and his knights, and in the early evening they came to Wells and a pleasant inn, with a quaint little garden before its front door that gave directly upon the cathedral. The three tourists devoted a golden half hour before dinner to the sculptures on the western face. The great screen of wrought stone rose up warmly, grey and clear and distinct against a clear blue sky in which the moon hung, round and already bright. That western facade with its hundreds of little figures tells the whole story of God and Man from Adam to the Last Judgment, as the mediaeval mind conceived it. It is an even fuller exposition than the carved Bible history that goes round the chapter house at Salisbury. It presented the universe, said Sir Richmond, as a complete crystal globe. It explained everything in life in a simple and natural manner, hope, heaven, devil and despair. Generations had lived and died mentally within that crystal globe, convinced that it was all and complete.

"And now," said Miss Grammont, "we are in limitless space and time. The crystal globe is broken."

"And?" said Belinda amazingly--for she had been silent for some time, "the goldfish are on the floor, V.V. Free to flop about. Are they any happier?"

It was one of those sudden rhetorical triumphs that are best left alone. "I trow not," said Belinda, giving the last touch to it.

After dinner Sir Richmond and Miss Grammont walked round the cathedral and along by the moat of the bishop's palace, and Miss Seyffert stayed in the hotel to send off postcards to her friends, a duty she had neglected for some days. The evening was warm and still and the moon was approaching its full and very bright. Insensibly the soft afterglow passed into moonlight.

At first the two companions talked very little. Sir Richmond was well content with this tacit friendliness and Miss Grammont was preoccupied because she was very strongly moved to tell him things about herself that hitherto she had told to no one. It was not merely that she wanted to tell him these things but also that for reasons she did not put as yet very clearly to herself she thought they were things he ought to know. She talked of herself at first in general terms. "Life comes on anyone with a rush, childhood seems lasting for ever and then suddenly one tears into life," she said. It was even more so for women than it was for men. You are shown life, a crowded vast spectacle full of what seems to be intensely interesting activities and endless delightful and frightful and tragic possibilities, and you have hardly had time to

look at it before you are called upon to make decisions. And there is something in your blood that urges you to decisive acts. Your mind, your reason resists. "Give me time," it says. "They clamour at you with treats, crowds, shows, theatres, all sorts of things; lovers buzz at you, each trying to fix you part of his life when you are trying to get clear to live a little of your own." Her father had had one merit at any rate. He had been jealous of her lovers and very ready to interfere.

"I wanted a lover to love," she said. "Every girl of course wants that. I wanted to be tremendously excited.... And at the same time I dreaded the enormous interference....

"I wasn't temperamentally a cold girl. Men interested and excited me, but there were a lot of men about and they clashed with each other. Perhaps way down in some out of the way place I should have fallen in love quite easily with the one man who came along. But no man fixed his image. After a year or so I think I began to lose the power which is natural to a young girl of falling very easily into love. I became critical of the youths and men who were attracted to me and I became analytical about myself....

"I suppose it is because you and I are going to part so soon that I can speak so freely to you.... But there are things about myself that I have never had out even with myself. I can talk to myself in you--"

She paused baffled. "I know exactly," said Sir Richmond.

"In my composition I perceive there have always been two ruling strains. I was a spoilt child at home, a rather reserved girl at school, keen on my dignity. I liked respect. I didn't give myself away. I suppose one would call that personal pride. Anyhow it was that streak made me value the position of being a rich married woman in New York. That was why I became engaged to Lake. He seemed to be as good a man as there was about. He said he adored me and wanted me to crown his life. He wasn't ill-looking or ill-mannered. The second main streak in my nature wouldn't however fit in with that."

She stopped short.

"The second streak," said Sir Richmond.

"Oh!--Love of beauty, love of romance. I want to give things their proper names; I don't want to pretend to you.... It was more or less than that.... It was--imaginative sensuousness. Why should I pretend it wasn't in me? I believe that streak is in all women."

"I believe so too. In all properly constituted women."

"I tried to devote that streak to Lake," she said. "I did my best for him. But Lake was much too much of a gentleman or an idealist about women, or what you will, to know his business as a lover. And that side of me fell in love, the rest of me protesting, with a man named Caston.

It was a notorious affair. Everybody in New York couples my name with Caston. Except when my father is about. His jealousy has blasted an area of silence--in that matter--all round him. He will not know of that story. And they dare not tell him. I should pity anyone who tried to tell it him."

"What sort of man was this Caston?"

Miss Grammont seemed to consider. She did not look at Sir Richmond; she kept her profile to him.

"He was," she said deliberately, "a very rotten sort of man."

She spoke like one resolved to be exact and judicial. "I believe I always knew he wasn't right. But he was very handsome. And ten years younger than Lake. And nobody else seemed to be all right, so I swallowed that. He was an artist, a painter. Perhaps you know his work." Sir Richmond shook his head. "He could make American business men look like characters out of the Three Musketeers, they said, and he was beginning to be popular. He made love to me. In exactly the way Lake didn't. If I shut my eyes to one or two things, it was delightful. I liked it. But my father would have stood a painter as my husband almost as cheerfully as he would a man of colour. I made a fool of myself, as people say, about Caston. Well--when the war came, he talked in a way that irritated me. He talked like an East Side Annunzio, about art and war. It made me furious to know it was all talk and that he didn't mean

business.... I made him go."

She paused for a moment. "He hated to go."

"Then I relented. Or I missed him and I wanted to be made love to. Or I really wanted to go on my own account. I forget. I forget my motives altogether now. That early war time was a queer time for everyone. A kind of wildness got into the blood.... I threw over Lake. All the time things had been going on in New York I had still been engaged to Lake. I went to France. I did good work. I did do good work. And also things were possible that would have seemed fantastic in America. You know something of the war-time atmosphere. There was death everywhere and people snatched at gratifications. Caston made 'To-morrow we die' his text. We contrived three days in Paris together--not very cleverly. All sorts of people know about it.... We went very far."

She stopped short. "Well?" said Sir Richmond.

"He did die...."

Another long pause. "They told me Caston had been killed. But someone hinted--or I guessed--that there was more in it than an ordinary casualty.

"Nobody, I think, realizes that I know. This is the first time I have ever confessed that I do know. He was--shot. He was shot for cowardice."

"That might happen to any man," said Sir Richmond presently. "No man is a hero all round the twenty-four hours. Perhaps he was caught by circumstances, unprepared. He may have been taken by surprise."

"It was the most calculated, cold-blooded cowardice imaginable. He let three other men go on and get killed..."

"No. It is no good your inventing excuses for a man you know nothing about. It was vile, contemptible cowardice and meanness. It fitted in with a score of ugly little things I remembered. It explained them all. I know the evidence and the judgment against him were strictly just and true, because they were exactly in character.... And that, you see, was my man. That was the lover I had chosen. That was the man to whom I had given myself with both hands."

Her soft unhurrying voice halted for a time, and then resumed in the same even tones of careful statement. "I wasn't disgusted, not even with myself. About him I was chiefly sorry, intensely sorry, because I had made him come out of a life that suited and protected him, to the war. About myself, I was stunned and perplexed. I had the clearest realization that what you and I have been calling the bright little personal life had broken off short and was spoilt and over and done with. I felt as though it was my body they had shot. And there I was, with fifty years of life left in me and nothing particular to do with

them."

"That was just the prelude to life, said Sir Richmond.

"It didn't seem so at the time. I felt I had to got hold of something or go to pieces. I couldn't turn to religion. I had no religion. And Duty? What is Duty? I set myself to that. I had a kind of revelation one night. 'Either I find out what all this world is about, I said, or I perish.' I have lost myself and I must forget myself by getting hold of something bigger than myself. And becoming that. That's why I have been making a sort of historical pilgrimage.... That's my story, Sir Richmond. That's my education.... Somehow though your troubles are different, it seems to me that my little muddle makes me understand how it is with you. What you've got, this idea of a scientific ordering of the world, is what I, in my younger, less experienced way, have been feeling my way towards. I want to join on. I want to got hold of this idea of a great fuel control in the world and of a still greater economic and educational control of which it is a part. I want to make that idea a part of myself. Rather I want to make myself a part of it. When you talk of it I believe in it altogether."

"And I believe in it, when I talk of it to you."

Section 9

Sir Richmond was stirred very deeply by Miss Grammont's confidences. His

dispute with Dr. Martineau was present in his mind, so that he did not want to make love to her. But he was extremely anxious to express his vivid sense of the value of her friendship. And while he hesitated over this difficult and unfamiliar task she began to talk again of herself, and in such a way as to give a new turn to Sir Richmond's thoughts.

"Perhaps I ought to tell you a little more about myself," she said; "now that I have told you so much. I did a thing that still puzzles me. I was filled with a sense of hopeless disaster in France and I suppose I had some sort of desperate idea of saving something out of the situation.... I renewed my correspondence with Gunter Lake. He made the suggestion I knew he would make, and I renewed our engagement."

"To go back to wealth and dignity in New York?"

"Yes."

"But you don't love him?"

"That's always been plain to me. But what I didn't realize, until I had given my promise over again, was that I dislike him acutely."

"You hadn't realized that before?"

"I hadn't thought about him sufficiently. But now I had to think about him a lot. The other affair had given me an idea perhaps of what it

means to be married to a man. And here I am drifting back to him. The horrible thing about him is the steady ENVELOPING way in which he has always come at me. Without fellowship. Without any community of ideas. Ready to make the most extraordinary bargains. So long as he can in any way fix me and get me. What does it mean? What is there behind those watching, soliciting eyes of his? I don't in the least love him, and this desire and service and all the rest of it he offers me--it's not love. It's not even such love as Caston gave me. It's a game he plays with his imagination."

She had released a flood of new ideas in Sir Richmond's mind. "This is illuminating," he said. "You dislike Lake acutely. You always have disliked him."

"I suppose I have. But it's only now I admit it to myself."

"Yes. And you might, for example, have married him in New York before the war."

"It came very near to that."

"And then probably you wouldn't have discovered you disliked him. You wouldn't have admitted it to yourself."

"I suppose I shouldn't. I suppose I should have tried to believe I loved him."

"Women do this sort of thing. Odd! I never realized it before. And there are endless wives suppressing an acute dislike. My wife does. I see now quite clearly that she detests me. Reasonably enough. From her angle I'm entirely detestable. But she won't admit it, won't know of it. She never will. To the end of my life, always, she will keep that detestation unconfessed. She puts a face on the matter. We both do. And this affair of yours.... Have you thought how unjust it is to Lake?"

"Not nearly so much as I might have done."

"It is unfair to him. Atrociously unfair. He's not my sort of man, perhaps, but it will hurt him cruelly according to the peculiar laws of his being. He seems to me a crawling sort of lover with an immense self-conceit at the back of his crawlingness."

"He has," she endorsed.

"He backs himself to crawl--until he crawls triumphantly right over you.... I don't like to think of the dream he has.... I take it he will lose. Is it fair to go into this game with him?"

"In the interests of Lake," she said, smiling softly at Sir Richmond in the moonlight. "But you are perfectly right."

"And suppose he doesn't lose!"

Sir Richmond found himself uttering sentiments.

"There is only one decent way in which a civilized man and a civilized woman may approach one another. Passionate desire is not enough. What is called love is not enough. Pledges, rational considerations, all these things are worthless. All these things are compatible with hate. The primary essential is friendship, clear understanding, absolute confidence. Then within that condition, in that elect relationship, love is permissible, mating, marriage or no marriage, as you will--all things are permissible...."

Came a long pause between them.

"Dear old cathedral," said Miss Grammont, a little irrelevantly. She had an air of having concluded something that to Sir Richmond seemed scarcely to have begun. She stood looking at the great dark facade edged with moonlight for some moments, and then turned towards the hotel, which showed a pink-lit window.

"I wonder," she said, "if Belinda is still up, And what she will think when I tell her of the final extinction of Mr. Lake. I think she rather looked forward to being the intimate friend, secrets and everything, of Mrs. Gunter Lake."

Section 10

Sir Richmond woke up at dawn and he woke out of an extraordinary dream. He was saying to Miss Grammont: "There is no other marriage than the marriage of true minds. There is no other marriage than the marriage of true minds." He saw her as he had seen her the evening before, light and cool, coming towards him in the moonlight from the hotel. But also in the inconsistent way of dreams he was very close to her kind, faintly smiling face, and his eyes were wet with tears and he was kissing her hand. "My dear wife and mate," he was saying, and suddenly he was kissing her cool lips.

He woke up and stared at his dream, which faded out only very slowly before the fresh sun rise upon the red tiles and tree boughs outside the open window, and before the first stir and clamour of the birds.

He felt like a court in which some overwhelmingly revolutionary piece of evidence had been tendered. All the elaborate defence had broken down at one blow. He sat up on the edge of his bed, facing the new fact.

"This is monstrous and ridiculous," he said, "and Martineau judged me exactly. I am in love with her.... I am head over heels in love with her. I have never been so much in love or so truly in love with anyone before."

Section 11

That was the dawn of a long day of tension for Sir Richmond and Miss Grammont. Because each was now vividly aware of being in love with the other and so neither was able to see how things were with the other. They were afraid of each other. A restraint had come upon them both, a restraint that was greatly enhanced by their sense of Belinda, acutely observant, ostentatiously tactful and self-effacing, and prepared at the slightest encouragement to be overwhelmingly romantic and sympathetic. Their talk waned, and was revived to an artificial activity and waned again. The historical interest had evaporated from the west of England and left only an urgent and embarrassing present.

But the loveliness of the weather did not fail, and the whole day was set in Severn landscapes. They first saw the great river like a sea with the Welsh mountains hanging in the sky behind as they came over the Mendip crest above Shipham. They saw it again as they crossed the hill before Clifton Bridge, and so they continued, climbing to hill crests for views at Alveston and near Dursley, and so to Gloucester and the lowest bridge and thence back down stream again through fat meadow lands at first and much apple-blossom and then over gentle hills through wide, pale Nownham and Lidney and Alvington and Woolaston to old Chepstow and its brown castle, always with the widening estuary to the left of them and its foaming shoals and shining sand banks. From Chepstow they turned back north along the steep Wye gorge to Tintern, and there at the snug little Beaufort Arms with its prim lawn and flower garden they ended the day's journey.

Tintern Abbey they thought a poor graceless mass of ruin down beside the river, and it was fenced about jealously and locked up from their invasion. After dinner Sir Richmond and Miss Grammont went for a walk in the mingled twilight and moonlight up the hill towards Chepstow. Both of them were absurdly and nervously pressing to Belinda to come with them, but she was far too wise to take this sudden desire for her company seriously. Her dinner shoes, she said, were too thin. Perhaps she would change and come out a little later. "Yes, come later," said Miss Grammont and led the way to the door.

They passed through the garden. "I think we go up the hill? " said Sir Richmond.

"Yes," she agreed, "up the hill."

Followed a silence.

Sir Richmond made an effort, but after some artificial and disconnected talk about Tintern Abbey, concerning, which she had no history ready, and then, still lamer, about whether Monmouthshire is in England or Wales, silence fell again. The silence lengthened, assumed a significance, a dignity that no common words might break.

Then Sir Richmond spoke. "I love, you," he said, "with all my heart."

Her soft voice came back after a stillness. "I love you," she said,

"with all myself."

"I had long ceased to hope," said Sir Richmond, "that I should ever find a friend... a lover... perfect companionship...."

They went on walking side by side, without touching each other or turning to each other.

"All the things I wanted to think I believe have come alive in me," she said....

"Cool and sweet," said Sir Richmond. "Such happiness as I could not have imagined."

The light of a silent bicycle appeared above them up the hill and swept down upon them, lit their two still faces brightly and passed.

"My dear," she whispered in the darkness between the high hedges.

They stopped short and stood quite still, trembling. He saw her face, dim and tender, looking up to his.

Then he took her in his arms and kissed her lips as he had desired in his dream....

When they returned to the inn Belinda Seyffert offered flat explanations

of why she had not followed them, and enlarged upon the moonlight effect
of the Abbey ruins from the inn lawn. But the scared congratulations
in her eyes betrayed her recognition that momentous things had happened
between the two.