



### XIII

THE earthquake which roused Dr. Harada from dreams of physical coercion, to which he was strongly opposed, at dawn that Sunday, was a vertical shock of sufficient violence and duration to cause a stampede throughout the town. The streets were thronged with alarmed nationals of both hemispheres, some clad in night-shirts, others in even less. Mr. Mendoza, who weighed sixteen stone, was observed to be clinging, perfectly undraped, to a telegraph post at a height of some fourteen feet from the ground, and at a distance of about six feet from his bedroom window, crying piteously for a ladder; all agreed that as an athletic feat it was highly creditable in itself, and in no need of any such apocryphal exaggerations as that put forward by Mr. McGonigle, who would have it that he was hanging head downwards; when corrected, however, he withdrew the suggestion, merely remarking that it was a *vara naatural* mistake.

As for the hotel, it would be impossible to describe the confusion that prevailed there. If, Miss Walker afterwards declared, anyone had retained sufficient presence of mind to compare the numbers of the rooms from which a scared multitude precipitated themselves, with those allotted to them in the hotel register, one's view of the morals of the entire community would require the most radical alteration.

Mr. Podler vaulted with ease the low bamboo railing of his garden, and strolled through the delicious cool of

the early hours. Now that the shock was over it seemed absurd to believe that this stable ground could heave and wince like a frightened horse. He wondered if an ant, walking on a spring-mattress which someone agitated, would feel like that—or on a living person. The earth was, perhaps, living, with a life that man failed to notice, except when it involved the stretching or contracting that relieved some malaise.

An eddy caught and set nodding a tuft of leaves like aspidistras, while everything else was still; in a yard near by some hens were congratulating themselves on the successful laying of eggs, and from far out at sea came the leaden concussion of Japanese dreadnoughts practising. It was pleasant to be up early when one's perceptive powers were sharp and fresh. He found himself soon wandering in the direction of Sheepshanks's villa, whose tamarisk could be seen looming, a cliff of green plush, at no great distance. Families, camped in the open, were drinking tea to calm their nerves, among the palms and pines; no doubt the Sheepshankses were doing the same. He was anxious to note the effect of his sudden appearance on Tristram; here was a splendid chance of getting it over quickly, so that, if it appeared that Alba had betrayed him, he could bolt to America at once. He had determined to do so if the affair came out, rather than face the public ignominy which, he saw, would be inevitable.

The faintly sweet odour of burning charcoal greeted him as he neared the gate, a homely, welcome and human smell, most effective in dispersing the horror induced by the earth's epileptic fury. Beneath the great tree a servant had placed an hibachi, upon which an elegant cast-iron kettle was simmering. The Sheepshankses lounged in deck chairs, Tristram in pyjamas of so sickly a green that they seemed to be still in a panic,

though the colour was really due to the chemical experiments of the laundry, the Japanese being as barbarous in their methods of washing clothes as the Chinese are expert. Alba was swathed in deep rose silk; about them the 'Morning Glory' was in the act of breaking apart the puckered lips of its chalice, and spilling in the act a pallid wealth of dew.

They were drinking tea and brandy with every sign of mental balance, and, as Podler, feeling painfully apprehensive, put his head up over the fence, shouted cheerfully at him, 'Hullo! here's a refugee; come along and have a drink'.

This was splendid, as far as it went. Tristram knew nothing as yet, but what about Alba? Was she still on her bogus mystical tack with temples and holy love, or what?

'Well, how's the earthquake? Still going strong?'

'Oh, you *are* bright this morning'. Alba seemed to be in a matter-of-fact and jaunty mood. It was the evenings, clearly, that made her 'all of a religious doodah'; no accounting for the woman.

'Yes', Sheepshanks was saying, 'after the shock of the quake our blood-vessels dilate and that makes us expansive. Have some coffee and brandy, it'll warm you up; you must be rather chilly with all those pyjamas'.

'Well, it's more than some people have got on. I saw some funny sights as I came along, I can tell you. The only person who looked as usual, I should say, was Undine Voadlo. She never wears anything to speak of, anyway'.

Mr. Sheepshanks looked troubled for a second, but Alba did not flinch.

'Isn't it queer', Tristram said rather hurriedly, 'how the younger generation, the post-war young people, have invented a new puritanism—that of the nude.'

They've grown up in the austerity of ideas fostered by Soviets or dictators, and of course they react against the flounciness and excess of clothing of last century. They demand nakedness ; the naked truth and so on. Drapery is indecent to them ; the purity of a nude and bloody corpse alone justifies those who have never seen blood in battle or the utter nakedness of the skeleton ; the only disguise they ever give it is a painfully laboured wit that postulates quasi-omniscience—the kind of omniscience, I mean, that one finds among undergraduates in their third year reading 'Greats', or among Chelsea artists. The popular expression of this is the work of a person like Noel Coward and such folk, who try to combine wit à la Wilde with problem-puritanism à la Shaw, with a dash of oddity to represent "expressionism". It's too crude for me ; but perhaps I should admit that crudeness is not confined to the latest generation. It's due largely to the Puritanism which is characteristic of our nation ; sixty years ago the old people voiced it, to-day the young people do : that's the only difference'.

'Oh rot, my good man ; you don't call people like Undine puritanical, do you ? Why, our manners have been becoming steadily more and more lax during the last hundred years ; just like our collars. First there was the Regency stock that choked one, then there was the stand-up collar (see Dickens *passim*), then there was the hard, turn-down collar ; and after that came the high and rather tight soft collar, which gave way to the low "Peter Pan", and now we have the open blouse shirt, which just suits the girlish young men of the present time'.

'What about Byron ?'

'Oh, poets were freaks and exceptions that prove the rule. I'm talking of men'.

'I grant your laxity ; but what I maintain is that our

countrymen can't be lax laxly ; they turn it into a kind of stiff religion and try to force it down our throats. I must say I prefer the Japanese " not necessaree " attitude. There's a lot to be said for the traditions of this country ; whether it's sensuality veiled neatly with etiquette, or the smiling face and the hidden dagger. It may be childish and not so advanced, but hang me if it's as childish as the modern highbrow emancipation. Modern young folks seem to be so afraid of the last generation with its ' psychic perils ' of repressions and what not, that, in flying to the other extreme, they're caught in the toils of an equal priggishness. I suspect, do you know, they all suffer, if I may use an old-fashioned expression, from a superiority complex—the thing which arises out of an original inferiority complex. Poor young things ! So retrogressive in spite of all ; as a good pejorationist, I may call it a sign of the wrath to come '.

' Yes, I'm all against priggishness ; and that's a thing you don't find out here. The Japanese aren't that, though they may be hypocritical—and we all have to be that '. Podler was feeling quite bold.

' Ah, quite so. And even then much of what we call deceit is merely convention that we haven't learnt to appreciate. A Japanese has every right, for that matter, to call us deceitful because we say " not at home " when we don't want to see people. But he doesn't because he's quick to recognise the thing in other codes than his own. But when we come out here with our appalling Anglo-Saxon self-assurance, we kick up a frightful fuss because the usage of Totsuka differs from that of Upper Norwood. We go about howling that the Japanese are a set of swindlers. I can only reply that I've been " done " once or twice in England, and once or twice in Japan ; and in one of the Japanese cases I learnt that the slim little blighter had learnt his business methods in the

States—probably one of the States who've defaulted with their External Bonds for the last sixty odd years. Besides, they may be excused if they feel irritated with foreigners ; I should if I were a Japanese. To begin with, they know perfectly well that once upon a time England and other white countries—but especially England—were getting far too enthusiastic about the White Man's Burden, and East Asia was being mopped up at an alarming rate. England came round the corner as far as Hongkong—farther. And Shanghai was a cosmopolitan Birmingham, while China was being done a beautiful brown. It was pretty clear that Europe would like to have seen Japan the same colour, though England would have had it as red as India. But China, so vast and unwieldy, is waking up very unpleasantly before the concessions become annexations, and Japan's always been too fierce to let itself be penetrated in a quiet and gentlemanly fashion. So far from being quaint little dolls on lacquer tea-trays, the Japs are as thorny as a nest of Malay pirates—from whom, I think, they derive a good deal of their hidden ferocity. There'll be no more bombardments of Shimonoseki by white punitive expeditions. Old Takamatsu's right ; he tells the truth, which is the secret opinion of the whole nation, and of course none of us believe him. One day, when they can afford it, they'll very promptly kick all the foreigners, including the missionaries, into the Tuscarora Deep'.

'But, my dear Sheepshanks, what about Japanese liberalism, which I've heard you carrying on about—your League of Nations and disarmament fans ?'

'Well, I've changed my mind after some reflection ; I think I know all about Japanese liberalism—it's like one of those lovely and serene " Noh " masks that makes a pig-faced actor look like a woman. The true spirit of the country derives from the Shogunate days when

Samurais would take vows to chop the head off everybody who passed over a certain bridge. The chopping tendency becomes evident at any crisis. I was in Totsuka last summer when they had the great earthquake, and some of the things I saw shook my faith, with which I came out here after having met some League of Nations Japanese in London, in the pacific tendencies of this people. Why, they were mad with blood-lust. I saw them chase a Korean—poor devil—all along a station platform and knife him, after letting him get away twice, on the cat-and-mouse principle. There were swords and bamboo spears all over the place, and fierce little weasel faces getting worked up by the desire to kill. It shook me badly’.

‘Yes, I know the sort of thing. Just after the anti-Japanese Immigration Act was passed in America I happened to be motoring in the country—Sunday joy-ride, of course—and I got into a village where they were having a grand Matsuri—pukka show, with big juggernaut cars full of flowers and painted-up boys beating drums, big dolls and devils on the roof, and so on. These cars were drawn by a mob of young men absolutely crazed with saké and religious excitement, and the queer syncopated rhythm of the drums—a fearful racket, it was’.

‘Yes, I’ve seen them ; something like a cross between a mediaeval Passion-play procession and a voodoo orgy in the Congo forests’.

‘Yes, quite. Well, I stopped my car quite politely to let them pass, but some drunken sot staggered right against it and barked his blasted shin. He yelped something to his pack-mates, and in three seconds hell was let loose. There I was, wedged in by a crowd of howling, spitting savages ; their faces weren’t human,—talk about monkeys and devils—they weren’t in it with this lot. I

thought I was "for it" that time and no mistake, especially when they began clambering into the car. However, in doing that they made a gap in front, and off I shot before it occurred to them to chuck stones. As a matter of fact, some did hit the car. Yes, they hate the foreigner at the bottom of their hearts all right. All these taxes on the kind of food we eat and have to import, all this "immoral foreigner" business, are simply tentative pinpricks to make things uncomfortable for us'.

'I know one feels like that sometimes, especially before breakfast; lots of people are anti-Japanese in the morning, but after dinner they can't praise the place enough. And they can always support their opinions, as you've been doing, with plenty of proof. Logic is hopelessly controlled by the state of the body. There is no logical judgment actually; merely belief'.

'Shut up, Tristram. Yes, do stop and have breakfast, won't you? I'm going to call you James from to-day, I warn you. I don't like Podler much, it's a silly sort of name; but the man's all right; I quite love him, you know'. She indicated Podler with a backward and vulgar thumb-jerk.

'Certainly, my dear. Anything in reason'.

Flabbergasted at her tactics, Podler wondered what on earth she was driving at. Of course, for one thing, she was throwing dust in her husband's eyes by hinting that Podler was nothing to her, except as one of those idealisations, perfectly harmless, which she often 'got up' about people. But why throw dust when it was in fact nothing but one of these idealisations, although it had started with more promise? If he was merely to go 'Galahading about the place' Tristram would be the very last person to prevent him; and he was clearly expected to do this. How deceived one was by appear-



ances! Alba had all the air of being a most sensual woman, yet, at the critical moment she had gone off gassing about temples and unions of the soul. She was a humbug, who liked to think herself wicked, and to lead men on to the point of expectation, and then retire into her rotten romantic shell. There was a very ugly word among common men for this type of tormentor. Anyhow, what the deuce was she up to now?

‘Thank you—both for the breakfast and the love’.

‘Not at all; anything in a small way. What’s your other name, James?’

‘Pugin, after poor old Augustus Welby; one of his masterpieces at Ramsgate, of all places’.

Tristram came excitedly into the conversation. ‘St. Augustine’s your patron saint, I suppose? Decorated, but too puristic and dismal. He was a dome of monochromatic but slightly opaque glass, and the whole radiance of Gothic shining through him—I’ve no patience with the pose of liking Victorian Gothic—never acquired the fruity port-like stain that it did with Gilbert Scott, or the pinkish rococo inconsequence of Wyatt. Do you know I feel astounded that I can sit here talking trivialities and awaiting with pleasure a soused gurnet when I think that an hour or so ago I was sweating with fear and thinking on my latter end. Alba didn’t turn a hair. As I tell her, she won’t die that way; she’s born to be hung for murdering me’.

‘I shan’t die that way either’, said Podler confidently. ‘I feel it in my bones. I shall die a gentle death; it runs in the family. We’re Catholics, you know, and all of us are in for such a warm time in Purgatory that it’d hardly be fair to worry us too much in the flesh’.

‘You’re a blasphemous backslider, and I’ve a great mind to have you put on the Index. Is it true that you’re going to have an excommunication party?’

‘Quite. I’ll send you a card’.

The sun was now as hot as on a midsummer day in England; the kites wheeled far aloft, and shop-boys were dashing up on bicycles and banging down loaves and bottles at the back door. It was a quarter-past seven. The servant soon announced breakfast, and Alba rose and stretched herself. What a provocative movement! Tristram rubbed his hands together grocer-fashion, and made to his guest eager, encouraging little gasps, as though salvation were now only a matter of moments, would the soul but manage to weather for a little longer the bleak and storm-harassed seaboard of despair.

‘You’ve a wonderful knack of beautifying everything; wherever you go you have something exquisite to look at’. Some superb impressions of aquatints by Malton gave Podler this opportunity of further ingratiating himself with Tristram, which, though it would make no difference if anything painful were discovered, made him feel safer at the time. ‘What’, he continued, ‘have the Japanese got except the fudé and the wood-graver? Burins, mattoirs, or roulettes are still unfamiliar weapons to them; their art’s absurdly limited’.

‘Only in some respects; and you’re a little sweeping, I think. The art of engraving on copper was known to Kokan in the eighteenth century. But when all’s said and done, the limits of their delightful art are clear both as regards conception and execution. There are no profound mysteries about it any more than there are about any other phenomenon of their life. If I have a quarrel to pick with this pleasant nation, it’ll be apropos of their tendency to pose as sphinxes; but they turn out to be the “Wildian” sphinxes without secrets. It is we who invent secrets for them in the first instance, and they, with their native sharpness, soon catch the idea and find it a useful one. An American journalist once came here

for a few weeks and dashed frantically back to produce a book called *Mysterious Japan*. Any nation, even America, would be mysterious for three weeks. It's flagrantly unjust to the Japanese to drape them in purple veils and paste haloes on their all-too-willing heads. *Conspuez les mystagogues !* The Japanese is nothing but a man and a brother ; we may find him a little nearer than us to the phallic origins of worship, a bit prone to suicide, and certainly more revengeful than our people, but he's a simple man and brother for all that'.

'Well, I think they're very obviously nearer the origins. They're so dirty, for one thing. We hear of the famous bath-habit of the Japanese, and that's all very true. But the rubbish and the spitting and litter and stink ; that's not very pretty'.

'Ah !' cried Alba, who was by this reconciled to it all. 'I adore the Primitive ; it brings them nearer to Nature than we are with our complex life. This parrot chatter ! If you destroy the barbarism that's Primitive and Racy of the Soil, you destroy the peg on which you hang any sort of civilisation. Theirs reveals their barbarism beautifully and ours hides it uglily. How about that for an epigram, boys ?'

'Boys' ! It was lamentable, yet in a way delicious, reminding one of the old days when Marie Lloyd and Connie Ediss were young ; one's youth—matinées at the Tivoli music-hall stolen on half-holidays, or passing through London from school to the parental home ; buns, lemonade, a cigarette on a demi-virgin palate.

'I shall keep it', said Podler, 'for Sir Birinus, to whom I'll deliver it as original at dinner to-morrow night. Unless one has an epigram ready to drop out of one's mouth one's afraid to speak to him'.

'I suppose you're afraid pretty often ?' Alba was being cheeky.

Beneath the table a foot touched his. He feared at first to return the light pressure in case this caress were to be lavished on Tristram, who had a way of shuffling his legs about. But when another foot of, as far as one could judge, the same size pressed obviously from the other side, he completed the contract, and thrill succeeded thrill under the demure white table-cloth.

'Sir Birinus is a relic in the great vulgar world', began Tristram, 'of the Oxford tradition that affects to ban the commonplace from conversation. The giggling self-consciousness of junior fellows—at least that's how it was in my time—is to be pitied; it's due to the dreadful ordeal of being expected to sparkle when sober. Sir Birinus presents to one's head the revolver of ferocious taciturnity, and waits for one to deliver the diamonds. His brutality was lately his own undoing. I found myself gasping with terror in the middle of one of his celebrated silences, quite unable to secrete a witticism, so out of sheer desperation I mentioned the only fact remaining in my sterilised brain, the fact that I had one or two very fine Hondiuses, all swagger and Baroque "panache", that I'd got out of Seligman. In my nervousness I talked about nothing else; I praised them up and analysed their composition with a kind of nightmareish zeal. And the end of it all was that he bought them. My mental costiveness was after all a Pactolus. Please excuse me a second; I've forgotten my Yeast Tablets; I ought to have bought some more last night, so I'll lean forth and drink with eager lips the wind of my own speed, in other words, dash round to the chemist's'.

He was scarce out of the house before Podler found Alba and her exiguous silken covering on his knees, forcing upon him kisses of the most lurid description. He was astounded, but ready to respond as hotly.

‘ But I say, dearest one, what about the temple ? ’

‘ Oh, damn the temple. I was feeling holy and hungry that evening, dear boy. I get like that sometimes ; you mustn’t mind. You won’t mind, will you ? ’

‘ Of course not ’.

‘ I’ve got some news for you. Wait round this week and there’ll be a good chance of our being together alone, I expect ’.

Scorching whispers and mute achings ; famished hyaenas that wailed among tombs choked with pre-historic gold and dust. Podler cleared his throat twice before he could say anything.

‘ Of course ; I’d go anywhere and do anything for you ; I’ve got it badly ’.

‘ So’ve I. I’ve been aching solidly ever since the other evening. It can’t be borne, can it ? ’

‘ I should think not. Look out ! ’ A click from the gate afforded ample warning. Alba was far ahead of her lover in the art of returning at once to normality. He noticed, even after Tristram’s re-entry, that the hand in which he held a cigarette was trembling ; but Tristram had no eye for such trifles, as he was so entirely unsuspecting. At the moment Podler was for him a vague but welcome background regaling itself.

‘ This is the stuff, like boiled beef and carrots and the old song, that makes you fat and keeps you well. Promotes an intestinal acid reaction, the secret of contentment. I think Job’s patience was due to the fact that he took some form of Yoghourt : the pastoral Orient has known the virtues of sour milk from remote ages. So when the Lord spake unto Job out of the whirlwind, he showed nothing worse than a passing and excusable irritation, such as I sometimes feel when attacking the didactic poets—Dyer’s *Fleece*, Armstrong’s *Art of Preserving Health*. Yet I love the Palladian deliberation ;

you can't get an architectural quality of that kind in the art of Japan—even in their architecture, which is wooden, restless and impermanent, perhaps because of the earthquakes'.

What rot the man talked ; there was something silly and childish about him—a bit of an ass, really. It was silly to say that about its being good to yield occasionally to temptation. Very well ; Tristram, not Podler, must take the full responsibility of anything that happened as a result of that remark. Just now he was feeling 'fed-up' with art : it was a covering, a clothing of the true basic emotions of man ; the garment fashioned in Eden, as the result of eating apples. An apple a day keeps the passions away, apparently. But he wanted the naked passions now, like the young people they had been talking about. Down with art and all other luxury-sublimations, and strip passion to the bone. A loves the woman B ; eliminate C, her proprietor, whom she does not love. That was the way to think ; these were the only things that mattered.

'Stone and ferro-concrete, if we knew how to handle it', Tristram was saying, 'are the noblest mediums for building, they express more deeply. Here people must temporise beautifully enough with wood ; but how far do they get ? The greyness of Kyoto is a confession of timidity, the Tokugawa gaudiness of Nikko a barbaric whoop ; even our Gothic went further than that'.

'Personally, I don't think any art gets very far ; just far enough to express human vanity and stupidity. It annoys me. Classical architecture, heavy and sententious ; Gothic, religious mania ; then the revivals. Baroque, now that the Sitwell generation's daing, turns out to be nothing but a bit of swank. All these revivals in which art has managed to exist more or less vicariously

since the Renaissance, are just swank—a series of shams. The Chippendale-Chinoiserie revival, the Gothic revival, the Greek revival—St. Pancras and the Ashmolean, Lord help us! The Jacobean revival—all that shockingly knobby furniture one used to see in the Tottenham Court Road; the early Victorian revival, the Peasant Pottery revival, the Baroque revival—third edition of Classicism and the Negro Sculpture revival—good God! one blooming fake after another. We make too much fuss about art; the man in the street doesn't, he's got more sense. We talk as much cant about art as our parents did about religion. Wheresoever two or three highbrows are gathered together, say at the Café Royal, there at once a forced atmosphere of pose and intellectual idiocy creates itself. The parable of Eden's quite correct. The first emotional experience of man, before he ever thought of painting on cave-walls, was, when not utilitarian, religious; animism, or god in the garden. After the fall—intellectual consciousness, came art, the apron, or breeches of fig-leaves. Your modern struggling to free himself from stage one, butts blindly into stage two; religion gives place to aesthetic. In a hundred generations, perhaps, they'll be more sensible; I hope so anyhow. Now I'm inclined to place art on a Darwinistic basis—adornment for sexual attraction, if we must have it'.

'Well, my dear Podler, all I can say is, your golden, inartistic age is, on the evidence of the market, remote. Business is very brisk, especially in inferior art. If I liked to sell photogravures of the Bath of Psyche and other orthodox nudes I could make a fortune'.

'The human form divine; that last epithet always tickles me hugely. Modern Japanese artists seem to be going in for the nude. You can get little plaster casts of naked and highly conventionalised Japanese ladies to

put along with the fumed oak furniture and the radio set in your Europe-style room'.

Stimulated by Alba's presence, Podler hoped he was being brilliant.

'Yes, but, as a matter of fact, the nude is, more or less surreptitiously, an artistic stock-in-trade of very old standing out here. The Japanese pornographic print is universal, and horribly brutal. There we have the phallic origins of nature-worship, the ugly, violent, irresistible libido of the world. How mild in comparison appears Rousseauism and the faded sentimentalities of the French Revolution; a little idealistic bloodshed, a quaint back-to-nature nomenclature of the months—Floréal, Germinal. It's true that the fierce salacious Earth Spirit is worshipped in France; but oh, how different from the orgiast-cultus in this convulsive land. I can feel the throb of license in my bones; I can comprehend the system of the Licensed Houses. Can't you?'

This talk maddened Podler, unintentionally ironic and provocative as it was. As if Tristram were capable of experiencing any sort of license whatever. Poor little creature; it was obvious now that his affair with Lulu had been hopelessly misconstrued. He must have been talking philosophy or something; you had only to look at the man to see that he was sexless—not at all the sort of person to be Alba's husband. She needed, not dialectics, but passion. Passion might save her from her habits of intemperance, and Podler might be the saviour, and rescue her from the Dragon Alcohol. Perseus Podler! A winged hero, gleaming like a diamond in a cupola of lapis lazuli. Insufferable that any obstacle should be placed between her and her well-being. Tristram worshipped Euphoria for himself, but remained callous to the needs of others.



'Hullo! stickin' the bits together after the jolly old ji-shin?' Mr. Miles, brick-red and grinning, stood at the verandah, while his exquisite wife trailed a parasol ferrule along the garden path. 'My word, though, you should have seen us doing a perfectly good burst for the open. West Bromwich Albion headed the League again!'

There was at least one hearty man left in the modern Gomorrhah. McGonigle's joke about a sulphur-spring resort occurred to him; 'Smells like the day after Gomorrhah, and knocks you into the middle of next week'.

Then, strange to say, the name of McGonigle appeared in the conversation.

'I say, though', Miles continued with a shade more of sobriety. 'Shockin' tales goin' about about the great McGonigle of McGonigle. Someone told me last night he was a gay deceiver; wreckin' the home or something'.

'Oh, rot!' cried Lulu. '*That* couldn't wreck a home if it tried. You can't be a sheik and go about looking like Ally Sloper's nephew. Somebody'd got a down on him, that's all'.

'You never know', Alba remarked, 'any sort of man may suddenly turn out to be a Don Juan; especially the most unexpected sort'.

'Not his fault if he is', growled Podler, misapplying the statement, which was intended for Tristram. 'It's the fault of woman, every woman is at heart a rake'.

'Here, what are you talking about?' queried Alba severely.

'Oh, I'm merely one of those people who call a rake a rake'. He felt pleased with this; he was coming on in the badinage line.

'Who on earth could have a spite against McGonigle?' Tristram wondered.

‘Some pretty fair tick, I should say’, replied Miles stolidly. ‘Lulu and I are going to ferret round a bit and see if we can spot the criminal’.

‘Child’s play, my dear Watson! Now, Podler, square your manly breast and confess all’.

‘Yes, of course it was me’. He looked at Lulu reflectively; to think that he had ever harboured designs against this shallow but pretty nobody. She was well-mated to her bridge-playing, golfing husband; they belonged to the world of Philistine reality, and were none of your frilled, arty people, but neither of them felt deeply enough to be his sort, to penetrate to his emotional domain. He marvelled at the speed with which love had converted him to the new reality; only a little while ago he had regretted the old days of Bohemian fantasies, and imagined them to be life. But life was passion and possession; reality was this. Everything else arose from the attempt of those who dared not and would not possess, to console themselves.

