



## VIII

*T*HE Takai Hotel sheltered all such as had neither the means nor the foresight to secure a villa for the season. It was a favourite haunt—particularly during week-ends, of the flashier sort of up-to-date Japanese, and of the European dancing which, said to rot the antique moral fibre of the nation, was now prohibited in the capital.

The enemies of that reform party which had set its face against this licentious practice averred that the sudden access of puritanism was due to a serious slump in the Geisha and light-o'-love market; and that those who desired to suppress dancing were actuated by the fear that its increase in popularity would interfere with the legitimate trade that was, for most of them, the main source of income. The young man who, clad in Tuxedo or 'flockcoat', engaged in the Charleston for a trifling admission fee, found it far cheaper than and fully as diverting as the hire of a singing or dancing girl for at least a hundred yen. So the hostile party would maintain; but they were not for the moment in power, though able to make themselves felt sufficiently to prevent that complete return to 'virtuous and pristine simplicity' advocated by the Conservatives. The result was that Europe-style dancing was limited though not wholly abolished. Thus, it had been discontinued at the Kiku Hotel in Totsuka ever since the memorable night upon which the irruption of a band of youths into the ball-room had caused a very fair panic. These were members of

the Pink Centipede League, a body devoted to the political pursuits of blackmail and intimidation, and thus eminently suited to the task of purging the moral system of the city. After clearing the ballroom floor, they solemnly performed a sword dance in protest at the decadent frivolity of a vogue that permitted male and female to gyrate rapidly and in close contact to the vulgarest kind of Negro-Judaic syncopation. There was no doubt that for dignity and purely aesthetic satisfaction the sword dance was in every way superior to the absurd shufflings imported from North (and in the case of the Tango, South) America. But this was not the point, which was to give those overbearing aliens a good slap in the eye.

The Takai Hotel was, for several curious reasons, immune from these bandit-like descents, and so laid itself out to attract the modernists and 'pro-foreign' sections of the community that it even afforded to Miss Vocadlo every facility for an exhibition of what she called 'Graeco-Euharmonic' dancing, which was advertised for that very night. For the first time she was to give a performance 'all on her own', and, knowing how keenly the vividness of her presence was felt in artistic circles, anticipated all the glow of a brilliant evening. Mr. Nishimura, fresh from the Ueno Musical Academy, had composed in Stravinsky's latest manner a rhapsody to which she would render 'The Death of Sappho' before catafalque-like black drapery, vaguely suggestive of the darkness and abyss that were to engulf her. It had been her idea, originally, to wear no costume other than two coatings of terra-cotta paint, so as to impart a Greek vase atmosphere into the scene; but the hotel manager, who was providing the auditorium, jibbed at that. Though quite liberal and unprejudiced on the matter of nudity, as regards his own compatriots, he feared lest a foreigner,

so disrobed, might attract the attention of the Centipedes. The compromise of a key-patterned garment, like a gauze bathing-dress, was the happiest that could be reached in so short a time. Miss Voadlo still adhered to the terra-cotta project for such portions of herself—and their area was considerable—which should remain exposed.

Tristram Sheepshanks left the tea-table of Mrs. Miles in a mood more complacent than any that he had experienced since landing in Japan. Not that he had been enjoying a protracted *tête-à-tête*; but Lulu had secured Mr. Kurrie-Lewer who, as a collector, revered Tristram and his judgment, to aid her in carrying out the treatment of flattery and appreciation that composed her prescription. She had correctly diagnosed that, in this respect at least, he was suffering from inanition, since it was clear enough that he was neither flattered nor appreciated by Alba, who snubbed him, certainly in public, and probably at home. Lulu chaffed him tactfully about his depression, and professed to admire his eloquent manner of giving it vent; while Mr. Kurrie-Lewer radiated his good humour and agreed with him on the question of the notorious Stetson El Greco, craving an introduction to Mr. Jones. Tristram became conscious, perhaps as never before, that some people at least were interested in him; possibly, without knowing it, he had charm. The shadows of death and impending catastrophe rolled stormily back, as in the radiance of good fellowship and the late afternoon he wandered up the homeward lane fragrant with the halitus of pines. Poor Alba; he hoped her head was better; but if it would only teach her not to mix her drinks so outrageously. Never take whisky after grape spirit, that was his principle.

And how pleasant to look forward to a good dinner

and profitable intercourse with Mr. Fargo, who was a decent sort, naïve, honest, child-like, and always ready to pay what he was asked—a crowning virtue.

A car slid by him, the occupants of which—M. Cavara, Madame Cavara, M. Fabre, waved friendly hats and hands. At his own gate he met, tranquil and emergent, Mr. Podler.

‘I’ve just been calling, but found you were out’.

Podler had overheard his skipper telling someone that morning that he was taking tea with Mrs. Miles, and, cancelling his plan of visiting her to discover if possible how far his suspicions were justified, had decided to sound Alba, when alone and possibly plaintive. She was no fool, and, provided she had not been roaring drunk the whole of the previous evening, must have noticed some pregnant symptom or other that would throw light on the problematical intrigue. Whatever had been revealed to him, he certainly gave no sign of perturbation as he greeted Sheepshanks with his favourite sardonic grin.

‘I hope you found Alba a little better—she was rather upset this morning’.

Mr. Podler looked benign. ‘Oh, she was in great form. I should say a little excitement bucks her up now and then’. He was about to add ‘what?’ but checked himself. ‘I suppose you’ve been calling on people?’

‘Yes, I have. Now I’ll have to hurry home and change as I’m due at the hotel at seven’.

Mr. Podler meandered on, noting that Sheepshanks had omitted the name of the person with whom he had been to tea, which he found very favourable to his theory, and estimating pros and cons in the matter of warning Mr. Miles. A risky business; bound to get him in trouble either way.

‘Miles, I’m awfully sorry, old son, but Sheepshanks

and your wife, you know. I've got some pretty conclusive evidence, otherwise I'd never have . . .'

'What the hell are you talking about, you blasted fool? Do you want your head knocked off, or what?'

Or he was quite capable of this treachery :

'I say, Lulu : here's Podler saying you're unfaithful to me. Off his chump, I should say'.

Things always happened crudely in Mr. Podler's imagination.

It had never occurred to Sheepshanks either to mention or to omit the name ; his mind had been concentrated on one thing, getting changed in time to dine punctually with Mr. Fargo. Conversation with Podler must therefore be curtailed.

Mr. Fargo had not included Mrs. Sheepshanks in his invitation, firstly, because he felt that the revelation of his previous artistic solecisms, for such he now suspected them of being, must be for the private ear of his confessor ; he hated to look a fool before women. To Sheepshanks, then, he would secretly confide his fear that he had been bamboozled into buying a mass of rubbish, and consult him as to the best means of palming it off, without monetary loss, if possible, on someone else. Secondly, he wished to tell funny stories, and was painfully aware of the unsuitability of his humour for a mixed audience.

The feeling that he had been victimised by the affable merchant at Nikko rankled ; an American citizen to be done by a Jap—monstrous. He had a good mind to go to the Embassy about it. And to-day his emotional malaise had been exacerbated by the poor quality of the waffles and maple syrup served to him at breakfast.

'But what can you expect from a bum country like this?' he complained to Tristram over the iced soup.

'There are plenty of annoyances, I know, and the

country's nearly intolerable when one's new to it', Tristram answered. 'But one must give these people their due. A nation that can leap from the fourteenth to the twentieth century in sixty years is something more than a "bum" nation. And just because the growth has been so rapid one must expect little flaws. The miracle is that you find waffles and maple syrup at all. You might go to fifty hotels in England and if you asked for them there they'd think you were trying to be funny; and you wouldn't complain. Personally, I think Japan's delightful. Taken all round, the foreigner has an excellent time and more freedom than he has at home, in spite of the "immoral foreigners" stunt they're running in politics just at present. Japanese women are most attractive, and have a spirit of devotion and self-sacrifice that you won't find in many other places. As for the men, when that spirit is equally strong in them, when they've acquired sound business principles and a little originality, and when they've taken to a meat diet, they'll be more than wonderful; they'll be formidable. But at present the majority are rather too selfish, short-sighted and disinclined to drive steadily ahead towards a given point; there's much too much "face" and window-dressing. When an eminent foreigner comes they throw as much dust in his eyes as possible; thus, at the last Scientific Congress they showed the international biologists the chemical laboratory, where they wouldn't be likely to see anything wrong, and the chemists were taken to the biological museum, for the same reason. And to make assurance doubly sure, they gave all the *savants* such a rattling good time that they felt it would be ungrateful to criticise harshly. But the amazing thing is to find anything at all behind the window-dressing; there's something, I assure you, and one day there'll be a lot more. On the whole I agree

with Mr. Gomperz—charming man, you ought to meet him—little boys aren't beaten enough here; they're spoilt; honourable male and all that, you know, in the old tradition. But when they learn better, look out, Mr. Fargo; you'll be sorry you ever passed that Immigration Act'.

'I never passed it,' protested Mr. Fargo, 'it was these Western States gettin scarred of the Japs'.

'Why is it', mused Tristram, 'that I find myself talking even more prosily than usual to Americans? Is it infection?' He continued aloud, 'Of course, if they do have a war they'll lose it financially if not militarily. Everyone knows that they'd have lost the Russo-Japanese War if it had gone on long enough. Let's hope, with Liberalism on the increase here, that they won't be so stupid. But at the same time they ought to expand; they're a coming nation. I think some recompense ought to be made them for barring them out of America and Australia. Supposing, for instance, we gave them Hongkong and parts of the Malay Peninsula, and you gave them the Philippines'.

'Aw Gahsh! Boy, you've said a mouthful'. Mr. Fargo guffawed so loudly that several people turned to look. 'Why, *we've suvvlised the Phuluppeens!*'

After this Mr. Sheepshanks thought it advisable to change the subject, and soon got his host expanding a theory of the 'duck-disease', as he facetiously called the shortness of leg from which the Japanese were suffering. No woman, he urged, could be attractive with such an unsatisfactory type of tibia.

Very brilliant, and rather noisy, Undine Voadlo was dining opposite to Mr. Nishimura, who looked like a dissipated Italian boy, as he possessed what is rouchsafed to few of his fellow-countrymen, a bridge to his nose. Her gleaming white skin, perfumed as azalea blossoms,

smooth as a glazed sanitary tile, flamed at her shoulders against the tenuous webs of black silk that clung about her here and there. The carmine curves and enamelled flashings in her mouth as she laughed were quite enough, one would hope, to enslave somebody. Her bluish shock head smouldered with vitality, a lurking fire; she was thoroughly well worked up to the point she required for plastic interpretation. Mr. Nishimura was taking it all very coolly, regarding the queer shape of her mouth appearing distorted through the glass and amber-coloured wine as she drank, and smoking a cigarette as he waited for his 'ice-cream'. Evidently he felt there was no particular reason for being worked up, or for scattering, pearl-like, a shower of animal magnetism.

Mr. Fargo, whose enthusiasm for the Beautiful did not stop short at pictures, asked who was the little gurl over there.

'That's the famous Undine Vocadlo', answered Sheepshanks in the exact words that she believed people used when she entered a room. 'She's dancing to-night; you really ought to see her. A lyrical young creature'.

Mr. Fargo thought he might later on; just now he felt disposed to relate some amorous adventures of his own in Pahrus, Florence, or Munich, which he had visited on a world tour.

Tristram found it difficult to maintain the appropriate expression, a compost of surprise, roguishness and delicious shock. His thoughts gravitated to the kaleidoscopic pattern of the diners fortuitously thrown together—or by cunning?—in the room. What effect would the pattern have upon its atomies? . . . Every now and then the mysterious word 'co-cart' broke in on his reverie, from which he judged Mr. Fargo to be perfectly well satisfied with the attention he was receiving. At



each irruption of 'co-cart' he took care to emit a little outraged giggle. It worked admirably.

'Ullo, Sheepshanks, old Cock! Ood uv thought uv seein' yew 'ere?' A warm, vinous blast and a slap on the shoulder recalled him, now truly scandalised, from the cave of fantasy. It was 'Captain' Moss who, having scented riches in the wind, had been hanging round the hotel bar for some days, cadging drinks, and hoping to get an introduction. He would, if he could, filch away the quarry from under Tristram's very nose. Having acquired a smattering of technical chatter, he could imitate, at short notice, an art expert, a theologian, a scientist, a sanitary engineer, or a declassed aristocrat, according to the dictates of his environment.

'I've been wanting to 'ave a serious talk with you for ever ser long'.

'Well, I'm afraid I'm engaged just at the moment; come and see me to-morrow'.

'Ow, down't trouble abart that. I'll jus' sit darn 'ere un mike meself at 'ome. I 'ave ter go ter 'Okkaido tomorrer in connection wivver psychological significance of tattooing amongst the 'airy Ainus; so I couldn't see yer then anywyes'.

Mr. Moss's rich cadences betrayed his Australian origin, though he honestly believed them to be characteristic of the average Etonian. It was in this Continent that he had wrested, as hush-money, from a (since defunct) correspondence college, and therefore gratis, the title of B.A. The weapon had been added but recently to his grim arsenal, since when the professorial unction of his manner had demonstrably increased.

'If the gentleman won't objec' ter my intrewding, ay fortioroi, yew won't. As Oriss sez . . .'

'A friend o' yourn's a friend o' mine, sure', put in Mr. Fargo naïvely.

‘Well, Mr. Fargo, this is Mr. Moss. . . .’

‘Keptin un Perfesser Moss Ar Hen Be Eye; en-chawnted ter mike yer erquinetence. I’ve ’eard sow much erbart the ’igh moral un intellekshal town of yer Unee-verstees in the Stites. I remember meeting Prof. William L. Phelps un evin a lively discussion erbart the ketegorical imperative. My view was that Shikespeare ad first tentativelee formulated it in the characterisyeshun uv Emlit. Phelps ’e saw the force uv my logic’.

Here was a state of things; already Mr. Fargo was assuming that reverent expression that Americans use when confronted by erudition, rather than by the presence of their deity, who is, so to speak, a citizen of the commonwealth. It would never do; this dreadful man must be extinguished immediately by some exposure. Mr. Sheepshanks had heard vaguely of the Ur-Hamlet; Mr. Moss certainly not. It was worth trying.

‘And what are your views, Captain Moss, on the Ur-Hamlet?’

Tristram was sadly deluded if he imagined that he could beat Moss in a game of bluff; for the latter was, unlike Mr. Horie, almost more glib on subjects of which he was totally ignorant than on those with which he had a nodding acquaintance. With no hesitation he began:

‘Well, as I said to Phelps at the time wen ’e arst me the sime question, that ’asn’t really much bearin’ on ver psychological arspect ovver situyeshun. Uv course I could tell yer my opini’on right off—I will some dye, but it owpens up ser many questions heach uv witch hinvolves a per’ikler problem that we’d ’ardly ev time to envisage e’l ver possibilities ’ere and nar. My thesis is—naow mark wot I sye; the owl of German philo-sophee’s been anticipated by the hearly Henglish poets, un wot’s more, I can prove it’.

‘ Well, go ahead ’.

‘ Ah, yew come rarnd ter my ’ouse wen you’re back in Totsuka un I’ll show yew all right. I’ve been lie-berin fer years gettin’ me welt-ann-show-hung clear, an’ I ope ter publish the reesolts soon; I’ve ’ad two firms clemerin’ fer me book, I can tell yer ’.

Mr. Moss had never written a book, nor had he the slightest intention of doing so. But Mr. Fargo’s expression was becoming more and more devotional; he was being clearly reduced by sheer force of gibberish to a state of religious coma.

Mr. Sheepshanks cast desperately about for a stratagem; if Moss was not routed within the next ten minutes the fat was in the fire. He remarked briskly:

‘ It’s fortunate you’re here, as we’re waiting for Dr. Harada to join us, an old friend of yours. He should be here any minute ’.

‘ Ow, Dr. Arrader! S’long time since I seen ’im. I used twave rare old times arguin’ with ’im abart Hairy Stotle’s Poetics—fmver pointter view uv economics, of course,’ he added, noting a startled flash from Tristram’s pince-nez. ‘ Torkin’ of Croce ’ (he pronounced it something like ‘ crochet ’) ‘ old Arrader was nuts on the ay priory synthesis, ’e was. Im’ an’ me differed on certain detiles uv definition, but grite moinds down’t think aloike naowerdyes, do they? Her, her!

‘ Nar, Mister Fargo, if you’re styein’ darn ’ere long, I owp you’ll call on me. I can show yer some things wot’ll mike yer air start art uv yer ’ead; Potiphér’s woife and Jowseph, Ans Sea-ball Beham; Punchinello drinkin’ porkwoine, Longy; and som: ’Okusai prints wot Count Honda give me. . . . Well, I see a friend owver there as I must sye sumfin to befor, I toddles on me hanthropopological quesht to Ok-hok-ado. So I gives yew me eartnand, un I sez bye bye, see yer liter ’.

Rising with care, he lurched off toward the door, making violent signals of recognition to an imaginary person beyond.

'I thought', said Tristram with a sigh, 'that might move him. No hint can pierce his carapace. But the name of Harada always does'.

'Say, who's this dahkter Herada?'

'It's all right, he's not coming here really; but the mention of his name always makes that grinning charlatan unhappy. Dr. Harada is one of the most brilliant men and has one of the prettiest wives in Japan. He's president of the Taisho University, and sacked Moss, who was teaching "conversation", I should rather say with Paul and Menander, "evil communications", in the Middle School attached to it, for gross incompetence and drunkenness in the class-room. Formerly Japanese schools were over-run with "Professors" of the Moss type; sea cooks, naval deserters, business failures, turned their dishonest penny by murdering English. This scamp is about the last of them. It's funny, now; disgruntled Europeans say that the Japanese are like monkeys and that they're cheats; but here's a bouncing baboon of an Englishman who manages to impose on the whole of the local intelligentsia. It shows how ready they are, poor things, to accept anything that looks like Western culture. Perhaps it's because they're so used to window-dressing that they can't distinguish between the genuine and the bogus; but also, I think, that the go-ahead party, whom I very much admire, approach the white man through faith and religious awe, rather than through reason—a science that is here even more in its infancy than at home. They are such an emotional nation! Well, keep out of the clutches of Mr. Moss, or he'll skin you alive'.

'My! Is that so?'

‘ It is. Queer man he is ; he never did a stroke of honest work, but he wears himself out getting up swindles. A sort of moral imbecile ’.

Mr. Sheepshanks, mildly majestic, cast a proprietary look at the millionaire : while upright in his dealings with his victims, he guarded them jealously as a bashaw his seraglio.

Retiring to Mr. Fargo’s private sitting-room, Tristram advised him to the best of his ability concerning the disposal of such works of art as he considered unsuitable. At the close of the session, he proposed that while Fargo was returning his portfolios to their boxes, he should reconnoitre the auditorium and report whether it was worth while attending, or whether Mr. Fargo should be introduced to Undine, as he desired, at a time when she was not being congratulated by an host of frenzied admirers.

To approach the building it was necessary to cross the garden, that sighed coolly in a draught from the hills. There were lights in the auditorium, but a strange silence as well. No typewriter-like crepitations of applause, no sound of crystalline arpeggio or wailing violin perturbed the night air. What macabre thing could that dance be which required for its performance the menacing quiet of a cemetery ? Well, you never knew what Undine, with her *penchant* for sensational eccentricities, would be up to next.

He stole in, marvelling not to encounter any attendant at the door. Rows of empty chairs met his astonished gaze ; evidently he had come too late ; engrossed in his task of instructing Mr. Fargo, the hours had slipped by unnoticed. Yet his watch, a reliable instrument, informed him that it was but nine o’clock, and the séance was advertised for eight-thirty. What on earth could have happened ? He lingered a while, trying to solve

the problem of this desolate and unexpected scene, and melancholy with the obscure chill of disappointment. He had been so anxious to see his impressionable friend sink deliciously under the enchantment of the round-limbed youth which Miss Vocadlo always lavished, with good measure running over, on her beholders.

When on the point of turning away from that lugubrious drapery that should have witnessed the ultimate contortions of the Lesbian, he was arrested by a curious sound. Surely it was of mechanical origin—clockwork, perhaps; the Pink Centipedes, incensed at the flagrant act of defiance which an exhibition of this kind must certainly oppose to their fanatical tenets, had decided to ‘perpetrate a dastardly outrage’, as the *Argus* would say to-morrow, by means of the bomb; but audience and performers, warned by some defalcating and conscience-stricken Centipede, were now cowering somewhere in safety, and awaiting the explosion which none had the courage to prevent. And he had blundered into this extreme peril. He felt himself also lacking in that courage, but his precipitate flight was checked by a louder variant of the same sound. This time there was no mistaking its character; it was the sniffie of a human nose. But where did it come from? From the empty stage—the wraith of a cold? How absurd; of course there was someone sniffing dolefully behind the sepulchral drapery.

Mounting softly the platform, he peered into the dubious recesses beyond. Seated on a cane chair, Miss Vocadlo, in full war-paint, wept bitterly and with quaking shoulders into the two hands that concealed her face; a few tears constellated the dust of the planked floor. In the flame of compassion all Mr. Sheepshanks’s propriety-inhibitions were consumed.

‘My poor kid, whatever’s the matter?’ He advanced

drawing out his handkerchief, for it was obvious from the dimensions of her clothing that she could not possibly have one secreted about her. 'Can't I do anything for you?'

At this unlooked-for sympathy she rose, revealing the tear-channelled anguish of her face and sighing, shuddering, sobbing, fell with entire abandon into his arms. Just like her; even when not mistress of herself she remained characteristic. He wiped her eyes with some difficulty, and found that somehow or other his disengaged arm was now supporting her. As paternally as possible he attempted to administer comfort, but for some time she struggled vainly to speak.

At first he experienced some alarm at having to clasp this agonised lady, so young and helpless, so warm and disquietingly pretty, who hung from his shoulders half-naked, in an attitude resembling that of the figure, far more adequately draped in a night-gown, of the popular print, 'Rock of Ages', that clings in a tempestuous and woolly ocean to a granite cross and adorns the bedrooms of pious domestics. But apprehension soon yielded to that quite painfully glowing sympathy which any vertebrate must feel sooner or later in such enviable circumstances. This emotion prompting him to tighten his grip, he suddenly remembered that he was married and nearly twenty years older than Undine, the latter proving an effective but insufficient reason why a more cautious mood should re-adjust his present outlook.

'Are you feeling better now, dear child? Sit down and have a drink'. It was only 'tooth-water'. 'Has there been any difficulty about hiring this room or what?'

'They wo-on't come!'

'Who won't?'

'Every bubody. No one tuturned up to see my show

at all. I'm so *mix jwable* ! I'm going to drown myself presently in the sea-ea !'

'Didn't turn up ? It seems very queer. Now, how can we account for that, I wonder ? Let's see, what's the date ?'

'The fif-ff-teenth, of course. I had it puput up b-big enough on the puposter for any fool to see !'

'The fifteenth ; oh, well, that accounts for it partly ; it's a pity you chose that date because the Bavarian Ambassador's giving a big dance to-night, Mrs. Miles told me only this afternoon ; and I know the American Commercial Attaché's having a moonlight picnic, because Alba was going and Mr. Gomperz promised to see her home. Whatever made you choose that date ?'

'I chose it ff-first : however could I tell what those d-dam diplomats were going to do ? I'm not G-God'.

'No, I know. You couldn't help it ; but another time you'll be able to take these things into account. By the way, I suppose you advertised well—went round touting and got people to talk about it and so on ?'

'No, I didn't much. I thought my pp—my personal-ity was quite vivid enough to attract them. Besides, for the last week I sat every morning for half an hour me-meditating on it. I said "This show's going to be a success" hundreds and hundreds of times. And then that Miss Walker let me down. She said she'd boohoom me. The nasty cow-ow ! She never lifted a finger !' Her grief broke out afresh.

'Never mind, never mind ! Don't cry like that, Undine, poor thing. It *is* a shame ! But I'll tell you what. We'll organise the thing properly and have it another day ; I'll beat up swarms of people and, what's more, I've got a pet millionaire who'll back you if I tell him to. So you can just snap your fingers at any loss you've had to-night. What do you think about that ?'



Undine was nothing if not mercurial. In order to show what she thought about it she flung her arms round his neck and kissed soundly on either cheek.

‘Oh, you are an old dear, you really are!’ she exclaimed, and in the same breath whispered, ‘What was that?’

Mr. Sheepshanks was so occupied in recovering from the double osculation and the ‘congruent epitheton’ of ‘old dear’, which, despite the avuncular rôle he had prudently adopted, he by no means relished—for he was not yet quite forty—hearing nothing, said as much. Nevertheless, they both went to investigate. The body of the hall was brilliantly lit and smelt of wood and dry-rot, but was perfectly empty; so was the cinema operator’s box. As Tristram faced about Miss Vocadlo gave of a sudden a little gasp, and then burst into uncontrollable laughter.

‘What’s the trouble now?’ he asked, with a half-grin in anticipation of being told a good joke.

Unable to reply, she pointed feebly at his person, the front of which, he now perceived for the first time, was smeared all over with terra-cotta paint. As he realised the full awfulness of his predicament a numbness took him at the knee-joints and a stab of pain at the solar plexus. Approaching the mirror reserved for artists, he surveyed himself; the white summer evening suit, the shirt-front, the tie, the collar even, gleamed with apricot tinctures, a ring of which encircled mayorally his neck where she had embraced him. On either cheek there glistened a broad star of the richest vermilion. It would be bad enough to enter the hotel lounge with these adornments, but the thought of having to face and explain matters to Alba was immeasurably more dreadful.

‘Do stop cackling, Undine! It’s very serious; do

you realise that if I'm divorced for this I shall expect you to marry me ?'

'O God !' replied Undine.

'I don't know what to do, I'm sure. Half a second ; there's Fargo. He lives in a wing with a separate entrance from the garden. I'll sneak in there and borrow some clothes off him. They won't fit very well, but Alba'll probably be too dr——, I mean, no one'll notice at night. I'm sure Fargo'll be amused, and it's a good way of introducing you to him. So perhaps you might be getting the rest of the paint off and putting on a few clothes, and we'll meet you in the lounge'.

'Right you are ! You're simply too wonderful'. She always wailed these last two words in a dreary chromatic intonation-curve. 'By the way, was that the man you were dining with, who stared at me so much ?'

'Yes, that's the man'.

'Oh then, I live next door to him. He snores, and gargles a great deal in the morning'.

Both attained unobserved the desiderated garden-door. As Undine removed the paint and other encumbrances from her silken body, she heard, rolling down the passage without, vast tides of titanic laughter, which followed her to and penetrated the seclusion of the bathroom. Mr. Fargo was evidently receiving the news of the paint catastrophe, which was making a good impression. From her wardrobe she selected a confection of silver and Cubist pink, no less ravishing than audacious.