

him at once and instinctively. Thinking of him as a woman thinks of a man, yet held away from him by some reservation due to immaturity or her own strange self.

He broke the spell, that had only lasted for a second, by glancing in at the old man and asking about him.

Yes, he was tired. They had come a good distance that afternoon and had walked most of the way—"not that walking tired him, as a rule, but the weather was hot." She spoke in the strange French that had impressed him that afternoon in the avenue when he had made the sketch of her, a French that had a touch of Italian accent, and she spoke with indifference as though Cavani and the road and the world around her were of no importance—or herself.

It was like the speech of a disembodied creature; and, without doubt, there was something of that about this wanderer without home or tie other than that other wanderer in there sitting blind before his mug of wine.

She had told him in the avenue that they went "anywhere." She had mentioned Munich and Agram, but he had been so busy with his sketch and so little intrigued with the doings of what had seemed to him fair-haunting "gipsies" that he had not questioned her. He had put Cavani down as a fake, perhaps he was.

Well, the questions he might have put then he could not put now, standing there talking to her before the inn door.

If he could have spoken he would have said, "Where have you come from, really, you strange person, and why have you worried me for days past haunting the road like that—always round the next

corner yet never there when the corner is turned—or if seen, washed out by a shower of rain ? ”

He could not say that.

“ Do you stay here long ? ” he asked her.

“ Till to-morrow.”

“ And where do you go to-morrow ? ”

“ Towards the sea, south.” She indicated the road with a little nod.

“ Then you are going the same way that I am going. I may overtake you on the road. Will you mind my walking with you ? ”

“ You ! ”

The note of disdain in the word struck him like a lash, then he recognised that it was not disdain of him.

“ Yes.”

“ But you are not like us.”

“ That does not matter, and, indeed, there is little difference—we are travellers on the road. Wait for me to-morrow beyond the town, it is good to have a companion.”

She looked at him as if considering things, then she nodded her head several times as though nodding assent to something that was being said in her own mind.

“ Karan ! ” came a voice.

It was the old man calling to her. She turned and went into the inn.

Jean went on. His mind was disturbed, fascinated. It was as though something that had been approaching him for the last few days had arrived, something strange and enigmatic and not too surely beneficent—yet irresistible. He had made an appointment with her and he knew quite well that he had not the power of mind to break that appointment.

Oh, it was all very well following her in fancy—a sort of game to alleviate the tedium of the road, but this was different. This was reality and might lead to what?

A little farther on he found an hotel near the station, it was not the best in Mostar but it was good enough for Jean. He got a room and left his rucksack there, and came out into the porch. There he sat wrestling in mind with the thought of the girl.

It was as though he had found himself suddenly on the edge of a precipice, an abyss that he was called upon to jump or turn away from.

Quite distinctly came to him the feeling that here, right before him, lay the danger of being tangled—in what?

He could not say, or at least common sense could only say, “an affair with a girl like that, a common tramp of the roads, has two sides to it, the girl’s position and the girl herself. She is not of your world, also she is not a common character but a person of individuality, and she has already got a hold upon you, it seems. Turn aside, break off with the thing now ere it is too late.”

That was what common sense said or tried to say, common sense, who is a million years old, yet has not learned the absolute futility of attempting to reason against the unreason, whose other name is Passion.

All the same, an effect remained. Jean went to bed disturbed, half-determined that on the morrow he would start early, leaving it to chance whether he would meet her on the road, and loading the dice against chance by the earliness of his departure.

But in the morning this resolution was not there.

In fact, as he rose and whilst he breakfasted, the whole business scarcely troubled him one way or

the other. The idea of the girl had lost its potency. If he met her on the road—well, there would be nothing in it, he could walk a little way with her and the old man, and then strike on after a talk. Yes, he would like a talk with both her and him, he would like to get them to speak of their vagabond form of life and their wanderings that seemed to be dictated by nothing but the desire to keep moving, and breaking new ground.

Karan! He would like, also, to find out where she had got her name and her relationship to the redoubtable Cavani.

That was all.

After breakfast he went into the Bazaar by the river and make a sketch or two, and it was not till comparatively late in the morning that he started, striking out on the road that would lead to Stolatz and Ragusa.

They would be on that road by this, he reckoned, if not—well, he would not wait, but go on. If he did not meet them he would take it as an indication of Fate and not bother. It would be perhaps just as well. Common sense agreed to that.

Yet, four or five kilometres on the way and no signs yet evident of the pursued ones, Jean's mind took a turn.

This was disappointing.

He had reckoned on meeting them. There were a lot of things he wanted to speak to her about, and there was herself.

He saw her again as she had stood before him last night looking into his eyes with that strange expression, as though she had come across something that drew her towards it, but of which she was not quite sure.

Hesitancy.

The vacant road became all at once vocal and clamatory.

He wanted her.

The self-deception was gone. He wanted her and she was not there, and he felt like a man who had been robbed.

He hurried his steps.

Perhaps, still, the next bend or the next bend would reveal her. Perhaps she had started earlier than he had expected.

He reached a point where the road, now between cliffs, gave a view for miles ahead. Nothing.

Nothing, but a horse being led by a peasant, no trace of old soldier or girl.

She could not have come this road. If she had wanted to meet him she would have come. It was quite plain, she had either stayed behind at Mostar or left by train, or taken some road to the north.

She had avoided him, or perhaps not even that.

It might be that he was quite indifferent to her, and that some petty accident or quirk of fancy had altered her course.

The result was the same.

By the road here a big boulder had fallen from the cliff, and taking his seat on it he fell into thought, at the same time keeping a watch to right and left, on the chance of her appearing from the direction of Mostar or reappearing from the direction of Stoltz.

He waited for half an hour. Then convinced that if he waited for a century his vigil would be in vain, he retook the road, making for Stoltz and sure now that if certainty lay in anything it lay in the fact that he never would see this girl again.