

PART II

CHAPTER XXII

BY THE SEA

THE driver, under the insane delusion that he had been hired to drive two ordinary people to Freshwater and back on some business connected with ordinary earthly matters, was making to return by the road they had come when Anthony stopped him.

“We'll stay and have luncheon here,” said he. “Which is the best hotel?”

There are two good hotels in Freshwater—the Albion on the beach and the one above. Anthony chose the Albion, small and old and perfumed with the sea, the wheel of a wrecked ship standing like a trophy in the porch. It was still open despite the lateness of the season.

It was nearly an hour too soon for luncheon, so they came out on to the tiny sea-shattered esplanade.

The sea, like a ruffian, is always threatening Freshwater. He has knocked her about like a drunken husband, torn off her front and lately has been threatening to cut her in two; yet she remains, battered it is true, but beautiful still.

In autumn, when the charrs-à-bancs have ceased from troubling, Freshwater is, or ought to be, an ideal resort for honeymoon couples, but to-day, as

Anthony stood beside the girl watching the sooty cormorants flying with outstretched necks and the puffins diving in the calm blue-grey sea, not a soul was in sight with the exception of a fisherman or two—far-away figures on the pebbly beach that stretches towards the Stag Rock.

The tide was out and they came down to the sea edge, walking along the rocks leading to the Frenchman's cave. Anthony helped his companion from rock to rock, now holding her hand, now her arm. Reaching a little stretch of still wet sand he took her up and carried her across, so that her feet might not get wet. She was so easy to lift, so light, so yielding, so like a creature in a dream—one of those delightful dreams where the impossible becomes true; wherein youth comes back, even to a man of fifty, and love and desire and the breath of morning.

He set her down on the rocks beyond, and they stood for a moment looking at the sea right at their feet, coming in with the turn of the tide.

"Are you tired?" he asked her.

"No," she replied. "Only a little. Listen to it!"

She raised her head

The sea was talking as it only talks at the turn of the tide in calm weather, talking in a whisper amongst the rocks, laughing to itself in the recesses of the Frenchman's cave—checking its laughter—sobbing. Listening, she seemed to have forgotten his presence for a moment; then bending and touching the dried seaweed of the rock daintily

with her finger-tips she sat down, and he took his seat beside her.

She was always touching things like that with the tips of her fingers—he remembered how she had touched the table last night as she came round it towards him—as if to make sure that the thing was there, or as if she were blind; or, sometimes, almost as though she wished to make sure she was there herself—a strange little trick, absolutely unconsciously performed, like the action of a child.

Anthony, resting and listening to the sea and following the coast-line with his eyes, fell for a second into that lulled condition in which thought scarcely exists. He was happy, like a man drugged, cut off for the moment from yesterday and tomorrow.

“This is better than London,” said he, rousing himself at last.

She answered him by taking his right hand, which was resting beside hers, as though the word London had made her seek comfort and protection. Not a word did she speak as he transferred the hand to his left and slipped his arm around her waist. Then she nestled closer to him and spoke in a voice dreamy and contented.

“I am never going back there again—never, never again.”

“No—never again,” said he. “You are happy here.”

“Yes.”

“Tell me,” he said, “do you care for me?”

GOBLIN MARKET

“Yes.” There was a laugh in the word, as though to say, “How absurd of you to ask such a question. Of course I care for you.”

The unhappy man went on after a pause :

“Really and truly care for me ?”

“Really and truly care for you.” It was like a child repeating a lesson.

“Never want to leave me ?”

“Never.”

“Kiss me.”

She turned her face and their lips met.

Then he knew. Knew that she loved him, as a woman loves a man, about as much as the seaweed-covered rock he was sitting on loved him, or the cormorants flying across the arc of the bay, or the waters chuckling at his feet. Knew that she loved him entirely as a child might love a suddenly found father, or a dog its master, or a plant the sun that warms it. And the knowledge imparted by that kiss was based not entirely on instinct. How could it be otherwise ? How could he inspire passion ?

Yet he knew that he might do with her as he would, that, whilst loving him only as a companion and protector, she would still deny him nothing. This slave ransomed from the market of the Goblins was his, body and soul—with the taint of the Market upon her.

What she had given other men with such dreadful indifference and facility was his for the asking—all was in order, had he been a libertine.

But Anthony was not a libertine. The very

thought that she would give him everything at his first request, open-handed and with indifference as she had given it to other men, filled him with confusion and dread, for the passion that had grown in him for her though rooted in clay had yet its flower, its perfume, its delicacy.

He was bashful as a boy in love for the first time.

"Look!" said she.

The incoming tide, laughing to itself, had cut them off, and the sand patch across which he had brought her was several inches deep in water, all but a ridge, across which he carried her, setting her down on the rocks beyond. Then they returned to the hotel, where luncheon was spread for them at a little table by a window facing the sea.

Seated at the table with them appeared, for Anthony, the spectre of Isaac Coborne, whom he had for a moment forgotten. What did Isaac want his address for?

He told himself again that his presence in the Isle of Wight was known only to three people—Selina, Gregg and Mandelberg.

Isaac did not know Mandelberg, yet he might have called at the office and Mandelberg might have given him the information, though that was unlikely; he might have called on Gregg with a like result, though that, too, was not probable; lastly, he might have gone to Selina.

Isaac had warned him not to get tangled up in this business. Had he been fussing round making enquiries, mixing and muddling in an affair that

wasn't his, talking of it—heavens! maybe talking to Selina's sister, opening his mind to her, warning her, for the good of the family, that Anthony was tangling himself up in a dangerous business?

Who could say?"

Why had he been such a fool as to tell Isaac anything?

Even whilst they were sitting at luncheon the weather changed. The sky that had been asking itself all the morning, Shall I rain? had made up its mind in the negative and pools of turquoise blue sky beyond Arreton way were spreading, the sunlight falling on the far Downs with the promise of a cloudless evening.

They came back by the Brook Road, past Mottistone and through Brighstone, arriving at Macketts' in time for tea.

All the way from Brighstone, spoiling the beauty of the afternoon and the peace of his mind, Isaac Coborne had been in the car.

It seemed to Anthony that Isaac had suddenly developed uncanny powers of pursuit, that there was no escaping from him, that he was Fate. Had he found Isaac waiting at the gate of the farm for his arrival he would scarcely have been surprised.

It is curious how an obsession of this sort takes hold of a man if he has anything to conceal or if, as in Anthony's case, he dreads intrusion or pursuit.

CHAPTER XXII
HERE THERE ARE P PPIES

BUT Isaac Coborne, was not waiting at the gate of the Barrow Farm, otherwise called Macketts'. The gate was open between its lichened grey-stone pillars, and when the car drove up to the door Mrs. Mackett was there to receive them, a figure that chased away for the moment all dreams and dreads, so remote was it from the atmosphere of London.

The smell of the house, the heavy oak beams across the stone passage, the measured tick of the great brass-faced clock, each too, in its way, formed part of a pentagram barring out the world and its worries and troubles.

A fire was burning on the hearth in the sitting-room and the tea-things were laid.

Leaving the girl to go upstairs to change, Anthony lit a pipe and went out.

He glanced at the stone slab over the doorway inscribed with the initials J. M. and bearing the date 1640.

Built when the Long Parliament was sitting in London, Macketts' displayed the fact to the rooks of Gallows Wood and the sparrows, the farm labourers and the milkmaids, all heedless of it as the sky, or the dead up in the churchyard of Godshill who had been milkmaids and farm labourers when Cromwell was leading his cavalry at Naseby.

Macketts' was very old, very old and undisturbed like the land around it—land that had lain unaltered in the form of meadows and woods for many years before Charles had faced the anger of his people or Elizabeth had broken the power of Spain.

Dominated by a church built by the fairies, these woods and meadows, paths, copses, swards dancing with daffodils in spring or spread with the blue mist of the wild hyacinths, had each its name and tradition, unwritten, but living in minds scarcely altered from the minds of the vanished namers. The meadow beyond the fence where Anthony was standing now was Puck's Piece, the meadow beyond half hidden by an outcrop of Gallows Wood, Trenchards. Cheekes Road, a narrow grass path bordered by high ferns in summer, joined the waste land beyond Trenchards with the main road; mushroom rings marked it for what it was, and on moonlit nights of summer young men and girls avoided it. They preferred the woods. Summer, winter, autumn or spring, all these lands and woods held the same atmosphere of secrecy and age and, even when the birds were singing loudest, of silence.

Crossing Puck's Piece in the twilight now came a figure, an old man carrying a spade across his shoulder. He came through the gate in the fence, which was open.

"Fine evening," said Anthony.

The other spoke no word, only nodded.

"That's a big church you've got up there" said Anthony, indicating the church above the trees.

The other grim, surly, and without a word passed on.

Phew! What an insufferable odour suddenly filled the air! A faint vague odour of corruption. Was it from the man or the black stuff still clinging to the spade?

Anthony watched him. He did not go to the house but through the gate to the road—evidently a villager using a right of way.

Anthony spat. Then he returned to the house. He spoke of the occurrence to Mrs. Mackett as she was bringing in the tea, not mentioning the unpleasant details.

"That would be Jem Goodchild," said she; "he's short with strangers since he came back from the War."

"But this was an old man—seventy, I should think."

"Coming through our place!" cried Mrs. Mackett. "The village has no right through here," she checked. "What like was he, may I ask, sir?"

"An old fellow carrying a spade."

Mrs. Mackett said nothing more. She finished her business and went out, closing the door and leaving Anthony and his companion together.

The girl had brought down one of the picture papers he had bought for her yesterday, and after tea she sat by him on a footstool reading it, whilst

he sat and smoked and skimmed the *Daily Chronicle*, which Mrs. Mackett had brought in when she cleared away.

The coming election shouted of itself in the *Chronicle*. Most disturbingly assured the *Chronicle* seemed of the result—disturbingly, had Anthony been in the mood to be disturbed. As a matter of fact, whether it was the air of this place, or the atmosphere of the house, or the silence that reigned complete around it, the election and all it might mean to him seemed something remote and impersonal—unreal.

Then, after a while, he dropped the paper and they talked, chatting about trifles: their trip to Freshwater, the sea, a little accident they had met with on the way home when a tyre had to be renewed—the merest trivialities, for of the world and the great things of life she seemed as heedless and as ignorant as a child.

As a child, or a creature of the woods outside, silent now, and crouched in the dark of the autumn night.

Had she been otherwise she would not have been herself, nor held him so with the clutch of the feeble and the trusting: she would have recalled to him other people, whereas the bond between them was strengthened by the fact that she brought him in touch with no former experience. He had never met anyone like her before.

In some strange way she suited Macketts', this out-of-the-world place where nothing mattered but

the trifles that made the day. She who had come from such a different environment, unfitting as this was fitting.

Poor flower, all but dead and now reviving. Flower of which he was the sun.

Then they fell silent and the fire spoke, the logs falling slightly together and little flames leaping up. She had dropped the paper from her lap and, with her head leaning against the arm of his chair, still weak from her illness and tired with the day, she seemed watching the burning embers, her mind travelling across glowing bridges and into caverns of ruby colour and across the white dice of the burnt-out wood.

He remembered the wretched fire she had been trying to light that evening which seemed so long ago, the shaking of her shoulders as she broke down overcome with weariness and illness. Surely if God had ever directed a man's steps, God had directed him that night—surely—surely.

A mist of tenderness dimmed his sight. As he stood up to light her candle he could not look at her straight in the face lest she should see that his eyes were blurred; not that she would have noticed, half blind as she was with sleep.

Outside she raised her lips to be kissed and candle in hand went up the stairs, walking slowly, holding the banister rail with her left hand, not looking back.

The day had been too much for her—evidently, he had forgotten that she was convalescent after a

severe illness ; he should have gone slower. Well, she had enjoyed it, anyhow.

He was turning to go back to the sitting-room when he heard through a suddenly opened door Mrs. Mackett's voice raised as if in dispute : " I ain't no more given to fancies than you are," Mrs. Mackett was saying, " but it's always the same when he's seen about—you'll see."

Then the door was shut, and Anthony returned to the sitting-room to smoke, wondering who " he " might be and why Mrs. Mackett should have been accused of giving herself over to fancies.

Unable to answer this question he roamed the room, hands in his pockets and pipe in mouth, re-examining the pictures and the books. He took again the little black book labelled " Shorwell." It was the only possible book on the shelf, and as he sat re-turning the leaves he saw that by no means had he exhausted its contents.

Here were five or six pages not to do with Shorwell, inscriptions and texts collected by some antiquary.

Here, from Arreton : " The rewarde of senne is death. Everlasting life is the Gifte of God through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christe, wherefor all ye that love the Lord doe this, hate all things that are evill, for he dothe keep the soules of his from such as would have them spill.—George Serle."

And under : " The said George Serle died in 1609. There is also her: the tomb of William Serle, who departed this world in 1595."

HERE THERE ARE POPPIES

“The rewarde of senne is death.”

What about her, upstairs? Death, that, of course, meant damnation. Would she be damned for her sins if by any chance she were to die? And what about the world that had wronged her? What damnation was bad enough for it?

“The rewarde of senne is death.”

Lord, this old babbling and the worst sinners never mentioned or punished—the people who look on; no wonder that Gregg should be filled with rage against society and the prim-faced hypocrites, the highly respectable people to whom a girl of the town was anathema if she carried on her trade openly instead of privately, or semi-privately; after the fashion of the Society Strumpets.

So he rambled on in thought, turning the leaves and reading as he turned them to the last page, whereon someone had inscribed a set of verses in ink that was now the colour of rust.

HERE THERE ARE POPPIES

Seen from this garden upon the hill
Fair lie the meadows all greene and fill,
Rivers and grey old Island townes,
Hovering hawks by the far sea downs,
Skies of summer or skies gone grey,
Wind on the barley, wind on the May.

Here there are poppies and jestless here,
Men once masterful, girls once dear,
Heedless of time or the old grey townes,
Or the hawk that quest's by the high sea downs.

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Gardens sweet or the flowers that were,
Rose in the belt, or rose in the hair,
Daffodils dancing, skies gone grey,
Wind o'er the barley, wind o'er the May.

Evelyn Luytiens, Godshill Churchyard. May 1826.

As Anthony glanced over the verses of the long-dead Evelyn, the impression they brought him came in the form of a vague remembrance of the perfume of rosemary. Words can recall scents and scents words.

She must have been a sweet, simple soul, gone long ago to the garden on the hill, one of the jestless company :

Headless of time or the old grey towns
Or the hawk that quests by the high sea downs.

Anthony put the book on the table and relit his pipe.

The verses had suddenly attached themselves to the girl upstairs like a pendant.

It was as if the ghost of Evelyn Luytiens had come and hung them round her neck. He could not tell why thought had connected the two ; perhaps because Evelyn seemed sweet-minded and simple, old-fashioned, different from the ordinary woman of to-day.

She. One of the strangest things in his relationship with her was the fact that he never called her by name, that she never called him by name. It was doubtful if she ever knew his surname. "Lucy

Grey," that obvious *nom de guerre*, was hateful to him. As for him, she seemed entirely uninquisitive. The horrible thought that this uninquisitiveness was due to the position from which he had taken her, that business where no questions are asked, was negatived by something indefinable yet real, something which showed itself in nearly everything she said or did, a seeming detachment from the world in which she moved and lived.

The expression "not all there" which we use in regard to the feeble-minded or eccentric might have been applied to her, only in a different sense: she was neither feeble-minded nor eccentric, yet at times she was not all there; absent-minded like a child in a day dream—and always, like a child, in her blind acceptance of what was given to her or done for her, in her indifference to the serious things of life. A child, or a spirit, sweet but undeveloped, not yet fully human.

Upstairs, when he had retired to rest and blown out the light, the glow of the rising moon showing through the little curtains held him for a while from going to sleep.

His mind re-travelled the road to Freshwater; the past day, like a picture-book, turned its leaves for him, showing him Jameson's study, the Albion Hotel, the waiter who had served them at luncheon.

Then he was on the rocks again with Her, and Mrs. Mackett was standing on the beach calling them in to tea: The Albion Hotel had turned itself into the farm-house, the tea was laid and he

was asking Mrs. Mackett where She was; he had lost Her somehow, lost Her for ever.

"Look in the wood," said Mrs. Mackett. He was down by the fence, and here across the meadow towards him was coming the horrid old man with the spade across his shoulder; the sight frightened him and he was turning to run when he was caught by the arm. It was the chauffeur who had driven them to Freshwater.

Mrs. Mackett had taken him by the other arm and they were trying between them to force him back to the house.

Then he heard Her calling to him for help—she was being killed, strangled in the wood; he struggled and fought with the dream people on either side of him, and then he awoke, lying on his back, sweating.

The patient moonlight still filled the room with its glow, but the dread still clung to him, the feeling that she was in danger, the overpowering desire to go to her, be with her, take her in his arms, protect her.

He rose and crossed the room and opened the door.

The passage was in darkness, the house dead silent. No, there was nothing wrong; it was only a dream, she was in no danger.

But he did not turn back. The dream had led him too far.

He had only to open her door, go in and take her in his arms, where she would be quite content to

be. The desire, the passion, the love for her drove all other things aside; nothing but death could have stopped him.

He opened the door. She had left the curtains undrawn and the p^{ri}m little room showed itself in the moonlight, and beautiful, almost miraculous, like a picture within a picture, the latticed window stood framing the vision of the distant church on the hill.

She was lying half on her side, her right arm and shoulder uncovered, the diffused light upon her face, her hand half closed as if clasping another hand. Dead she might have been but for the vague movement of her breast, the tremor of a spirit almost gone, voyaging so dreadfully far away in sleep.

How small she looked and how different! It seemed to him that he had never seen her really before, or known the truth of her absolute dependence on Fate, on chance, on the blowing of the winds of the world.

He stood for a moment gazing upon her, divided from her by sleep—sleep as inviolate for him as the distances of the stars or death.

“You couldn’t harm her,” had said Gregg. However that might be in her waking hours, it was true now.

He turned away to the door, and at the door he turned again to glance at the form on the bed, beyond which the window showed its picture of the church, above the trees, against the sky.

CHAPTER XXIV

LOVE

If you are staying at Macketts' you get your morning paper sometimes at nine, sometimes at twelve, sometimes late in the afternoon, and sometimes not at all. The reason for this is that it comes by milk-carts (returning) from Shanklin, by boys on bicycles, by the butcher, by anything on wheels or legs likely to call at the Barrow Farm. If no such messenger is available it is left at the little shop in Godshill, where you can get it if you send for it.

But the post comes regularly.

Somewhere about the year 1839, when the penny post was instituted, some early Victorian, to celebrate the event, affixed a hideous brass knocker to the front door of Macketts'—the oak door barred and nailed, the door that antiquarians love to rub their thumbs over. He would, without doubt, have completed the vandalism with a letter-slit, only for the fact that from six o'clock onward the door is wide open.

Anthony, next morning, just as he was completing his toilet, heard the double rap of the postman. He put on his coat and came down. Two letters were lying on the mat. He picked them up; they were not for him—election stuff addressed to the farmer and his wife—and leaving them on the little table by the door he came into the sitting-room.

He had awakened depressed and irritable, with a feeling that, somehow, the whole world was against him, that beyond his visible environment, as behind an arras, all sorts of people were moving and plotting. Why did Isaac Coborne want his address? What were they all doing in London? It seemed to him a month since he left Waterloo, and that he had travelled as far as Kamchatka.

In the sitting-room now, taking his place in an arm-chair by the table set out with the breakfast-things, he sat idle, looking at the impossible books in the book-case and the print of The Great Exhibition, fronting the fact that there were no morning papers, no letters.

He did not expect letters, nor did he want them; all the same, the fact that there were none, and could be none, was disturbing to him in his present mood of mind. He was cut off, he had cut himself off, he was in hiding. Yes, that was the word. In hiding. That was a *fact*. He had got at the rat that was worrying him most, away in the recesses of his mind, and, holding it up by the tail, it was unpleasant to look at and by no means dead. Yet it was somehow absurd. Though he was hiding like a defaulting cashier he had done nothing wrong. Was it wrong to rescue Her from that horrible place, was it wrong to have a heart, was it wrong to take Her to this place away from all that, was it wrong to love Her—why, an angel from heaven couldn't help loving Her—was it wrong for a man to love Her who could no more help himself from doing so

than he could help himself from falling were he to lose his balance ?

Wrong ? He had done no wrong ; had he done otherwise he would have been less than a man.

Then why was he hiding ?

Well, it's just this : How could I tell Selina ? If I had let her know I was here, what might not have happened ? She would have come here, no doubt, and made a scene. A scene with Her ! The situation all through has been impossible to explain—to a woman. ' Gregg understands, but a woman couldn't—and it's more impossible now. All the same, what's happening ? Suppose Selina were by any chance to get this address and to know the truth—suppose she were to come here ! Gregg alone knows the address. Why not go up and see him ? Why not go up and see what Isaac Coborne is after ? Why not go up and see if the fat's in the fire and have it out—and the uncertainty ? I'd only be a night away.

Mrs. Mackett pushed open the door with her tray. He left the room and went outside, where he stood and looked up at the bedroom windows. A bird was whistling in the garden—no, it was in her room ; sweet, liquid the notes came, broken now as though interrupted by some preoccupation—ceasing. The half-open lattice of her window was pushed wide by a little hand and she looked out.

“ Breakfast,” said Anthony.

She laughed down at him and nodded—vanished. Then he heard her step on the stairs ; saw her come

down, the tips of her fingers on the banister rails, took her two hands in his and led her into the breakfast-room. He watched her pouring out the tea.

Selina, whom his thoughts had 'invoked before breakfast, wouldn't get away. She had never poured out his tea for him in late years, choosing to breakfast in bed; but when they were first married—how distinctly he saw it all, those honeymoon breakfasts at the hotel in Hastings, the big room, the waiters, Selina, the morning paper, the toast, the kippers, the bald-headed man and his wife at the opposite table, the general air of silence and partial resurrection, like a party of *poitè* corpses sitting up and taking nourishment, speaking in undertones.

• And the dull morning afterwards on the front, and the smoke-room, where he would slip in to have a small Bass at twelve o'clock, and the buzzy and lazy feeling after—

• The recollection brought up no pangs.

How daintily she ate, and, as she held her cup, how her little finger perked itself out as if disdaining the others. It never did any work—it was the aristocrat.

How perfect her teeth were! Teeth that made other people's teeth look like piano keys.

He had never read Herrick or he would have remembered the *quarrelets* of pearls. Those teeth of hers had the *chatoyancy* almost of pearls—a rare thing, and not altogether to be desired, for

these pearly teeth as a rule do not last: the pity of it!

Her little head, clasped in its warm, wavy hair, round and faultless, and when she turned it a bit aside——!

He had never seen her before, as now, with health suddenly coming back to her and her natural self re-blooming.

And she did not attract men, so Gregg had said—or attracting them for a moment left them cold. It was easy to see why, for when were innocence and childish grace ever attractive to the human hogs of Goblin Market?

Goblin Market, that was London Town, where he must go to-morrow to make sure that no chilling draught or evil spell should reach out here and touch Her. London Town and Hastings town and every town,—aye, and all society where understanding was not or pity, where women were cruel to women and men without mercy.

“Get your hat, and we will go out.”

They were standing in the passage after breakfast and Anthony was filling his pipe. The weather still held fine. She was standing on tiptoe to look at an old high-hung print on the wall next the sitting-room door, but at his voice she lost interest in the print and, turning, ran upstairs.

They came from the farm gate into the road leading to the village of Godshill and the Daffodil Valley beyond, a road set with high hedges perfumed with honeysuckle in June.

CHAPTER XXV

AT THE STILE

GODSHILL is one of the beauty spots of the island, a piece of Old Times. It grew in the old and spacious days when the Longstone was young and Mottistone Manor the home of the Glamorgans and Chekes, when many-gabled Westcourt was held by Gozelin FitzAzar, and the Hacketts and Deheynos, De Aulas and Frys were powers in the land.

To-day there are tea-gardens in Godshill, and the coach horns have turned into the horns of chars-à-bancs. That is in summer, and even tea-gardens and chars-à-bancs fail to spoil its summer charm. In autumn Godshill folds its green hands and goes to sleep.

But it was not asleep to-day. An open-air political meeting was being held before the little hotel near which, on a board, was displayed this admonition :

“VOTE FOR JACK.”

The meeting, which was a Conservative one, had nothing to do with the board. The speaker, evidently down from London and standing on a soap-box, his car near by to whirl him to the next village, was engaged in stripping the fallacies from Free Trade, and the audience, numbering about forty, seemed to be agreeing with him.

Indeed, it seemed quite reasonable what he said,

quite reasonable that, without taxing the food of the nation, British factories should be protected as far as possible from the cold blast of foreign competition.

"And now," said the speaker, "would any gentleman like to ask me any questions?"

No gentleman offered to do so; dead silence reigned till Anthony, suddenly seized with the gift of the tongue, took a step forward and addressed the meeting.

He had only spoken twice or three times in his life before, at city functions, and always with difficulty and from notes carefully prepared, almost committed to memory; but he had no difficulty to-day, and no notes. He was thinking of the factory. He spoke so fluently and well that the audience when he finished applauded, gave him, in fact, a better reception than they had given the professional gentleman from London.

This gentleman, however, showed no professional jealousy.

"That's the way to talk to them," said he. "I don't know your name, sir, but we shall be pleased to see you at any of our meetings; there's one to-morrow night at Ventnor Town Hall and another the day after at Sandown. Eight o'clock, and I hope you will be there."

"I'll see," said Anthony. He felt pleased with himself, more than ever sure that all would be right and common sense and conservatism would sweep the polls.

Turning away with the girl, who had been mutely

admiring him, he spoke to an old man in the crowd, pointing to the placard near the hotel.

"Who's Jack?" asked he.

"He's the chap that's goin' to get in," replied the old fellow, hobbling off without explaining that Jack was the Liberal candidate, for whom nearly every man in the crowd would vote on polling-day—common sense or not.

They went on through the village, and up along a lane that twisted and turned like a corkscrew. He wanted to tell her of his projected journey to London. He had fully made up his mind that he would go, and on the morrow—go and "clear up things" and see how the land lay.

Leaning on a stile from which a footpath led across a meadow he told her.

"I am going up to London to-morrow," said Anthony. "It's on business—got to do with this election—but I'll be back the day after."

She said nothing, and he could not tell how she had taken the news, for her face was turned away. Then she turned it a bit and he saw her profile against the trees of the lane. She did not seem to mind.

"To-morrow?" she said.

"Yes, to-morrow. I'll be back next day."

She caught in her breath, and he saw her underlip drawing down and a tremor about the muscles of her mouth. His arm went round her, and in a moment she was clinging to him and sobbing into his coat.

“ You are going to leave me—here—alone—alone. Oh, what shall I do ! What shall I do ! Without you—alone.”

“ But, my darling,” he whispered, “ it’s only for a day—only for a day. I can’t take you with me. Look up—turn your face.”

She was still now, like a bird that had ceased struggling, but she would not turn her face, till, holding her more tightly, he pressed his cheek against hers ; then, all at once, she turned it fiercely, holding up her lips whilst her eyes, half sightless with tears, met his.

Then he knew.

She loved him.

In that extraordinary moment, and whilst their lips clung together, he was reborn. Made again. Renewed, glorified. The love beside which all other love is a shadow and a phantom was his. The consuming love of a woman for a man, a man for a woman. And yesterday he had thought that she only loved him as a child loves a father, or a dog a master ; and yesterday, perhaps, he was right. Who can tell, or how, in a moment, affection had leaped to flame and turned to passion ?

Their lips met again and clung and parted. She was no longer weeping at the thought of his going away, assured as she was now that nothing could part him from her. Then leaving the stile they took, instinctively, the footpath across the meadow,

heedless of where they went and seeking only loneliness for the moment. The stile on the opposite side led to a path skirting a wood of holly and ash, and past that to a stretch of poor ground and a tumble-down cottage deserted and sheltered by a group of firs. Without knowing it, they were again on the grounds of the Barrow Farm and within ten minutes' walk of the house. Gallows Wood lay ahead, and to the right a path leading to Trenchards, the field giving on Puck's Piece.

They had not noticed the clouds gathering over the sea downs or how dull the day had become; rain was beginning to fall, a few large heavy drops, ominous to anyone who knew what the island can do in a few minutes in the way of rain.

Anthony turned towards the ruinous cottage; a young man who had been at work inside stacking wood was standing now at the door, and as they took shelter he moved aside a bit for them, but without a word of greeting.

"Looks as if it was going to rain," said Anthony.

"Aye, it's going to rain," replied the other, and fell dumb.

The rain spoke. Suddenly, and as if at the pull of a shower-bath string, it came down—holly, ash, larch and fir answering with all their different tongues, the roof drumming to it.

"Fortunate we took shelter," said Anthony to his companion.

"Yes," she murmured.

They were holding each other's hands unobserved

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by the other one, and they could say a lot to each other without his knowing; all the same, they wished him away. Dumb as an animal, yet able to talk, he disturbed them.

Round about the Barrow Farm and in some other parts of the island you find very often still the original native unspoiled and with all his pleasant and unpleasant features intact: his attitude towards strangers chief amongst the latter, an attitude speaking of dislike and contempt, hinting at tolerance.

The old man with the spade, the old man at the political meeting and this person—possibly that Jen. Goodchild spoken of by Mrs. Mackett—all were exhibitions of the island way with strangers, each in a different way.

“This is an old cottage,” said Anthony after a while, more to break the monotony of watching than from any desire to talk.

“Aye, it’s an old cottage,” replied the other. “Good for nought but a wood-house.”

“Hasn’t been lived in for a long time, I should think.”

“Not since the chap hanged himself from that there beam in beyond.”

“Hanged himself? What did he do that for?”

“Lord knows. It was a matter of forty years ago——”

“Look,” said the girl, “the rain’s stopping.” She seemed anxious to be gone; this talk about hanged men had no doubt frightened her, and

Anthony felt her little hand clasping his more tightly.

He looked out. The rain had suddenly ceased and the clouds were parting.

"Yes, it's stopped," said he. "We'd better go. Which way is it to the Barrow Farm?" he asked.

"Is there a short-cut?"

"Why, you're on it," said the young man. "That's Trenchards right before you; follow the path across it—that's all you have to do."

"Good day to you," said Anthony.

He was as glad as the girl to get out in the open and away from that cottage by the funeral firs; hanged men or not, there was an evil feeling about the place, an atmosphere of decay and gloom, helped, no doubt, by the overcast in the weather and the rain. The Barrow Farm is best seen in fine weather; rain and darkened skies bring out a strange quality in these old lands and meadows, copses and woods; a vague oppression rises from them like a viewless mist, the trees come closer, one feels closed in, especially in such places as Cheekes Road or the long glade running to southward of it, or Wacklands, that wilderness of thorns and nut trees.

Half-way across Trenchards and with the house in sight, the clouds above closed together again and down came the rain.

"Now I've caught you," cried the rain.

"Run!" said Anthony.

They ran—the girl laughing, then panting; she

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was in no condition for running, and they finished at a walk, reaching the house drenched, but not minding.

That night, instead of retiring early as she had done hitherto, the girl sat up with him to the tune of doors being locked and barred, the wind in the trees, and presently, had they listened, the snoring of the Mackett household. Then, having put out the lamp in the sitting-room they came upstairs and along the corridor; here, with a sudden mischievous little laugh and just outside her room door, she bent and blew his candle out.

