THE PRESENCE AND THE POWER

MARJORIE BOWEN

THE PRESENCE AND THE POWER

A STORY OF THREE GENERATIONS

BY

MARJORIE BOWEN

Author of "I Will Maintain," "Because of These Things," "The Viper of Milan," "Stinging Nettles," etc., etc.

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OFFERED AS A SLIGHT TOKEN
OF LOVE, ADMIRATION
AND GRATITUDE
TO
VIOLET ROY BATTY

POLVENDEN, KENT
March, 1924.

'So the foundations of his mind were laid,
In such communion, not from terror free,
While yet a child, and long before his time,
Had he perceived the presence and the power
Of greatness; and deep feelings had impressed
So vividly great objects that they lay
Upon his mind like substances, whose presence
Perplexed the bodily sense."

WORDSWORTH.

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LAMBERT DYPRRE,

1883

THE PRESENCE AND THE POWER

CHAPTER I

THE verger opened the west door under the organ-loft and the small door in the north aisle so that a slight breeze blowing across orchards, hay-fields and graves fluttered the open prayer-book placed in front of Raulyn Dyprre, and the thicker leaves of the Bible on the lectern from which Mr. Cantelowe read the lesson.

Tedium was over Raulyn Dyprre like a veil, tedium of summer, of Sunday, of England, of comfort, of everything accomplished and nothing more to achieve, tedium of every-day things and the common way.

The wash of sunlight through the open doors and the Norman windows filled with leaded diamonds of greenish glass, the placid wind circling through the church, the white-washed walls, the clean mural tablets, gave an effect of pale peace and drowsy well-being, of wide, empty days.

It was all neat and orderly—from the two brass vases of white scabias and stocks, grown in the vicarage garden, that stood on the altar with the green frontal, to the starched print frocks of the children with stiff straw hats and hair the colour and quality of dried hay who sat scattered at the back and in the north and south aisles. When Raulyn turned his head and looked up, he could see the grey head of Matthew Gleed, the grocer, motionless before the painted pipes of the organ, and either side were long black boards bearing in white letters the details of some charity, endowed by dead men and women.

Some of these benefactors had their funeral hatchments hanging between the arches, and others had the tablets with letterings of black or brass in Latin and English.

There were only three names again and again repeated, that of Cantelowe, of Dyprre, and of Myniott; names that sounded peculiar, even uncouth, in the ears of a stranger, but here were thrice familiar and held in the highest reverence and esteem.

Raulyn Dyprre was weary of these names, his own and those of his neighbours; he looked to the pew on his right where Philippa Myniott sat with her mother; she wore a light dress, and appeared bathed in blonde radiance, but behind her pure profile was the stone commemorating another Philippa Myniott, the wife of a Raulyn Dyprre, whose epitaph was headed with a skull and crossbones; Raulyn thought of the mouldering coffins in the vaults beneath their feet, and a fine shiver quivered in his too sensitive flesh.

"We live over our own graves—always," he thought. With an effort he forced his attention on the lesson, and his quick imagination fastened on the words that Mr. Cantelowe's expressionless monotone could not wholly mute:

"*Moreover the king made a great throne of ivory, and overlaid it with the best gold. The throne had six steps, and the top of the throne was round behind: and there were stays on either side in place of the seat, and two lions stood beside the stays. And twelve lions stood there on the one side and on the other upon the six steps: and there was not the like made in any kingdom.*"

Raulyn gazed furtively at the composed faces of the congregation: not one of them understood what they were listening to; his was the only heart that thrilled to the power of a distant, dead, mighty world; he bit his long narrow underlip and nervously took up and closed his prayer-book.

"*—and cedars made he to be as the sycamore trees that are in the vale, for abundance. And Solomon had horses brought out of Egypt——*"

Philippa Myniott was looking at him now; her oval face expressed a steady sweetness, almost a gentle resignation. Raulyn wondered if she was to be his wife or the wife of Piers Cantelowe; he believed that he loved her, but this morning he could not detach her from her surroundings; she seemed the ghost of her namesake whose bones decayed in the vaults below.

The schoolmaster crossed to the lectern and closed the book as the choir rose; their white surplices, deep starched

collars and clean faces made a patch of light in the stalls. Raulyn watched Philippa as she sang the *Te Deum*; she was like all the Myniotts, tall and fair, with an air of almost austere nobility; he thought her dress with the high collar and long skirt too heavy and severe, he was worried by the weighty look of her straw hat loaded with artificial roses, he disliked the "gigot" sleeves, the white kid gloves, the bugles and black ostrich feathers and lace of Mrs. Myniott, whose figure when she stood blocked out the mural tablets.

Raulyn's mind ran on beauty, strangeness, opulence. What had the Psalms just said: "The wings of the morning" —"The uttermost parts of the sea."

Raulyn tried to control this mental restlessness, this reaction against the prim Sabbatic atmosphere; he sat very still, his right hand nervously shading his face; but the second lesson again set his fancy wandering.

It was the story of Paul cast on the desert island and the viper which bit his hand, and it gave the young man the same thrill as he had received from the account of the throne of Solomon.

At one verse his imagination leapt with almost a pang:

"*And so we went towards Rome; and from thence, when the heathen heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Appii Forum and the Three Taverns——*"

Solomon was dead with all his splendour, but Rome still stood; the young man's imagination played round the thought that in a few days' time he might be in Rome, treading where Paul trod . . . but to think of going abroad was to indulge in fairy-tale reverie; save as soldiers or sailors the Dyprres never travelled, and Raulyn was an only son reared with the sole purpose of being master of Dyprre Manor and faithful occupier of Dyprre Manor House.

He heard nothing of the accustomed drone of the rest of the service; tangled dreams impeded his thoughts, he visioned airy angels and splendid chimeræ, treading up and down the lion-guarded steps of Solomon, or along the streets of Rome where the acanthus-wreathed capitals of buried pillars were shaded by rustling olives that grew above the goats pasturing upon the sunken Forum; he had seen that somewhere in a picture . . . how had Rome looked to Paul during those three years he "was suffered to dwell in a house with the soldier who kept him"?

The vicar's voice sounded from the vestry as he dismissed the choir, the congregation drifted through the two open doors and lingered in the churchyard among the mouldering headstones and transient flowers. Philippa Myniott came slowly, her delicate face passed one after another of the mural tablets, a stone of golden alabaster, transparent from the sunshine, and painted coat-of-arms; it was like a cameo against the different depths of shade and colour. Myniotts who had married Cantelowes, Cantelowes who had married Dyprres, with here and there the name of a stranger, a Lussy, a Northlond, a Banastre, wives who had been brought from other parts of Kent, could be read.

Of late years the three families had not intermarried so exclusively: the present Mrs. Myniott was a Collepiper from Norfolk, and the late Mrs. Cantelowe had been a Sentcler from York, but Raulyn was of the pure inbred stock—his mother had been a Cantelowe, and he was first cousin to the present owner of Cantelowe Place.

The three families had a history peculiarly interwoven; their several ancestors had been in the service of John of Gaunt, by whose interest this fair portion of land had been parcelled between them, and though none of them had risen to any distinction whatever, they had rather more than held their own in money, prestige, and honour, through revolutions, revolts, and social changes.

Each name could claim a creditable family record; each had their traditions, their anecdotes, their particular prides and boasts; with dignified decorum they had preserved their first names as carefully as their coats; Raulyn Dyprre was on the roll of the Duke of Lancaster's knights, and the Cantelowes were always either Piers or Thomas or William; John, Roger or Stephen served the Myniotts, and all three families called their daughters after the women of Early English History—Philippa, Emma, Matilda, Constance, Katherine, Isabella or Anne. Raulyn always disliked his own name: it seemed a weight and chain about his personality, the archaic look of it when written slightly irritated him, it came of course from Ypres, and much legend hung about the Raulyn who bore it and was knighted on the field of Nafera. Philippa had paused by the north door; beside her was a draped marble urn wreathed by a serpent, that dreary symbol of eternity; again, it bore her name, "Philippa Myniott," this time the wife of a Cantelowe.

Raulyn walked past her and out at the west door; straight before him lay the village of Trawden, quite empty save for sunshine and the bright flowers, phlox, snapdragons, and white daisies in the gardens of the closed cottages.

The scene was so familiar to him that he hardly knew if he beheld it or not; from sheer inertia of spirit he loitered. Philippa had left the church now, and stood under the gigantic hollow yew talking to Piers Cantelowe.

A commonplace sense of jealousy stirred Raulyn from his sombre mood; he at once joined the man and the girl and watched Philippa's fair face as she talked to his cousin. It was tacitly understood that she would choose one of them for a husband; it was unthinkable that a Myniott should marry a stranger when there was a Cantelowe and a Dyprre of her own generation.

"I think you were asleep, Raulyn," said Philippa shyly as she turned to him.

"I was terribly awake."

"Why 'terribly'?" asked Cantelowe with his cheerful air; he was a younger but now an only son, a Wykhamist and bred to the Bar, now at thirty-five "settling down" into a country squire, intelligent, handsome and jolly, whose greatest pride were firstly his name, secondly his cricket, and thirdly his pedigree stock, horses, dogs, cattle.

Raulyn looked with envy at his casual, blonde, good looks; he had never really liked him; there was that obscure touch of something alien about Raulyn that made him not quite like any of his relations and neighbours.

"I mean terribly bored," he explained shortly.

"Oh, that!" Cantelowe laughed; it was obvious that he considered the remark in bad taste, he quite honestly considered a great deal about Raulyn in bad taste; from one of his type and class it was a severe condemnation. He turned to Philippa, who stood obscured in the dark shade of the blackish yew.

"You're coming over this afternoon, aren't you?" he said with ardent blue eyes illuminating the commonplace words. "Mrs. Myniott promised—and the Cottesmores are coming."

Hesitation visibly quivered Philippa's repose; Cantelowe became more insistent.

"I want you to see the new vineries," he added with a hint of authority.

"Did I promise for to-day?" asked Philippa faintly.

"We are contending for this woman," thought Raulyn, but the only emotion that stirred his tedium was a feeling of irritation against his cousin, which was really not so much because they were rivals for this girl's good graces as that he knew that Cantelowe was the type who inherits the earth, while he had some obscure qualities alien to fortune and success.

"You'll come?" demanded Cantelowe.

"Oh, if my mother promised," replied Philippa. She moved out into the sunshine. The Myniott carriage and pair was at the lich-gate, Mrs. Myniott, gently conversing with neighbours, was walking towards it; the glossy bays, the shining varnish, the spruce coachman and groom all gleaming in the summer radiance, Mr. Myniott's broadcloth and top hat, his wife's black silks and ostrich boa, seemed to Raulyn symbolic of the whole conventuality and depression of the Sabbath.

He watched Philippa as she walked slightly ahead with Cantelowe; her pale skirts, full from the waist, flared out in a bell-shape which was emphasized by a wide floating sash; this and the balloon-like tops of the sleeves destroyed all the natural lines of her figure; Raulyn was vexed with himself for noticing this; he was himself teased by his own eye for meticulous detail.

Cantelowe handed the girl into her carriage, but she looked past him into the spare dark face of the other; her frank eyes were direct and wistful. "Do please come to-morrow," she said directly to Raulyn as, amid formal bows, the "Victoria" drove away. He was pleased by the discomfiture of Cantelowe; but it was not the first time that Philippa Myniott had obviously favoured him, and he had taken no advantage of it, yet he did not intend that she should marry his cousin. He even believed that he loved her; still, that terrible flavour of weary sameness spoiled his romance.

"This is the place where I shall live all my life, that was the woman I shall marry, and here I shall be buried, part of the earth of Trawden for ever and ever."

It was this prospect, that would have been to some, to most, wholly pleasant, that made his nerves wince as he walked homeward.

Immediately he was out of the village he was on his father's land; the foreign sound of the name had long been lost, and

the signposts spelled the word as the countryfolk pronounced it—"Deeper"—which was the title given to the vast estates of Sir Lambert Dyprre whose prudent and thrifty ancestors had bought, from time to time, land from the Myniotts, land from the Cantelowes.

The hedgerows had not yet been cut, but the tall grasses were full flowering and burnt dry, the sow-thistle, purple loose-strife and cow-parsley made summer's last garland in the ditches, the few lingering wild roses and meadowsweet hung withered; in the fields the harvest was already in sheaves, the late haysel just over.

Trawden stood on a slight elevation above the marsh, and Raulyn, as he left the long street, could see the gentle champaign spreading into the hyacinth-blue that concealed the sea. Placid, gentle, a thousand times familiar, this view held for Raulyn an infinite melancholy, as if this corner of the world was utterly remote from all endeavour, all chance, all change.

"And why should I want anything but what is provided for me?" pleaded Raulyn with himself. "How many men would thank God for my heritage?"

Full and fair and fruitful it lay about him; surely the circle of a man's life and activities might be described in noble and seemly fashion among these pleasant meadows and swelling uplands.

"There *is* nothing else," Raulyn told himself firmly. "Everything in life is comprised in such an existence as mine."

But he knew that he was lying to himself: *there were other things;* now and then they echoed faintly under these placid skies, as when the wonderful gorgeous words of that strange Eastern book were read aloud in the still, sun-washed church.

Raulyn and his father sat alone at table in the heavy dining-room, a footman behind either chair, the butler beside the long mahogany sideboard; weighty curtains of red damask and striped sun-blinds kept out the sunshine that blazed on the stone terrace without.

Above the Tudor fire-place, in the corner of some of the portraits that lined the panelled walls, on the old-fashioned and ornate silver, were the arms of the Dyprre family; *pale or and azure, charged with a lion rampant, sable within a bordure az,* surmounted with a helmet bearing a panache crest, and under-

neath the motto on the undulating scroll: "*Deus nobiscum, quis contra?*"

The atmosphere of the room was the same as that of the church and the country, secure, prosperous, too comfortable; a serenity that might or might not be a mask, perhaps even a mask without a living face behind it; nothing in the room, or the house, or the country-side had been altered during the memory of the oldest living man; even though machinery was used in most of the fields, yet in the big barns the flail, older than the Romans, was still wielded, the wheat was still cut with the sickle of Ceres; people said the times were on the edge of change, but despite steam, telegraph and machinery, the change had not yet come. Raulyn looked at his father, where he sat at the head of the long table, and thought that for one who had had so bright and honoured a life, he looked a melancholy man, as if he too felt, secretly, that this still sameness of the days was the stillness of decay.

Sir Lambert was an elderly man who suffered from some slow heart disease, the nature nor the existence of which was ever mentioned save between him and his doctor; it would not kill him easily, perhaps not at all, but it kept him slow, quiet, constantly ailing, sober and moderate, even beyond his natural sobriety and moderation.

In person he was tall and elegant with the dark thin face of a thinker, black brows, close white hair and eyes still blue; the features were overclear and delicate, and time had left the firm contour unblurred, but added deep precise lines about eyes, mouth, and nostrils.

Raulyn, the child of a late marriage and a delicate mother, was too closely like his father, but his face was even more finely drawn, more delicate, the type further emphasized to the verge of decadence, yet preserving dignity and a certain beauty, slightly wistful, a curious quality for youth, and more than slightly melancholy, a curious quality for opening manhood.

Father and son scarcely spoke during the meal, but the silence was more as if they had too much than too little to say.

"Was Philippa in church?" asked Sir Lambert abruptly.

"Yes, sir."

"Are you going over there this afternoon?"

"No, Philippa had promised to go to Cantelowe."

Sir Lambert gave him a quick glance; the sun had slipped

between the blinds and the curtains, and lay in a bar of extraordinary vividness across the oak floor ; Raulyn idly watched the dazzle.

"Has it ever occurred to you, Raulyn," said Sir Lambert carefully, "how attenuated we are becoming ?"

"We, sir ?"

"The Dyprres, the Cantelowes, the Myniotts : Philippa is the last of her family since Harry died, Cantelowe has gone to a second son, and you are an only child."

"Well, there are three of us left," smiled Raulyn slightly.

"But it is the last of Myniott—Philippa's husband will have the place—the name too. It feels strange to me, Raulyn. For generations these three houses have been full of children —young people coming and going from all over the world. And now it seems like a silence."

Raulyn did not answer ; he put his foot into the bar of sunshine and watched it spread up his ankle.

"You're thirty," added Sir Lambert abruptly, "Piers is thirty-five. Time you both married."

He rose, took a copy of *The Gentleman's Magazine* from one of the leather-covered chairs and left the room.

Raulyn felt that a fiat had gone forth : his father wished him to marry Philippa without delay ; he was not used to disobey his father.

He moved the curtains, stepped under the sun-blinds, and stood on the warm terrace.

The golden acres, the beautiful wheat moved from one field to another for centuries ; the flowers, lucerne, trifolium, mustard, sanfoin, showing definite colours under the quiver of the heat ; the orchards, where the fruit ripened among the wrinkled leaves ; the bean-fields, breathing the last perfume of the fading blooms ; the distant marsh-lands, where the final yields of coarse hay, mingled with reeds, lay heaped for Monday's carting—all this rich scene of Nature's fertility and man's activities lay spread before him undisturbed, bathed in perpetual gleams of light, shimmering away to the haze of sea where Romans, Saxons, Danes, Normans, had landed to make battle-grounds of these laden fields for the sake of the wealth they bore.

And here stood one of their descendants, gazing with indifference at the heritage so long closely gripped and jealously guarded.

To him it was like a prison-yard, where one must labour

dully all life, then lie down and find a grave at last within the walls.

He and Philippa in this house, their children running about—his boy with the breech-loader under the old, old elms with the million branches, his girl riding to hounds—he and Philippa dead upstairs in the dark bed-chamber, where Sir Lambert would die; he and Philippa side by side in Trawden vaults, and still the sowing and reaping, the laden wains, drawn by gleaming horses home, the hay flowering, falling, the great barns piled with sacks, the waters ebbing and flowing on the marshes.

Raulyn came back into the silent house; he kept a spare diary; that evening he noted, under the date *July 29th*, 1883: "*Resolved to marry Philippa Myniott.*"

He thought of her noble face, her easy postures, her delicate limbs, and strove to conjure up her picture illuminated by love; but in the image that he evoked he saw a look of resignation akin to his own.

CHAPTER II

TO-MORROW was to-day, and Raulyn did not go to Myniott Grange, though the delicate insistence of Philippa's low invitation was constantly in his mind: it was a tennis-party, and he had promised to be there, but he did not excel at games or greatly care to see women playing them; Piers Cantelowe would be displaying his skill, his good looks, his popularity; Raulyn had no wish to compete with him in open rivalry: his carefully worded interview with Philippa should be discreetly chosen. It gave him pleasure to think that when the girl was his affianced wife Piers would have to withdraw his ardent pretensions, but he also felt a half-hesitating compunction towards Piers, for he knew that his cousin's love was a truer thing than his own, and that Philippa's happiness would be more secure with Piers Cantelowe than he could ever render it; that she should have chosen him from her two pretenders seemed curious to Raulyn; he wished he was not so sure of her choice, so certain that she would fall, like a ripe fruit, into his outstretched hand.

The day was again one of ruffled summer heat, but now

the fields and lanes were full of an activity that looked, from the terrace of Dyprre Manor House, slow and slumberous, but was in reality laborious and strenuous.

Raulyn rode idly on to the flat pastures on the edge of the marsh, and watched the new machinery gathering, binding, and stacking the corn; up the lanes moved the wagons in tedious progress with the last loads of marsh hay, withes of it caught on the dry hedges, and the harsh boughs of the brambles where the puce-coloured flowers were hardening into fruit among leaves already beginning to turn fox-red.

The ground was hard from drought, splitting into wide gaping cracks, and the mole-hills, resistant as iron, continually blunted and even turned the blade of the machine; some men complained of bleeding feet within their massive boots, but for the most part they worked silently with grim faces, buffeted red with wind, rain, sun, and now greasy with sweat under broken straw hats.

Raulyn fastened his horse under the stalwart oak by the gate and went round the cornfield; by the far hedge was Sir Lambert, watching the big machine. Though a stiff Tory, he was broadminded and cultured as well as prejudiced—worthy innovations he welcomed generously. He had been one of the first shareholders in the Suez Canal and Atlantic Cable Companies.

Raulyn had not wished to see him, but it was too late to turn back, so he came forward slowly and stood beside his father; Sir Lambert put a thin hand lightly on his shoulder and spoke to him about the new tractor; then, as this clanged away across the huge field and the two men stood alone under the dome of upper air and the flight of dipping swifts, the elder said:

"Not at Myniott again to-day, Raulyn?"

"I don't care about tennis," answered the young man with the slight manner he used to conceal uneasiness.

Sir Lambert's long narrow mouth was firmly set, his dark brows firmly drawn; his son knew that he was thinking there was very little that Raulyn did care for, and only the slenderest justification for this indifference to the common interests of life, for neither at Caius nor afterwards had he distinguished himself in any fashion whatever; he had no special pursuits, not even any hobby, beyond a dilatory interest in heraldry and medals.

"Raulyn," said the old man suddenly, "what is wrong?

What is coming between you and"—he wavered for a word, then with the faintest gesture indicated the wide prospect, adding—" this ? "

He looked keenly at the sensitive peculiar face so like his own, on so near a level to his own, and saw the thin features flush as Raulyn made an effort to repay candour with candour.

" Oh, I don't know. One gets stale, I suppose, sir. I'm spoilt, perhaps, living too soft. Everything has been too easy."

" There is no need," replied Sir Lambert, " to live softly."

" But I haven't the fortitude to make life hard. I couldn't alter things. Except by going away."

" Going away ? "

Raulyn had uttered his words casually, but when his father repeated them with this deep inflection they abruptly became important, and Raulyn spoke with a sharp animation.

" Why should I not travel for awhile ? I'm not really wanted here."

The old man's voice was steady as he answered :

" Have you not already had your ' Wanderjahre,' Raulyn? " He even smiled, but the other sensed an iron opposition painfully controlled. He reacted to this, and answered from a deep concealed irritation :

" That's years ago, and only for a few months—I don't mean Paris, Switzerland—with introductions. I thought of——"

He paused quickly ; after all, he was going farther than he meant, and to put into words the impulse that harried him seemed absurd.

But Sir Lambert was determined to drag the issue into the open ; he looked over the hedge towards the hazed distance, where the fields showed bistre and the trees an arid blackish-green in the veil of heat.

" What did you think of, Raulyn ? " If a life of long habit of courtesy had not modulated his voice to perpetual softness, it would have been sharp now.

" I have never been as far as Rome even," said the young man, touching the stubble with his riding-crop. " I—I have rather a sense of the ' romance ' of places—names, chance names, even on a bottle of wine, heard in church, under a picture—I think I should like to see these places—flavour

them, as it were, test them—oh! how can I explain it, but places seem to me more important than people——"

"I quite understand," replied Sir Lambert gravely. Encouraged, the young man continued, speaking awkwardly, but not without a certain force and feeling.

"Think of all the places there are, sir—towns and houses, fields and orchards—mountains, too, and one never sees them. Think at this moment of what is happening in all these far-off corners of the earth—even as we stand here ——"

"And this corner, and our standing here, is as important as any of it," said Sir Lambert. "You must get that in your mind, Raulyn. These fancies of yours are dreams."

"But if I am haunted by dreams?" asked Raulyn quickly.

"You must conquer them—as an idle habit."

Raulyn persisted.

"But if the dreams conquer me?"

His father's blue eyes looked at him serenely, steadily, not without pity.

"He who is conquered by dreams is a vagabond, an adventurer—an outsider, Raulyn."

The ponderous machine crashed round the field, coming so close that they were silent in the noise as the driver stopped for Sir Lambert's approval, and the old man stepped quickly up to him where he sat, wet and filthy, and courteously praised him for his work and intelligently commented on and admired the colossus he guided.

Raulyn watched his father's tall lean figure in the rubbed dun tweeds, and wished he was such a man, with so sure a grip of his destiny, so certain a faith in his forbears' ways and creeds.

The machine passed on, and Sir Lambert returned to his son, who said, carelessly, yet with meaning:

"After all, sir, dreamers have run the world; our very religions were once only some man's visions."

"That is a fallacy," replied Sir Lambert calmly. "This is, I think, an age of fallacies; there are always dreamers to follow the dreams of others, and fools in their turn to follow these second-hand visionaries, but the men who have mattered have been the active men who had not time for vision; responsibility, Raulyn, courage, fortitude, loyalty—these things have no part with dreams."

Then, as if he at once repented having said so much or

spoken so seriously, he moved away slowly in the track of the tractor, saying:

"Did you hear there was to be a sale at Clobbertons?"

"No." Raulyn was displeased at the truncation of the conversation; he felt his theme had been dismissed as not worthy of serious consideration. "There must be a lot of rubbish there," he added perfunctorily.

"Many good things as well, I believe. The old man had an eye for the valuable and remarkable. Some of the china should be worth going to see."

"Clobbertons has been shut up so long it must all be a matter of legend," said Raulyn idly. "How long is it since any one was inside the place?"

"I went there as a boy—fifty years perhaps ago. Hislop must have been over ninety."

The two men paused in the scorched field.

Raulyn was conscious of the heat soaking through his jacket and causing his flesh to throb, and of the immense space of luminous air above him filled with unimpeded light, pure, vivid ether, that he saw encircling the globe as water would encircle a pebble in a bowl.

"The machine works well," said Sir Lambert; "it is ugly, but useful."

"And of little importance," added Raulyn. "After all, what does it matter how the corn is cut?"

"Perhaps," returned his father gently, "the corn itself appears of little importance, yet what else had man ever contended for but these few grains you may so lightly tread on?"

The steam-engine with the funnel of black smoke rising up ponderously from the golden level of the field, came clattering by again, but describing a smaller circle; while round the edges of the hedge a man with a hook and a stick was "vagging" the corn the machinery could not reach.

The swifts dipped and plunged with incredible airy grace, and Raulyn thought of their journey to Africa that they were so soon to undertake, the darting away from the grey island as the mists began to enclose the cold shores, the eager speeding towards the Eastern sun. So absorbed was he in his thoughts that it was with a throb of compunction that he noticed his father's kind eyes on him, watching him with a deep anxiety.

At that moment he felt desirous only of pleasing Sir Lam-

bert, of atoning for his own inner disloyalty to him, to Dyprre, to Philippa (already he felt bound to Philippa); but he did not know how to tell his father this.

The old man helped him, as if he had delicately divined his thoughts.

"I should like you to know, Raulyn, that I do so perfectly understand—hesitation—we have that, I think, with other things. A heritage. I wish that I had married when I was a younger man. I wish I had had a larger family. Dyprre is a large responsibility for one. You must feel it. I know that feeling of—staleness—too. It passes, I believe, with youth."

"And youth itself passes so quickly," smiled Raulyn; "but is there nothing, sir, save resignation?"

"There is nothing," returned Sir Lambert firmly, "but duty—courage. One must put through what one is born to do. You have your place very clearly, very definitely defined."

"That is what I—shirk," said Raulyn. "It is too clear, too definite."

"Ah, no," cried his father. "A shirker—ah, no! We have never lacked courage, Raulyn."

They had reached the five-barred gate into the lane now, and the young man held it open as he answered:

"Courage—yes. But courage to go on—or courage to turn aside?"

Sir Lambert, half-way through the gate, turned and looked at him, with a movement, a gesture so fine as to be scarcely apparent but most eloquent; in that brief second there came before the old man, with poignant vividness his own youth.

He had loved Constance Cantelowe and she another, and after long painful delays and oppositions she had married this stranger and died soon after, and Sir Lambert, for the sake of Dyprre had, in middle life, taken as his wife the elder sister, who had never shared his heart and not long his home.

Ailing and disappointed, she had yet died reluctantly, for she had adorned with jealous love the husband whose devotion was to her sister's memory.

Sir Lambert remembered these things now; in his son's face he saw the reflection of his own hesitations, his own weaknesses, his wife's thwarted love of life, her restless resignation, her rebellious acceptance of the second best, the anguished admission of failure with which she had unwillingly died.

Her last words to him had been an expression of boundless regret:

"Had I lived I might have made you love me.'

Sir Lambert seemed to hear that sibilant whisper now as he looked on the son who was not the child of love or passion, but born of wistful submissions, of pitiful make-believe.

"If he had been Connie's boy," thought the old man, and turned and clanged the gate.

Raulyn could not interpret the look of withering pain in his father's face, yet in his very blood he sensed the root of the trouble. With studied carelessness he unfastened the bridle of his patient horse.

"I thought I would go over to Myniott to-morrow, sir," he said, "and find Philippa by herself."

He could not look at his father as he said this, nor yet at the swooping swifts: the triumph of the one meant the mockery of the other.

Sir Lambert spoke too quietly.

"I'm glad. Good luck, Raulyn."

"Are you coming back?"

"No. I promised Withers to look at those fields on the marsh—the river is silting, and there are about twenty acres under water. I'm walking—don't wait."

Raulyn watched the tall authoritative figure walking the narrow upland lane, thrown distinct against the wide limpid sky. Below, on the slope, the steam-engine laboured round the dwindling patch of corn, the throb and clang of it echoed in the blank quiet of the afternoon, the sheer radiance of light bleached the blue out of the air, and dazzled on the tops of the drooping trees like a silver shower.

The smoke of the engine was clear now, and rose like bluish gauze against dark foliage of oak and ash.

Raulyn sprang into the saddle but did not know where to go; he so often had these moments of vacillation, sure symptoms of a mind ill at ease.

Then he remembered Clobbertons and the sale his father had mentioned: an impulse of fanciful curiosity, such as he too frequently indulged, sent him in the direction of the old house: he had not seen it since it was dismantled, and it would, he told himself, never look the same once it had changed hands.

Clobbertons had been to Raulyn one of the landmarks of a dreamy, not too happy, childhood.

It was a walled Georgian house outside Smeed, the nearest town, and before Raulyn was born had been bought by a retired Admiral of the name of Hislop. He was a widower with one daughter, a girl of unusual vivacity and individuality, but his principal absorption had been in his collections of bric-à-brac—and what a former generation had called "curiosities.'

When Raulyn had been about five, Clarissa Hislop, then a beautiful woman of thirty-five or so with a dark pointed face gay and graceful as a floating plume of feathers, had loved and been loved by a young farmer; the details of the affair were never known, whether the unfortunate couple had dreamt of a secret marriage, or had conducted a long secret intrigue, or were merely waiting for the old man's death was never known, but it was obvious that a complete concealment from the harsh, tyrannical father was carefully maintained until the proud woman's pitiful secret was revealed by the malice of a spying servant, her honour and her happiness at once laid in ruins.

Unfettered, ferocious, the fury of the outraged father had broken out in a manner that exposed his daughter to open shame.

In a moment of maddened passion the high-spirited woman had taken her own life, hanging herself by her neckerchief to the hook behind her bed-chamber door.

Raulyn had only heard of this tragedy in hints and whispers; in his childhood it had only been the vaguest of nightmares, and ever since he had grown up he had never heard the affair openly discussed; but for a mind like his it was sufficient to vest Clobbertons with a horrid and intense interest.

After his daughter's death, Admiral Hislop had lived as a complete recluse, eccentric, miserly, detesting and detested by his neighbours, and the sombre enclosed house with the dismal story and barred gates and neglected garden had always had a peculiar fascination for Raulyn.

He had never seen the fell old man, but he could, like a dream within a dream, recall seeing Miss Hislop riding up Smeed High Street in a very deep green riding habit and a tall hat with a waving feather.

Something in her piquant beauty, her abundant vitality, had appealed to the child's romantic imagination; he had never forgotten the glitter and gleam of her laughing face,

the flush of her roseate loveliness, the poise and lift of her in her saddle, nor yet the shock with which he had learnt afterwards that he must have seen her two days before her violent and miserable death.

Now as he rode towards Clobbertons this little scene returned to him; he could see himself, a pale child, leaning from the carriage window of his mother's carriage, as it waited before the low-fronted chemists' shop, watching Clarissa Hislop, so strangely near the brink of horrible death, ride smiling up the sunny High Street.

He thought of her now, with deep pity, as he rode towards Clobbertons.

Her situation had been something like his own: an only child of a late marriage, she had been preordained to a destiny that she could not endure; Raulyn wondered if, should passion chance his way, he would be able to resist disaster any better than Clarissa Hislop.

As he approached Smeed the sun was sinking and a deep blue had returned to the upper sky; at the end of a small lane leading from the high-road was Clobbertons, raised on an incline, full against the skyline, and encircled by a ten-foot wall.

Raulyn paused by the gate and looked through the rusty iron scrolls.

For years the old man, bedridden, senile, had never left the house; he had been in the constant charge of a paid attendant, and the front entrance was utterly unused.

The grass had been roughly cut, but cascades of faded roses hung untended from the red garden walls, hollyhocks, sweet-williams, and coarse white daisies spread in luxuriant untidiness across the flower-beds; over the pillared classic porch fell festoons of clematis seeding into crowns of silvery fluff; patches of burdock, camomile, mallow and thistle choked paths and lawn; at the sides of the house two chained gates shut off and showed a wilderness of trees and flowers. All the windows were shuttered; notices of the sale "by order of the executors" were pasted round the pillars and on a board at the gates.

Raulyn marked the date: "Tuesday, July 31st,"—tomorrow.

He was sorry that it was the day when he had resolved to go over to Myniott, for he had a whimsical fancy to penetrate the mysterious house that had always seemed an outpost of

some dreadful fairy-land; sorry too that he had not come over earlier, for of course the auctioneers must have been here to-day arranging the things for the sale: he could see the tramplings of the weeds and bushes, the packing-cases and straw piled up in readiness for purchasers.

Raulyn wondered which window was that of Clarissa Hislop's room; how different she was to Philippa! How different women could be! He was sensitive enough to be able to appreciate acutely the feelings of the woman when she had rushed upstairs and turned the key in her door for the last time . . . and the feelings of her father when that door was broken down.

And now they were both dead, and their several agonies mattered to none.

Raulyn, looking at the mute and solitary house that had been the scene of so much suffering, thought—"What a hell we can make of life with our foolish passions."

He wondered what had become of the lover; probably he too was dead; how futile it all was!

As well live out the little span peacefully as make these violent anguishes out of beating on the bars.

Raulyn turned his horse's head from Clobbertons.

"To-morrow," he decided finally, as he looked up at the crystal flashes of the evening star swung low in the translucent sky, "I will go to Philippa, sweet, kind Philippa."

CHAPTER III

IF Raulyn lingered on his errand it was a hesitation almost imperceptible; if he did not hasten over to Myniott Grange with the swift ardour of a lover in the first morning freshness, he was there in the early hours of the afternoon.

The weather was still of a cloudless sunshine, the dense chestnuts in the park threw pools of deep shade on the yet green grass in which the spotted deer rested; in the quiet lake pink waterlilies lay folded from the sun, motionless on flat leaves.

On the long stone terrace the scarlet geraniums and crimson dahlias drooped in the big vases; the Tudor house with the usual flamboyant Georgian additions was shuttered against the heat; an air of even prosperity, of untouched serenity, blended park and house with the landscape.

Raulyn thought, without a thrill, that Myniott would in due course be his ; more responsibility, another chain to hold him in his place. He had hoped that Philippa might have been in the park or under the striped awning on the terrace ; he was sorry that he had to ride round the house without seeing anyone.

When he reached the front of the house with the dark avenue, that was the pride of Myniott, stretching straight into the distance bounded by the great gates, he received an unexpected vexation ; before he had dismounted a gardener, who was carefully sweeping the first fallen leaves from the drive, told him that Mrs. Myniott and her daughter had gone out half an hour before : to Smeed, he believed.

This unlooked-for rebuff gave Raulyn a sense of the ridiculous, as if something, somewhere, was mocking his tardy wooing ; he intensely disliked the thought of telling Sir Lambert that he had not even seen Philippa, so decided he would also go to Smeed and look for some opportunity of seeing the girl ; perhaps she had gone to the sale at Clobbertons, he would look in there on the chance ; he was pleased at the thought of after all attending this auction.

The narrow lane leading to Clobbertons was blocked with carriages, gigs, dog-carts, and a few of the lately improved "bone-shaker" bicycles.

Raulyn left his horse at *The Woolpack*, the inn at the corner, which was bustling with the excitement of the sale, and, with a curious sense of interested anticipation, went through the rusty gates and neglected garden he had gazed at last night.

He had seen the Myniott carriage passing slowly up and down the High Street, and found Philippa, as he had expected, in Clobbertons.

The sale had not yet begun, but a great number of the things had been sold privately first and were already being removed from the dismantled house.

"Isn't it all horrid ?" said Mrs. Myniott, appealing to Raulyn as he joined them in the entrance hall. "I can't imagine anyone letting a place go like this."

"Admiral Hislop was very old and very unhappy," put in Philippa. "Wasn't there some dreadful story——"

Mrs. Myniott interrupted hastily :

"Nothing fit to repeat, dear. And I dare say nothing but village gossip, after all."

"Is there anything worth buying ?" asked Raulyn.

"Well, the best things have gone, I believe, sold privately to a London dealer," replied Mrs. Myniott. "The property has gone to a distant cousin, who just wants to get rid of it all. We really came out of a morbid curiosity to see the inside of the house, didn't we, Philippa?"

"It was a sort of ogre's castle of our childhood, wasn't it, Raulyn?" The girl turned to the young man. "I am sure you too came just to see what it was really like."

Raulyn looked directly down at her as she stood by the dusty newel post of the stairway: she wore a lavender muslin with a wide sash; very fair and desirable she seemed in her untroubled youth, a sweet contrast to this house of evil memories.

"I came after you," said Raulyn, "I followed you. I was at Myniott, early, Philippa, to find you——"

She looked at him with an innocent eagerness that hurt him with a stab of compunction.

"But you didn't come yesterday, Raulyn——"

"I don't like tennis. And I wanted to see you alone."

He lowered his voice as he said this and his tones were the most lover-like he had ever used. Mrs. Myniott heard them with a deep throb of thankfulness; she had dreamt of this marriage for her daughter since Philippa had been in long clothes; and, more potent cause for rejoicing, she knew the state of the beloved girl's heart.

"Well," she said cheerfully, "you two had better explore the ogre's den. I shall wait in the garden till the sale begins. See if there is anything you would like to buy, Philippa. Raulyn, see that she does not get too tired and dusty."

This last with a gesture that seemed to consign the girl to his care and that he perfectly well understood; he knew that the Myniotts were as convinced as Sir Lambert of the desirability of the Dyprre Myniott match.

All combining to urge him to this one point, all with gentle, loving, but firm and unrelenting insistence combining to force him in the way appointed for him: Philippa herself helping with the unconscious appeal of her graceful youth, her innocent affection so ingenuously revealed.

"Shall we go upstairs?" he said, as Mrs. Myniott's stately figure in the grey mantle and bonnet passed into the tangled roses of the garden.

"Yes, it is a horrible house, isn't it? Something dreadful did happen here, didn't it?"

Raulyn had a strong desire to tell her this story so unfit for her to hear; she was the same as Clarissa Hislop in sex, rank, and comeliness—he wondered how she would handle passion and tragedy.

"Supposing she loved like that," he thought, "but it is not likely.

"It is all just a legend," he said aloud.

They went up the dusty stairs to a wide landing piled with pictures in heavy gilt frames from which open doors gave glimpses of disordered rooms.

Philippa's housewifely instincts were offended by the chaos of broken, torn and filthy objects heaped and stacked on dirty furniture.

"It really is in a shocking state," she said, lifting up her flaring skirts and white petticoats.

One of the auctioneer's clerks came out of one of the rooms with a case of books.

"Not much to see up here, sir, I'm afraid," he said respectfully, "we've got the best things downstairs. Unless you would like to view Miss Hislop's room. We haven't touched that, as every one seemed to have a fancy to look at it."

"Why?" asked Philippa.

"Because it has been shut up twenty years and more," answered Raulyn quickly, "ever since Miss Hislop died. You know the old man was half crazed."

"The real ogre's castle, after all," said Philippa, half shyly.

The clerk put down his case and with an air of good-will opened the door directly in front of them and at the end of the wide passage.

They beheld but an ordinary bed-chamber with mirrors and pictures draped, heavily embound by shadow, for the blinds were drawn across the big windows.

"Don't go in," said Raulyn, but Philippa had already stepped across the threshold; the large pieces of furniture were of a monumental heaviness, the massive bed was an old-fashioned four-poster hung with cracking damask; the glass on the dressing-table, the chairs, the mirror on the panelled walls, the pictures were all concealed by holland covers; a coarse sheet was fastened over the bed; on the chimney-piece were two ornaments and a clock under glass cases.

The atmosphere of the room was oppressive, mouldy, thick.

A blear-eyed old woman in a check print dress was slowly dismantling the room.

Philippa addressed her sharply.

"What happened here, please?"

"It was Miss Clary's room. I've looked after it all these years, miss, for I'm the only maid that stayed at Clobbertons through it all."

"It is such an ordinary story," said Raulyn, and turned, hoping that the girl would follow him; but Philippa stood erect by the dark old bed and looked round with eyes over which the brows were closely knit.

"Do tell me what it was," she insisted, with a touch of authority. "I've heard such queer hints about Clobbertons——"

"Saving your presence, miss," returned the old woman as she drew the covers off the chairs, "it was just as Mr. Dyprre says, an ordinary story. Miss Clary was crossed in love and made away with herself——"

"Made away with herself!" exchoed Philippa, recoiling.

"Yes, miss. In this room. And now all her things are to be sold, like any common trumpery."

"It was so long ago," added Raulyn; his own shuddering distaste of the sombre ugly room merged in concern at the change in Philippa.

In a second she was so different to anything his intimate knowledge of her had ever revealed to him before, that it was as if he had long watched a sleeper who now had suddenly awakened; the usual docile serenity of her demeanour was replaced by a tense, barely-controlled emotion.

"She killed herself, you say?" she asked. "Oh, think of it! Her lover had left her and she killed herself!"

"He didn't leave her, miss—the man wasn't made who would have left Miss Clary—it was the Admiral came between. But he was sorry afterwards, that was why he kept this room just as she left it."

"Just as she left it!" repeated Philippa.

"Even to her clothes in the press," answered the servant, and, pulling open one of the heavy but smooth-sliding doors of the wardrobe, revealed hanging a number of closely packed dresses that to Raulyn's quick fancy seemed like so many replicas of Clarissa Hislop as she must have looked when she also was hanging to a hook.

"Come away, Philippa," he said sharply. "Your mother would not like this—she will blame me—Philippa!"

For the girl had gone up to the wardrobe and was fingering the gowns.

"Yes,' said the woman with the relish of her class for morbidity, "that hangs near the front, miss, as my young mistress put it there herself—two days before she——"

"Don't chatter," interrupted Raulyn sternly. "This is revolting, Philippa; come away."

He spoke with feeling, for the girl's fine hand was shivering over the folds of a dark-green silk, and this actual link of the present with that faint childish nightmare gave Raulyn a sense of mental nausea. Philippa turned obediently now, thrilling to his tone of command.

"Yes—we will go. It must have been terrible. Oh, Raulyn, to love like that!"

The unusual abandon in her words, her look, the very gesture with which she caught his arm, loosed in him a flood of tenderness; his pity, his regret for the dead woman, for all unhappy women, became merged in pity and regret for her. Had they been alone his darling would soon have been in his embrace and he would have been whispering comfort to the weeping joy of her surrender, but the old woman was looking at them with the chill and malignant curiosity of soured age.

"If your honour cares to listen," she remarked, "there's a lesson in the story of Miss Clary."

They paused in the doorway to look back at the bent dry figure neatly folding the holland covers into four.

"There is no lesson," said Philippa, still disturbed by that queer passion. "Only a fearful, fearful misfortune!"

"The lesson is this, miss," replied the old woman: "Miss Clary ought to have gone away. Often she said to me, 'Marion, if I don't go away, something will happen—I can't go on, year after year of it, everything the same, all planned out, no chance of escape—if I went away,' she used to say, 'I might come back and settle down'; but the Admiral wouldn't let her, no, not for a day—and come to think of it, if she'd gone on waiting for him to die, she'd have been an old woman——"

"But why did she not marry?" asked Philippa, in whose conception of life marriage was as inevitable as death.

"Miss Clary did not fancy the Admiral's choice, miss, and there weren't many marrying gentlemen in Smeed."

"But the man—she—did care for?" hesitated Philippa.

"He was a common man, miss."

"Oh," the girl recoiled with another sense of shock; but

now Raulyn drew her away and closed the door on the garrulous old woman.

"Shall we go down and see what they are selling?" he asked at random; for the stray gossip with the echo of a desperate creature's mind had been barbed and edged for him; tedium had driven Clarissa Hislop to disgrace and death . . . he dare not pursue this train of thought.

"I would rather go into the garden," he heard Philippa say faintly. "Will not you, too, come into the fresh air?"

They had reached the wide entrance hall and Raulyn saw the dining-room filled with chairs, a desk and rostrum.

"I would like to see some of those fabled treasures," he answered with affected lightness, but Philippa drew back.

"I don't want to go in, Raulyn—it is so crowded and men smoking. Raulyn, I would rather go into the garden——"

He glanced at her appealing face and hesitated; the slight innocent yet distinct air of belonging to him that she assumed made him, even on the verge of asking her to be his wife, draw perceptibly back.

"I think I will go in for a moment," he said.

Disappointed, but still confident of his affection, she said ingenuously:

"Will you come home with us, Raulyn?"

"Yes, of course." His eagerness was at once an excuse and a disguise. "You are not leaving Smeed just yet?"

"No, my mother has to call at one or two shops—we will come back for you——"

She touched his hand and went out into the garden.

Raulyn turned into the temporary sales-room; the firm of Maidstone auctioneers was very efficient and sales were already proceeding briskly.

As Raulyn took a seat near the door the old servant who had spoken to them upstairs entered, carrying in either hand the two ornaments from the chimney-piece of Miss Hislop's room.

"I was told all the chaney was to go in the first lot," she said to the clerk who came forward. "It does seem strange to see Miss Clary's things, that I've looked after so long, come to this."

She sighed, clasping her lean, swollen-veined hands, as the indifferent youth took her treasures, already disfigured by the crude sale numbers pasted across them.

Seeing Raulyn seated near the door she bent down and added with an air of senile irrelevancy:

"The Admiral brought them from his travels when he was a young man, your honour, and Miss Clary had a queer regard for them. I keep them, she used to say, to remind me of all I've missed."

Raulyn did not answer; but he glanced covertly at the two ornaments.

From the first they possessed a peculiar fascination for him; from under the hand that shaded his eyes he watched them passed up, through the packed crowd to the auctioneer's desk, where Mr. Battlee, of Maidstone, was bantering his colleagues and acquaintances.

CHAPTER IV

RAULYN sat passively as one object after another was handed up to the rostrum. He took no part in the bidding: in a detached and joyless fashion he gazed down the room filled with sturdy familiar people in their dark clothes against the dark walls, the low windows sending in broad beams of sunshine in which the motes danced endlessly, till some one pulled down the stout holland blinds and a dull suffused yellow light filled the room.

On the desk below the rostrum were the two ornaments from Clarissa Hislop's room waiting their fate: one was the small figure of a priest or god, seated, in Ting ware, or *blanc de chine*, that peculiar white porcelain which appears to be made of solidified milk or moonlight, showing reflections within reflections; the other was a bouquet of china flowers, of exquisite workmanship, charmingly arranged in a *jardinière* of a powder-blue colour.

A strange miscellanea of objects was being disposed of: snuff-boxes, bottle tickets, stone plates and Dutch tiles, clocks, watches, engravings, oil paintings, candlesticks, salt-cellars. Raulyn fluttered the pages of his catalogue without interest; he intended to buy "Miss Clary's" pitiful relics and give them to the old woman who had guarded them as they had guarded the empty chamber for twenty-five years.

The white figure was put up to auction. Raulyn bid, a high price as he thought. He was rather surprised that he had a competitor: a heavy, bearded, elderly farmer, in tweeds and gaiters, who bid against him, steadily running the price

up to fifty guineas, at which fantastical figure the statuette fell to Raulyn. He was apt to be extravagant as far as indulging his whims was concerned and he gave no thought to the money, but he marked curiously the stolid personality of the man who had bid against him. The grizzled farmer sat heavily leaning on his stick and looked straight ahead of him ; he was a stranger to Raulyn, who knew nearly every one else in the room.

His curiosity was further roused when the little *jardinière* came up for sale and the same farmer bid for it. With a queer little sense of excitement Raulyn again bid against him, and, amid the awed interest of the crowd, became the possessor of the ornament for the sum of thirty-five guineas ; in this case the price was not high, as the bouquet of flowers was of Vincennes ware and of great rarity.

" Ladies of the old French Court," as the auctioneer said, " used to wear these in their gowns."

Raulyn looked round for the old woman in the check dress with the flat slab of grey hair in the knotted net, but she had left the room.

A young groom made his way through the crowd :

" Mrs. Myniott is waiting, sir."

Raulyn was quite genuinely startled ; he had not realized how the time had gone, how absorbed he had been, how completely he had forgotten Philippa ; even now she only flickered across his mind.

" Tell Mrs. Myniott," he said spontaneously, " that I am detained—I am sorry—of course she must not wait——"

The significance of what he did in thus declining Philippa's messenger hardly occurred to him. Before the groom had left the room Raulyn was again absorbed in Clobbertons. He had now fetched his two purchases and stood them in the wide window-sill before which he sat ; he was in no hurry to find the old servant, as something queer and even grotesque in the scene pleased his errant fancy.

A sampler worked by Clarissa Hislop's mother was knocked down for a few shillings, knick-knacks and oddments were sold for a few pence. When the servant Marion entered the room again she was carrying the clothes from her mistress's wardrobe tied up in bundles ; these were put up to auction immediately after all the objects of *bijouterie* and pictures had been disposed of.

The tawny grizzled farmer, who had scarcely moved since

he had lost the two ornaments, was, with the rag merchant of Smeed, the only bidder for these poor remnants, and for a small sum became the possessor of them all; immediately after, he rose and departed, many covert glances following him as he threaded his way ponderously through the press.

"Who is that man?" asked Raulyn of his neighbour.

"Caleb Content, your honour, from Content Hill, way the other side of Smeed," was the whispered reply from the stout shopkeeper. "Your honour will have heard," he added tentatively, "that that is the man who should have married Miss Hislop?"

And his coarse voice dropped lower on the name of the suicide.

Raulyn moved away without replying, slipping the statuette and the bouquet of flowers into the pocket of his tweed jacket; the atmosphere of the house had become intolerably musty, vault-like and even foul with the disturbance of so many old, decaying and dusty things.

He was glad to breathe the air of the desecrated garden, where the overgrown flowers now lay broken and trampled, while cases, furniture, wrappings and straw were scattered over lawn and beds alike.

Searching about for old Marion, and loitering a little amid the confusion, he noticed her helping the silent old farmer to carry the bundles of dresses down the lane.

Raulyn followed.

Among the blockade of carts, carriages, gigs, and hand-carts, was a farm wagon into which labourers were piling the furniture from Miss Hislop's room, even the gigantic bed which had been roughly dismembered. The long bundle of clothes, boots, shoes, bonnets, boxes, fans, all a woman's paraphernalia, cracked, dirty, decayed, were flung in; the farm hands worked silently under the sharp supervision of the farmer and the old woman.

He lingered at the corner of the lane watching them; there was something so ugly in the spectacle that he revolted against adding his two treasures to the holocaust that was being so roughly, even, it seemed, so contemptuously handled.

"The lover and the confidant," he thought. "That stout, hard old man, that repellent woman—and these wretched sticks and rags the mementoes of the beloved!"

Not able any longer to endure the sight he went away,

leaving a ring of curious sightseers watching Caleb Content at his work.

It was now late afternoon and something of a wind had risen, shaking the big trees in the lane and in the garden of Clobbertons ; with veiled uneasiness Raulyn recalled Philippa ; would she feel slighted, was she possibly expecting him still ?

He was sorry that he had been distracted from his intention of going back with her ; but what, after all, did it matter ? He was virtually pledged to her, and there was to-morrow—the usual vacillation, the usual excuse, the perpetual procrastination that encumbered all Raulyn Dyprre's actions ; never yet had he found an emotion or an impulse powerful enough to carry him directly over these clogging hesitations.

Too late to go to Myniott Grange now, too late to speak to Philippa to-day, too late for many things.

The pale melancholy of the long evening overspread the remote landscape that Raulyn glimpsed beyond the hedgerow that bordered Raulyn's upland road ; a faint glimmer of colourless light penetrated the dense leafage of the wide-branched elms. The young man rode slowly, almost aimlessly ; he had a sense that all actuality was very remote, " through a glass darkly " indeed appeared the world to him then ; Philippa Myniott was no more real to him than Clarissa Hislop ; the shadow of the empty house of fearful memories was still about his path ; he could still hear the strident voice of the auctioneer echoing in the dusty dun room, still see the piled objects, once cherished, loved and used, piled in confusion against the drab walls.

Reining up his docile animal, he put his hand into the big outside pocket of his tweed jacket and took out one of his treasures, smooth as silk, hard and full of colour as a pearl, luminous as if it held an inner light, the tiny figure sat on his hand and looked directly up at him ; Raulyn did not know what it represented, but he thought some god or priest ; the modelling was of the most delicious fineness, the folds of the robe, the crossed feet, the hand holding a drum, the contours of the face, with three eyes, the curious coronal of lotus and sesame flowers were all wrought with loving exactitude ; on the back was an inscription in Chinese characters, the whole was not above four inches high.

Raulyn slipped the thing back in his pocket and turned his horse's head on the backward way.

"I have no business with these," he thought. "I'll take them to the man who bought the rest of Clarissa Hislop's possessions." As he rode again through Smeed the last light was receding, leaving the upper air a clear purple; yellow lights showed in the windows, colourless shadows filled the arches and doorways.

Raulyn had to ask his way to Content Farm; it was a smallish place and remote, and quite beyond the lands of the three magnates, Dyprre, Myniott, and Cantelowe. When Raulyn found it, on the top of a lonely hill that rose abruptly out of the marsh, the evening star was high above the trees and faintly sparkled the other constellations.

The outlines of the farm still far away showed rigid against the pellucid sky; in the field near the road was a great flare that illuminated the fields and road with angry, leaping light.

Raulyn paused by the fence; figures were moving round the huge bonfire; some with iron forks were pitching on different dark objects, others were chopping with axes that gleamed red in the firelight at something black and massive; tar bundles of dry brushwood were hurled to the flames; a sudden spurt of fire threw into crimson relief the distant farm buildings and showed Raulyn that the farmer was burning everything he had bought at the sale at Clobbertons; the green dress was curling on the top of the splintered bed, shoes, gloves, books, tapestry were being rapidly consumed amid the charred blistering stumps of the heavy furniture that resisted the fiercest flames. Mr. Content was watching the conflagration with the same stolidity with which he had watched the auction, but he instantly saw Raulyn and came directly to the fence.

"Good evening, Mr. Dyprre." He was a well-spoken man whose manner was free from the servility to which Raulyn was too accustomed from this class.

"You know me?"

"And you know me by now, I reckon, Mr. Dyprre. I live quiet, but you'll have heard all about me in Smeed to-day."

"I know nothing about you at all, Mr. Content—only old stories, fairy tales to me," replied Raulyn, who found a strange pleasure in this encounter. "But I've brought you the two ornaments you bid for to-day."

The elder man folded his arms on the fence and looked sideways at the lusty bonfire devouring ancient memories.

"Why did you bid for them, Mr. Dyprre?"

"A whim, a fancy. I thought to give them to the old woman who had looked after them so long."

"So you have whims and fancies, Mr. Dyprre. Cost you some money too, buying my poor girl's things."

"They are yours,"—Raulyn held out his hand with the *blanc de chine* figure—"yet I grudge them to your holocaust."

"Keep them," said the farmer without moving. "My girl valued them. I've seen her wearing the bowkay in her breast. She thought a deal of that idol, too."

"Would you have burnt them if you had bought them?" asked Raulyn.

"No, I would have kept them. But I don't take them as a gift. Seems that it is meant this way. They're for you—not me."

Raulyn returned the figure to his pocket.

"Your bonfire was costly, too," he said.

"Yes, but I'm a lone man, Mr. Dyprre. And I've always done well. That was my fancy." His dourness suddenly flashed into passion. "My God, if I'd had the money I'd have bought up Clobbertons and made a bonfire o' that."

Raulyn, looking at the sombre locked face, wondered what part he had played in that ancient tragedy; had he behaved well or meanly, followed honour or expediency?

"Clobbertons should be razed to the ground, I agree," said Raulyn. "A hateful house."

"You came from curiosity, because you'd heard tales, Mr. Dyprre?"

"Yes," said the young man. "I have a restless mind. I am interested in by-paths."

"You've the look of my poor girl, Mr. Dyprre. You're not happy in your place."

"That is putting it bluntly—I don't know."

"Maybe not. You won't know. Not till the pinch comes. Life is good and easy for you. A gentleman with a big place and a big name. A gentleman! That helps most things."

"I suppose so," answered Raulyn slowly, "but I should like to know something of other ways of life."

"Follow your fancy," said the farmer, "even if it is one of the Jacky lanterns on the marsh."

"Is it worth it?" asked Raulyn with a leap of the heart.

"For all but cowards," answered Mr. Content. "You keep those two toys, Mr. Dyprre, and they'll remind you that there are other things in life beside safety."

These words had a sharp sting for Raulyn : he felt a pettish child before this quiet grey man whose hand had closed so heavily on his own destiny ; the strange intimacy of this slow talk with a man he had never seen before, under the deepening sky and brightening stars was peculiarly refreshing to one so bound and so fettered by endless restraints of endless conventionality.

" You think," he asked with a boy's eagerness, " that it is really worth while doing—what you want to do ? taking what you want to take ? "

The old man smiled dryly.

" It is worth while, Mr. Dyprre."

" Whatever the cost ? " asked Raulyn.

The farmer glanced again at the bonfire.

" The cost is high," added the young man.

" High enough, Mr. Dyprre. But there be some things you could not pay too high for—not if your raw soul to blaze in hell for eternity were asked for."

Raulyn did not answer and the old man turned heavily away.

" Good night, Mr. Dyprre."

" Good night."

He rode away, the red light of the flames playing long round his path ; once or twice he looked back and saw the bonfire like a beacon on the hill.

The end of it ; the end of love, of passion, of shame, of agony, of kisses and tears . . . and yet that old man standing by saying it was " worth while."

" What memories he must have," thought Raulyn enviously.

When he had ridden from the circle of the light of flames the night seemed cold and barren.

CHAPTER V

THE dinner hour was long past and Sir Lambert had gone to his room when Raulyn returned to Dyprre Manor House ; such unceremonious absences were rare indeed in this establishment, and Raulyn knew that his father would have happily excused it this time in the certain belief that it meant the celebration of his betrothal to Philippa. The purely whimsical and foolish motives that had kept him from

returning to Myniott Grange would be quite beneath Sir Lambert's comprehension, all the delicate nuances of feeling that had gone to thwart his hard-won decision would be impossible to describe to his father's courteous intolerance, nor would he make the attempt. He would say nothing save that he had not been . . . the thought of the pain he was bound to inflict on the old man made him angry, threw him into a deeper rebellion.

Why should he be so chained by the love, desires and needs of other people that he was never free to act for himself? There was cruelty in the fact that he must always be considering the suffering of others, never his own secret pain.

He resented all of it—his father's silent love, the innocent adoration that looked from Philippa's pure eyes, the eager, slightly anxious good will of Mrs. Myniott, all combining to fling over him the net, from the delicate yet inflexible meshes of which they did not intend him ever to escape.

Though he had not eaten since the middle of the day, he took nothing but some biscuits and a glass of wine and went up to his room.

This was the principal bed-chamber of the house; since his wife's death Sir Lambert had discovered an unconquerable aversion to it, but as, since the building of the house, it had never been closed and would have seemed like a confession of the extinction of the line to do so, it was given to Raulyn on his last return from Oxford.

Raulyn also had disliked and resented the room which to him, as sole heir of his name, should have had a special and even sacred significance, but, bound, as always, by the ideas of other people, he had acquiesced silently in his father's wish that he should occupy this chamber.

It was a large apartment with antechamber and powder closet, furnished in the heavy furniture of the William and Mary period; on the flat stone mantelpiece and at intervals in the Wren pattern panelling were the Arms of Dyprre. The big Jacobean bed was hung with curtains of seventeenth-century needlework, the chairs were to match, covered in old yellow satin.

Sir Lambert had added a large tallboys and several comfortable modern chairs, Raulyn a few mementoes from his college rooms and a shelf of uncommon books; there were several good but undistinguished landscapes in oil of the Richard Wilson school, some rare sconces of beaten silver

and a coverlet on the bed and curtains at the big window space of costly puce-coloured Venetian damask.

Raulyn always found something wrong with the room, the old and the new did not harmonize; his own personality had not dominated the place; rather, whenever he came there, he himself was dominated by the shadows of the past.

He would really have liked to have entirely altered and refurnished the room, but had of course never dared to voice the idea of such sacrilege.

His valet, Bates, slept in a small adjoining room reached by two steps down from the powder closet; he put in no appearance to-night, for he had long since learned that his master wished to see as little of him as possible, and never when he came home late; Raulyn really disliked having a body servant, though he was so used to it as to scarcely be aware of his own dislike, and he had kept Bates so long because the man had been quick at self-effacement and learned to avoid the least appearance of intimacy with his master.

Raulyn pulled back the curtains and the faint star-beams poured into the room, filling it with those misty shadows that are neither light nor dark, the borderland of gloom.

Raulyn lit the candles in the beautiful sticks of Florentine copper on the massive dressing-table, took his two purchases carefully from his pocket and set them on the polished top of the table.

He yawned, stretched, and took out a cigar, threw it down; never had he been able to find any consolation in smoking. As he dropped into the comfortable leathern chair that had known so many of his idle hours the whole atmosphere of the room swept over him with intolerable poignancy.

It was a very charnel house of memories; how many phantom coffins could he not see on that bed, how many phantom cradles standing beside it!

There he himself had been born, there his mother had died, there Philippa would sleep, and her children first see the light—these all of them in turn would lie down for the last time, through that door they would go, feet foremost, down to Trawden Church.

The blind love of life, the Gothic horror of death associated entirely with material horrors of darkness and corruption shook the young man where he sat; he could think of nothing about these ancestors of his save the dusty facts of their several deaths; even the bridal couples he viewed with this

shuddering melancholy, seeing the skull grin behind their kisses, even the infants who had lain here in the bosoms of their mothers he thought of as heirs of death.

All the stories he knew of his forbears occurred to him; here had been brought the Raulyn Dyprre who had been flung on the hunting field, here the Lambert Dyprre who had been drowned while bathing, here the Walter Dyprre shot at his own gate by highwaymen, here had died Constance Dyprre of the smallpox, three months after her marriage, here Emma Dyprre of senile age, and here Matilda Dyprre, aged seventeen, in childbed; he knew the portraits of all of them in the gallery downstairs and the tombs of all of them in Trawden Church.

His glance travelled to the two alien objects on his dressing-table.

Serene and slightly mocking the gleaming figure sat in the waving pool of candle shade; the bouquet of china flowers looked exquisitely lovely in the blue *jardinière*, lovely with that artificial beauty that Raulyn most admired; these roses, lilies, jasmines, pinks and violets, so tenderly enamelled, so precisely elegant, of what forgotten gaieties, what *fête-galante* and *fête-champêtre* did they not remind him?

He could fancy Clarissa Hislop keeping them for a consolation, breathing over them her ardent sighs, wearing them on her passionate bosom, raising them to her delicate lips. Raulyn rose impatiently; he was ashamed that he should be so worked on by toys, he cursed his perpetual seeing of symbols; he was jarred and fretted and there was no relief for his jangled nerves for he had no art of expression, and he did not deign to scribble those poor sonnets, those limping stanzas that have stilled so many tempests of the soul.

He went to look out of the window; the stars were still now in the vast quiet of the midnight sky, Charles's Wain hung directly opposite; the remoteness of these eternal fires crushed Raulyn's heart with pain.

"I will marry Philippa," he told his vacillating soul, "but not now—not now."

Not even to-morrow.

He would go away and come back.

She was a girl, almost a child, she could wait; his rank, his period gave him a masculine arrogance that was not wholly natural to his shy character, and he was, with perfect ingenuous-

ness, sure that Philippa would wait for him as long as he chose to keep her dependent on his pleasure.

He did not credit her as the possessor of great emotion; sweet, serene, dutiful, were the epithets he mentally used towards Philippa; in ten years' time she would be still there, at Myniott Grange, with her dogs and her croquet and her tennis, her gentle smile of welcome.

Towards his father his thoughts were more compunctuous; he knew that here he would inflict a deep hurt, an almost incredible outrage; it was easy to argue that Sir Lambert's attitude of mind was absurd, grotesque, it was also unmoved, dominant, and Raulyn's less powerful mentality had grown up in subjection.

There was something weak even in his revolt; it was no measured decision supported by weighty mature reasons, but a sudden, rather desperate resolve inspired by nervous fancies, by dreams, by queer agitations of a restless mind that was without any particular bent or energy, and this something weak in Raulyn's character brought with it the usual accompaniment of slight cruelty, not active, or indeed conscious, cruelty, but the cruelty that goaded vacillation is capable of inflicting on those who pursue it to a decision.

Raulyn was impatient of the thought of the pain he was about to inflict on those who loved him, but he was capable of inflicting it; his palliative to his own remorse was not untinged with cowardice, it was that of flight; he would go away instantly, turning his back on reproaches or sighs.

Yet he knew even as he made this resolve that there was something in him that he himself could never forgive.

On the morrow he faced his father almost sullenly, when the breakfast was over and the servants had left the room.

"I thought, quite seriously, sir, of going away for a while."

Sir Lambert glanced at him across the breakfast-table, then continued to slip his ivory knife under the wrappers of the newspapers that had been left till he had finished his correspondence.

"Where?" he asked.

Raulyn at once resented the direct question that forced him to a random reply.

"I thought of Rome," he said; then added on a chance thought, "Kenayston is at the Embassy there, you know, he often suggested that I should go out."

"Kenayston was never a particular friend of yours, I thought," replied Sir Lambert levelly.

"No. I suppose it is only an excuse," said Raulyn, trying to be honest. "I want to go away."

"And Philippa Myniott?" asked his father, carefully unfolding the thick papers, *The Times* and *The Morning Post.*

"I am not going for ever, sir," murmured Raulyn with a faint smile.

"Have you spoken to her?"

"In what way?" evaded Raulyn.

"Have you asked her to be your wife?"

"No," replied the young man reluctantly, "if I had could I have decided to go away?"

"Decided!" repeated Sir Lambert softly. "I hardly knew that you ever decided anything, Raulyn."

The young man flushed painfully.

"I am at no two minds on this matter," he said.

"I see. Where did you go yesterday if you were not at Myniott Grange?"

And Raulyn knew that Sir Lambert meant, "Who or what has been influencing you since I saw you last?"

"I went to the sale at Clobbertons," answered Raulyn, weary of the whole hopelessness of the situation. "I bought two trifles. I could not tell you, sir, what works with me. If I were capable of laying bare my motives you would despise them. I have curbed these errant desires so long."

His father's dark eyes were looking at him with an intolerant pity.

"Philippa does not know of this resolution of yours?" he asked carefully.

"No—I saw her for a moment at the sale."

"I hope you will yourself tell her of your intention."

Raulyn saw this suggestion or command as a trap; he was to see the girl and be, his father hoped, persuaded back into allegiance; he hardened and threw back his head a little as he looked steadily into the fine proud face so like his own.

"I am not bound to Philippa Myniott, sir," he said quietly.

Sir Lambert pushed away the letters and papers among the ornate silver on the table and rose abruptly.

"Are you not?" he asked with a kind of soft violence. "Are you not?"

Raulyn rose too.

"What do you think of me?" he asked nervously.

"I do not wish to tell you, Raulyn. But I will tell you this: you have gone too far with Philippa to be able to leave her now."

"I do not understand," replied the young man, really surprised and chagrined. "Nothing more has passed between us than what you yourself have seen."

"And I have seen enough. And I am ashamed that I should have to say this to you."

Raulyn, very mortified and angry, bit his long under lip.

"Do you mean, sir, to say," he stammered, "that—Philippa expects——"

His father raised a hand that silenced him.

"It is intolerable that the name of this lady should be subjected to any discussion; it is intolerable that you should pretend not to understand things that are commonly understood without words and that no words can explain."

"I am not without rivals," answered Raulyn, goaded into a further extreme than he had intended.

"And you go away to leave the field open to them?"

"I leave Philippa free—as she has always been for me," retorted Raulyn hotly. "After all, sir, if there has been any thought of my marriage it has been purely as a matter of expediency."

"You think so?" asked Sir Lambert, a withering scorn in his voice and glance.

Raulyn knew now that it was in his father's knowledge, as it was secretly in his own, that Philippa preferred him and, in perfect confidence of his wooing, had given innocent signs of this preference; he was aware also that in his father's code (that should have been his) this should have bound him to the Myniott alliance definitely and without possibility of a quibble.

But Raulyn refused to be bound; even as Sir Lambert's words cornered him his nature turned; the touch of obstinacy and the touch of cruelty that went with his weakness hardened him into a dull but immovable defiance.

"None of this makes for peace," he said. "It is better that I should go."

Sir Lambert answered in a tone of deep displeasure.

"If you cannot conduct yourself with credit in your allotted place, it is better indeed that you should go."

Raulyn had never received, or indeed expected, such a

stinging reproof, it was as if the level words contained a lifetime of rebuke, as if he saw, for the first time, the light in which his father had always viewed him; he moved aside from that unflinching face and figure as one might move aside from a threatened blow; a sense of harsh injustice and a deserved punishment overwhelmed him.

"We will discuss later the details of your journey," said Sir Lambert, and gathering up his letters, left the room.

Raulyn fell once more on compromise; he would go to Philippa, he would see how she took the news of his proposed departure. With a sore heart he took his way across the harvest fields, the shadowed park, walking rapidly to ease the tumult of his thoughts. His errand was again in vain; Miss Myniott was not well and could see no one.

Raulyn returned home, feeling that the waters of his Rubicon lapped distantly behind his departing feet.

CHAPTER VI

RAULYN was not hampered in his hard-won decision by any question of means, that usual stumbling-block to most breaking away from the conventional path; his mother's dowry had come to him untouched on his twenty-first birthday, and he had never spent the half of Sir Lambert's generous allowance.

If it had been necessary to ask his father for money, Raulyn would never have left Dyprre; as it was, the way was easy. When he returned from his fruitless visit to Myniott Grange he told his man to pack his portmanteaux in readiness for the 5.5 train from Smeed Station.

Sir Lambert had repulsed him with unfeeling severity, Philippa would not see him (he did not believe in her indisposition, he had never known her have a day's illness), doubtless because she was offended at his refusal of yesterday, and he wished to get away at once from both of them.

In London or Paris he would be able to think more clearly, to consider the issue of his life without this overshadowing of too poignant associations and too arrogant affections.

His whole spirit exulted at the thought of the journey; the heart and soul of him were arid for change, for experience—above all, for freedom.

For a whole year, for two years, for even, perhaps, three years, he would indulge his curiosities, his whims, his desires for solitude, for the strange and queer, without being frowned on or checked or reprimanded or reproached. He would clear his mind of this aversion of local objects that made all life associated with Dyprre and all death with Trawden Church.

For ever he would widen his horizon, enlarge his sphere of sensations, garner a richer harvest of experience than any of his ancestors had ever done before ; and then, after not so long an interval, he would come back and marry Philippa and rule at Dyprre.

Until all his preparations were made he had avoided seeing his father, even breakfasting in his own room ; but when everything was done, even to the ordering of the carriage for Smeed, he went in search of Sir Lambert.

The old man had made no effort to see him, but was as usual going about his stately affairs ; Raulyn learnt that he had been most of the morning in the estate office with Mr. Withers and that now he was in the stables, which he proposed to enlarge.

Raulyn went down the long, clean, light building where the sleek animals stood in their wide stalls, and in the circular harness-room at the end found Sir Lambert with Mr. Withers and the London architect. Raulyn came unwillingly into the presence of these three men ; he thought that Jarvis Withers, the energetic young bailiff, looked at him with veiled contempt as if he knew of his defaulting, and that the trained eye of the stranger glanced at him with no friendly summing up.

Sir Lambert barely raised his gaze, which was concentrated on a sheaf of curling plans he held, traced with outlines of red and blue paint.

With his usual manner of gentle courtesy he presented the architect to his son, then continued his equable discussion of the suggested alterations.

" I wish," he said, " the old structure left untouched—and whatever you build, Mr. Hepburn, must look as like as possible to the original."

The architect acquiesced ; he was used to such instructions, but Raulyn said :

" Has the nineteenth century no ideas, sir, that there must be this endless copying ? "

Sir Lambert did not look up from the crackling papers his fine keen fingers so lightly turned.

"Dyprre," he answered very gently, "is scarcely the place for experiments."

"They would be barbarisms here," said the architect; "the place is perfect of its kind and extraordinarily intact."

"Do you think me narrow that I wish to keep it intact?" replied Sir Lambert with his charming smile. "I admit to a great respect for tradition, Mr. Hepburn, and for the work of those who have gone before us."

"But new things come," murmured Raulyn.

"And the old remain," replied his father with graceful certainty. "I have the steam plough in my fields, Mr. Hepburn, the steam thresher in my barns, I was thirty years ago one of the promoters of the railway, I have the greatest faith in the future of the telegraph, and even of the telephone they talk of—but I like to keep my house as my fathers built it."

"Who is to give the architects of to-day their opportunity?" asked Raulyn obstinately.

"There are always," said Sir Lambert kindly, "the *nouveaux riches*—Mr. Hepburn shall supply them with houses as the heralds supply them with grandfathers."

He looked at his son and the secret antagonism of the two men leaped out in a long glance.

"If you could spare me a moment, sir," said Raulyn.

"You came to see me?" replied his father. "In a short while I shall be at your disposal."

Raulyn heard the stable clock strike two; in a few hours he would be away from all this, quite free; he leant against the whitewashed wall and watched the three men in quiet discussion.

He had always disliked the harness-room with the cold upper light and the tedious quantity of unnecessary trappings so meticulously arranged.

Round wooden bosses fastened to the walls were curled whips of varying lengths, many with valuable and antique handles of ivory, silver, inlaid wood and even gold, damascened, carved, and all cleaned and polished; above them hung the head stalls of horses, some very elaborate, plated and engraved with the Dyprre panache crest and motto, some with white plumes for Dyprre bridals and christenings, some with sable plumes and black trappings for Dyprre funerals.

And Raulyn thought, as he had thought in his room, of the great bed waiting for him, an image of implacable death, of first the white, then the black, feathers being brought out for

himself and Philippa, and then being put back, cleaned and polished, and left to hang in this barren room to wait the next wedding or the next death.

Sir Lambert did not keep him long; with graceful ease he dismissed his bailiff and the architect to look at some needful repairs at the back of the house, and turned with no great air of expectancy to his son.

"I am leaving Smeed by the five o'clock," began Raulyn dully. "After what you, sir, said yesterday, I think it better that I should go."

Sir Lambert received this blow without a quiver; he folded his arms and looked down so that his keen pure profile was towards his son.

"I went to Myniott Grange this morning," continued Raulyn. "Philippa would not see me."

This was the old man's last hope gone, but he betrayed no sign of emotion.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"In the first place to London."

"Afterwards?"

"To Paris—Italy, Spain—I don't know," replied Raulyn, weighted with the sense of his father's unspeakable displeasure.

"A wanderer? An adventurer?" suggested Sir Lambert.

"If you like to say, to think so, sir," answered Raulyn desperately. "One might find a worthier name for what I mean to do."

"Sir Percival in search of the San Graal?" said his father coldly, but without a sneer. "I cannot congratulate you on your rôle. You have always been apt to consider yourself above your fellows, fit for these fantastic quests."

"You utterly, utterly mistake me——" responded Raulyn bitterly, but not resentfully.

"The usual cry of weakness," said Sir Lambert sadly. "I neither mistake nor misunderstand you. I read you like an open book."

Raulyn could not answer; he considered that perhaps this was true, and his father did see into his inmost heart, that those cold, blue eyes, still so alert and vivid, did penetrate all the secret convolutions of his character.

"From the first I have known you," continued Sir Lambert in the same tone.

"Then, sir," replied Raulyn, after a painful pause, "you must have known that I should some day go."

"Perhaps I also knew that."

Raulyn moved slightly with an uneasy smile.

"You were always a philosopher—give me the benefit of but following my fate. If I am only doing what you expected me to do——"

The young man paused, hating the words that, after all, were only confusing his inner meaning.

But Sir Lambert, as usual, forced him to an issue.

"What would you say, Raulyn?"

"Sir, I suppose I would say, why this displeasure at the inevitable?"

The old man raised his head; Raulyn was conscious of a grandeur about him that set him on some remote height of dignity.

"That is my weakness," he said simply, and his glance that was so cold when he was silent now was softened into a delicate tenderness as it went over his only son. "And there is hope, Raulyn. One always hoped that matters would never come to this pass. Some things run for ever underground—it might have been that this—quality—in you would never have come to the surface."

"You think it cowardice," returned Raulyn hopelessly.

Sir Lambert was silent.

"I think," continued the young man with a mounting colour staining his high cheek-bones, "that the truest courage is to find out what you are—to put yourself to the test."

Still Sir Lambert did not answer; Raulyn forced himself to another despairing attempt to break down this intolerable barrier between his father and himself.

"After all, sir, there is nothing in it. I am not wanted here. I am only going away for a year or so—I shall return immediately if I am needed——"

"You will never be needed more than you are now."

"There is nothing in it," repeated Raulyn dully. "You make too much of it."

He moved towards the door; his impulse to escape was irresistible; tedium, uneasiness and distaste choked and numbed him; he felt that there was something fantastic in that lean tall figure of his father with the accusing eyes and writhen smile.

"Good-bye, sir," he said in a tone almost of apathy.

As from a great distance he heard the echo:

"Good-bye, Raulyn."

With a strong exercise of will he left the potent presence, walked straightly away and down the long, white, clean stable that he was never again to think of without loathing.

He returned to the house and went up to his room.

All his personal possessions were packed, and the chamber had instantly become alien ; it was difficult to believe that he had slept and lived in it for so many years.

It had now the same look as the room at Clobbertons, full of dust, memories and invisible phantoms ; the close-drawn Holland blinds that shut out the sun gave a hazed dun light and deep brown shadows to the apartment ; the tarnished tinsel showed harshly in the tedious needlework of curtains and bed-cover ; in the large mirrors images that were more than human seemed to be dimly reflected.

Raulyn heard the sound of the carriage wheels on the gravel drive below. He left the room softly, and softly closed the door.

CHAPTER VII

THE undeviating sunshine still lay like a bright benison on the land as Mr. Myniott and his daughter rode up to Dyprre Manor House.

The last pale roses opened wide drooping petals on the warm red bricks of the severe frontage of the stately house ; blinds and shutters were closed ; bees buzzed heavily among the asters, dahlias and seeding hollyhocks ; the remaining lilies hung crumpled and withered, like furled flags. The stillness of the complete summer day had a mournful quality as if the quiet air was overburdened with yearning memories and remote from youth and even life.

" I think there is no one here," said Philippa in a low voice. " Shall we not, father, turn back ? "

" Without asking ? " replied Mr. Myniott ; his candid face was not used to conceal trouble, and now revealed an ingenuous distress clumsily masked by an air of lightness.

" There is no one about," murmured Philippa. " The house looks empty. And what does it matter ? "

" Of course not, of course not," agreed Mr. Myniott hastily ; " but now we are here we may as well find out if Raulyn is at home or not——"

Without answering, Philippa threw her reins to her father and dismounted on to the block by the steps.

Mr. Myniott watched her, with her long habit gathered in her hand, go up to the door; he marked the slowness of her gait, the droop of her shoulders; he knew what she did not suppose him to know—her devastating secret.

She loved Raulyn Dyprre, the man who on all counts it was expedient for her to marry, and in some way the wretched boy had defaulted, played false. Mr. Myniott had learnt from his wife of her certainty that Raulyn had come after them to propose to Philippa, and of his unaccountable cutting of his appointment with them; he had seen his daughter stagger under the blow, and he had given, in a moment of anger, orders that she was to be denied to the dilatory suitor if he came.

Philippa, as soon as she had heard of this, had written a note to Raulyn that had not been answered, and Mr. Myniott, repentant, anxious, after an agitated conference with his wife, had suggested this casual riding over to Dyprre, at which suggestion the poor girl had clutched with pathetic eagerness.

As Mr. Myniott watched her slim figure standing with meek patience at the big door, his kind heart was almost overwhelmed with love and pity; this girl stood to him for two dead sons: in her children his line so long and jealously preserved must be merged; to his proud affection she was a woman apart, unique, of wonderful graces, his heiress, the heiress of the dear, dear boys.

He gnawed his lip with the thick bright grey moustache as he watched her speaking to the footman; he was thinking that he had never liked Raulyn—no good with a gun or a bat, indifferent with a horse or a boat, apathetic about the land, an idle, moody, queer fellow; of course, Dyprre had done his best with him, drilled him, kept him in hand, but he was poor stuff under the veneer; of that Roger Myniott was sure; not good enough, by Heaven, not good enough for that sweet girl of his.

Philippa came to the top of the steps.

"Raulyn is away, father," she said in a steady voice, "but Sir Lambert would like to see us—shall we go in?"

Even as she spoke Sir Lambert appeared in the doorway behind her. "Philippa," he murmured.

She half-turned and stood hesitant between the two men, both of whom seemed to make a movement of protection towards her, the baronet coming forward, her father leaning

across her empty saddle ; she spoke again, faintly but clearly :

" Raulyn has gone away ? It was unexpected, was it not ? "

" He went two days ago," replied Sir Lambert. " Come in and I will tell you about it."

One word shot into Roger Myniott's amazed mind, " Bolted ! " and his proper complexion went ashy under the ruddy tan.

Sir Lambert had reached Philippa now and laid his hand on her shoulder.

" Roger," he said, " will you let her come in with me a little while ? I was coming over to-night—but—as you are here—trust her to me, I'll see her home."

Hot questioning was about to burst from Mr. Myniott's lips, but the stricken appeal in the blue eyes of the older man stayed him. As his glance measured that of Sir Lambert, he though not without pride, " After all, it is worse for him, for it is *his son.*" So he controlled himself with a prodigious effort and said, yet thickly :

" Philippa will like to have a chat with you—I'll ride back. That grain of yours, Lambert, looks heavy and ripe, surely——"

" We're cutting to-morrow, the haysel has been so extraordinary we have hardly been able to find the men before——"

" I almost wish that the weather would break—there has been such incessant sunshine," said Philippa. " Do I disturb you, Sir Lambert ? I should like to get out of the sun if I do not——"

Her father raised his soft hat ; it was as if he saluted her gallant spirit, and tossing her reins to a waiting groom, abruptly rode off.

" I really don't know why we have bothered you," said Philippa, lifting a pale bright face, " only my father thought —as I had written——"

Her voice trailed off. Sir Lambert led her tenderly into the house that was only less familiar to her than her own home and into his own quiet room that was half-study, half-library. Philippa could remember as a child being forbidden this room, and the daring raids that she and Raulyn had sometimes made there, overawed by the gross, deformed-looking head of Socrates in Parian marble that stood between the high glass-cases of opulent and stately books. The white bust was there still, and the worn Cordovan leather chairs that had seemed to a child's eye vast enough for a make-believe island or galleon, and the deep velvety mezzotints of high-bred

women, the marquetry and ormolu desk, the long curtains of amber velvet, all the same, even to the books behind the polished glass, the Tacitus and Livy, the Goldsmith and Hallam, the Pindar and Robertson, in their gleaming gold tooling; only Sir Lambert was different.

And Philippa—she too was changed. In the dark blue riding habit and black hat and veil, severe as a uniform, the noble quality of her delicate serene charm was enhanced; the trailing length of the cloth that she had at every step to lift from her spurred boots emphasized the slender grace of her maiden's figure.

"Will you not take off your hat?" asked Sir Lambert, ringing the bell.

She obeyed; her bright softly waving hair, gathered plainly into a fine net at the nape of her neck, gleamed in the subdued rays that fell between the curtains; she sat in one of the deep low chairs and clasped her long fair hands on her lap.

"You will take a glass of sherry?" said Sir Lambert as the footman entered, "or—perhaps, a cup of tea?"

"Neither—thank you indeed."

"But I think you should take a glass of wine," he insisted gently, and ordered it. Philippa made no further protest; she was very tired, very agitated, her spirit swung in a void of passivity.

"I sent a note to Raulyn," she said nervously. "You—have not sent it on?"

"No—I have it here. You shall have it forwarded or returned, as you wish."

"I will have it back, please," replied Philippa quickly. "It was nothing—just a trivial note."

The footman entered with the rococo silver tray, the glittering decanter and glasses, the wine biscuits on the *rose du Barry* dish. Why did even this detail have such poignancy for the girl?—she could recall those biscuits, the crescents, the stars, the peculiar shapes and flavours, and remember how envied they had been in her childhood's days, how she and Raulyn used to prize them as being exclusively the privilege of grown-ups.

Sir Lambert poured her a glass of wine which she barely tasted and set down beside her on the edge of the bookcase.

"Philippa," said the old man, sitting very erect in the deep chair by the desk, "there is grief here and shame and

humiliation; the grief I must share—but in the other you have no part, it is mine alone."

At these bold words, which brushed aside all pretences, all conventions, the girl, who had never dealt directly with any emotion, paled and raised her head.

"We could gloss this over," continued Sir Lambert slowly, "but neither you nor I are shirkers, I think, Philippa. You value courage, do you not?"

"Courage?" she repeated. "Yes."

Sir Lambert smiled pitifully, tenderly.

"I remember that as a little maid you used to have a royal spirit." He paused a second, then added: "I should have been very proud, my dear, if you had married Raulyn."

Philippa sat mute, still.

"An old man may say that he believes you so far honoured him as to consider this alliance—that you would perhaps have, in time, contracted this alliance?"

"You know," whispered Philippa.

"Thank you, my dear, thank you. It is because of that—and my great, my very great, personal regard for you, that I want you to help me now."

The girl's innocent suffering eyes gazed blankly at his old, tired but firm face.

"Help you, Sir Lambert?"

"Raulyn has gone away."

"Yes—a visit? Business?" She laboured the words out, clasping and unclasping her frail hands.

"Neither. A flight. An escape," replied Sir Lambert sternly. "From me, from Dyprre."

In one movement Philippa was on her feet.

"He isn't coming back?"

The old man looked at her with an infinite compassion.

"No—I do not think he is coming back—at least, not to us. Not to me—or to you," he answered softly but deliberately.

"Why?" The word was a challenge.

"He falls short," said Sir Lambert, rising. "He is not what you or I expected, Philippa."

"He didn't care, then," muttered the girl, unheeding. "He has gone—without——"

She put her hands to her mouth and looked at Sir Lambert with another intensity in her gaze.

"Perhaps you mistake," she whispered, "and think some

explanation is due to me." She swayed a little, but instantly caught herself erect. "There is none due," she added from twisted lips. "Raulyn never asked me to be his wife. I have no privileges."

"My poor child, my poor girl, I understand it all—I have always understood—always."

She raised piteous eyes, that had closed as if she shuddered, to his face, and at the agony of sympathy she saw there she broke down utterly.

"Oh, don't say he has gone like this—it isn't possible. Monday, only last Monday, at Clobbertons he would have spoken, I swear he would have spoken——"

"He blenches from all issues," said Sir Lambert hoarsely. "He has gone to the aimless wandering, the casual adventure, for which he is alone fit——"

"But he'll come back!" cried Philippa frantically. "Say that he'll come back!"

"If I did I should be lying, to you and to my own soul. Raulyn spoke of a year, of two years, of three. But he won't come back, Philippa. I know him too well. He will be entangled too deeply in indecisions ever to return to us."

"I can't believe it! I will not believe it!"

"You must believe it," he replied with a noble firmness. "I tell you because I do not want you to break your heart for a shadow—to pine in secret, to waste your youth, your father's, your mother's hopes—forget Raulyn."

"But he has loved me," whispered the girl. "Surely, oh, surely I have not been mistaken!"

"He has loved you—in his fashion he will always love you—he means to come back to you. But he never will. He has gone to pursue his chimera—he will find it and it will have a female face——"

"Other women?" muttered Philippa.

"Other men and other women, Philippa. He will fall to the first lure that dangles across his path."

For all her limited experience of life the girl knew that this was true; with whatever searchings of agony she reviewed the past she knew she would never discover one second, one look, one gesture, one word that bound him to her wholly; her greatest happiness had always been built on the shifting foundations of his uncertain moods.

"Where has he gone?" she asked, holding on to the back of the chair.

"I have had a telegram saying he is leaving for Paris—and Rome."

These words conveyed to the girl a grim and hopeless distance, and also an inevitable glamour of temptations. She saw her beloved swept suddenly beyond her sphere, her reach, the faintest echo of her appeals, and she realized with ghastly force her infinite loss and the appalling emptiness of the future; all her dreams, all her hopes, were bereft from her, all the sweet imaginings that had touched her days with magic.

She stood rigid. She remembered the brother who had died of typhus during his first year at school, the other brother who had been drowned while on his holiday, and she felt all the misfortunes of her house culminate in her despair.

Devastation overwhelmed her spirit; all the fair prospects of her life lay withered about her, and she could not contemplate this lightning ruin with instant fortitude.

The man who was watching her with such compassionate tenderness understood her far better than she had ever understood herself; he knew that her untouched girlhood was only the sheath enclosing a woman's passions, that all her gentle nature and high breeding and careful training could not for ever overlay the potent emotions of youth. And now in her trouble she seemed to him, what he had known she would seem, an agonized woman.

Raulyn had slain her unblemished youth.

"It can't have happened," she whispered. She sat down, her hands flung over the arm of the chair stiffly, clenched tightly, her eyes closed; all the bloom had gone from her face and the very contours seemed sharpened.

"It is only the other day," she went on, "at Clobbertons, in that dreadful room, it all came over me when I heard about that other woman—suppose it were I? And now it has come to me——"

She opened her eyes, and they were no longer the eyes of inexperience.

"It isn't as if I were a girl," she said. "I'm twenty-five—I've loved him for years—you know that, don't you, Sir Lambert? It is the love of my life, and he has left me."

Then suddenly she was down on her knees, the long habit flowing about her, her hands raised beseechingly, her head thrown back.

"O God! help me!" she cried. "O God! don't let it be true!"

Sir Lambert caught the two searching feeble hands and held them tightly; he looked down into her colourless face that quivered with a faint contortion.

"I wanted *you* to help *me*," he said quietly.

She gazed at him blankly.

"In my great need," added Sir Lambert.

Philippa remained on her knees; she let him continue to hold her hands to his breast as he bent over her. As Raulyn had thrown over all tradition and convention as so much ballast to be got rid of, so now did these two, under the stress of mighty emotion: only at rare crises would these people ever reveal themselves as they were doing now. Sir Lambert had only once so opened himself, when he had asked Constance Cantelowe to marry him; the girl never; and it was not likely that either ever would again.

But now, and here, all the barriers were down: there was no difference of age or sex remembered; soul called to soul in extremity of pain.

"Your great need," whispered Philippa.

"He was my only son and he has left me. The link is broken. There is an end of us."

"But he will return to *you*——"

"Let me raise you—stand beside me and hold my hands—look at me, dear girl—Raulyn spoke of one year, of two years, of three years. Even if he should return before three years, I shall not be here—at the end of one it is not likely——"

She stood now beside him; they were nearly shoulder to shoulder, the tall old man and the tall girl; something of the frantic distraction left her face.

"How selfish I have been," she whispered slowly. "It is worse for you—and do you mean, oh, that you have not long to live?"

"I mean that."

"You did not tell him?"

"No."

"Did you not owe it to him to tell him?"

"I owed it to myself not to tell him," replied Sir Lambert. "Could I have kept him by those means?—no more than you would have kept him by telling him you loved him, Philippa."

A slight stir passed through Philippa's body; she tightly pressed Sir Lambert's hand.

"Of course," she answered. "You are right—you could not tell him."

She spoke almost wearily, she did not cry out again—her moment of uncontrolled protest was over; perhaps she never would cry out any more for anything. The old man's arm passed round her shoulders; with a little sigh she leant against him, her bright head drooping low above the gallant heart that was so near the time when it would be stilled for ever.

"Speak to me," she murmured. "Speak to me."

They had always been good and understanding friends, but now the intimacy was closer than even the intimacy with her own parents could ever be.

"I have had," continued Sir Lambert quietly, looking straightly above the bowed head, "just one hope since I knew—about myself—that was to see you and Raulyn here in my place, to know, perhaps, that there was a child—this lent, possibly, some urgency to my furthering of these dear plans—but I cannot accuse myself of tyranny—I did nothing in anger or haste or disappointment—you must not accuse me of driving him away."

"Don't!" muttered Philippa; "don't!"

"And now there is only one thing left to me—only one thing—to see you take up life again."

"No—no—no."

"You must feel that now. I cannot pretend anything will make up for what you have missed—it is what I missed, Philippa, and I know," replied Sir Lambert—"but life can be lived with courage, with utility and dignity."

The stricken girl clung closer.

"As you say, you are not a child—you are all your father, your mother, have. That is why I wanted to speak to you myself. If they had told you, they could never have put this as I can put it, never, I mean, have spoken for themselves."

Philippa disengaged herself from him, for she felt quite suddenly as if she was going to fall, and sank again into the low chair; the room looked dark and seemed to be gliding away from her, but in the midst of this faintness she felt as if something tremendous was keeping her up, body and spirit; and she knew that this something tremendous, which was too vague and grand for her altogether to understand, came from Sir Lambert.

He was beside her, putting the glass of wine into her hand, and this time she drank it gratefully.

"I will do what you tell me," she said when the mists cleared from her eyes again. "I understand all that you

say. This—must not upset the lives of other people. I—I think I shall be able to go on—yes, I do understand."

She looked up at him clearly, the heroism in her leaping to meet the heroism in him.

"I've never cried out before when I've been hurt, Sir Lambert. You must forgive me." She clasped her hands on her bosom, and a peculiar smile twisted her ashy lips. "Because he failed we must not."

"You take it well, Philippa."

"Because you help me. Presently you must tell me what you want me to do. I should like,"—she rose slowly, took up her hat and repeated her words—"I should like a day or so to myself—only a day or so——"

He made a gesture above the bent fair head that was like a benediction.

"My dear, dear child."

"We will not speak of it again," she murmured piteously, "please—only—for the time that is left let me be very much with you—will you?"

They looked full into each other's eyes, hers full of sudden tears, his, too, misted.

"I asked you to help me, Philippa. You will be my great comfort. Perhaps I too can help you."

"Without you it would have been impossible."

"I have done nothing but remind you that there are other things besides love, Philippa."

"That is everything," whispered the girl. "I am still terribly in the dark—but you have given me something to hold to——"

"God give you many blessings yet—God bless you."

He put his hands on her shoulders and kissed her forehead; as he touched her pale cold brow he thought of his lost love of forty years ago who had never been kissed by him, and as she felt his sad salute she thought of her lost lover whose caress she had never known, and now never would know.

CHAPTER VIII

WHEN Sir Lambert had left Philippa at Myniott Grange his task was not yet complete, and the harder part remained to be performed. There was no need to say any-

thing to Roger Myniott, who was out on the terrace waiting for his daughter ; a look, a handclasp was sufficient ; it was not likely that the Myniotts would ever mention Raulyn's name again.

A queer thought, that.

Sir Lambert felt very weary and not without pain ; but even when he was riding away alone his face did not relax from stern set purpose.

In what he had to do now he must tread on very difficult ground, where it would be easy to spoil everything by a stumble or a false step : he would gladly have deferred it all, but he had allowed himself three clear days of respite and seclusion, and now he must act, for there were many forces working against him and they must not be allowed to gather strength. Besides, it was not in him to flinch or dally with anything unpleasant, so instead of returning to his desolate home he went farther past Myniott Grange to Hamblethorpe, Piers Cantelowe's place. Of the three families the Cantelowes had prospered the least ; on several occasions they had sold large parcels of land to each of their neighbours ; some of the finest farms in Dyprre had once belonged to Hamblethorpe ; there had always been a strain of recklessness, of thoughtless gaiety in the Cantelowes ; they had mostly been soldiers or sailors, and never had they engaged in lucrative professions or speculations.

The present holder of Hamblethorpe had broken with tradition when he had chosen law. He was really more prudent and steady than most of his forbears ; perhaps he had received some shock from the misfortunes that had lately overtaken Myniott, Dyprre and Cantelowe, reducing them all, in one generation, to one heir each.

His mother had died soon after his birth, his brother had been killed in Paris in a none too creditable duel, and his father had been thrown in the hunting field and died of the operation subsequent on his injuries.

Piers had shown himself deeply affected by the circumstances that had given him his kingdom ; he had been heard to quote the old jingling prophecy that linked the fortunes of the three houses.

> "Myniott, Dyprre and Cantelowe
> Together did rise, together must go ;
> When one sinks, the other must fall,
> And the end of one is the end of all."

He was by nature sociable, cheerful and domesticated, and had remained a bachelor for the sole object of marrying Philippa Myniott, a match on which he had stubbornly set his heart since his brother's death ten years ago ; before then he had known it hopeless to expect Roger Myniott to give his daughter to a second son, but he had warmly noted the girl since she was a child. Every one knew of his patient wooing, and that it forced him to a life that he disliked, but he continued all the same to be very much occupied and to be continually surrounded by friends.

Though his town house was let he frequently went to London and made himself very comfortable in chambers ; he produced aunts and cousins who acted as hostesses for him, and entertained a great deal ; he went to Scotland in the autumn and abroad in the spring ; he was an extremely efficient farmer and an able man of business ; no one had ever heard anything against him, and his good humour, reliable temper and skill at games and sports made him very popular ; he was, in fact, exactly what any one would have judged he must be, from his name, his school colours, and his clubs.

No one perhaps remembered that all his life he had been in every way remarkably fortunate, and that so far he had never been tried nor tested by anything.

But Sir Lambert, riding slowly towards Hamblethorpe, did remember it, and that some such trial and test he must be put to now.

He also remembered that Piers was his nephew and Constance's nephew (a queer link there among all the queer links that bound the three of these families together), something like Constance too, who had been an opulent fair beauty, all glow and rich colouring.

Hamblethorpe was, as he had expected, full of people. He had not been here for some time, for he had really very little in common with the smart, gay, young folk Piers gathered together, and he noted how different was the atmosphere of the house from that of his own, or Myniott Grange.

It was late afternoon now, and a creeping chill in the air and a deepening of the sun's tint as it flooded the wide champaign with light were the first premonitions of autumn.

A tennis match was just finishing : the women, in bell-shaped white skirts that touched the ground, big sleeves, and small hard straw hats poised on netted hair, ran with difficulty to and fro. Sir Lambert saw with relief that Piers was not

playing; he gave up his horse and, unnoticed by the players on the low lawns, went behind the great cluster of exotic bushes to the house.

Hamblethorpe was pure Tudor; it had never been altered or added to, and though it lacked the Palladian dignity of Dyprre Manor House and the Georgian stateliness of Myniott Grange, it was more beautiful and more uncommon in the perfection of the Elizabethan timbering, and stood with an aspect of great charm among rare and prized gardens, pleasaunces, and pleached alleys.

Sir Lambert gave his name, and was admitted into the long room with the oriel window one end and the musicians' gallery the other, both decorated with the jolly ragged bear that was the crest of Cantelowe.

Here, forty years ago, on this very spot, on just such an evening in late summer, Lambert Dyprre had asked Constance to be his wife; in that great bay window looking westward she had stood, and he could recall so well the rays of the setting sun tangled in her lovely hair as she put out the cold hand that forbid his passion, his love, his happiness. Piers came in immediately in his white flannels, flushed and hearty, yet, to Sir Lambert's quick observation, neither so much at ease, nor so high of heart as usual.

The greetings on both sides were nervous; Sir Lambert seated himself on the worn red cushions of the oriel seat and the young man leant in the open casement; despite the liking Piers had for every novelty and modern invention, the essentials of Hamblethorpe had been jealously preserved, and most of the details of the room were the same as they had been when Sir Lambert had stood here in front of Constance Cantelowe before Piers was born.

"Can I speak to you quietly for awhile?" asked Sir Lambert, with a glance at the people in the gardens beneath that relegated them to nothingness. "I am rather tired, and must say what I have to say slowly."

"Of course, Uncle Lambert—they are only a crowd of youngsters enjoying themselves. Cousin Carrie will look after them." Piers had a number of these distant relatives whom he called cousin and used as willing fags.

Sir Lambert looked intently at this man who was a blood relation to his son but not to him, and who, for all the tie between them, he had never known very intimately; Piers had never really "got on" with Raulyn, who was a different

type and led a different kind of life ; yet the traditional link between the families was very strong and stronger still the marriage link.

There was something wistful in Sir Lambert's scrutiny; the younger man, uneasy under it, plunged into casual conversation, and Sir Lambert did not interrupt him.

Piers was uncommonly attractive; his healthy manhood possessed a definite charm, a clean fragrance that was very pleasing, because he was so entirely unconscious of his own personality : his florid good looks were of the youthful type that made him look younger than he really was, though his figure was beginning to thicken, the thorax to become massive and the jaw heavy, while his collar pressed a white line in his sunburnt neck ; he still had an appearance of the first ingenuous frankness of boyhood, and no lines of maturity had yet sharpened the blunt features. It was a type often met with in English history, looking out between the bars of the crusader's visor, shouting on the fields of Crecy or Agincourt, smiling between the cavalier's lovelocks, stately in the eighteenth-century pomp.

"You wonder why I have come," said Sir Lambert suddenly. "Well, Raulyn has gone away."

"I should think," answered Piers carefully, "that is all to the good. Raulyn doesn't get away enough."

"You do not understand ; Raulyn has definitely and permanently broken with Dyprre."

Piers' pleasant, candid, hazel eyes darkened.

"No. I do not understand," he said shortly. "How is it possible ? Why, it is not possible."

"Not to most men, perhaps—but to Raulyn, Dyprre and all Dyprre stands for irks him. He has always been wanting, waiting to—get away. I thought I could hold him—it seems —not."

"Where has he gone ? " frowned Piers.

"Adventuring—Paris—Rome. He is, you know, in every way independent."

"But he is coming back ? "

"He talks of a few years. But you, as well as I, Piers, must know that Raulyn will never want to come back. And if he did, he is certain to be entangled in other influences."

"Good God," murmured Piers blankly. "You mean—he's just—funked it ? "

"Just that, Piers."

"But I don't understand," continued Piers, in rising agitation—"why—only last week"—he checked himself—"does Philippa know?" he asked abruptly.

"I have told her this afternoon."

"But they—she as good as told me," stammered the young man in honest amazement. "You see, sir, I dare say you know my feelings; well, I spoke to Philippa—the day of the sale at Clobbertons; I was there to lunch and she, she said no, told me there was some one else, made hardly any disguise that it was Raulyn, and who else should it be?"

This was worse than Sir Lambert had expected; he had hoped that matters might not have come to an issue between Piers and the girl. "I was taking myself off to Scotland," continued Piers. "You'll appreciate that I didn't want to stay here. And now you say that Raulyn has gone!"

Quickness and penetration were not among this young man's gifts: Sir Lambert saw that he would have to make himself very lucid.

"Raulyn has gone—without any explanation with Philippa, and she, poor child, cared for him, and he had led her to think that he cared for her; when she so innocently disclosed her preference she was sure that she was going to be Raulyn's wife."

Piers was silent a second with bent and frowning brows and a gradual deepening of his colour; then he said slowly:

"He has jilted her—gone away and left her?"

"There was no word between them," replied Sir Lambert heavily, "but it amounts to that. He discounts Philippa's feeling—thinks he will come back."

"Good God!" said Piers again; the enormity of the whole thing was still almost more than he could comprehend; if he had a rigid intelligence, he also had a very rigid code of honour, and this was almost as much of a shock to him as if he had caught some school-fellow of his cheating at cards. His flush deepened.

"I don't know that I ought to hear this; why did you come to me, Uncle Lambert?"

Sir Lambert used the same devastating honesty of purpose and of speech with which he had conquered the girl.

"Because you love Philippa."

Piers winced painfully.

"Raulyn having gone," continued Sir Lambert, "there remains only you two. There is no other man Roger Myniott

would care to see his heir, there is no other man could give Philippa any happiness."

"Second best for both of them?" asked Piers passionately. "You forget, I've been rejected."

"That is my difficulty," answered the old man calmly. "You will think I wish to make use of you—but consider what is my stake in this? Neither you nor Philippa are heirs to me."

"Why *are* you concerned in it, sir?" demanded Piers with a new wonder.

"Mostly because of the girl. I must put right what I can there. And there's Roger Myniott to think of—he lost his sons——"

"And what, Uncle Lambert, of my point of view?" interrupted Piers.

"I've come here to find out what it is, Piers," replied Sir Lambert. "I dare say you think that I slight you—have no fear, I know you for a better man than Raulyn, and I would give half Dyprre to have you for my son."

"You disarm me utterly," murmured Piers. "What, sir, do you wish me to do?"

"I have no orders," replied Sir Lambert, "no authority with you. I am trying to put right what Raulyn pulled awry. I'm thinking a little, too, of these three families of ours; well—I just wished to put it to you: no one else could have made you understand. You're a man, you're a Cantelowe; now, Piers." He rose, with an air of great, but contained, weariness.

"It all lies with you now, Piers; there is nothing more that I can do."

He paused, looked intently at the dumb yet passionate agitation of the young man, and added, as if labouring to make himself clear:

"You must not think of second best—you could give Philippa what Raulyn never could, and she——"

"She loves Raulyn," whispered Piers, turning his head away.

"Raulyn has broken her heart," said Sir Lambert. "I think you could heal it."

He paused, then added quietly:

"At least—don't go away—just now. Don't leave her alone—just now. There is even—talk—to be considered. Every one expected—what you and I expected."

Piers looked round sharply, an expression of acute distress

convulsed his fair features; Sir Lambert knew that only his presence checked an outburst against Raulyn.

"I'll go to her," he said. "Shall I go now?"

"No—give her time. But you'll stand by? You'll wait?"

Piers struggled with a desperate emotion that nearly overwhelmed him.

"Of course. I'll—look after her—if she'll let me—for God's sake don't thank me, sir," he added harshly.

A faint smile touched the old man's long thin mouth.

"No. I have just one thing more to say. A great deal of Dyprre was once Cantelowe—a good deal besides is not entailed—I have no doubt that Raulyn would be willing to break the entail, but even as it stands about half the property is mine to dispose of."

He spoke lightly, yet with an indescribable bitterness.

"I should wish to leave this to you—I hope that means to Philippa also—but in any case to you, Piers."

It was a splendid offering, and the young man could not but be moved by it, the more especially as he, so much more prudent and practical than his forbears, had often irked at the comparative paucity of his lands and envied and regretted the fine farms and fat meadows that were now Dyprre and had once been Cantelowe. And now Cantelowe, Myniott, part of Dyprre marching as one!

Yet he hesitated, his joy clouded by some grim, almost intangible, spectre of honour; he felt uneasy, and could not put his finger on the cause of his uneasiness.

He could not quarrel with Sir Lambert's manner of offering his splendid gift; if he lhad spoken of it earlier in the interview it might have seemed ike a bribe, an inducement for him to marry Philippa, but nothing was said of it till he, Piers, had made his decision, so there was nothing to rankle there.

There was the question of his cousin: it must be that which rankled.

"I don't like to put Raulyn out of his kingdom," he said diffidently, not looking at that erect tall figure of his uncle, of which he was so supremely conscious.

"Raulyn has abdicated," replied Sir Lambert instantly. "When I am gone, the place will be in the hands of stewards, you know that, Piers? Raulyn cares nothing for Dyprre. And as for money—of that he is well provided. You know this is true, Piers."

Piers did know it was true; he knew also that he disliked

Raulyn, and now regarded him with blazing hate, and his rather slow moving mind had discovered the cause of his uneasiness—Philippa.

It was too convenient, too advantageous to marry Philippa; his impulse of chivalry was blunted, his passionate desire to protect and support was nullified.

His fair face clouded.

"Give it to Philippa," he said. "She might choose some other man."

"I give it to you—a burden, a responsibility, not a gift," replied Sir Lambert wearily. "I leave to you—what there is no one else to care for——"

Piers now saw what Philippa had only seen when her own passion was spent, the aspect of all this to Sir Lambert, and he was suddenly shamed; for while he was dealing with these niceties of his own, the older man was facing humiliation, desolation, a complete downfall of all his hopes.

"I'll look after Dyprre," he said impulsively. "You need not fear that I shall go away—if Raulyn does not marry—we might take the name—but I wish," he hurried on, "Philippa was not in all this—it will be difficult to make her see—to make any one see—how I care."

Sir Lambert had seen this point from the first.

"Do you not think a woman knows when a man cares?" he asked. "Alas! they are not so easily mistaken. If Philippa marries, it will be you. Good-bye, Piers."

He turned to the door with no more farewell than this; though Piers followed him there were some of the guests passing through the hall, and no further word was possible; indeed, Piers moved, dazzled, enraged, had nothing more to say, and Sir Lambert, who had twice that day opened his soul, had need of silence.

As he rode slowly home, he was not thinking of Piers, of Philippa, or even of Raulyn, but a little of himself with a brave man's speculation on the end that was slipping nearer, like the end of a paid-out rope. When he reached Dyprre Manor House he went straight upstairs to the big chamber which Raulyn had last occupied.

Since his wife had died there, so reluctantly, with such futile regrets, he had hated the room, but the time had come when he must return to it; so a man may dread his grave, yet it will be ready for him at last.

Raulyn had not taken all his things: there were his old

faded college caps hanging up, a model of a full-rigged ship given him on his tenth birthday, the fishing-rod given on his twelfth, the collar of a favourite dog that had died; Sir Lambert went round the room, fingering these objects one after another.

He remembered reading, a long time ago, a phrase that now flashed into his mind: "Beware what you wish for, for it shall surely come to you."

Well, he, after Connie's head turned from him, had wished for a son, had entered in and endured a loveless marriage for that end—a son—an heir for Dyprre.

His wish had been fulfilled, and the son had thrown Dyprre back in his face: that was his reward for betraying his dead love, for breaking another woman's heart by withheld affection; the boy was misgotten, child of his father's reluctance, of his mother's despair, the fruit of a union where the bridal chamber had been a charnel house of stinging memories and wild regrets. The sun was setting now, and the large chamber was suddenly chilly. Sir Lambert rang the bell, and ordered the room to be prepared for his immediate use.

CHAPTER IX

IF Sir Lambert had at once put Piers out of the silent tumult of his thoughts, Piers certainly at once ceased to think of him or of his new-found hatred for Raulyn, or even of that glittering prospect of becoming heir to Dyprre; in his honest heart and candid mind there was room for nothing but a storm of compassion for Philippa. He loved her more than he had known till now, loved her with the accumulated strength of years of waiting; he had watched her grow up from a lilybud of a child to a lilyflower of a woman, but a flower still in the sheaf, and unblown on by any wind, and now it seemed as if a rude tempest had broken and cast her down, scattering and wasting her chill loveliness.

Unlike Raulyn in everything else, he was like him in this, that he did not credit a girl of Philippa's birth and protected maidenhood with any capacity for devastating passion; he would even have thought it derogatory to do so. He was the type of man who associates ardent love with one kind

of distinctly labelled woman, and that not the kind from which he would have chosen his wife. He therefore saw Philippa's supreme tragedy as a childish grief, a girlish humiliation, a maiden's fancy brutally destroyed; it never occurred to him that she loved Raulyn to the same aching depths as he loved her; he was not the less desperately moved and sorry, as one might be moved and sorry to see the despair of a child with a broken toy that to-morrow would be forgotten.

It seemed to the upright and conventional mind of Piers a really ghastly thing for a woman to show a preference for a man and have that preference rejected, and for a woman like Philippa, so delicate, so proud!

He genuinely could not conceive of a man doing such a thing; it seemed to him that a look, a gesture, a smile, from a girl like Philippa would pledge and bind a man for ever.

And he knew that every one had guessed that Raulyn was her favoured suitor, that she had almost told him so when she had rejected him, the day of the sale at Clobbertons.

"Dear Piers—I do care for you—I can't bear to hurt you, but please don't speak of it again—there is some one else——"

He could recall these words, her blush, her glow, her tremble; and as she had let him see, so she had let others see—her parents, her friends, even her neighbours—and now the scoundrel had gone and left her! . . . the poor, poor child, the darling girl!

With hands that trembled with excitement he lit match after match that spurted and flared uselessly, then cast them and the cigarette away, for underneath all his strong compassion for Philippa was a sense of personal exaltation.

He really loved this girl with a love that had opened many doors on many heavens and hells unknown to such vast numbers of human beings; his eager manhood had pursued many bubble fancies that had gleamed, allured, and vanished, but never had he lost sight of that high vision of this girl, so desirable, his peer, his childhood's playmate, and yet so remote, so enskied and beyond price.

With an agony of control he had forced down his feelings when she had refused him; he had meant to hurry away and snatch at some desperate diversion, but now it was as if the soaring bird, whose white plumes had wafted her away

out of his sight, had suddenly been put bruised and wounded into his hand. And with this downfall of Philippa, so that she was no more a happy spirit but a weeping woman, came a more earthly quality into his love that hitherto had absorbed all the spirituality of his nature.

The thought of Philippa weeping, wanting him, attainable, roused his hoarded, guarded, cherished passion to a devastating strength. Piers actually shook as he thought of this girl being really in his reach, at last possibly to be in his possession. In some forced fashion he managed to entertain his company at dinner, cursing them in his heart for being there, positively disliking the women, who seemed to him to be cut out of cardboard, for not being Philippa.

They all noted that something had troubled the cheerful serenity of their host, though that had been considerably clouded for the last few days, for Piers was the worst of actors, and before dinner was over most of them had made excuses for early departure that Piers accepted with complete distraction. His great vexation, and one that he could by no means overcome, lay in Sir Lambert's injunction "to wait."

All that was prudent and practical in Piers saw the wisdom, nay, the necessity, of following this advice; it would be rash, almost outrageous, to present himself before the girl now, yet all that was prudent and practical in Piers Cantelowe was overswept by a rising passion that longed for expression; he fretted to declare himself the girl's open champion, and he trembled lest any delay should even now wrench her from him: he thought of a long illness, a journey abroad, a meeting with another man, even death, a hundred vicissitudes which might yet snatch his love from him; *his* love, he said now deliberately in the triumph of his heart.

He had always been dubious of winning Philippa right through his dogged wooing; always there had been that lurking certainty that she was unattainable, that Raulyn was her destined husband.

And now there was no Raulyn, and he never doubted that he could make her listen to him.

Unable wholly to contain his excitement, he threw on a light overcoat and, under some flimsy excuse, left the house and turned through his own pleasant grounds to the park surrounding Myniott Grange. Though it was impossible for him to see Philippa, he thought he would look, as he had so

often looked before, at the outside of her house, at the light in her window, possibly at the shadow on her blind; he believed that he might even be able to find out, by signs such as these, if she was ill or well, awake or asleep.

And at the back of all this was a deeper if more intangible motive, a half-insane desire to know that she was there, that she could not escape him, as if his gaze on her house would keep her there somehow in his power.

The air was cool and keen after the August heat of the day; the young moon looked monstrous, a deep gold colour above the dark masses of the trees outlined against the tender translucent green of the evening sky.

Piers walked under the black shadows of the chestnut trees where the grass did not grow, and the green windfalls crunched under his feet, and through the open spaces of deep lush sward, sprinkled with white clover. He strode quickly, as if he was on some definite and imperative errand.

He had reached the bottom of a gentle slope, where there was a small pond grown with alders that had been a favourite spot for games when he and Raulyn had played together, and where he had seen Philippa, a little girl in a tartan frock, sail paper boats, when he saw some one seated under the long-leaved bushes that rose so straightly and stirred so slightly in the colourless air. For one second Piers, the least superstitious of men, felt a tingling shock, for the figure was wrapped in some drab garment, and was inhumanly motionless, leaning forward with outflung arms and a head bowed on raised knees.

Then he knew, even before he had recognized her, that it was Philippa, and he remembered that he was an intruder and had broken into her sad seclusion on her own grounds.

Yet this consideration was soon overcome by the wonder of finding her, waiting, as it seemed, at the end of his hot-foot quest; he took off his soft hat, flung it on the grass, and went up to her where she sat; at the sound of his light, trained step she looked up, not otherwise changing her attitude.

"Why, Piers," she said gently, "this is late to see you here."

He gazed down at her without answering; never before had he seen her without the conventional setting of decorum, custom, and sober everyday, never seen her without the confining fripperies of cumbersome feminine attire; now she

wore some pale summer muslin, tumbled and clinging, and a dull tweed coat, flung over her shoulders.

Her hair for once was unconfined by ribbon, comb or net: it hung in heavy folds down her bare neck; the arms that clasped her neck were also bare, full and splendid in line in the perfection of womanly development; this was the Philippa of his visions, the Philippa he had so far only glimpsed under the prim correctness of the high-bred young lady.

This was neither child nor girl, nor young lady, but a woman, a fair Saxon woman grandly made, agonized, but calm and unafraid.

At sight of her all his careful defences, reserves, reticences broke down, vanished; all his real feeling shone so undisguised on his candid face that she said, without any attempt at pretence:

"Poor Piers, are you, then, so sorry for me?"

"You couldn't pity *me* a little?" he asked hoarsely.

She rose from the alder stump, the tweed coat slipping from her shoulders. As the two stood side by side, the racial likeness showed strong between them, a fair man and a fair woman, erect and strong, and both now shaken by a deep emotion.

"Do you want pity too?" asked Philippa. "I came here to be alone—it is so strange, Piers, to think how we all played here and that now we are not children any more."

"I always loved you," said Piers intently, "always, always——"

"Did you? But I—you've heard that he has gone—and you guessed? I almost told you, did I not? And now you blame Raulyn. You must not."

"I do not want to think of him," replied Piers harshly.

"He has done no wrong," said Philippa faintly, but with no accent of weakness. "You must never think that. My—my mistake, my great mistake was—a girl's vanity and no fault of his." She glanced at the cloudy passionate face so near her own, a face so familiar but never seen before under this aspect, and added, with an effort: "Piers, I never said or did anything to make him think—that his going away would hurt me."

"That you should have to say those words!" broke out the young man. "That I should have to listen!"

Philippa peered at him curiously; she had not wept, but

her eyes were hot and tired, and the uncertain light was dimming every second; Piers' point of view had hardly yet penetrated her absorption in her memories.

"Did you come to find me?" she asked—"to say you were—sorry? Did you come to speak to me?"

"Oh, my darling!" cried Piers, not daring to look at her. "I do not know what I came for! I could not bear to keep away—I wanted to know that you were safe. Oh, Philippa, I am so wretched! If only you could have cared for me!"

Philippa still looked at him with concentrated intentness, and he flashed on her consciousness as something different from the Piers Cantelowe she had always known and never taken very seriously.

By the intuition of her own deep feelings she saw him as he was in the humility of his devotion, standing there abashed before her, as if his own splendid young manhood and his honourable name were of no value save in as far as she would smile on them; she saw him too in that bitter clearness of the mind with which the wayward passions of the heart have nothing to do, as a finer, more reliable, and steadfast creature than the man she loved and one far more likely to be able to guard the fragile treasure of a woman's happiness.

"You are good to trouble about me," she said, hesitating. "I wish—I do not want this to—disturb you, Piers."

"Disturb me!" echoed Piers fiercely. "You will not put me off so easily as that, Philippa, nor get rid of me so lightly."

Half-awed, half-bewildered, Philippa looked at him under frowning brows.

"Do you think," he added, "that I can ever escape from you?"

Philippa had never yet seen passion; even when Piers had spoken to her before, convention had clogged and stilled him, and his words came halting and his demeanour had been stiff, and she, in her girlish ignorance and secret complacent certainty of Raulyn, had taken it all very easily as something that need not trouble her either.

Now she read his emotion by the light of her own, realized her selfishness and was humbled.

"You care for me—like that?" she stammered. "Oh, Piers, I feel so lost and broken! You must forgive me." She clasped her hands. "I did not understand before. I understand now——"

The dark was gathering softly about them like an invisible

veil that bound them gently together; the pallid rays of the young moon now paling as it swam higher into the pure upper sky. Philippa, in the close white gown, looked luminous, ethereal. Piers picked up the coat with shaking hands and laid it lightly round her shoulders, carefully avoiding the most passing touch.

"Do you understand," he said in a voice that had almost slipped control, "do you know that I still want you—that I cannot endure life without you——"

She stopped him.

"Piers, Piers—you know how it is with me—how it always will be——"

"How can you answer for the future?" he interrupted roughly. "If you marry me I will make you forget Raulyn Dyprre, by God I will."

"I have nothing to give you," answered Philippa faintly, "in return for all you offer—you know that——"

But Piers only laughed; he was master of the situation and knew it. What were the girl's fancies, he asked himself, to pit against his man's love?

He was inexorable and really overwhelmed and held her as the man, at a certain point of roused passion, must always overwhelm and hold the woman.

"Only marry me," he said. "Leave the rest till afterwards. You don't hate me—I ask nothing more—come—tell me that I may wait."

She trembled before him; he saw that and almost forgave her her preference for Raulyn. After all, what was this fancy of hers but a caprice, a thing of no substance? She stood before him untouched, unkissed.

"Come, Philippa," he added, and his voice was curiously harsh. "You must answer me—I am not to be evaded or put aside.'

Through all her misery something in the girl responded; he was very splendid and very much in love with her, and she was lonely and forsaken; through the secret fibres of her heart some thrill of comfort crept.

"Not now," she murmured, "it is not fair to ask it—nor fair to yourself to ask it ever—and I am tired——"

He interrupted her.

"I'm tired too," he said—"of waiting.'

He put his arm swiftly round her and kissed her pale upturned face that was like ivory in the moon-glow. Philippa

felt the buttons of his waistcoat press her neck, the hard grip of his arm round her, his lips, cool and firm, on her cheek, the brush of his stiff hair, and she shivered and winced with terror and amazement.

Then he, at the top of his snatched triumph, resigned her utterly; he let her go, and turned away and a sob or groan shook him.

"I've waited so long," he whispered. "I'm about finished, Phil dear."

Still tingling from his kiss she stepped after him and caught his hand; he showed then as all that was dear and kind and good; she was very feminine and she responded instantly both to his strength and his weakness.

"If you care so much, wait—oh, wait," she whispered back. "And good night—and——"

He turned convulsively and snatched at her hand.

"—and I'm glad there are men like you," she finished.

It was her surrender; she dragged her hands from his and hastened away beneath the black shadows of the chestnuts towards the house.

Piers followed when he could see no gleam of her figure and hear no echo of her footfall, and watched, as from the first he had intended to watch, the light in her high distant room.

CHAPTER X

RAULYN wrote from Paris, from Vienna, from Budapest; his letters were brief, and though touched with an uneasy regret, full of a firm and strengthened resolution. It was obvious that he was glad that he had gone away, that he found this new life exciting, thrilling, and amusing; he had met old friends, he had made new friends, his objective was still Italy, but he had been diverted by other attractions; he proposed a visit to South America, a man he had met had an *estancia* there, and so on and so on.

These letters gave Sir Lambert no fresh pain; what is the news of petty skirmishes to one who has lost the whole campaign?

Sir Lambert had never deluded himself into imagining for a moment that Raulyn, so unstable, so easily susceptible to new influences, so indifferent to the ordered dignity and

stately responsibility for which Dyprre stood, would ever return to the life for which he had been so carefully trained.

Long had Sir Lambert known that his one chance of keeping Raulyn was to chain and bind him with wife and family, and that one chance had eluded his grasp ; he had done his utmost to fan the delicate affection of Raulyn for Philippa into an absorbing love, and when he had failed in that he knew that he had failed in everything. The knowledge that he had, in a way, sacrificed Philippa to his pressing urge to chain Raulyn added a sharp compunction to the bitter regrets with which he regarded his own ill-success.

When he had been driving Raulyn, by every means in his power, into the position of suitor to Philippa, he had scarcely considered the ultimate effect on the girl, hardly realized that his son's reluctant wooing might have been, in a girl's candour, accepted as sincere, and that she in her innocence might have repaid his counterfeit coin in true gold.

And later, when it had been obvious to his fine intelligence that Philippa's heart was deeply involved, he believed too that Raulyn's honour was deeply involved also, and that he had won his stakes. Therefore the thought of Philippa rested over his obscured days like another cloud ; all that autumn she was his constant companion ; he always gave her Raulyn's letters to read, and she always returned them without comment.

She was never mentioned in these pages, which indeed contained little but formal phrases.

Towards Christmas Sir Lambert's health failed ; the doctor was constantly in the house, grooms rode to and from the telegraph at Smeed Station, two specialists came from London.

Then Sir Lambert mentioned his son's name to Philippa.

" Never let him know that I am ill," he said. " I could not endure to bring him home that way. My lawyers have all my instructions. Raulyn shall know when there is no need for him to break his travels."

" I understand," said Philippa.

Contrary to the expectations of the great doctors, Sir Lambert notably recovered with the first chill sunshine of the spring: a fine and pure constitution had again overcome the incurable malady of which no one even now either spoke of or understood in Dyprre.

Wasted, hollow-cheeked, but still erect, Sir Lambert walked about his fields again. From Lima now came the formal letters; still from his study Sir Lambert answered them with

other formal notes on the thick paper with the panache crest and the motto beneath the one word "*Dyprre.*"

All his remaining interest in life was now concentrated on Philippa; not only in his affection, but in her relationship to him, had she, unconsciously to both of them, taken the place of Raulyn? Sir Lambert was endeavouring to bend her to his will as he had endeavoured to bend his son. He, the Myniotts and Piers were all pressing Philippa into marriage as they had striven to press Raulyn; ignoring her secret love as they had ignored his secret restlessness, they all combined to urge her into this marriage that seemed to them the most desirable, almost the only expedient: Sir Lambert, actuated by remorse and desire to see the two old families united; Roger Myniott driven by the hope of perpetuating his name and race through his daughter on the ancient land; Mrs. Myniott from maternal pride that wished to see her daughter instantly well married to wipe out the slight of a defaulting suitor, and Piers because of his patient, but increasing, passion.

Philippa held out against these combined forces through the long winter; nor did they unduly press her: they were all too fine for that, but she knew that they were all waiting.

Since Piers had surprised her in the first unloosening of her grief, she had not seen him alone; her startled soul, had leapt away to closed fastnesses on distant heights; she hardly knew if she was pledged to him or no, but she would not see him save casually, in the presence of others. Piers did not obtrude; for weeks she would scarcely see him, but he was always there, he never went away, and she knew he was there —waiting. He defined her liberty and circumscribed her action as a guardian dog lying across the one entrance would define and circumscribe one walking in a garden.

With a grotesque reversing of the positions, she was made to feel that she was as unfair to Piers as Raulyn had been to her: in each case the unsolicited, unreturned passion was exacting, overwhelming, dominant. Raulyn had escaped by going away, but Philippa could not go away. And it seemed impossible to live overshadowed by this feeling and not surrender.

Sometimes the face of Piers riding past her carriage, behind her mother's tea-table, in the pew in Trawden Church, seen suddenly, looking at her with unlocked eyes, would frighten her.

"Have I any right," she asked herself in terror, "to hurt any one else as Raulyn hurt me? He did not know, but I *do*

know." And when the upset of Sir Lambert's illness was over they began to ply her with arguments.

Her mother reminded her gently that she was twenty-six in June, and men did not wait for ever; her father hinted more boldly that she was his sole heiress and he fretted to see her settled; Sir Lambert recalled to her the promise she had made the day he had told her Raulyn had gone, a promise to be courageous and tread the accepted way gallantly.

Piers said nothing, but his silence had most weight of all; she noticed anxiously that he was looking strained about the eyes, that his manner was both reckless and preoccupied.

Once, when she was out walking with her father, she met him coming across the frozen fields from one of his farms, and something about him stirred her sufficiently to cause her to linger behind when their ways parted.

She pulled the dogskin glove off her pale hand and laid it on his rough sleeve. "Piers—you don't look well—I'm so sorry," she faltered, conscious of the futility of her words; yet his reply startled her; he moved away abruptly from her touch so that he had stepped from the road and was leaning against the gate into a ploughed field.

"Sorry!" he said fiercely. "You don't know what you are talking about."

His haggard eyes, so alien to his robust youth, looked at her almost with enmity.

"You don't understand," he added. "Please go on."

She stood, hesitant, perplexed, roused, slowly pulling on her glove again, finger by finger, her plain dark homespun suit one with the wintry landscape, but her face, into which the colour faintly flowed and ebbed, a haunting beauty to the eyes of love. Roger Myniott was slowly walking away from them, with his spaniels at his heels and not looking back.

Piers clenched the top bar of the gate. "Go on," he commanded, "leave me alone."

Philippa went after her father, but she looked back, flushing.

Piers had vaulted the gate and was striding across the fields; no one but Piers had ever spoken to her like that, no one but Piers had ever kissed her; she had banished all thoughts of that quick kiss, but it had refused to go; often with uneasy exactness had she recalled the feel of his lips, the pressure of his arm, even the slight perfume of tobacco and a freshly shaven face, the stiff roughness of his hair; these trifles had even at times fantastically obscured her recollec-

tions of Raulyn, who had never touched more than her hand.

And the poor girl in her distress and remorse and thwarted love and confused emotion had often fallen asleep on a tear-wet pillow endeavouring to persuade herself that her one love kiss had been from Raulyn, that that day at Clobbertons he had really put his arm closely round her, that it was his dark face that had pressed hers, his black hair that had touched her cheek.

Her father marked her downcast abstraction and rejoiced; he was easily on the side of youth and nature against any feminine fancies, and had always backed Piers, a man of his own type, whom he heartily commended against any caprice on the part of his daughter.

As they reached the gates of Dyprre Manor, the girl said that she would go in and see Sir Lambert.

Roger Myniott did not object; he knew the powerful ally that he had in Raulyn's father.

"I will send the carriage before it is dusk," he said.

And Philippa barely knew that she would have preferred to walk, so bound was she by a lifetime's environment of cherishing care.

Sir Lambert received her in the amber-coloured study where he had told her first of Raulyn's desertion; but now a wood fire cast a glow over the escutcheon on the Tudor mantelpiece, and the backs of the stately books, and the dark features of Dyprres who looked out of the old portraits between.

He was turning over some quarterlies listlessly enough, and brightened at the girl's entrance.

"It is so cold outside," said Philippa, "though there are violets in the hedges—I wanted to come in and get warm." She sat down on the old chair where she had crouched in her agony six months ago, and the firelight was over her sad grace now as the sunlight had been over her distorted beauty then; Philippa Myniott had changed a great deal in this half-year: her light gaiety had gone, her girl's complacency, something of her bloom.

But Sir Lambert, a connoisseur in women, approved of her as she sat there in her rough country clothes and thick boots and stout gloves.

"A grand creature," he thought, "a beautiful fine creature."

"Have you heard from Raulyn lately, Sir Lambert?"

This was totally unexpected, as this name had never been mentioned between them save in the case of Sir Lambert's

instructions about his illness, but the old man answered in serene accents:

"Yes, I heard yesterday. A short letter."

"Nothing of importance, Sir Lambert?"

"No. He is, I believe, pleased with his life. He says, 'I have close in view many of the things I have wished for.'"

"Ah!" Philippa drew a long breath.

"And I," continued Sir Lambert, "wrote out a quotation that has been much in my mind of late—'Beware of what you set your heart on, for it shall surely be yours'—Emerson, I think. I sent this to Raulyn."

"You think it is true?"

"I do. Wishes have great power. But what we long for comes to us in guises we never dreamed of—and how seldom do dreams come true grant us peace or rest!"

"But I did not get my wish," said Philippa with a shadowed smile.

"Nor I mine. But that was the lack of some driving force in us, Philippa. There were reserves, reticences stronger than our desire."

"Oh, no," said Philippa.

"Think—you could not have *asked* Raulyn to stay?"

"Ah, that—no."

"Well, you see, there was something stronger; if your wish had been powerful enough to urge you to that, Raulyn would have stayed."

And he thought to himself "As, if mine had been strong enough, I should have told him I was a dying man, and kept him that way—and Connie—I should even have won Connie if I had sunk all pride and importuned enough."

"I see what you mean," answered Philippa slowly. "Yes, there are reserves—things one could not do. Of course."

So they agreed, neither being able to speak beyond the code of their race and breed and tradition, neither imagining that there might be other standards and other natures and other passions that would sweep down with contempt any reserves, any reticences—any obstacles.

"And so," said Sir Lambert, "one's wishes are nearly always bounded, limited, hampered; when they are not, they are very potent."

"Well," answered Philippa, "Raulyn has achieved his wishes—or is on the way to achieve them."

"Why," asked Sir Lambert, "did you speak of Raulyn to-day?"

So deep was the intimacy between these two that any thought of concealment or subterfuge never confused their regard for each other.

Philippa answered quite simply:

"Because I suppose I am not likely to speak of him again. I have that feeling. Do you think, Sir Lambert, that he will marry some stranger, some foreigner?"

This hideous idea had been often in the old man's mind; her words brought it leaping out, a spectre between them.

"It is most possible," he said grimly. "I have faced that, too. I hope before Raulyn brings an alien to Dyprre that it will be over with me."

But Philippa's instinct was truer.

"If Raulyn made that kind of a marriage he would never come back," she said. "Indeed, I do not think anyhow he will come back."

"Nor I," returned Sir Lambert sternly.

He touched the bell, and again was the ceremonious entry of the wine and biscuits, the glittering decanter and glasses, the plate of odd-shaped crescents and stars, with the faint perfume of scented sugar, bringing those clear memories of childhood.

The footman put another log on the fire; the orange flames spurted up, and the flicker seemed to give a waving movement to the panache feathers in the carved crest, to the raised paws of the rampant lion, to the dark, fine, nervous faces looking from the sombre canvasses between the rows of polished books.

"It is a long time since you sang to me," said Sir Lambert. "I was playing this afternoon, and I remembered how long it was since you had sung to me."

"Shall I sing now?" asked Philippa. "I think I should like to. There will be just time before the carriage comes."

They left the room together, the tall, erect, old man and the tall, erect, young woman, and went down the shining oak corridor to the music room with the coloured glass window built by an eighteenth-century Dyprre who was a musical enthusiast; there was an organ Handel and Bononcini had both played on, a copy of Raphael's Saint Cecilia, low divans and chairs, and a large concert grand.

Sir Lambert lit the candles before this, for the cold spring light was fading and showed but dimly through the flamboyant coat in the lancet window that glowed with crude reds and blues.

Philippa sat down at the piano; she was a fastidious and delicate musician, and her long cold fingers rippled into the melody of one of the melodies of the "Lieder ohne Worte" that Sir Lambert could remember his mother playing when it was first published, and he as a young man had gone to Exeter Hall to hear the great composer conduct his own *Elijah*, gone with Connie and her mother—Connie had worn a poke bonnet and a fringed shawl with a faint blue pattern. . . .

Philippa began to sing; Sir Lambert was sunk in one of the far chairs, deep in the shadows.

The pure voice rose into the vaulted roof with the tender words of the Scotch song.

"Low there thou lies, my lassie,
Low there thou lies,
A fairer form ne'er went to the earth,
Nor from it shall arise."

Aye, low enough, poor Connie far in the north among strangers; ah, well! . . . fair enough too, fairer even than the girl singing now. . . .

"I looked on thy death-cold face, my lassie,
I looked on thy death-cold face,
Thou seemed a lily new cut i' the bud
And fading at its place."

Philippa paused, then began again the slight plaintive song

"Thy lips were ruddy and calm, my lassie,
Thy lips were ruddy and calm,
But gone was the holy breath o' heaven
To sing the evening psalm.

"There's naught but dust now mine, lassie,
There's naught but dust now mine,
My soul with thee in the cold, cold grave,
And why should I stay behind?"

Philippa's hand dropped from the keys. "That is the ballad you like, isn't it, Sir Lambert?"

"Yes," came the voice from the shadows, "it is sad, but there is consolation in that ancient sadness."

"There are worse separations than death," said Philippa, sitting still on her stool in the candle-light; "that was so easy then, when people just died. 'There's naught but dust now mine'—but when there has never been anything—not even the dust of memories . . ."

She turned on the stool, so that the light behind her made a halo of her brilliant hair beneath the fur cap.

"I am going to marry Piers Cantelowe," she said.

Book II

RAULYN DYPRRE

1887

CHAPTER I

RAULYN DYPRRE crossed the Via Longarina and came out into the small piazza of S. Benedetto e Piscinuola; he was well acquainted with the churches and streets of Rome, but he had never yet entered this little church now before him, though he had passed it and been told that it was built on the site of the house of Saint Benedict, where he had lived before he fled to his wild and remote retreat in Subiaco.

The church was plain, the brick campanile looked rigid against the translucent sky of the May evening; Raulyn raised the padded leathern curtain before the door and entered the building; the queer interior pleased him: the atrium, with ancient columns, looked still like the entrance to a house, the vaulted chapel beyond, austere, gloomy, had yet an air of having been inhabited in some remote and terrible age.

Here, glimpsed between the antique pillars, showed a primitive picture of Virgin and Child, fitfully lit by the fluttering red of a small lamp. Raulyn passed over the rich pavement to the high altar.

Behind this was a grim and remarkable picture.

On a gold background was represented the figure of an old man with white hair and beard, who looked sternly out from under a black cowl, and seated on a Gothic chair with a crozier in one hand and a book in the other.

As Raulyn gazed at this portrait, which seemed to him to be endowed with a sinister vitality, a man suddenly emerged from a door in the shadows, with the effect of some one rising from a vault or tomb. Raulyn turned quickly, unable to repress a slight sense of shock, for he had considered himself absolutely alone in the church.

His movement brought him face to face with the other man, and then he discovered that he knew him, and said formally:

"How do you do, Dr. Michelozzi."

"Ah, Mr. Dyprre!" replied the Italian pleasantly. "I

should not have expected to meet you in Trastevere—and in the church of S. Benedict."

"I am only a sightseer," answered Raulyn, with English stiffness. "I heard there was a curious picture here."

He was not sure that he was pleased by this interruption, nor even that he liked Dr. Michelozzi; he did not know anything of the man, having only seen him once before in a crowded company where he was treated as a personage of station and repute.

"But have you visited the cell?" asked the Italian, speaking an English of an almost irritating correctness. "That is more amusing than the picture——"

"Amusing!" echoed Raulyn.

"S. Benedict was very amusing," said Dr. Michelozzi serenely.

Raulyn followed him to the doorway from which he had just come forth; it led to a cell of rough-hewn stones, dark, noisome, with a stone pillow on the floor.

Raulyn was peculiarly affected, not so much by this perhaps faked relic of a fanatic as by the personality of his companion, that appeared to be violently as it were thrown into relief against this dead and sombre background.

Dr. Michelozzi stood still by the entrance to the cell, looking into the murky depths where the filtered light of the church struggled faintly with the shadows.

And Raulyn Dyprre was impressed as he had never been impressed by any one since he had left his father.

The Italian was a man of middle age, but of superb physique and enormous strength; he was not tall, and the mighty bulk of shoulders and thorax, neck and head, finely proportioned as these were, gave him a look almost grotesque in comparison to the common make of men.

His features were noble, lined and rugged; his eyes small, light-coloured, and sparkling with an expression of devastating intelligence; his small close beard and abundant locks were stiff, wiry, and red, turning grey; his attire was, to the eyes of Raulyn (even after four years among foreigners), melodramatic, for he wore a mantle of fine grey cloth, a tattered felt hat, and riding boots laced to the knees.

"A charlatan?" thought Raulyn; but he was intensely interested.

Suddenly the Italian spoke, as if from the depth of meditation:

"There *were* saints, you know," he said, "*and* miracles."

"And are still?" asked Raulyn quickly.

"And are still," replied the other. "Does that interest you?"

"Everything interests me," said Raulyn; he spoke naturally, since it was impossible to be formal with this man.

"Come, let us leave this terrible old saint with his stone pillow, Mr. Dyprre—and, will you come home with me and take some coffee?"

He gave the invitation as if they had known each other for years, and Raulyn accepted it gladly, for in his soul the Englishman was assailed by a dreadful loneliness.

"I like to come sometimes and look at S. Benedict," said Dr. Michelozzi as they crossed the atrium, "for he isn't really there, you know, and never was. it is just a peep into fairyland.'

Coming out into the Via Longarina they turned towards the river; the sparkling beauty of the early evening glorified the mean squalor of the streets, the crude ugliness of poverty and filth.

"You know Rome well?" asked the doctor.

"I have been here six months," replied Raulyn vaguely. "I find it a bewildering place—a labyrinth to which I have not the clue."

"You are staying?'

"I think so—for awhile—there is nothing to take me—home." He brought out the last word with an effort and added instantly: "And you, doctor, why do you come to Trastevere—it is an ugly spot?"

"No," said Dr. Michelozzi cheerfully, "not ugly. I have a great many good friends here. I run a little hospital here—a clinic, what you will. And when I come over I like to visit S. Benedict or S. Theodora and Seraphina in the Convent of the Poor Clares—but I live a long way from here, in the Via della Rotonda, and we will take a carriage."

Raulyn was deriving an extraordinary comfort from the robust presence of this man; it was as if, walking in the twilight of a doubtful dawn, he had suddenly had a pure warm light put into his hand.

"Rome," continued the doctor, as they walked towards the Ponte Rotto, "is not for every one—scarcely, I think, for you."

"Why?" asked Raulyn sharply.

The Italian gave him a look of charming kindness.

"Rome is too complex," he answered, "for one already tangled in complexities. A man of your type, Mr. Dyprre, should have a sheet anchor. Is there nothing to take you home?"

Raulyn would have bitterly resented this remark, so immediately personal, from any one else; but his heart glowed with the sense of having found a friend.

He had long wanted a friend.

"I have considerable possessions," he answered, "but they do not need me. And I have no relations—and but few acquaintances. And," he added, on a note of rising eagerness, "these four years that I have been away from home have been the happiest of my life."

Dr. Michelozzi did not answer this statement. They had crossed the Ponte Rotto, and he was looking about for one of the light carriages that ply for hire in Rome.

As he paused on the cobbles Raulyn gazed at the quick yellow waters of the Tiber that seemed sunk at a great depth between the powerful embankments, at the irregular masses of pale buildings set with dark trees that flanked these bastions, and at the glowing sky unsullied by a fleck of cloud that seemed to reduce the city and the river to mere blurs and faint touches of colour; this dominating heaven blazed like a dissolved topaz falling through fire; the penetrating light blotted out all lines, even the buildings gave no impression of substance, but appeared transitory enchantments of the twilight hour.

"I am afraid we shall not find a carriage," said Dr. Michelozzi.

Even as he spoke a private equipage came into sight driving fast along the embankment, and the Italian touched his companion on the arm.

"This will surely be some one of my acquaintances who will take us back to the city."

Raulyn turned; he felt vague, uncertain, as if he moved in a dream, for the rays of the sun, now level with his eyes, dazzled him and his mind was full of cloudy dreams.

The carriage had stopped; the two horses were restive and made a clatter on the stones; the gilt cords on the coachman's tarnished liveries were transfigured with opulent gold.

In the open barouche sat a solitary lady; with long bare fingers she held under her chin a veil that was stirred by the

breeze from the river, a grey veil, Raulyn thought, touched with stars of silver; over her shoulders was a black silk shawl, and on the knees of her black gown was a bouquet of tuberoses and white lilac.

This was Raulyn's first impression, but the creature was faceless, impersonal, a figment of the enchantment of the hour.

Dr. Michelozzi was standing bare-headed by the carriage door, refusing gently the offered seat.

Then Raulyn was aware that the strange wraith of a woman was leaning towards him, that dark eyes were looking at him from behind the misty veil, and that a voice of an almost overpowering softness and sweetness was saying:

"And you, Signore, will you be so cruel as to refuse my poor carriage?"

She spoke in Italian, and in that language her words did not sound fantastic.

"Marchesina," said the doctor in the same language and with a considerable air of authority. "I have not presented my friend to you. And we prefer to walk."

The lady was silent, but she threw back her veil across her plumed hat with a movement of extraordinary grace—and Raulyn looked into a strange pale face that reminded him not of any other human features that he had ever seen, but of some half forgotten melody, some flower glimpsed in a vision, some perfume of some unearthly moment at dawn or dusk.

"I am Geva Lambruschini," she said. "You must come and see me. When Dr. Michelozzi is not here, you can talk to me."

Raulyn, standing with his hat in his hand, like a foolish supplicant, at her carriage door, could find no word to say beyond stammered conventionalities.

The boldness of her invitation repelled him; he did not like her; an old yearning revived in his wayward heart as the carriage swung away along the banks of the Tiber.

"Who is she?" he asked.

Dr. Michelozzi was dry; he either did not care about the acquaintance of this lady or else did not wish Raulyn to know her; in either case he made no disguise of his impatience of the episode.

"The Marchesina Lambruschini," he answered. "She is the last of that name. The family is decayed and very poor."

"Unmarried?"

"Unmarried. She is a delicate woman, almost an invalid,

eccentric and violent tempered—you would have nothing in common."

"She is—lovely, though," said Raulyn slowly. "No, not lovely, I don't know——"

"Here," interrupted the doctor brusquely, "is a carriage at last."

As they stepped into the shabby little *vettura* with broken springs, Raulyn felt an impulse of anger towards his companion for having refused the hospitality of the Marchesina Lambruschini.

He had not liked her, no, indeed he had not liked her, but it was impossible to see her and not to wish to know more of her; strange she was, strange as one of his own dreams . . . the way she had turned her head! . . . one glorious movement of the neck, like a proud bird.

The crazy little carriage, drawn by a big horse with an immense pheasant's feather rising from between the eyes, rattled gaily through the darkling streets where the lamps were beginning to flare orange coloured in the shops and cafés, and stopped at a tall-fronted but narrow house in the *Via della Rotonda,* behind the *Pantheon.*

Raulyn sat moodily during the drive, but gradually the impression made on him by the solitary woman in the barouche faded, and the sense of pleasure he had in being in the company of Dr. Michelozzi revived.

The interior of the house, like the exterior, was modest and ordinary, bare but comfortable; the room into which Raulyn followed his host was whitewashed, furnished with easy shabby chairs, a delicate bronze lamp of antique workmanship, a silken Russian carpet of the intermingled hues of flame and pearl, and on the wall facing the big window a bas-relief in yellowish alabaster.

There was something both austere and fragrant about this chamber; the half-light filled the unencumbered spaces tenderly, the deepest shadows had a transparency of tone.

Dr. Michelozzi lit the lamp and set a coffee equipage out on the worn oak table; Raulyn sat in one of the low chairs and watched him, and the two talked.

"You have been a long while from England, Mr. Dyprre?'

"Four years."

The blue flame leapt clear from the spirit lamp, the small cups tingled in the doctor's big scrubbed hands.

"I don't want to go back," added Raulyn, with an effort at candour.

"Why?" asked Dr. Michelozzi simply.

"It is all so alien to me," smiled Raulyn. "I came away because I could not endure it—and since then, my father died—and—a lady I might have married has married some one I dislike, so I have no desire to see the old places under such a changed aspect."

"And you—have you not changed at all?"

Raulyn raised his rather tired eyes to the face of the man who was so earnestly engaged in making coffee; his lonely and reserved soul felt an unutterable need of expression, perhaps of confession.

"I was on ill terms with my father," he said briefly. "He punished me very cruelly, for he knew he was going to die and he would not let me know. He preferred to die alone. There was no message for me. And the girl—I was sure she would wait," he added grimly. "I thought that she even disliked the man she has now married."

"So you were outraged that your father did not send for you?" asked the doctor, jealously nursing his coffee machine.

"Yes—even now, after three years, outraged!" answered Raulyn vehemently.

"But, all the same, if he had sent for you, you would not have gone," replied the other pleasantly, "and he knew it."

"You are wrong," said Raulyn sullenly, "wrong, wrong."

"And this girl—you would never have gone back to her—and she knew it," said Dr. Michelozzi in the same tone. "I think they were both very sensible people, and you," he added, as if he humoured a child, "must be sensible also—come, here is a cup of excellent coffee."

Raulyn was half-vexed, half-amused; but the pleasure of easing his heart of secret burdens overcame other emotions.

"It is kind of you to allow me to talk of myself, doctor," he said, with a remote smile that took everything personal from his speech. "I seldom meet people I don't despise—you, I dare say, despise me."

"That is a mere flourish," replied Dr. Michelozzi, sipping his own coffee. "I have observed you about Rome a great deal. You interest me intensely."

Raulyn answered on a wild impulse.

"Geva Lambruschini interested me intensely—I want to meet her."

"The Lambruschini?" remarked the doctor coldly. "She is not worth a thought."

CHAPTER II

"I ALSO am not worth a thought," said Raulyn lightly. "How curious that we should have met! How curious that I should be speaking to you like this!"

"Have you not already," smiled the doctor, "met many curious people in many curious ways?"

"I have had no adventures," answered the Englishman, leaning slackly in his chair; "I have handicaps."

"Yes?"

"After my father died I learnt that he had been an ailing man for years—that spring I also was ill—and I learnt of my other heritage—'*un très vilain cœur*' the doctor in Paris told me."

"A pity," said the Italian simply. "I like you, Mr. Dyprre—I saw you in Trastevere to-day as I came out of my little hospital, and I thought—now he will go and look at my old friend *S. Benedict* with his book of rules—so I—no, not followed you—you were there first, perhaps you lost your way."

"Yes," said Raulyn, sitting erect. "How did you know that I should go there?"

"I have observed you, Mr. Dyprre."

"I only remember meeting you once—at Madame Delavel's reception."

"I have seen you several times—there is no mystery, Mr. Dyprre, it is my business and my diversion to study humanity. Now let me make a guess—I think you went to *S. Benedict* to-day because you also thought of a cavern and a stone pillow?"

Raulyn flushed self-consciously, yet a certain eager pleasure at being able to talk, and talk easily, of these intimate experiences animated his sensitive features.

"I had thought of it," he admitted. "You are a shrewd observer, doctor. Yes, I had thought of it; why not?" he added defiantly.

"Cannot you find anything else in all the world?"

Raulyn looked keenly, almost desperately at the older

man, who stood negligently by the bare window, half in twilight, half in lamp-light, so astonishingly strong, serene and cheerful that Raulyn was moved to a despairing envy.

In this fine shade, against the purple blur of the street beyond the panes of glass, the Italian's head and profile was that of a hero or conqueror; the warm-coloured flesh and the greying reddish hair were blended into one colour like that of an antique bust of tinted alabaster; he had taken off his cloak and hat, and now showed a thick pale silk shirt open at the throat. Raulyn's never-quenched avidity for the fantastic and the beautiful combined was satisfied.

"I believe that you understand all about me," he said with energy. "No, I cannot find anything. You see, I loathed my life at home, I could not face the routine laid down for me—I could not endure to know just how I must live and die—to sleep in the bed where we had all died, to sit in the church where we were all buried—I could not well bear it."

"So you came away?'

"I came away. And I found that the life I hated had spoilt me for everything else. I was soft. I couldn't get away from myself. I turned instinctively to people like myself—I found I valued manners and cleanliness and breed——"

He paused, still looking, with an air of excitement, at the man he had so freakishly chosen as his father-confessor.

"Fastidious as a greyhound," said that personage cheerfully. "An old race thrice refined; of course—of course, you'd been fed on spice-dressed dishes so long that raw meat and onions filled you with nausea, eh? Real life frightened you?"

"Frightened? I don't know. I did not like it. I kept endeavouring to get away from people like myself, but I could not endure any others—and no one cared for me outside my own set; I was marked the idler, the dilettante, the rich man, the prey of some, the sport of others. The mooning fool who knew nothing, nothing at all!"

"You are not a fool, however," came the Italian's pleasant voice with the accent that was like a caress on the words. "I know something of your English life—a big place yours, eh? Lords of the Manor, you call it, and I know not what besides."

"Yes," said Raulyn, "Dyprre is a big place; there are

just three families in the neighbourhood, and we have always intermarried."

Dr. Michelozzi laughed.

"Only three families!"

"Of course there are the people on the estate," answered the Englishman, still unconsciously.

"You never knew anything about them?"

"No. I believe they were very comfortable. My father used to be very proud of the fact that there were no Radicals or Nonconformists among them. I used to think that narrow."

He struggled with his own thoughts in silence a moment, then broke out again, intent on trying to make himself clear: this for his own sake as much as for that of his listener.

"That is the worst of it, doctor! That illustrates what I mean! When I met the Nonconformists and the Radicals I hated them too. All my life was stale, sad and dull, yet when I got away from it, from the men who came from the same schools, the same clubs, the same tradition, I was uneasy—I did not like it. I found that I was dependent on money, too. I couldn't be prudent with pence, I couldn't live cheaply—as I shook off friends, acquaintances, as I got through, circle after circle, to the unknown and the strange, I met people who were uneducated, poor, gifted and charming, perhaps, but full of shifts and pretences—oh, I don't know, I could never get to grips with any of it!"

"And yet you do not wish to go home?"

"Dyprre?" cried Raulyn. "The huge empty house? The locked-up rooms? My father's bed, his chair, his horse, his gun, waiting for me! His tablet in the church, every one despising me for a runaway, and Philippa, well, despising me too, I believe."

"Did you ask her to wait for you?" asked the doctor delicately.

"No—no—I never questioned that she would. I was mistaken, that is all. When I first came away, I always felt that she and my father were both waiting for me. They failed me—failed! It seems as if cheated was the word."

"You are one of those quite intelligent men," remarked Dr. Michelozzi, "who forget that the being you call a 'young lady' is a creature of flesh and blood. I think your Philippa is a sensible girl, and I hope she will be happy."

"Did I say Philippa?" asked Raulyn in self-scorn. "I

am becoming loose-souled. I am beginning to chatter! She is certainly happy, she never cared an iota for me, and I only dislike the man she has married because he is in every way my superior."

Speaking with energy, and as if sorry that he had said so much, the young man rose abruptly and picked up his hat and coat.

"Do not go," said Dr. Michelozzi, with an emphasis on his quiet air of authority. "You have had, you know, a double shock in the death of your father and this marriage; for years this has numbed you. Come, now, tell me what you have done with yourself."

Obediently the other man sat down, clasping his hands tightly before him: his emotions had slipped his control; the longing for sympathy and comfort urged him into further speech.

"I wrote a little," said the poor fellow ruefully, "but always for the quarterlies. I moved about, from one country to another. But I always found myself in the capitals—I've learnt languages, I've lent money to artists and people——"

The doctor interrupted.

"You have a great deal of money?"

"A great deal," answered Raulyn simply. "I have excellent lawyers and an excellent steward—I really do not know how much money I have got."

"You can give me some for these people in Trastevere," remarked Dr. Michelozzi. "Come and see them first—such jolly filthy ruffians! You'll hate them."

"No," said Raulyn, "my feeling never amounts to hate."

"Or love?"

"Or love. I'm too selfish, too absorbed in details . . . women, now—I see them too clearly—there is always something wrong—clothes, voice, hair, perfume, . . . I should have to be drunk before I could fall in love . . . and I can't bear to get drunk."

"And so you thought of the stone pillow and the hollow in the hills?"

"Yes. I know I couldn't do that either—one's wretched body becoming loathsome daily!"

He made an impatient movement of one hand against the other.

"You are allowing me to talk myself out. It is kind of

you, doctor, and I am immensely grateful. I'm sick, of course, in my soul, I mean, I know that—restless, morbid, weak. I feel as if there was a magnificent conflict going on somewhere in the air, I think, and I wanted to join in, but couldn't—there *is* something, *something*, that lures and beckons and always escapes—what is it? I can't express myself—if I was a musician! Nothing but music is any use, really; it's fluid, intangible! But I have no gifts."

Shaken, he stared across the peaceful room now filled with shadow, delicately stirred by the flicker from the tongue of flame in the hanging bronze lamp.

"I bought two toys before I came away—an Eastern idol, a bouquet of china flowers. They belonged to a woman who hanged herself for love—that actually happened, near to where I lived. They were symbols to me, beauty, fantasy, fascination—if I could ever find that in a human being! But never, no."

"You have found it in a picture, a statue, perhaps?"

"Yes," said Raulyn with vivacity; "often the symbol, never the thing itself."

"And this English girl?" inquired the doctor. "She had not this quality, or you would not have left her."

"She? No, she was just part of it all—my daily life—tasteless! I'm talking like a coxcomb, I'm unnerved, doctor." Fear touched his voice, he rose and held on to the back of his chair. "Night after night I dream of my father in his grave and that great empty house. He cursed me by that silence of his, and I dare not go back. And yet it is my heritage, and I dare not forgo it."

"Go back," said Dr. Michelozzi.

"Oh, yes, I shall go back—alive or dead. It is there, Dyprre, like a nightmare monster waiting to spring on me."

"Well," smiled the Italian, "escape into your stone cell. Meanwhile, I think I could employ your days. You are a little crazy. I also am crazy, and together we could do some fine things."

"I am a 'case' to you," smiled Raulyn bitterly; "the insect in the phial of spirit!"

"On the contrary," said Dr. Michelozzi, "I will take you and show you other insects in their various pickles."

"You could interest me intensely, but I am not worth your while."

The Italian ignored this.

"I do not really know your name—Dyprre, I heard—you say Deeper? I was at Oxford, and am fussy about your English."

"I am Sir Raulyn Dyprre," replied the young man indifferently. "I've tried to shake the name off, but it is too much a part of me."

"I did not know your title," said the doctor courteously. "Is it not rather a bitter commonplace this—that so many, many men would be envious of you, and eagerly envious to get into your place?"

"I feel that too," answered Raulyn quickly. "I am very sensitive to it—I know and believe that my position is in itself a fine one, and that many, most, would make it worth while. That is the tragedy—that I cannot."

"Nor yet get away from it, my child," smiled the Italian, "'for he had great possessions,' you know! I have a patient awaits me now. Come again to-morrow—where are you staying?"

"Rooms in the Via Babaino—number 2 bis."

"I will call for you in the morning, I shall be able to amuse you."

Raulyn wanted to say, "Will you take me to wait on Madame Lambruschini?" but this was not easy, for he feared a rebuff; also cunning, for the first time in his life, he thought, "I will go and see her alone."

They parted, taking different ways along the ill-lit streets beneath the glorious sky, the doctor, whistling gaily, to take up a watch beside a dying woman so miserable, foul and ancient that she was neglected by the lowest of her kind, the young man to idle in melancholy fashion through the springtime night.

He indeed felt a touch of relief, excitement, almost of exultation in having discovered a friend and confidant; it was as if lightning had rent the clouds of melancholy that had long enclosed him, and a hand had come out to take his.

For the first time since his father's death he had opened his heart; some shame followed this reflection, but more thankfulness.

That secret horrific remorse that had been spreading like a bloom of decay over his soul, that insidious ghastly dread that had driven him to contemplate the maceration and solitude of the fanatic as a refuge, the fell suspicion that he

was spiritually a parricide and a pariah, had vanished before the light accents of a stranger's voice.

He felt on equal terms with Sir Lambert, on equal terms with Philippa; he could now even admit the possibility of, in some distant future, facing the grave of one, the happiness of the other.

Raulyn knew many people in Rome, very few of them amused him; as he had told Dr. Michelozzi, those of his own class were stale and those of any other he was too fastidious to endure; had he been a reigning prince, he would have picked his intimates with meticulous nicety, two or three perhaps from a nation, and then died lonely.

To-night he was occupied by thoughts of Dr. Michelozzi; he had heard nothing of this remarkable man but some fantastic gossip that he had forgotten, and the facts of the doctor's considerable wealth and unconventional philanthropy; Raulyn believed he had heard the word "charlatan" spoken in connection with Michelozzi, and he too had used it in his mind, for the Italian was to English eyes flamboyant, too extraordinary, too vivid and vital.

But Raulyn no longer cared if the man was charlatan or no; he believed in and wished to see much of him and have him for his friend, his confidant, his protector against the terrors that assailed his uncertain solitary soul.

Crossing the quiet streets through the long blue dusk, passing the Piazza della Rotonda, where the boys were packing up the cages of birds, Raulyn came to the noble bulk of the *Pantheon* and entered the bronze doors below the level of the street; he came to the *Pantheon* more often than to any place in Rome, and always passed that dark and mournful portico with a heightened heart. This building, raised by the son-in-law of Augustus Cæsar, and for twelve centuries a Christian fort or church, standing majestic and aloof in the heart of the noisy modern city, had for Raulyn the fascination of the supremely strange.

To enter the *Pantheon* was to escape from dreams by encountering influences more marvellous than dreams.

The young man stood on the pavement of huge blocks of purple porphyry and dark granite that the tread of soldiers, priests, suppliants and mourners had cracked into rough fragments during stormy ages, and that the damp from the rain falling through the dome had covered with tender mosses.

Around him were the pillars of priceless yellow marble, between which glinted the altars, loaded with tawdry finery that occupied the niches hallowed for the grand forms of heathen gods; the whole sweep of the complete circle lit only by that aperture in the dome through which the starlight faintly drifted and the feeble flames of lamps and candles burning before the dingy shrines.

This dimness concealed the dust and rust, the stains of decay, the mutilations of Pope and mob, the cheap tinsel of the wreaths and crowns, dolls and hearts that hung upon the altars, and the gloomy harmony of the ravaged building was unspoilt.

Raulyn looked up at the great opening in the dome; the stars seemed nearer than when he had seen them in the street—so near that it almost appeared as if they swung loose into the church, and might fall glittering at his feet.

When he looked round him the whole circle of the walls, blotted by a thousand shadows, seemed to throb with the shadowy forms of heathen deities, who smiled behind the threadbare Christian shrines.

These phantom gods, huge, with heroic smiling faces, seemed to Raulyn to wear the likeness of the man he had just left, and the goddesses, deeply veiled, crowned by white flowers, long-limbed, palpitating in a mysterious dusk, were no other than wraiths of Geva Lambruschini.

CHAPTER III

WHEN Raulyn descended from fantasy to reality he discovered that his new acquaintances were very definite personages: easily placed in that world of the Roman aristocracy that he just touched, but to which he did not belong, and that he had never understood.

The lady was really of the *haute noblesse*, the last bloom on what had been a splendid and grandiose tree; her father had been a magnificent scoundrel; her mother a Spaniard who had died when she was a baby. The title was really extinct, for there were no further male heirs, and the property had been cut up, sold, mortgaged, and allowed to fall into ruins; an ancient great-aunt had till lately lived with the heiress to this forlorn greatness; since her death the lady, in

defiance of Roman custom, had lived alone with no further duenna than an old nurse. She travelled a great deal, she lived in the summer in the half-shattered castle in the Apennines, but always in seclusion, and with an austerity that suited both her poverty and her pride. She was eccentric, but the gossips had no ill word against her ; her lack of dowry and the extreme fragility of her health were deemed sufficient excuse for her remaining unmarried. She was not young as youth is rated in the south, and there were not lacking those that hinted at some disastrous love affair in the past that had blighted her health and marred her happiness, and it was plain at least that she could never with her decayed fortunes have hoped to marry within her own rank, and that she was much too haughty to marry beneath her inherited dignities.

This was the history of the lady in the solitary barouche as Raulyn Dyprre easily heard it from his Roman acquaintance ; the story interested him only in this—that in loneliness and isolated pride of position her situation was akin to his—and in one other particular.

Francesco Michelozzi, who had spoken of her so lightly, even scornfully, was in fact her guardian, and had been her father's dearest friend ; he was supposed to have the complete control of all her affairs and even to regulate her movements, to inspect the company she kept, and in general oversee her life and actions.

The late Marchese Lambruschini had indeed made the fortune of the brilliant young doctor, who had come, in the glow of the great noble's friendship, to Rome ; the aristocrat and the intellectual had enjoyed one of those splendid companionships not uncommon between two such types. In years, Michelozzi might almost have been the son of the Marchese, but he had served him as monitor, as adviser, as physician, and though he could not, perhaps had not even made the endeavour to, retrieve the headlong splendours of the gay career of Gino Lambruschini, which must obviously end in some form of disaster, he had remained in close association with him in every passage of his erratic life, been with him in Spain during his early married life, attended him in the sudden illness that ended in his unexpected death, and watched over the interests of his daughter.

Of the doctor himself Raulyn could discover no such clear account ; the man was from the Veneto, his father a road

contractor, his mother suspected to have been a Jewess or an Arab; the broad lines of his career were those of an adventurer's progress; his strength, his handsomeness, his feats of skill and endurance, had the showiness of a hero of an imaginary romance; but, on the other hand, his intellect, his fame in his profession, his generosity, charity, laborious industry and daring courage were not denied by even those who hated him, and he was vehemently hated—and as vehemently loved.

The unquestioned position he held he had conquered by sheer audacious force of character and the power of a great mentality; much of what he did, said and was, was entirely disapproved by the general; he had the reputation of being an atheist, of believing in magic, of ignoring sacred codes, of trampling on desirable conventionalities, of outraging public opinion, yet he numbered priests and the most rigid of the law-keepers among his ardent friends.

Not fastidious, even, at times, coarse and gross, utterly fearless and laughing good-humouredly at all shibboleths, this hybrid foreigner of dubious (according to Raulyn's code) antecedents was much the kind of man that the Englishman, obscured by his sensitive melancholies, would have wished to be; he regarded with a certain wistfulness this grand nature that nothing could disturb, this serene intellect that nothing could confuse.

Of course he at first sharply repented of his self-confession; he was as ashamed of having opened his soul to a stranger as he was ashamed of the impulse that had sent him to gaze at the cell of S. Benedict; but as soon as he was again in the presence of Francesco Michelozzi this feeling disappeared. The doctor took it for granted that people should open their souls to him, and made nothing of it; he was capable, Raulyn thought, of being on perfectly good terms with an atrocious murderer; he had heard him say once, after the company had discussed with horror the exploits of some miserable criminal, "I hear he whistles beautifully, I should like to hear him."

So Raulyn advanced in friendship with Francesco Michelozzi; a queer friendship perhaps, but the word "queer" was always applied by some one to the great doctor's actions. The Englishman did not see much of him, for Michelozzi was an extremely occupied man, whose every moment was valuable to himself and others, and Raulyn could not follow him

into the filthy hovels where he ministered to the paupers the parish doctors disdained to attend, nor to the hospitals where he walked amid hideous diseases and ghastly wounds, nor to his dispensaries in Trastevere and the Borgo where crowds of the outcast and the hopeless pressed round him for comfort. Raulyn lived elegantly, if notably below his means, and not even the doctor's charm could beguile him from the paths of ease and security.

Rome was in itself horrible enough for those who did not keep to the beaten track; Raulyn had had to shudder away from many a back street, many an out-of-the-way quarter where filth, starvation, despair and cruelty blotted out the beauty of the Italian sun.

Yet Rome was noble also, and pleased him with an aspect of sad and lonely beauty in the superb fallen temples, the grotesque baroque churches, the trailing processions of monkish ritual through the narrow crazy streets, the exquisite gardens where the turf seemed softer, the trees more verdant, the flowers more delicate than in the west.

Often, with an indescribable pang, Raulyn thought of Dyprre, of the may trees and the roses and the chestnut trees in spiky bloom, of his shut house waiting for him and that other house where Philippa Cantelowe lived with her husband.

He had never answered any of the random letters of his friends which had followed him on his travels, and he had long since ceased to receive any; all his news of home came through the austere columns of the *Morning Post* or the brief letters of Caleb Withers, his bailiff.

He knew from this last source that there was another tablet in Trawden Church besides that to the memory of his father, and this above the Cantelowe vault to: "Anthony, son of Piers Cantelowe and Philippa his wife," who had died the same summer as he was born, coming with the roses and dying when a full-blown rose could still cover his face.

Raulyn had suffered for this loss; in three years there had been no other child, and he knew that there must be a bitter smart in the hearts of Piers Cantelowe and Roger Myniott and a desolating grief in that of Philippa; if this marriage was fruitless, Myniott and Cantelowe alike would go to bearers of other names; one generation would see all of them extinct.

And, brooding over this, he would play with the idea of marriage and a return to Dyprre to bring up heirs; if the

neighbouring estates came into the market he was wealthy enough to purchase them—some boy of his might rule over all three properties. But this was a dream, and dreamlike also his speculations as to Philippa and her husband; he could not believe that she was happy or even passably content; he even thought that Piers, in his disappointed pride, might become harsh and indifferent to his wife; and he was sure, mournfully sure, that she did not love Piers.

But indistinct were all these figures to him, blurred by the Roman sunshine, absurdly far away, and he had no desire to bring them nearer; indeed, he would have been well pleased if he had known that he was never to see his cousin again; as far as he could actively dislike any one he disliked Piers Cantelowe.

Not only was Piers the successful wooer of Philippa, but he had inherited everything that it had been in Sir Lambert's power to leave away from his son; Cantelowe had been enriched and Dyprre impoverished by the transfer of much rich pasture and many opulent farms, and Mr. Withers wrote, in his dry fashion, that Mr. Cantelowe was lavishing a passionate interest and a lavish care on his place, and had taken over, as recognized heir, the supervision of Myniott's lands.

Raulyn had cared little for the lost property, and the monetary loss made no difference to his already swollen fortunes, but he felt to the full his father's gesture of repudiation, the scorn that had put his cousin first; and there had been times when he had been frightened by his near approach to cruel satisfaction that Piers was without an heir to his haughtily cherished possessions.

He knew that if any motive could induce him to marry and return to Dyprre to live as his father had lived it would be the desire to hold his own with Piers Cantelowe.

And he thought, delicately, remotely, of Geva Silvestra Lambruschini, the solitary lady in the shabby barouche who had seemed a figment of the liquid fire of the sunset. Dr. Michelozzi never mentioned her name, but Raulyn knew that the doctor was a frequent visitor at the Palazzo Lambruschini, and once he said to him, with a casualness that was not wholly assumed:

"Will you not take me to the reception of the Marchesina Lambruschini? I hear she gives one to-morrow."

The doctor showed not the slightest annoyance or hesitation, but instantly assented.

"But you will find it dull," he added; "the Marchesina is old-fashioned too. We have to leave early and be very decorous and quiet. Perhaps some one will play the piano, and there will be just a little talk—a few biscuits, and away!"

Raulyn was encouraged by this to do what he had never ventured to do before—question the doctor on the subject of this lady.

"Is this Marchesina your ward, doctor? It seems a curious responsibility."

"It *is* a curious responsibility," replied the other with perfect good humour.

"The lady lives a peculiar life for a young woman."

"She is not so young—*via*!" said the doctor. "She has no strength for any other kind of life."

"In England it would hardly be possible," persisted Raulyn.

"Oh, England!" smiled Michelozzi. "Geva," he added significantly, "is a very tiresome creature, moody, impossible, capricious, and violent; she is idle also, and really entirely useless." He paused a light second to give further emphasis to what he was about to add: "Part of my curious responsibility, Sir Raulyn, is to watch that this lady does not become entangled in any matrimonial schemes; she is"—he finished with emphasis—"more utterly unfitted for marriage, more calculated to make a man wretched than any woman I know. And that, of course, is saying a great deal."

"A warning," thought Raulyn, and he replied to this warning by saying:

"There was something about her that repelled me—her personality is too powerful for a woman. I shall probably, on a nearer view, dislike her."

"Forgo the nearer view," suggested the doctor; but Raulyn had decided to go to the reception. He always afterwards remembered how, before he left his rooms that day, he had looked at the two objects standing above his bookcase—the Eastern image and the bouquet of china flowers that he had bought at that sale at Clobbertons—how many years ago now?

The reception was at six o'clock, and it was soon after that hour that Raulyn and the doctor turned into the vast courtyard of Palazzo Lambruschini that rose abruptly on the side of the Aventino among a huddled crowd of lofty but smouldering houses.

The building was of gigantic size, having been built as a fortress in the days of battles in the streets; later it had been refronted in Palladian style, but time and neglect had blended the work of the fifteenth and that of the sixteenth century in one dinginess.

The marble façade was cracked and discoloured: ivy and wistaria hung in a cascade over one wing, blotting out the windows; the flamboyant coat-of-arms above the rusty gate was half-broken away, the graceful basin of the fountain was choked with weeds, and the lichen-covered Tritons that clustered in the centre tipped up dry horns.

A luxuriant growth of palms and exotic fantastic-looking flowers and shrubs filled the unswept portico, and a headless marble youth held up an iron frame empty of any lantern; when the door was opened by a cadaverous-looking man in most threadbare liveries of a pompous green and yellow, Raulyn saw a vista of a columned entrance, without carpets or hangings, and woefully disfigured by damp.

Raulyn, though something used to foreign poverty, was painfully impressed by these evidences of penury; it was, he thought, scarcely decent, and he felt angry with Dr. Michelozzi for permitting his ward to live in this grandiloquent squalor.

But the doctor, chatting cheerfully, strode up the ruined staircase, with the split treads and tarnished ramp, with an air of complete unconsciousness of anything amiss.

The shabby footman threw wide open a magnificent folding door, and Raulyn heard his name echo in a lofty apartment panelled with wine-coloured velvet alternately with squares of mirror clamped together by clasps of bronze; the ceiling was richly but darkly painted, and such furniture as there was had been set against the walls so that the floor space was entirely free, save for a couch and a few chairs by one tall window.

The room was ugly, grotesque; Raulyn entered almost with a sense of disgust.

"We are the first," said Dr. Michelozzi, advancing, and his robust voice rang incongruously in those dusty heights of the barren chamber.

On the couch reclined the woman Raulyn had come to see—Geva Silvestra Lambruschini.

It was an empire couch, of horsehair, with no back nor any support beyond a stiff bolster at the head; on this the

woman rested her right elbow, and in that hand, her head; Raulyn had seen such an attitude in antique sketches, the upper part of the body erect and free, the lower limbs langourously reclining and shrouded by draperies.

So the Marchesina wore a tight black silk bodice, and over the couch and her knees and feet was a multitude of fine, vari-coloured, fringed shawls and scarfs that appeared to have slipped from her shoulders and waist.

With her other hand she held a book that she read without lowering her head—and when the two men entered she looked at them, not changing her position.

But Raulyn forgot the strangeness of this reception in the pleasure of her grace. Nothing could have been more exquisite than the outline of her person against the pure light of the window, the sloping shoulders, the long neck, the little head, so beautifully poised and adorned by clusters of black curls fastened high by a huge coral comb shaped like an unfurled fan, the tiny ears from which swung long jet pendants, and the delicate bosom and arms almost incredibly fine in line and shape.

As Raulyn advanced she held out her hand and said, with a kind of sombre petulance:

"How is it that you have not been before to see me?"

CHAPTER IV

HER voice, like the woman herself, was a paradox. Harshly sweet, low, with a break in the husky notes, she spoke the pure Roman tongue with the precise noble accent never heard in common speech.

Raulyn knew now that he had been waiting to hear that voice again ever since he had heard her speak before.

From that moment he resolved to love her; resolved, not from any impulse of passion, but deliberately from some fantastic whim, to love her, to make her his interest, his distraction from his own moods, his amusement.

And when he decided this, he felt a delicious excitement, and life, hitherto so melancholy, became coloured bright as a bubble.

His pleasure was tinged by malice too; the queer strain of cruelty that went with his weakness of character leapt to life; he knew that Dr. Michelozzi did not want him, or any

man, to love this woman, and he was conscious that this would give his wooing an added zest. The lady must be pursued in secret, and in the face of powerful opposition; for months this would give him an absorbing occupation, and in the end an exquisite triumph.

It was not coxcombry but fatalism that made him thus assured of success; he was convinced that this woman who so completely pleased his wayward taste was destined to be his wife.

And what confirmed this exquisite certainty was that, like a preconcerted signal between them, a small *jardinière* of porcelain flowers stood on the massive porphyry and gilt table by the side of the Marchesina's couch.

With extraordinary delight Raulyn observed that this stiff bouquet was the counterpart of that which he had bought at the sale at Clobbertons, and placed, as his was, in a minute Sèvres *jardinière* of dazzling colour. That evening was to Raulyn a phantasmagoria of hidden pleasure: the bizarre and ugly room became a palace of secret joy, a background, fantastic and appropriate to Geva Silvestra Lambruschini.

Other people came, all strange to Raulyn, thin, ugly, graceful women with exquisite voices, a beautiful young man in a resplendent cavalry uniform, an old French savant, an old Polish musician, both withered and charming.

They talked and jested, and Raulyn listened with a sense of peace and repose, as if, after much wandering, he had at last found home.

It was an event to him when the Marchesina rose; she was no invalid, confined to her couch, as her guardian had insinuated, but moved with the elasticity of youth and health; her veils and shawls, slipping down the length of her silk gown, revealed a curving line of noble limbs; her pale cheek was as firm as a magnolia blossom, and her eye, grotesquely black and large, gleamed with a fire that could only belong to health.

"Michelozzi has deceived me," thought Raulyn, and he again felt that thrill of malicious pleasure at the prospect of disconcerting his new-found friend.

"We will have some music," said the hostess. She took her guardian's arm and led the way down the long shining floor into the next room.

Raulyn, watching her jealously, saw that she walked as such a woman must walk—with infinite grace.

In this lofty but smaller apartment stood a large concert grand piano and two semi-circles of red velvet and gilt chairs; from the domed and dusky ceiling hung a candelabra of Murano glass; behind the piano one long window opened on to the fading evening, the straight lines of the palace wing, the still plumes of stately palms, and the chill whiteness of the new moon in the pure heaven.

The Pole sat down before the piano; the sweetness of the spring dusk turned the bare and ceremonious chamber into a harmony of muted shade; the sombre frescoes of rocks and trees in the walls were scarcely visible, the shape of the piano was lost; only the keyboard gleamed white as the shirt fronts of the men and the gold cords of the young officer.

The women all wore dark gowns, and only their faces and hands showed faintly, like pale flowers at twilight.

The doctor, who ignored convention in his attire, and was never seen in anything more formal than his brown velvet coat, was comfortably lost in the murk of the distant corner where he sat; but Raulyn was aware of him, and sure that those keen light eyes were judging him, even through the dark.

The old man played; Raulyn did not know the melody. As it flowed into the still air the company, relaxing in their seats, seemed as if their souls swayed to the rhythm.

Raulyn deliberately seated himself beside the Marchesina; she sat erect, her definite pale profile towards him, looking up at the moon in the high window-pane above the musician's head; and it seemed to Raulyn that she looked at her own reflection.

"What does he play?" whispered the young man, not wishing to know, but to make her speak to him, to turn and gaze at him through the twilight.

But she answered without moving, curiously attentive, and speaking in subdued tones:

"It is Carissimi—very old; you like it?" she said. "But no, it is too ineffable for a room—we will have something else——"

"No," answered Raulyn, "let him play what he will and let us sit as we are."

She looked at him now; there were empty chairs on either side of them, and he had the delusion that they were completely isolated.

"Of these moments I make my eternities," said the Mar-

chesina. "I would believe in nothing but the illusions created by twilight and music."

The musician took his fine fingers from the keys and lit the yellow candles that stood either side of him.

"Give us," came the robust voice of Francesco Michelozzi, "something we can beat time to with our hands and feet—Haydn's hymn to the Emperor, come!"

"*Via*!" cried the Marchesina, slightly moving in her chair. "You shall not be such a poor patriot, Cecco—I will have no noisy music—play," she commanded, "something delicate——"

Without replying, the Pole began one of the vivid, romantic *arias* from "*Fidelio*."

"Ah," sighed the Marchesina, "that is the language of the emotions—you hear how it pulses with light!"

The rich tumult of the notes caught at Raulyn's heart; a passionate languor invaded his senses, he ignored the virile voice that had come out of the dark like a warning, he ignored the bold integrity of the friendly face that was watching him; he gave himself, not with his heart, but with his mind, to the subtle ecstasy of this moment.

A few of the candles in the other apartment had been lit, and through the open doors Raulyn saw this bare chamber as a luminous zone.

"Come," whispered the Marchesina, "the music and the dusk stifle me—we will go into the *salone*."

She moved slowly towards the great doors and passed into the farther light; Raulyn followed.

"You are a stranger," she said. "Let me show you my treasures that the others know so well."

The music drifted after them and became an accompaniment to her words; every one seated in the concert room would be able to observe them; it was as if they were on a vast stage playing some stately comedy before an audience and an orchestra hidden in the dark. Slowly they walked round the walls, and Raulyn now observed that the chamber he had thought so bare was stored with beautiful objects.

Indifferently the lady pointed them out: here a basalt Cæsar, there a vase of *giallo antico*, now an alabaster vase, now a mediæval cup on pedestals of marble, gilt wood, ebony, or malachite. Raulyn did not consider any of them; he waited for his guide to pass the dim greenish mirrors clamped by bronze clasps, tarnished by age, that alternated with the

panels of rubbed violet velvet, and then he watched her myriad reflections, broken, slightly distorted, of an infinite fascination.

The room, or the woman, or both, gave out a perfume that was heavy and sweet, like dust and dried flowers, yet very faint like the scent of a petunia.

Without, the darkening night enclosed the room, a refuge of vague yet sparkling light—against the encroaching immensity of moon-pallid sky.

Now she was against this moonshine, as it entered by the high windows, now against the candle-glow, now enwrapped in crossing shadows, always with that erect crowned head, that slender distinctness of imperial bearing, so that light and shadow both seemed but as veils cast about her graciousness.

Her tiny hand, resting on a porphyry bust so cold and massive, was a lovely thing to see, and lovely too that exquisite figure reflected again and again in the ancient mirrors.

Raulyn's wilful fancy was wholly pleased; what did he care for her faults?

He had time and money and patience enough to deal with any woman's faults.

How well the rococo room and the artificial music and the mingled glow of waxlight and spring moon suited her perverse personality.

And Raulyn thought, with the first throb of genuine satisfaction he had known since his father's death, that with this lady by his side he should not be afraid to face Dyprre and Piers . . . not even afraid to face the wife of Piers.

He saw his own reflection beside that of his fragile guide; he did not look so alien here as he had looked in England; his slender, dark and small-featured type was more akin to the Marchesina than to Philippa; to look at them there might have been a blood-tie between them instead of a wide gulf of—everything.

"Upstairs," said Geva Silvestra Lambruschini, "we have other treasures, pictures and armour and toys. Some day you must see them—it is dusty and sad there for me, but for you—no."

They had circled the room now and stood by the far window, the table and the couch.

"We have lost so much," continued the Marchesina, "even the name. Gino, that young officer here to-night,

my second cousin, will have all there is left—but the name, no, that goes with me."

She spoke like a creature doomed to near extinction, and Raulyn was moved to recall what Dr. Michelozzi had said of her ill-health and the impossibility of her marriage; yet the very thought, in this close proximity to her fragrant youth, seemed an absurdity.

"But is it not your custom," he said, with a boldness softened by the deference of his manner and the use of the ceremonious Italian mode of address, "for the name of great families to descend in the female line? Would not your children be your father's heirs?"

She answered also in the courtly third person.

"But I shall not ever marry—I am sure that Cecco told you that."

Sparkling malice was in her words, but her eyes were wistful.

"It seems your guardian's wish that you should not marry," said Raulyn.

And she answered swiftly:

"It is his command."

The man they spoke of came from the music room; for the first time since he had known him Raulyn resented his presence, which now seemed that of a tyrant.

"Why do you run away from your favourite music?" he asked with no ruffle in his charming manner.

"We hear it very well," replied the Marchesina with a flash in her voice. "It is you, Cecco, who disturb the evening with your Austrian hymns!"

"Ah, as for you," smiled the doctor, "you have had enough excitement for to-night—your guests are leaving, and you must go to bed."

This was so completely the manner of a man speaking to a child that Raulyn wondered how any high-spirited woman, as the Marchesina certainly was, could well endure it; yet the lady made no resistance, but flung herself on the couch and turned her head sharply away.

"I must see," continued the doctor in a tone both kind and grave, "that my patient does not over-exert herself—next week we will have more music."

The Marchesina looked around; tears glittered in her lustrous eyes.

"You are unkind," she murmured; then she caught up the bouquet of china flowers and fastened them into the

laces on her bosom, looking up at Raulyn with a quick and wayward laugh.

The doctor glanced at her with mild displeasure.

"Ah, that is a pretty compliment to you, Sir Raulyn—I told her you had the fellow posy on your bookcase, and she must look out hers to greet you."

Raulyn knew that this was said to destroy the effect of the little coincidence; but this he wilfully refused to allow it to do, thrilling instead to this subtle mark of her favour.

"My bouquet will seem the sweeter to me henceforth," he said.

"Your compliment is repaid, Geva," remarked the doctor slightly. "Come, we take leave." His careless way of speaking to her, the use of the "thou" and her Christian name annoyed Raulyn.

He became conscious that Francesco Michelozzi was not of the same rank as this woman, nor, indeed, as he was himself, and that his manners and even his personality lacked the finished elegance that Raulyn so highly valued.

The music was over, and the other guests, as if obeying some signal, took their several leave, yet it was still early in the evening. But the Marchesina made no further protest; she received the courtly salutations of the men, the warm caresses of the women, with a pretty animation, and to Raulyn she gave a laughing farewell.

She still wore the porcelain flowers; the last sight that he had of her she was lying on the couch with her hand over the fantastic posy that rested on her heart. The doctor paused on the large cold landing, where the walls were adorned by mouldering paintings of sprawling Bacchantes, and called sharply up the stairs:

"Jiacinta!"

A tall old woman instantly appeared from some unseen door and came hastening down with an air of great attention and respect; she had the appearance of a respectable upper servant of the better sort.

"Your mistress is alone, Jiacinta," said the doctor pleasantly, "good night, my good Jiacinta."

The woman went at once into the *salone*.

"That is the old nurse," explained Michelozzi, as they descended the grandiose stairs. "Geva does not care to be alone."

"Then I wonder that you so early deprive her of com-

pany," replied Raulyn; but he spoke indifferently, for he meant to guard jealously his prize secret, especially from this man.

"She is not strong enough for any excitement," said the doctor; then he added dryly, "Do you still find her repellent?"

Raulyn lied, coolly and thoughtfully.

"The Marchesina does not impress me very definitely—I see her as one of a crowd, vaguely. Already I forget her."

CHAPTER V

RAULYN DYPRRE pursued his fantasy with the headlong swiftness to which passion would have impelled a stronger nature.

He saw no need for either reflection or hesitation; there was no one to whom he was responsible or even accountable: he possessed money, position, leisure, and no one could bring forward, possibly, any reason why he should not entirely please himself.

The lady's situation was also one of singular independence; he had ascertained that she was twenty-eight years of age and completely her own mistress; he disdained to inquire into the terms of Dr. Michelozzi's guardianship, but even if, at the most severe, her marriage without his consent meant the forfeiture of all her property, Raulyn was indifferent; he would indeed prefer to shake himself free of her decayed heritage; neither his pride, his reserve, nor the intensity of his whimsical feeling, would permit him to disclose his intentions to the Marchesina's guardian, for he knew that he should meet with a powerful opposition, and he could not endure to dispute and argue over his sentiments, nor even to disclose them.

Had he been pushed to an extremity he would sooner have forfeited this twilight love of his than have it dragged out into the light of day and fought for against the robust attacks of Francesco Michelozzi.

And no mean part of the immense pleasure of his wooing was the secretiveness, the queerness, the readiness with which it fell not into the daily routine of his ordinary life but into the fantastic realms of his vaguest dreams.

It was impossible for him to see the Marchesina very

often; she was too watched, enclosed, and he suspected Jiacinta, the old nurse, of being Dr. Michelozzi's spy; but whenever the doors of the Palazzo Lambruschini were open to guests, the Englishman joined the little circle that listened to the Marchesina's music and sipped her sweet wine; and when she drove abroad, in the Corso, or on the Rincio, in her shabby barouche, he was always near on his smooth, slender Italian horse.

In his strange hour of self-revelation he had spoken of himself as incapable of love while in his sober senses, and now he was intoxicated, not by any earthly wine, but by a personality rare and peculiar enough definitely to satisfy his capricious mind.

Geva Silvestra Lambruschini was contradiction personified; she twisted every trivial incident into a thing of picturesque meaning—and each time a different meaning; she was haughty, indifferent, gay, sad, and violent in a breath, but she never lost the charm of her delicate dignity, the delicious grace of her deportment; she never failed in the fascination of her exquisite manners, the sombre cloudy grandeur of her rich attire, and no mood could dim the charm of her queer pale face with the clusters of black locks always crowned lightly by jewels, veils or flowers.

Raulyn made of this delicious and fantastic human being the cult he had been prepared to make of asceticism; she became to him the absorption, the obsession, that he might have found in the saint of Subiaco, the life of care and vision.

She healed his melancholy, she cured his idleness, she was soporific and balm in one; Raulyn was at last happy, with a faint illusory happiness, perhaps, like the false fire of the *ignis fatuus*, but happy.

Jealously as he guarded his secret the change in him could not long escape Francesco Michelozzi.

With his usual devastating honesty the doctor challenged Raulyn.

"Do you see a great deal of Geva Lambruschini? Something has cured you; is it this woman?"

And Raulyn, fearful of his cherished felicity, replied:

"No." And he added, angry with his own lie: "Why do you challenge me? One cannot discuss such matters."

"I heard that you saw much of her," replied the doctor with unruffled urbanity. "She is, for any man, a waste of time. I told you so. Her rank precludes her from the

amusement of coquetry—and marriage is for her an impossibility."

Raulyn laughed slightly; in face of Latin frankness his English reserve served as well as a deliberate deception.

"An impossibility?" he echoed with indifferent incredulity.

"Absolutely. Her health would not permit her to lead any life save the one she leads."

The air of serene authority with which this was spoken sent a bleak wind across the moon-mists of Raulyn's romance; in his heart he shivered.

"It is difficult to believe," he said coldly. "The Marchesina appears a healthy woman."

"It is," replied the doctor, "as I have said."

But Raulyn was not convinced; his observation of Geva Silvestra Lambruschini had been keen and searching, and he had never received any impression of illness nor a feeble constitution; indeed, once she had expressed to him a vivacious horror of sickness, and declared that she herself had never been troubled by so much as a headache. Raulyn knew that her mother had died from a riding accident and the father from typhoid; portraits and tradition alike showed both as magnificent creatures.

Whatever Dr. Michelozzi's objections to the marriage of his ward, those founded on the state of her health must be mere absurd punctilio; many of these high-born southern women were frail and delicate, but they married without question. Raulyn rather despised the man he had so admired for offering such a poor excuse to cover some secret reason which could hardly be other than selfish.

"You stay late in Rome," added the doctor pleasantly, "it is becoming very hot. I must send the Marchesina up to the hills."

Raulyn smiled; he thought this was very clumsy.

"I am taking your advice, doctor," he said, "and returning to England. I have written to my steward to prepare the place."

The older man looked at him with a keen anxiety, a long, almost wistful, look, as if he was both hurt and baffled; Raulyn was not unmoved by this, and the impulse came to him to lay bare his heart a second time, but he could not combat his own deep reserve.

And the moment passed; the doctor was imperatively summoned, and Raulyn had to leave him; it was late afternoon, the weather of a burning heat, the city empty save

for beggars, soldiers, and the inhabitants. Raulyn wondered why the Marchesina had not left before; unused as he was to the customs of Italy, he knew that most of his acquaintances had left the capital. He had heard a threat in the doctor's words and, urged by this as a flame is urged by wind, he went directly through the hot bright streets to the Palazzo Lambruschini.

He had never before been to see her uninvited, and had never been invited save when there was other company, and he knew enough of the rigid Roman etiquette to be aware that he was doing a daring and unusual thing.

The almost rank luxuriance of the palms, creepers and exotic plants had overwhelmed the noble decaying façade of the palace, the court-yard was heaped with neglected trails of foliage, and as Raulyn stood under the portico, bells, clusters, and wreaths of blooms, withering in the summer sun, hung in festoons above him, a climbing bush, bearing cups of vivid colour, had hidden the flamboyant coat-of-arms above the entrance.

Yet all this splendour was dry and lifeless, glowing with a last beauty; the finest breeze cast leaves and flowers alike to the ground, and where the cascade of roses had hung a few shrivelled brown stems drooped against the marble.

The harsh iron bell clanged dismally in the wide hall; with a sudden doubt of his chances of entering Raulyn put his hand in his pocket.

But no bribe was necessary; the Marchesina looked out from the tall window of the *salone*, smiled, put her finger to her lip and disappeared.

Raulyn leant against one of the warm pillars and waited; nothing in all his dreams had been so strange as this.

He remembered the day of the sale at Clobbertons, the day he had gone to Smeed to ask Philippa to be his wife, and these two episodes were represented to him as shadows within shadows.

The lady opened the door; she looked slight and vivid against the dusky background of the lofty empty vestibule.

Raulyn was not yet free from deep reserves and sensitive doubts, his wayward love had not yet had power to overcome the exclusiveness, the sensitiveness of his nature, and never before had he spoken to her alone.

But she swept away his delicate hesitations with one delicious movement.

Without even closing the heavy door on the ruined fragrance of the garden, she received him as her accepted lover by putting her lovely bare hands on his arm and holding up her face.

"How long you have been in coming!" she whispered; and he:

"Were you waiting?"

"O God," she answered, "if I have waited!"

Trembling he put his arms round her, and she held him close with a passion that seemed a fury of desperate triumph. He did not kiss her; he was watching how the fine locks of hair were slipping from her amber comb over his light sleeve.

"Take me away, won't you?" she asked swiftly. "And secretly—don't let Cecco know——"

"Why?" asked Raulyn, half-amused by her pretty vehemence. "You are going to marry me, you know."

"Ah, you are good! But Cecco will not allow it! It must be secret. You see how he keeps me! You know, he wants me himself."

Raulyn recoiled before the impact of a repulsive truth; the moment so long hoarded in anticipation was tarnished; he released the woman, indeed, almost lightly repelled her from him.

She stood before him in the shadow, with clasped hands, vivid, despite her black gown and shawls.

"Are you angry that I told you that? You keep me waiting so long and now you never tell me that you love me! What have I done to make you angry with me?"

It was a foreigner, speaking a foreign tongue, and the man's thoughts were running in his native idiom.

"Dr. Michelozzi is your suitor," he said, "your rejected suitor?"

"Yes, yes, he always loved me—when my father was alive and I was a little girl—and now, if I do not marry him, I must not marry any one else—you see how close he keeps me!"

Raulyn took her poor, imploring, fluttering hands, conscious of her distress, conscious that they were talking in hushed voices like conspirators in this seemingly unreal setting of the gaunt chill hall, outside which the sunshine lingered like an exile.

"And you—you do not care for Francesco Michelozzi?"

"Care for him?" she answered cruelly; "he is a common man. And old."

Again she made that superb gesture of turning with joyous surrender into her lover's embrace.

"I love you," she added and, leaning on his arm, she broke into luxurious caressing words through which ran an almost desperate note of gratitude, painful for Raulyn to hear.

"Are you frightened?" he asked. "If you love me we will be married, and I will take you home. Your guardian can do nothing—nothing!"

"But you will not tell him?" she pleaded.

Secrecy best fitted his pride, his reserve, his mood, his inner bewilderment, but he made an effort for the conventional code of honour.

"It will be better for me to see him—to speak to him——"

"If you do we shall be separated," she answered passionately, "and that would kill me!" Then her whole body became taut; she turned, listened, and added swiftly:

"That is Jiacinta! She is looking for me! Hush! Go away now, and write, write, *write*——"

She stooped, kissed his hand, pushed him lightly through the open door and silently closed the heavy portals.

"Like a pair of stage lovers," thought Raulyn bitterly, and he felt that he had been but a pasteboard hero in this romantic comedy.

The cloudless sky, the massive pile of lofty masonry, the wreaths of withering flowers, the large and splendid plants turning to the rankness of decay, the silence of the height of summer in a great city at midday, all this gave Raulyn a sense of solitude.

The closing of the door had put Geva Silvestra Lambruschini far away indeed from him, but the situation, if not the woman, entirely absorbed him; nor did he for one second consider himself as anything but absolutely pledged to marry this woman, pledged to her and to his own headstrong whim.

What she had said of Francesco Michelozzi seemed to him an ugly thing; and even more ugly that she should have spoken of it with such crude emphasis; it was the first jar of the exuberance of her nature against the reserve of his; he did not doubt what she had said, for the explanation fitted the whole affair with painful exactness, and was in keeping with all he had heard or seen of these alien people. But he

was more shocked and sorry than he could have believed possible at the destruction of the noble image of Francesco Michelozzi—a charlatan after all, an ambitious, false, tyrannical man!

"Common," the aristocratic woman had said—"and old." She despised him, and he was in a position of complete power over her; Raulyn's heart was stirred at the thought of that; with infinite cunning this powerful man had isolated this lovely woman, and was forcing her into his possession by lies, intrigue, and tyranny.

The thing amazed as it disgusted Raulyn; he wished to have no further dealings with it, with Francesco Michelozzi; he even, because of this, began to dislike Rome.

Yet, urged by all his inherited traditions, he went direct to the Via della Rotonda and rang the bell at the flat-fronted modest house of the doctor.

He was chagrined to find that the man he had resolved to come to issues with was not there; it was the doctor's day for Trastevere and he had not yet returned.

Raulyn waited awhile in the cool, clean, white room; he felt a little pang at the sight of the humble coffee service and the worn arm-chairs that reminded him of so much genial hospitality, so much inspiring comradeship.

The doctor did not return before dusk and Raulyn went back to his rooms through the luminous night with a feeling of dissatisfaction. His servant told him that while he had been waiting for Francesco Michelozzi some one had been waiting for him: a certain officer of the name of Foscari, said the English valet clumsily. Raulyn did not know the name, but the stranger had left a note within in a beautiful hand and couched in terms of suave courtesy.

The writer asked for an interview; he said he was the bearer of a message from Francesco Michelozzi, and that it was of some importance; he left his address, that of a Villa Foscari, and signed himself "Gino Foscari."

Raulyn was puzzled for a moment; then he recalled the gay young officer who occasionally appeared at the receptions of the Marchesina. Of course, her cousin, the heir, set on him to warn, to threaten, the young man, the ally of the elder man to victimize the woman, to take for themselves her person and her property.

The Englishman could at once imagine the reckless, probably poor Italian, unscrupulous and avaricious, bribed into

acquiescence with the plans of Dr. Michelozzi; the whole intrigue was as cheap as it was obvious, and he despised the doctor for setting this young fool the despicable task of bully.

That evening he wrote a long letter to the Marchesina, the love-letter of a conscientious man.

And early the next morning, with disdain in his heart for this tawdry climax to his fantastical romance, he rode out to the Villa Foscari.

CHAPTER VI

EVEN the sordidness of his errand could not eclipse for Raulyn the pure loveliness of that early morning.

The Villa Foscari lay beyond the close gates of the Porta Pinciana, along the Via Salava, and proved to be one of the most magnificent in Rome; nor was it in any state of decay or neglect. The great gates opened glittering and splendid on a long avenue of oaks and ilex, and Raulyn, entering, found himself in grounds as well-kept as those of Dyprre.

"This young man is living here with some relative—a parasite," he thought, and the expression of contempt deepened on his fine face.

At the end of the avenue was a casino of exquisite design, in the accomplished style of the eighteenth century, with a garden terrace in front adorned by massive and noble antique statues of unflecked whiteness in the brilliant sunshine, orange and lemon trees in terra-cotta vases, and alabaster urns full of verbena, heliotrope and tuberoses.

Here the tumult of the city was entirely lost, and as Raulyn approached the terrace a view, unearthly in pure fairness, was disclosed beyond the gardens.

The delicate Sabine mountains in pale and melting tints, seemed to fade into the hyacinth hues of the sky; Monte Gennaro and the Montecelli showed with a more exquisite distinctness, and nearer still two lovely churches rose from amid the poignant darkness of cypress trees and close to the gleam and grace of a tall fountain.

A servant came and took Raulyn's bridle, asking him, with the exaggerated deference the Englishman disliked, if he wished to see the Prince.

Raulyn hesitated, not knowing what title to give the man

he sought, when he saw the Marchesina's "Gino" coming towards him through the columned vestibule.

Even at this hour the young man wore, in accordance with what seemed to Raulyn a theatrical custom, his regimentals, but the stiff modernity of the uniform could not efface the beauty of his early youth which was of that flawless and luxuriant character associated with paganism.

Raulyn disliked him none the less for feeling old and seared beside him; thirty-five, with no record and no prospect, and that *très vilain cœur*, beside this untouched bloom of graceful youth!

As the Italian greeted his guest, to him so austere and imposing, he blushed, and his winning manner was marked by an indefinite constraint.

"It is kind of you to come," he said. "I meant to visit you again this morning—I have, you see, to join my regiment at Modena to-day—shall we stay on the terrace? Already it begins to be hot."

They seated themselves on two of the light cane chairs behind the orange trees.

"Is this your place?" asked Raulyn, rendered yet more rigid than usual by the trepidation of the other's courtesy.

"Oh, yes," with the slightest inflexion of surprise.

"You are the Prince Foscari?"

The young officer bowed.

"Forgive me," said Raulyn quickly, "I never clearly understood your name, though we have met several times—it is sometimes difficult for a foreigner, and I live something of the life of a recluse."

"Of course. And the Marchesina is haphazard with her presentations," replied the other with eager pleasantness. "You would one day care to see the Casino? It was built by a great, great, great uncle of mine, who was a Cardinal and a Pope's nephew, but a great antiquarian. I have some good pieces still, but the best were taken by the French—and when they were restored in '15 we sold them in Paris, because of the cost of the freightage."

He spoke swiftly as if to outrun some lingering embarrassment, and welcomed with delight the appearance of a footman with iced drinks and cigarettes.

Raulyn was thinking, "This is a man of wealth and position," and his theory of two conspirators began to be distorted and vague.

But he was in no mood to be beguiled by any trappings.

"You said you had a message from Dr. Michelozzi?" he asked definitely.

"Ah, yes." The uneasiness of the young Italian was now obvious. "Yesterday I received a message from him—he is at Trastevere—the plague has been found there, and he will stay till it is well in hand."

"Is that his work?" asked Raulyn, hating even the suspicion of a pose.

"Well, no," almost with apology; "but he likes to do it. The people there are very attached to him and he encourages them. It may be several weeks before he is able to leave the infected area."

Raulyn was silent, not without an ungraciousness of demeanour that added to the younger man's perturbation.

"And I also am going away—it is imperative," he added hastily.

"Yes."

"My cousin, the Marchesina Lambruschini, will be left alone in Rome. She should now go up the mountains to her estate, but it is quite possible that she may refuse to do so."

He paused, drank some iced sherbet slowly, and lit a cigarette.

"I remain at a loss," said Raulyn.

The Prince was silent; against the rich columns of the portico and that exquisite distant background of blue, purple and lilac mountains, and the dark spires of cypress, his soft manly beauty, the exact blooming features, the flow of the black wavy hair, the earnest darkness of the faun-like eyes, did really look like a painting of some mediæval saint against the sweep of the painter's native hills.

"You perhaps are leaving Rome, Sir Raulyn?" he asked at length.

"No," said the Englishman, "no."

"Dr. Michelozzi hoped that you would—I also hoped so. Rome is too hot now, and unhealthy, especially for foreigners."

Here was the warning and the threat, scarcely disguised.

"I hope that you will deal with me more plainly," replied Raulyn. "What, exactly, was the message that Dr. Michelozzi left or sent for me?"

"He is my cousin's guardian," said Prince Foscari, "and I am her only male relative, and we thought that you might

be forming an attachment to the lady—to Geva Silvestra."

He smoked with furious rapidity and looked on the ground.

"And if I was?" asked Raulyn indifferently. "If I should ask her guardian and her cousin for her hand?"

"You would be," replied the Prince instantly, "at once and unconditionally refused—that is really," he added with simple frankness, "what I wanted to tell you."

"And the reason?"

"No reason would be given. Save that it would be made abundantly clear, Sir Raulyn, that there was no reflection on yourself nor on your family."

Raulyn bowed; this boy faintly amused him.

"Believe me," he said with the duplicity of a half-truth, "I have never had the least intention of asking either yourself, Prince Foscari, nor Dr. Michelozzi, for the hand of the Marchesina."

"I am glad," replied the Italian with a dazzling smile of relief; "I did not think it likely—but the doctor, he seemed to fear it——"

"You pique my curiosity! The lady is young, charming——"

The Prince interrupted:

"Charming, no. Geva Silvestra has a strange disposition, and her health is such that marriage for her is not to be thought of. It has," he continued, speaking with the full authority of his position as head of a noble family, "long been my wish that she should join a sisterhood."

This provoked Raulyn into opening a flank attack.

"Do you not think it possible, Prince Foscari," he asked, "that the doctor is in love with his ward himself?"

The young Italian coloured warmly; he seemed both amazed and indignant, but this amazement and indignation confirmed not refuted what Raulyn had said. For a second he struggled with himself; then he said, with an air of reluctance:

"It may be so, but it cannot concern us—in any case, the lady will never marry."

"He is," thought Raulyn, "utterly under the spell of Francesco Michelozzi; if not a ruffian as I first thought, at least a fool."

The boy was indeed too young and inexperienced for the task set him, and was aware that he acquitted himself therein without much subtlety; he had escaped impertinence, and

achieved perhaps discretion, but not any measure of success.

"I wish," he added sincerely, "that Dr. Michelozzi could have spoken to you himself, or that Geva Silvestra had left Rome. And then there would have been no need for any one to speak."

Raulyn, who had felt himself entirely master of the situation, replied with quiet cynicism:

"Need I again assure you that I have no intention of asking you or Dr. Michelozzi to accept any suit of mine for the Marchesina? And now that you have been so frank with me," he added with complete disingenuousness, "may I be frank with you? I should like to know something about Dr. Michelozzi—a man I much admired—but of whose career I am ignorant."

The Prince raised his wide black brows.

"But any one will tell you of him," he replied a little stiffly.

"Ah, one hears gossip. I have heard Dr. Michelozzi spoken of as a charlatan and a quack."

"Ah, yes, he has enemies," replied the Prince uneasily, "but I know him to be a great, a good, man."

This passed in the simple definite Italian; translated in Raulyn's mind it became ridiculous.

"He makes, I suppose, a great deal of money?"

"Money?" echoed the Italian, "I do not know. He is a very rich man. His father left him a large fortune. And then the State railway bought up a great deal of his land in the Veneto."

The young man fell to a sharp silence that Raulyn interpreted as a rebuke.

He rose; not all the charming grace of the Italian could take a painful restraint from the moment.

The slight contempt that had clouded Raulyn's face during the interview was not lifted when he rode away down the avenue of oak and ilex.

These people were alien; he was sorry that he had to meddle with them; and though his idea of a crude conspiracy was shaken by the knowledge of the wealth of Gino Foscari and Dr. Michelozzi, he still saw the doctor as an unscrupulous pursuer of a defenceless lady, and this remote kinsman as a weak-minded dupe and ally.

An ardent letter from the Marchesina, elegant as a Petrachan sonnet, greeted him on his return to the Via Babuino and both tempered and exalted his mood; she begged him not to

endeavour to see her, but she passionately left her fate in his hands.

At the reception that afternoon, to which Raulyn went with the special purpose of discovering something further of the three people who had suddenly become of such immense interest to himself, he was fortunate to meet one of the vivacious dark women he had seen at the Palazzo Lambruschini.

She told him with a carelessness that might have been a challenge (he distrusted all these foreigners so utterly !) that Dr. Michelozzi had deputed to her the charge of taking Donna Geva Silvestra up to the hills. Raulyn felt a malicious gratification in this proof of how the doctor feared him ; he answered with cold indifference :

"Is it really necessary for Dr. Michelozzi to remain in Trastevere ? "

"He thinks so," replied the lady, "and I have never known him to be wrong."

The next day Raulyn was in Leghorn ; judicious inquiries from the British Consul, aided by a local lawyer, elicited the fact that there was no impediment to his proposed marriage : whatever the guardianship of Francesco Michelozzi might be it was not a legal one ; the Marchesina had inherited without any restrictions the great palace in Rome, the castle in the Apennines, a casino outside Florence, and some few remaining acres of vineyard and orchard. How she contrived to live even in the style she did was marvellous, for the ravaged estate appeared to yield no revenues whatever. Still, whatever she had was clearly in her own hands, and whatever authority the doctor possessed over her must be purely moral and submitted to voluntarily on her part.

Her dilapidated heritage went to Gino Foscari in default of her children, but this could hardly be a matter of much moment to this young man, as he was one of the wealthiest of Roman patricians, and, ironically enough, considering the estimate Raulyn had formed of him, of an austere and enthusiastic disposition, and on the early deaths of his parents had nearly entered the Church.

He was even now supposed to be likely enough one day to change his gorgeous uniform for the robe of a priest.

The family history of the Lambruschini was absolutely clear : it was of an antiquity that made the house of Dyprre appear provincial, and had provided warriors, statesmen,

cardinals, in dignified succession until the *débâcle* of the last Marchese, who, however, had been, like all genial well-bred profligates, much beloved.

His Spanish wife had only been for a brief period in Rome, where she had created a deep impression by the wild splendour of her beauty: she had died at Cordova of an accident; her house, the noble house of Pamira, was also extinct in her daughter save for some holy women in the gloomy convents of the Vera.

There was no record of any ill-health or disease that might be hereditary; Geva Silvestra had been educated in a Roman convent till she was seventeen, and from twenty, when her father died, she had lived between the castle and the palace under the constant surveillance of Francesco Michelozzi and Gino Foscari—the philanthropic doctor and the religious youth.

Raulyn resolved to cut his way secretly and with decision straight through this tangled undergrowth; with injunction to preserve all the discretion possible he arranged for his marriage at the British Consulate.

And he wrote to Caleb Withers, telling him to prepare Dyprre for the homecoming of a mistress.

CHAPTER VII

DURING the short time before their marriage Donna Geva Silvestra and Raulyn met as acquaintances, he sometimes riding beside her barouche or appearing at her sparsely attended receptions; save that she refused to leave Rome, she was docile to the wishes of her guardian, and even in the matter of going to the Apennines she gave way, both on account of the plague in the Trastevere, she said, and the heat and emptiness of the city.

But she begged that she might stay till August 6, for the festival of "La Madonna della Neve" in the Borghese Chapel of Santa Maria Maggiore. Here, on that swooningly hot day of summer, knelt the lady in the chapel glittering with precious alabasters, before the painted picture of S. Luke and the Madonna in a blaze of angelic light, and between the sumptuous tombs of two majestic Popes, one grim and cold, the sinister priest, the other violent and imperious, the dominating type of the warrior.

A hundred candles sparkled in the costly marbles and mosaics, giving them rich reflexes of light, and cast palpitating shadows on the massive marble figures of Clement and Paul.

Despite the cholera and the burning summer weather, the resplendent chapel was well filled; a dark and bowed figure crouched on every cushion during the grandiose ceremonies of the High Mass. Behind them all, in the body of the church, was Raulyn, watching the slender woman in the black hat and cloak, who appeared so rigidly intent on the altar. Her lover watched her through a shower of rose-leaves, for continuously the petals of white roses were cast down from the ceiling, fell like a veil over the worshippers, and clung to their garments and lay thick on the pavement. This was in memory of a vision of the Madonna in a snow-storm which had fallen only on this spot, that, appearing to Pope Tiberias, had caused this church to be founded.

To Raulyn this had been a mere queer pretty legend among many queer pretty legends, but now, absorbed as he was by his own affairs and the coming climax in his life, this simple story became something overwhelming, almost sinister in its sheer survival after so many hundreds of years; and Raulyn could by no means escape the sense of oppression given by his surroundings.

He remembered how, in the bleak little Protestant church at Trawden, he had been depressed by the stark simplicity, the stale clarity of the service, and how his imagination had snatched at the Biblical words—the Queen of Sheba—Paul coming to Rome—Rome.

And now he was in Rome, surrounded by imposing and sensuous beauty, viewing a lofty pageantry staged in magnificent surroundings, and all enclosing a beloved and rare woman soon to be wholly his; yet he was not satisfied.

He felt the same triteness, the same monotony, beneath the gilding and the alabaster, smelt the same faint charnel odours behind the heavy reek of the incense.

The four great prophets in the pendatives of the dome, the gigantic marble figures beneath, the confused colours of saints, emperors, and virgins in the frescoes, all in the luscious, magnificent, worldly rococo taste, the bull-necked Paul V, overwhelming, swollen with power, who built this sensual temple, the azure slow smoke from the censers, and that perpetual, over-sweet shower of white rose-leaves, the chanting

in the thick masculine voice of the priest, all these things combined in an effect that Raulyn could not resist.

He felt drugged, sleepy, and slightly nauseated; he considered that his impetuous marriage was to a woman who was part of all this, who believed passionately in this opulent faith . . . Donna Geva Silvestra at Dyprre! At Trawden Church!

Had not his love of the fantastic, his wilful selection of the strange, led him into folly?

He moved to shake off the influence that was overwhelming him; but the vast basilica extinguished his individuality, and he stood irresolute, troubled and vanquished in the avenue of white marble columns that suppor ed the ancient blazing mosaics; the white-and-gold walls, the crimson-and-purple pavement, the huge porphyry baldacchino before the tribune, with pillars wreathed by gilt leaves and the powerful marble angels, the monumental tombs of popes, bishops, cardinals, all this comprised a dominating splendour, acutely alien, aridly tasteless to the Englishman.

The rose-leaves fell more thickly, the incense smoke rose densely, the chanting seemed to assume feverish fervour; from the now prostrate congregation in the Borghese chapel rose and glided out with inaudible lightness Donna Geva Silvestra.

Jiacinta, the old nurse, grovelling in a luxury of adoration before the lovely altar, overwhelmed by the perfume and the rose-leaves, was taken off her guard, and did not see her mistress leave.

The lady drew a long black veil over her face, and passed quietly out of the western door by the tombs of two Popes.

Raulyn followed her; the sun was like a sword bared to slay in the deserted streets without; the cab Raulyn had hired was waiting patiently in the narrow strip of blue shadow cast by a house opposite.

The lovers crossed the space of blazing light without speaking—and entered the shabby little vehicle with the dirty striped awning; they drove to the railway station, and were in the fast train for Leghorn before the shower of white rose-petals had ceased to fall on the heads of the worshippers in the Borghese Chapel of Santa Maria Maggiore.

CHAPTER VIII

RAULYN DYPRRE had indulged his fantasy before, notably when he had left England, but never so completely, with such utter disregard of all those ideals, codes and conventions in which he had been so carefully trained and that he had discarded slowly, painfully, and almost with reluctance.

And now, in this married life, so absolutely different to anything in his old experience, he had finally escaped from all these ideals, codes and conventions, that had been so austere, so dull, so threadbare, and he was both bewildered, excited and cloyed by the extent of his deliverance. From Leghorn they travelled to Venice ; Raulyn disdained either an obvious flight or an obvious disguise or hiding away, but he yielded very readily to his wife's ardent wish that the marriage should not be announced, that they should live quietly, and that he should not write to either Dr. Michelozzi or Gino Foscari.

On the last point Raulyn, struck in the weakest part of his weakness, made a feeble compromise between his inclination and his desire ; she was to write herself, he said, both to her guardian and her cousin. After some petulance, Geva Silvestra yielded, and her husband himself posted the two slim letters ; no answers disturbed their bridal days, and Raulyn was relieved that these two men whom he both disliked and dreaded had chosen to accept their defeat in silence. Money made their retreat an easy matter : the lady was soon supplied with a maid and lavish appointments ; from the modest hotel in Venice they went to a furnished villa on the Lido, where there were few people, and those not of their world nor likely to know them or even to have heard of them.

When the milder days of September came Geva Silvestra tired of the Villa, but did not seem to wish to go to England yet, and this was Raulyn's mood too ; something in him may have been clogged by the luscious sweetness of these southern days, but he was not ready to end them, and though he quite definitely wished to return to Dyprre, as it were in triumph now and justified, still he was willing enough to postpone responsibility, work and change ; he was conscious of homesickness, but it was of a delicate and placid quality.

And meanwhile he was absorbed by the woman he had married ; he had wilfully undertaken her as a life occupation,

and he at once discovered that she was indeed not likely to give him time for anything else.

His passion for her was of so light and whimsical a quality, founded so on dreams and fantasies, that it soon shuddered, faded, and was dispelled, like morning mist before the light of day.

For Geva Silvestra was not, after all, a creature of fantasy, but some one very obviously human and vital, full of a peculiar force and power, and capable of feelings so intense, of emotions so passionate, of sentiments so deep, that Raulyn was both amazed and confounded, the strongest feeling that had ever been roused in Raulyn was as uncertain as northern starlight by the side of the blaze of noonday sun in the south when compared to the force of his wife's emotions.

And this fury of passion was hidden behind that almost austere elegance that had made him compare her with the porcelain flowers. Even after nearly two months of isolated intimacy with her he could discover, even with his almost prying nervous fastidiousness, no flaw in her elegance, in her delicacy, in her exquisite fineness; there she was all perfection, but behind this loveliness of person and demeanour was the blazing reckless soul, like fire hidden in the heart of a pearl.

She possessed an excellent and cultured intelligence, but it was all, as it were, broken and distorted by caprice, contradiction and emotion; all the control she possessed was in the frail restraint of high breeding; she had never more than the usual southern woman's disregard for masculine standards of honour, and was an adept in trick and intrigue, suspicious, easily offended, unforgiving and revengeful, yet, inconsistent in everything, she was capable of a beautiful trust and a boundless generosity; she had neither knowledge nor wisdom nor experience, yet wit, quickness, and humour; she read European quarterlies as well as French novels, and could sustain with ease an academic discussion on any subject.

She was also profoundly lazy and almost incredibly idle; she appeared never even to have conceived the necessity of any duty or work or obligation beyond the obligation of gracious loveliness. Though haughty in her manner, she was neither proud nor vain, and seemed to give no thought either to her rank or her beauty, and to be entirely indifferent to public admiration or opinion and to the homage of friends and acquaintances. She never even mentioned the people

who had composed her former life, and if Raulyn spoke of her guardian, Gino Foscari, or old Jiacinta, she would merely shrug her shoulders with amused indifference. This was the vague outline of her character as Raulyn was able to understand it, but so crossed by contradictions, split into moods, blurred by irritations and nervousness, that she appeared a being who changed every hour.

But in one thing she did not change : all her varying moods and uncertain humours centred to one point—her passion, love, adoration, for her husband, and—the inevitable result of this in such a temperament—a devastating jealousy. Raulyn noted this with a sense of impending doom.

Even in the very first enchantment of their days together his sensitive spirit nervously spied the fetters beneath the rose-leaves ; he had finally escaped one prison only to enter another ; fled from the bonds of Dyprre to take on the bonds of Geva Silvestra.

She exercised the pitiless tyranny of a jealous idle woman's faithful love, and Raulyn found that the service exacted by Dyprre and all that Dyprre had meant had been freedom compared to the service exacted by his wife ; her love encompassed, cloyed and stifled him ; the soft luscious idleness of the rich autumn days, the luxurious grace of the woman enervated him, bound him, almost enchanted him, never quite ; here was no deep true magic, but a transient spell.

And Raulyn became clear-eyed and clear-headed very soon ; before this second month was over, every day brought some episode, trifling or important, that was another ugly rent in the thin veil of his illusion.

She was remarkably extravagant, but Raulyn had overlooked this, partly because of the considerable wealth at his command, and partly because of his own indifference to money, but one incident struck him like a blow in the face.

She had asked for money—it was the second time in a week —and he gave her, with what he considered lavishness, fifty pounds in Italian notes.

And she, standing there so gracious and lovely, in her black velvet and ermine furs, tossed them back at him with a contemptuous movement of her long hand.

" Why do you keep me so meanly ? " she asked ; and then, for the first time since their marriage, she mentioned her guardian : " Cecco never treated me like this—I never had to ask him——"

"How did he treat you?" asked Raulyn stupidly.

"Every day there was money put in my jewel-case—and then I could buy what I wished and the people went to him for payment."

"Haven't you bought what you wished here?" asked Raulyn.

"But you," said she with fiery disdain, "ask the *price* of things—and you say that you do not like debt, as you call it, when I buy things and tell them to come to you for their money."

"But, Geva," he answered gently, "I do not think that you always buy wisely—you go to these Turks and Jews on the Rialto and they charge anything——"

"What does that matter if I get what pleases me?"

"Dear, these things you buy you often don't look at again—they are given away or lost or broken——"

She interrupted:

"Haven't you got the money?"

"Yes, Geva—of course, but money has both a value and a responsibility." He paused, feeling the hopelessness of any appeal to her angry contempt; he also thought of her father. "If that isn't enough," he added feebly, "I shall have to send to the agents again."

"It isn't enough," said Geva. "The pearl set is two thousand francs, and then the black shawl——"

"But I gave you the money for the black shawl yesterday!" he exclaimed.

"I bought combs with some of that and gave the rest away."

He checked his impatience, and only replied:

"Geva, you must allow me to buy jewels for you—two thousand francs is foolish for a pearl set, it must be rubbish. The shop people here are thieves. I will get you some pearls when we go to Paris, and at home there are all my mother's things which you shall have re-set as you wish."

"I want more money," insisted Geva quickly.

"That is all I have in the house; I've told you, dear—if there is anything you want——"

"Anything I want! Did I not come to you with nothing?"

"But you will not allow me to send to Rome for your possessions, Geva—you should, and must, have them before we leave Italy——"

"Cecco did not answer."

"I must see him."

Geva stamped.

"You try to annoy me. I hate Cecco. I don't wish ever to see Rome again. If this is all the money you have, I'll buy something else with it, and tell them to send the shawl and the pearl set for you to pay."

She gathered up the notes into her long bag purse with the steel bead tassel and walked, with her exquisite poise and flow of drapery, out of the room.

The incident was only one of many, but Raulyn felt himself pulled up sharp.

Her utter unreasonableness, recklessness and extravagance awoke in him more sense of responsibility than he had ever felt before; he went to his desk and cast up roughly what this woman had cost him in less than two months. The sum ran into thousands. Of course he could afford it; there was a great deal of accumulated capital behind him—the result of his own and his father's thrift—and he had never spent a quarter of his income—but this rate of expenditure was ridiculous, grotesque; a life run on these lines would mean mortgages, sales, drawing on capital, in a few years the bankruptcy court. He, who intensely disliked to control anyone, would very sternly have to control his wife's extravagance.

He shrank from an endless prospect of childish scenes.

And what of Dyprre, the household, the social duties, guests, charities—all the tasks that would fall to Lady Dyprre? Raulyn had always taken such things for granted, but now he was married to a woman like Geva he realized their importance.

He remembered the women of his acquaintance—women like Mrs. Myniott—their activities, economies and organizations; how they controlled servants and tenants, entertained, were always accessible, cool, pleasant, dignified, with their household books and household keys, daily prayers, and Sundays at church, ready to help and advise their dependents, employing all their time on a regular system that had been in force in England for nearly a thousand years—trained exactly to their place and keeping it with due decorum.

How alien would Geva show in such a world!

He had perversely wanted her to be startling by reason of her strange exotic beauty, to be a sensation and a wonder in Dyprre, but he did not want her to be laughed at, sneered

at; he did not want Philippa's cool grey eyes to glance at her with pity.

Of course there were expedients. Dyprre had been run by efficient housekeepers during Sir Lambert's long widowhood; this arrangement would have to continue, and Geva treated as a child, a cipher.

And there was Caleb Withers—Raulyn pulled up his thoughts with a smile of self-contempt; her sphere to be managed by a paid servant—his sphere in the hands of the loyal bailiff!

And he and she incompetent, idle, full of whims and caprices, shut up in Dyprre like birds in a gilded cage; he knew she loved him, but love could not fill his life.

Raulyn, looking for an escape, thought of residence in Italy, and then recalled that he knew nothing, nothing of her affairs: this must be remedied before he left Italy. He would send for her lawyer, thrust, as usual, the whole distasteful business on to some one else.

Geva herself was on this matter almost incredibly simple: she did not know the extent of her own estates, the amount of her own income, the terms of her father's will, and the lavish manner in which she had been supplied with money for her personal expenditure seemed entirely inconsistent with her decayed fortunes and the ruined grandeur in which she lived.

Of course it would have been quite simple for Raulyn to have gone either to Gino Foscari at Modena or to Dr. Michelozzi, but he did not wish to see either again, and the fact that neither had answered Geva's letter convinced him that they had been confounded in some contemptible scheme.

It was all distasteful to Raulyn, all blurred, as it were, by the voluptuous atmosphere of his marriage: the church hazed by azure-perfumed smoke, the massive figures of Popes against the glittering background of precious stones, the porphyry columns, the purple pavement, the woman coming towards him with the luscious white rose-leaves clinging to her black shawl, the blazing sun without, and the little hired cab waiting in the strip of violet shade.

He rose impatiently, restlessly, and went to the long window that looked on the canal: his gondola had just returned, and was swaying by the painted poles. Geva sat it in laughing gaily with her maid, a pert creature she called Minetta, who was detested by Raulyn.

The two women were looking at Eastern scarves which they shook out in the sunlight, doubtless purchased out of Raulyn's fifty pounds. He lifted his shoulders and went back to the desk; he must write to his lawyers: some one must come out to take this all in hand.

He heard his wife and the maid run upstairs laughing; Geva opened the door and looked in, the Oriental embroidery trailing over her arm and black dress.

"I have bought a little ape," she said. "Minetta is taking him upstairs, and we are going to make him some clothes out of these!"

Raulyn did not speak; she ran away up the wide stairs, laughing, laughing, laughing—how the woman laughed!

Raulyn began nervously tearing up the paper on which he had been about to write; he knew suddenly that his wife rasped him almost intolerably save at short intervals, and that, as time went on, these intervals would become less and less.

He tried to remember how she loved him, how completely dependent she was on him, how mean and poor he was to be irritated by her failings, and he took another sheet of paper on which to write his letter.

The Venetian manservant opened the door and asked if His Excellency could see a Dr. Michelozzi who waited below.

CHAPTER IX

RAULYN felt a disagreeable shock, yet a furtive sense of relief; there was a certain satisfaction in having his own vagueness and irresolution brought so sharply to an issue.

In the large, dim, faded room, where the sunlight fell through the closed green *persiane*, the two men quietly met.

The doctor wore plain travelling clothes without the slightest touch of eccentricity, and looked what Raulyn had never imagined he could look—haggard and pale; he was also close shaven, which altered his face, accentuating the nobility of features; his charm, about which there was something absolutely radiant, dominated Raulyn again instantly.

"You have given me a great deal of trouble to find you," he said gravely, "and I have only just been able to leave Trastevere—tell me at once, is Geva your wife?"

"Of course," answered Raulyn. "What do you mean? She wrote to you and to her cousin."

"Gino received an envelope addressed in her hand with a blank sheet inside—I nothing at all, as my letters were not sent into the infected area. When I returned to the Via della Rotunda, I also found the blank letter, and traced you through the post-mark."

Raulyn, ashamed, bewildered, made no denial nor protest; he was aware at once that Geva had deceived him.

"I did not know," he said, "but Prince Foscari could have traced us."

"Prince Foscari, by my command, left all to me. He is a boy, and has his own life."

He paused, frowning.

"I am ready," said Raulyn, "to answer anything you like to ask me."

"This marriage—it is regular—not some mere ceremony in a church?"

He spoke so earnestly and sadly that Raulyn could not feel offended.

"We were married before the British Consul at Leghorn and then in a church here to please Geva."

"Oh!" The doctor turned his head away.

"I am taking Geva to England soon," added Raulyn. "I am glad that you have come. I must settle my wife's affairs. I know nothing of them, nothing at all."

"My poor fellow."

"Why do you say that?" demanded the other defiantly. "She is—I ought not to have said I did not know about the blank letters—that was a jest we played together. She has never deceived me."

The doctor looked full at him now.

"You love her?" he asked curiously.

Raulyn gave an uneasy laugh; he was fighting against the power the other man had over him.

"We need not discuss that," he answered; "but there is much else we must talk about."

"Too much," said Dr. Michelozzi, "too much."

"Sit down." Raulyn touched one of the big red chairs, but the doctor remained standing. "I am ready to receive any explanation," he added. "I bear no rancour."

"Rancour?" repeated the doctor severely.

Raulyn flushed.

"The circumstances are peculiar. This lady was kept practically a prisoner, her affairs appear to be in chaos, she has no knowledge of them. She was terrorized, especially on the subject of marriage. I had to take her away secretly, she was so afraid of—her guardian."

"Go on," said the doctor, leaning on the back of the chair.

"You constantly told me of her delicate health—but it is easy to see that she is a robust woman. Prince Foscari warned me—on your behalf, I think—that any proposal I might make would be refused without an explanation."

"Poor Gino," murmured Dr. Michelozzi.

"And he confirmed what Geva had previously told me—that you yourself, Dr. Michelozzi, were her suitor."

Raulyn said this with a certain desperation, as if he dragged some reluctant monster into the daylight.

But the doctor only said, without looking round:

"Poor Geva."

Raulyn was finding his self-control a difficulty, and now something happened that completely shattered his courage. The door was flung open and his wife entered, followed by the giggling maid.

Geva wore black satin, a deep lace collar, and a huge pearl comb; she dragged by the hand a large monkey tied up in gaudy scarves that gibbered up at her, half in malice, half in fright; the maid, close behind, kept lightly beating the animal with a feathered fan.

"Look, Raulyn, how splendid he is!" she cried on a high note; then, as she entered, she saw Francesco Michelozzi.

Instantly her hectic gaiety was changed to a blank terror; she let go of the animal, who scampered ludicrously on all fours round the big room, trailing the bright scarves, and she crouched back against the door, in an attitude as if she was about to drop on her knees.

"Oh, Cecco! Cecco!" she whispered in the accents of pure fear. The doctor did not move, but, holding his hat and gloves, continued to lean over the back of the grandiose red chair, without looking at either the man or the woman.

"I'm sorry—I didn't mean to—forgive me," babbled Geva, and was really about to fall on her knees when Raulyn came forward and caught hold of her arm; he was now definitely roused and angry.

"Geva, what do you mean? You are my wife. You have done no wrong. Why should you ask forgiveness of

anyone ?" Then, as she continued to sob and shudder in his grasp: "This man has no power over you. You are Lady Dyprre."

Ignoring him, pale and passionate, she flung out her clasped hands towards the doctor and strove to cast herself on her knees, showing the abject terror of a cowed child.

"For God's sake speak to her——" cried Raulyn.

Then the doctor turned and looked at her; his face was slightly distorted, but wore a look of infinite compassion.

"Go upstairs, Geva," he said quietly. "Everything is well. Jiacinta will come soon—she is now on the way. I will see you before I go—now I must talk to Sir Raulyn. I am not angry with you—but go."

Geva was calmed instantly; the frightened maid had captured the monkey, and now followed her mistress out of the room; for Geva had at once left her husband's support and turned through the open door.

"What does this mean ?" asked Raulyn with weary anger. "Why do you come here to make this pantomime ? I am tired of these mysteries and evasions! There are some questions you must answer me."

"Any you please. And at once."

But Raulyn, as always, was unready—he did not know of what he accused Francesco Michelozzi.

He caught at the only tangible thing that offered.

"My wife's affairs are in confusion—she knows nothing of them—to whom shall I go for an account ?"

"To me."

"I ask it then—what is her property and income ?"

"She has neither."

"Neither ?" exclaimed Raulyn stupidly.

"Her father died so heavily involved that everything was sold—even the Castle and the Palace."

"But she lived in these places—and her money ?"

"It was I who bought this property—bought it for her—you understand, Sir Raulyn, for my friend's daughter. Her income was supplied by Gino Foscari and myself," he added simply.

Raulyn was completely baffled, incredulous, afraid.

"This does not seem possible," he muttered.

"I can prove it to you, whenever you wish."

"And she knows nothing ?"

"Nothing.'

"And the world knows nothing?"

"One does not talk of these things."

"What is this power you have over her?" asked Raulyn, still fighting in the dark, the dreadful dark.

"The power of a doctor over his patient."

As he spoke he put his hand to his head as if he was tired.

"I suppose you do love her," said Raulyn, goaded at last out of his deep reserve.

"Yes—in a fashion I love her. I loved her father——"

"This to my face. So coolly!"

The doctor sighed.

"This is terrible. I blame myself so deeply, so entirely," he said. "I ought to have foreseen more clearly, to have acted more decisively. I allowed myself to become absorbed in other things—I relaxed my watch. And I never," he added, not bitterly or harshly, but with tenderness, "thought you were a fool."

Raulyn stopped short in his restless walking about the dim room.

"You think me a fool?" he asked sharply.

"My poor fellow, I am afraid that you have been a fool. And not the fool of love and not the fool of passion—the fool of fantasy."

This was so deadly true that Raulyn felt a great relief as if some one had let the fragrant outer air in on his imprisoned heart and soul.

All his defences were down; he was a miserable man standing before his confessor.

"I must know," continued the doctor softly, "before I speak further—if I am right. Have you been happy with Geva?"

"No," said Raulyn dully.

"You can neither understand nor manage her?"

"No."

The doctor rose impetuously and walked up and down the room.

"Do you want to leave her?" he asked, frowning.

"Leave her? That never occurred to me. She is my wife."

"God have mercy upon us all," muttered the doctor. "I see no way out—none. A church marriage—that could have been annulled—but before the English Consul, you say?"

"Yes." Raulyn spoke through dry lips; he was sick with fear.

"You'll need some courage," said Francesco Michelozzi.

Raulyn remembered that word, and how his father had used it when persuading him to remain in Dyprre.

"Tell me what you must," he answered sombrely.

He no longer felt any distrust or suspicion of this man; it seemed now impossible to think that he had ever done so. Instead there was, through all his apprehension, a vast relief in this dealing with a powerful masculine intelligence after two months of isolation with feminine folly.

He stood stripped of many uneasy pretences; his way might lie desolate before him, but at least it was clear.

"Tell me what I must do," he said.

"I have not yet told you what you have done."

The glance of the two men met: pure anguished pity in that of the elder; pure anguished dread in that of the younger.

"What have I done?" asked Raulyn. "What is it I have got upstairs?" he added in a lower tone, coming nearer.

"A mad woman," answered the doctor steadily. "A poor mad woman."

CHAPTER X

RAULYN'S instant sensation was that this tremendous thing had not been said; it was like some one opening a door on to incredible ghastliness, slamming it to, and standing with his back to it, pretending that it had never been opened.

He began to talk, very loud and fast—the contrary of his usual habit.

"Where are you staying, doctor? Would you care to come here? The hotels are intolerable in Venice. I detest Venice. We have a great deal to discuss. I think I detest Italy. I—*we* must return to England very soon."

"I will stay here," answered the doctor gently from the depths of his infinite compassion. "We will advise together as to what must be done."

Raulyn went to the window and violently pulled up the *persiane*; the light from the sky and the light reflected from the water flooded into the big dim room, and ravaged with blank brightness his thin dark face; a middle-aged face now, hollowed and seared before it need have been, still remarkable for that overfine grace that marked a subtle weakness.

"I have thought vilely of you," he said, turning about swiftly. "I believed that you were a charlatan."

"Oh, that!" The doctor lifted his hand and let it fall.

"I apologize. I crave your pardon," continued Raulyn, with soft violence. "I do not know what I can say to you. I must return to England," he added irrelevantly.

"You cannot take Geva to England," said the doctor. "Never heed what you thought of me. Come here and sit down. Come, Sir Raulyn, you must face this."

He obeyed, sank slackly into the opulent red velvet chair, and put his thin hands before his face.

Through the open window floated the prolonged laughter of a woman, coming brokenly from an upper room.

Raulyn shuddered without restraint.

"Mad," he whispered behind his hand. "Mad, you said."

"I do not know if I should tell you all her story," said the doctor quietly, "it would be very alien to you."

"If it is dreadful—don't."

"It is dreadful."

"Then—in mercy, leave me in ignorance. She is my wife."

"A shirker," said Francesco Michelozzi softly. "Well, each man to his own way—but some things you must know, some things you must face."

"No," muttered Raulyn, "no. I'll go on as I am. I don't want to know anything."

"That is not possible, Sir Raulyn. Geva, as you remind yourself, is your wife. To a man of your type that means a great deal."

Even through his misery Raulyn was conscious of the curious strangeness of this point of view, as if there might be, and were, many men to whom "wife" meant nothing.

"You took her away from me," continued the doctor, "behind my back. You have ruined the long effort I and Gino Foscari made to keep this sad secret, known only to a few faithful friends. It is a great family, Sir Raulyn, and the pride of many is involved in keeping this last poor flower on a decayed spent tree inviolate from scorn and pain. Geva was happy, as happy as I could make her, in a world of illusion, carefully built for her; Jiacinta was her nurse and watch—we gave her a great semblance of liberty, as much as we dared, too much as I now find, too much."

"You should have told me," muttered Raulyn.

"If I had been there at the crisis, I should have seen what was happening and told you. But Gino Foscari, poor boy, could not read you—he is a mystic, without any experience. And you practically lied to him, you know," added the doctor with increased gentleness; "you told him that you had no intention of asking for Geva's hand. I should have read you—but Gino took you literally."

Raulyn bowed his head still lower; he had lied—lied in word and deed; there was nothing to be said.

The pleasant low voice, speaking the delicate and flowing Italian, continued with the exquisite tenderness of the skilled surgeon approaching a wound.

"I blame myself. I saw you much with Geva. But never, I thought, alone. And I knew you were not in love with her; I believed that you would leave Rome and forget a fantasy. And she, poor, poor child——"

He broke off and Raulyn took him up, hoarsely:

"Didn't you see," he said, "you who know her so well, that she was becoming fond of me?"

"Geva has had a fancy for so many men—in that, as in everything, she is not responsible."

Raulyn sat dumb, his hands falling between his knees.

The immensity of his misfortune was overwhelming him; gradually, like a gigantic thundercloud approaching a warm clear landscape, it was blotting out all light and air from his life.

But he fought against the darkness.

"I don't believe it was, is—fancy. I've lived with her two months." The foreign language he spoke helped him to use a word avoided by Englishmen. "I believe she loves me."

"Ah—love!" said the doctor. "We so misuse that term . . . perhaps she does love you—if so, it is very piteous—she, amid her clouds of terror, striving for her woman's heritage."

Again Raulyn struggled against his fate.

"Mad, you say? Insane? She's been uncontrolled, violent, unreasonable—but *mad*."

The doctor went to the window and let down the *persiane*; the room was again dim, full of that greenish filtered light.

"She is insane," he answered, coming up behind the chair where Raulyn was huddled, and laying a firm hand on his shoulder. "There was insanity in her mother's family, a long record of religious mania, fanatic cruelty, and unbalanced

passions. Her mother first showed insanity about the time of her birth, provoked by jealousy of her husband; she reacted from this into a passion for another man; on suspicion of this man's infidelity she attempted to kill him, on being thwarted and put under restraint, committed suicide—under circumstances of great horror. On the urgent request of the Marchese, I from the first took charge of the child."

"Geva?" stammered Raulyn. "The child was Geva?"

"Geva—about ten years old when her mother died. Jiacinta, a nurse who had worked at these cases for years, was put in charge—I was a very young man at this time, hardly more than a student, but the Marchese had, somehow, great confidence in me. I had been working under Dr. Kratz at Leipzig, and he was one of the first to study this type of hereditary insanity. The Marchese confided to me the story of his wife, and begged me to do what I could for the child; she was brought to Rome and given the usual convent education, but always with Jiacinta in attendance—and under my observation. From the age of eleven the child, always wayward, nervous and passionate, showed symptoms of insanity."

Raulyn moved uneasily, but the doctor's hand closed more firmly on his shoulder.

"Hear me out, and then we need not talk of it again. I will not give you a medical *dossier*—the record of fits, visions, religious enthusiasm, hectic love affairs, furtive cruelties, aberrations—by seventeen Geva was a lunatic with homicidal tendencies, but also, God help us, a healthy, lovely, brilliant and fascinating woman, who by infinite care could be kept almost normal—*if entirely isolated from passion and emotion.*

"Her father had hoped for a complete cure; a consultation of the first alienists in Europe confirmed my opinion that this was out of the question.

"The Marchese, a sensitive man, whose power of resistance was weakened by a life of indulgence, could not withstand this shock; he plunged deeper into a reckless dissipation that completed his financial ruin, and during an attack of mania his daughter had during a brief infatuation for Gino Foscari—who should have been, in the usual way, her husband—the Marchese took his own life by an overdose of morphia."

"I did not think," muttered Raulyn through stiff lips, "that such things were possible, possible—and it was all hushed up—I heard a different story——"

"So much is hushed up, every day," answered the doctor,

"so much! Probably only physicians and lawyers know how much. But for you this story would have remained in the possession of a few people who would never have breathed it—the Marchese had many loyal friends—and many love Geva. Under the clouded intellect is a noble character, high-bred and delicate, under the disordered emotions a tender, faithful heart—we hoped to keep her from open disaster, moderately happy—but now!"

"What have I done?" murmured Raulyn, overwhelmed. "What have I done?"

"I don't know," replied the other man with the first trace of bitterness that he had shown; "if you have made her love you—I don't know——"

"You mean——"

"She cannot well bear it."

Then to Raulyn, out of his anguish, despair and terror, came a thought that was like a rescuing angel descending into the pit—the thought of self-sacrifice; he thrilled to it as he had thrilled on the day when he had gone to S. Benedict's Church at Trastevere, the day when he had first met Dr. Michelozzi, and through him, Geva.

But then it had been an abstract feeling, the mere desire to escape from a perplexing world; now it was a definite aspiration born of agony.

"Perhaps I could make her happy," he said, "make atonement—that way. I would give my life up to it—perhaps——"

And he felt a glow of pleasure at the prospect of a complete abnegation in the service of Geva.

But the doctor answered sternly:

"How can you make her happy? If she loves you—it is impossible. You are her husband. And she must never have any children."

At this the darkness, lit so briefly, closed again on Raulyn.

He remembered Dyprre, his father, the wide heirless lands, Philippa—Piers Cantelowe, watching him . . . the long years to be lived through. His pain was grotesque.

"Of course," he mumbled foolishly, "of course."

"And Geva will want children."

"She does," came from Raulyn; "she does—and I——"

"And you. You are a wealthy man, something in your own country, I think. But this must not be—the risk is too terrible. I have told you how it broke the Marchese up. And you are not so strong as he. You could not face it.

And for the sake of humanity it must not be. You have no right to entail this fearful heritage on another creature."

"I understand," said Raulyn, braced to his doom; "I understand. Thank you."

It was the gesture of one who holds himself courteously towards his executioner.

Dr. Michelozzi took away his hand and turned into the shadows; he too had his secret agony.

Raulyn rose, with laboured movements; his heart seemed to him to be slurring every beat and fluttering only in a turbulent quiver; the withdrawal, for the moment, of the personality of the other man left him to flounder helplessly in unfathomed waters of despair.

Detached aspects of his misfortune showed themselves before him crudely like separate facts.

He could not go home—not ever go home save furtively, on a fleeting visit, alone. He could never have any children, not children who could inherit Dyprre. He could never face Piers with pride, nor Philippa with serenity; he could never have life out among his equals.

He was tied, gagged, bound, before a nightmare fate.

The same sensitive weakness that had made him clutch with ardour at the prospect of self-immolation now made him snatch at any chance of escape . . . could she not go back to Rome . . . and he get away . . . free?

Aloud he said:

"Shall she not return to her home? To live as if this had never happened? I will never see her again if you wish."

And out of the shadow the older man answered ironically:

"You said that she loved you."

Raulyn turned on him.

"What do you want me to do? I'm trapped—grinning through bars, huddled at the back of my cage; give me freedom, or wring my neck——"

He heard the hysteric note in his own voice—like a woman's voice—like Geva's laugh; he put his hand to his mouth and his eyes rounded with fright.

Geva entered.

They had not heard her approach, nor even the opening of the door.

She stood there suddenly before them, like the embodiment of the thought of each.

Radiant now, the forgiven child, deliciously impertinent again, she had decked herself out for this festival of reconciliation in a gown of white muslin branched with silver and flowing full from the golden sash ; in her hair was the filigree gold comb, and over her shoulders the *point de Venise* shawl that had been among Raulyn's reckless bridal gifts.

Her delicate head was held high, and she was laughing ; even to one who did not know her story there would have appeared something poignant in her sweetness, something too vivid in her vitality, too sharp and clear in her lovely personality, as if some strange fire had worn away her likeness to her kind.

To Raulyn she seemed like a flame dancing on the edge of doom, that lit the intense blackness beyond. And he could not speak.

But Francesco Michelozzi came forward at once.

" Ah ! I am glad that you are back, Cecco ! And Jiacinta is coming, too ? " said Geva. " She is better than Minetta, who can never do my hair well, Cecco." She took his hand. " Are you staying here, with us ? "

" Yes, Geva, for awhile at least. Are you happy here ? And well ? "

" Oh, happy, happy ! But sometimes I had those headaches. I think I was troubled, Cecco, thinking of you, and wondering if you would be angry with me for running away. I was sure that you would be, and therefore I would not allow Raulyn to tell you."

These childish words were spoken with the grace and finish of a woman, and Raulyn listened to them with a crazy sense of unreality . . . it *could* not be true, the monstrous horror, it *wasn't* true.

" I have never been angry with you, Geva," replied the doctor, with no blemish in his beautiful serenity ; " but you should have told me—always, Geva, tell me everything."

A vague trouble clouded her aspect.

" I'm trying to remember quite why I didn't tell you," she answered.

" Don't. Let us think only of to-day. Shall we have a *festa*, Geva ? Venice is new to you. I can take you to some places that tourists do not find."

Raulyn dumbly accused him of too steady a nerve, of a calm that became heartlessness.

For himself, he was vacantly mute, endeavouring to steady

shivering soul, quivering nerves, sitting in the big red chair staring at the devastation embodied in the form of his wife.

Yet still there was something in him that kept saying: "*It is not true.*"

Then Geva, clingling lightly to the doctor, and looking up at him, said:

"Come up and see my monkey. Minetta cried and went away. I've been putting pins in him—did you hear me laugh?"

Raulyn had heard her laugh.

And now he knew that it was true.

CHAPTER XI

THE days were externally the same save for an added order and peace. Jiacinta returned quietly to her charge, Minetta was dismissed, and a sober elderly woman took her place. Under the gentle hand of accustomed authority Geva became more reasonable, her extravagance was controlled, her moods dealt with, her tempers controlled with infinite tact, skill, and experience; the monkey disappeared, and she did not ask about it: all her life she had been kept without pets, and she accepted this fiat as she had accepted so many others; her rebellions were brief and aimless, as if she had neither memory nor any capacity of planning for, or even dreaming of, the future.

Dr. Michelozzi told Raulyn that she was more happy and more normal than he had ever known her—"Nearer a sane woman," he said. "But you," he added, "you cannot stand it—it is breaking you up, my poor fellow."

Raulyn neither protested his courage nor resented the expression of sympathy; the situation was "breaking him up," and he came to lean heavily on the elder man. It was all transient, he knew: Francesco Michelozzi could not stay with them for ever, or even for long; he must make some compromise about the question of Dyprre, he must adjust his relations with his wife, he must think of something, *something* to fill the long years ahead. Meanwhile, during the lovely September and October weather, he was passive in his misery, living through the days somehow—thrusting all issues into a dubious future.

His first instinct had been to thrust off and utterly discard

Geva; but she, as he knew, as he had said, loved him. He filled her world, illuminated her sky, circled her horizon; and she was confident of a returned love; she clung to him, exacted every minute from him with more than the usual jealousy of a Southern woman: he had to live with her, eat with her, share her amusements, her gondola rides, her walks, her devotions in the grandiose churches; he had to sleep beside her, lying awake, watchful, imagining the fair peaceful creature, silent in her slumbers, some monster that would suddenly rise up and scatter his wits by horror. For Raulyn could not regard Geva as her friends regarded her—with pity, with love, with respect; she had become for him a thing outside consideration. He did not see her as a gracious, sweet, even noble being, clouded and warped by a disease that was no fault of her own, but as a thing hardly human, hardly belonging to this world. None of Francesco Michelozzi's assurances comforted him; the weakness, the morbidity, the fantasy in him created an unspeakable terror round the lovely figure of his wife; to him she moved in lambent flames of nightmare, and not his entire stock of logic and reason could suffice him to allay the ghastly dreads and fears with which her mere presence inspired him; yet she was—and his outer eye marked it with bitterness—so exquisite, so fine, often so gay, being, as Dr. Michelozzi said pathetically, so "good."

Towards the end of October, when Geva was out with the nurse in the gondola on one of her visits to the shops and booths so attractive with Oriental gauds (Dr. Michelozzi had circumvented her extravagance by visits to the shop-keepers, and most of her purchases went back again, a simple expedient that had never occurred to Raulyn), Raulyn endeavoured to force himself to face the future.

He had been spurred to this by a letter from a most unexpected source.

A letter from Philippa, from Mrs. Cantelowe. She had got his address from Caleb Withers, and she wrote in a vein of the lightest yet most assured friendship; wondering a little, but not unduly, at his long silence, and sending her husband's cordial good wishes.

She had not, she said, been very well, and the doctor thought that she should escape the long chill English winter. She had never been abroad, and the thought was very exciting; the doctor had suggested Italy, and Piers had suggested Rome or Venice or Florence.

She had thought of Rome—and Piers (how often she mentioned Piers !) had said she must write to Raulyn and he would tell them of a house, a villa ?—what was it one took ? She did not want an hotel.

Her parents would join them later ; it would be very pleasant to be altogether again and they could tell him the "news" of the neighbourhood ; Dyprre was looking splendid, Mr. Withers, Piers said, was an excellent man.

Would it not be delightful for them to meet again ?

And she was : "Yours very sincerely, Philippa Cantelowe."

To read this letter was almost to hear her gentle high-bred voice, to feel her delicate presence ; Raulyn experienced a convulsive reaction towards his own people, his own place ; Italy sickened him—*sickened.*

He wanted her, to see Philippa, even at the price of seeing her as the wife of Piers Cantelowe ; he felt in his loneliness and his humiliation, even, as he sensed it, his degradation, that if he could just see and perhaps speak to Philippa for an hour or so a day, he would be able to endure his life.

Dear, kind Philippa !

Perhaps she was unhappy, almost as unhappy as he was. He had never liked Piers ; he believed that Piers could be hateful to a woman ; and she had cared for him, Raulyn Dyprre, the man every one said she ought to marry : he was nearly quite sure that she had cared. And he almost relished her possible unhappiness thinking of the bond that it would be between them.

The vagueness of the future now settled into definite shapes ; he could return with Geva to Rome, to the old palace that he would make habitable and pleasant. He would find some charming place for the Cantelowes, Geva would be relegated more and more to Dr. Michelozzi and Jiacinta, and he would be free, for one winter at least, to take up some normal life gladdened by the presence of Philippa.

And there need be no galling sense of obligations to these Italians, for he would pay them lavishly, extravagantly.

It was the first sparkle in his days since Dr. Michelozzi had come to Venice.

Of course there was always Dyprre, like a monster waiting for him in the background ; but still—*waiting.*

For the next few months, at least, there might be some peace and some ease ; his thoughts even glimpsed ahead to the possibility of thrusting Geva back into the entire charge

of Dr. Michelozzi and returning alone to England; willingly would he settle on her half his income if this could be achieved.

He stood on the steps washed by the sea-water and green with the sea-weed and watched his wife return.

She lay idly in the *feltzi*, in her graceful black attire, with a cross of cut steel gently rising on her breast, and long ear-rings of cut steel lying against her smooth cheeks; the black hair was loosened on the satin cushions, and her eyes were languidly closed.

Beside her lay a spray of tuberoses and a gilt basket full of dried figs, packets of comfits and cut and gilded crystal phials full of attar of roses.

Scarcely had Raulyn ever seen her without these childish toys, these exotic flowers; never again could he regard with equanimity the frivolities of life.

As he looked at her now, he would not be merciful to her, for all the infantile beauty, for all the delicate pathos of her repose; he was not pitiful towards her, he could not be; she was witch and vampire under this frail disguise.

Nor even when she opened her eyes and her whole being lit at sight of him, when she sprang up and to him as he stood waiting, did he quiver with anything but aversion.

Jiacinta, following, asked him in her usual even, respectful tones if the doctor was in?

Raulyn disliked this woman, secret gaoler, confidante of his hidden horror, but he always tried to conciliate her, from a sense of justice and a sense of fear.

He answered, no.

After all, they did not see so much of the doctor who had discovered a thousand friends, a thousand interests in Venice, none of which would Raulyn share.

"It does not matter," said the woman, "but would His Excellency tell the Signor dottore that I would like to see him when he does return?"

Raulyn's wife was clinging to his arm; but she seemed drowsy and gave no heed to this conversation; she was pulling the tuberoses to pieces and scattering them on the wet step, then setting her tiny heels on the luscious waxy blooms.

"Is—anything wrong?" he could not forbear the frightened whisper.

But Jiacinta said, Oh, no, there was nothing wrong, only she would like to see the doctor as soon as possible.

Geva went upstairs to her, *their* great chamber with the leather hangings; she said she was tired, and the afternoon was very hot.

Raulyn, stopping on the landing by the *piano nobile*, watched her go up the great stairs, the sombre nurse following her with the gilded basket of sweets and perfume.

As long as she was in sight she kept turning back with loving looks, kissing her hand to him, so radiant in her exotic coquetry, so fine in her distinguished grace; but Raulyn shuddered at her, shuddered in his soul.

He was sitting at the ormulu desk, dreaming pleasantly over his letter to Philippa, when Dr. Michelozzi came in.

Raulyn began at once about his plan for the winter, began with a haste that was almost trepidation.

"Doctor, I thought I would return to Rome for the winter. It would interest me to have the Palazzo Lambruschini done up. We are not comfortable here. Geva will be more happy in her own surroundings. And," he added rapidly, "some friends from England would like to stay in Rome for a few months—that would be pleasant for me."

"Who are these friends?" asked the doctor without the cordiality for which Raulyn had hoped. "Geva must live most quietly, in her accustomed fashion."

Raulyn resented this; he knew that his misfortune was his own fault, but he could not shake off the sensation of having been cornered—trapped. And in his resentment and his weakness he suggested a lie, as he had suggested a lie to Gino Foscari.

"A cousin and neighbour of mine and his wife," he answered coldly. "Piers is my own age—almost my nearest friend."

"Your sort?"

Raulyn laughed vexedly:

"Good heavens, no—a farmer, an athlete—a big jolly fellow."

"That type never does any harm anywhere," replied the doctor. "And his wife?"

Raulyn went deeper into his implied falsehood:

"Mrs. Cantelowe is the same as Piers—the daughter of a neighbour. They lost an only child and she has never quite recovered from it—so her husband suggests I find a house for them in Rome."

So he conveyed, and knew that he conveyed, that Piers, not his wife, had written, and that Philippa was practically a stranger to him.

"Nice, well-bred, wealthy English people, doing a little globe-trotting, let them come and you spend this winter in Rome with them—why not?" said the doctor pleasantly.

And Raulyn knew that if he had said that this was the woman he ought to have married, the woman he believed cared for him, the woman he was longing to see, and who was, he thought, as miserably mated as himself, the doctor would have protested hotly against the Roman visit, nay, have used arguments that would have rendered it impossible.

But Raulyn shut away his conscience and continued, with a certain coldness.

"And perhaps in the spring I can return alone to Dyprre, leaving Geva in your charge."

The doctor looked at him keenly:

"That depends on Geva. You cannot leave her if she looks to you as she is looking now. That would be to shirk a grave responsibility."

Raulyn bit his lip.

"You put a burden on me," he said.

"I?" answered the other quietly, "I put a burden on you?"

Raulyn was silent.

"I am not really concerned with you," continued the doctor. "You were never a charge of mine, not put into my care by anyone I loved. You are a stranger to me. And a man. Wealthy, young and strong. Geva is still my concern, a woman, penniless, helpless—always on the verge of disaster."

Raulyn braced himself.

"I am glad you have spoken of money—I shall, of course, make the fullest settlements on Lady Dyprre. And," he added with a rather awkward delicacy, "I will purchase what she thinks her property from you on your own terms, of course—and for what I owe you——"

He found it difficult to bring this sentence to a graceful conclusion, and the doctor interrupted him with a disconcerting simplicity.

"The property is my marriage present to Geva. Gino Foscari is a very rich man and you cannot talk of repaying him. As for what you owe me—nothing. I am, for many reasons, bound to do what I can for Geva. And I also, as it happens, am a rich man."

"I should not have mentioned it," replied Raulyn stiffly, "if you had not reminded me that I was a stranger to you."

But his eyes were ashamed and he was remembering what vile thoughts he had had of this man.

"This obligation is also a burden to me," he added.

"Why? What I do I do for Geva. It should not touch you. And you will naturally provide for her—as you wish. She is likely," he added gently, "to outlive you and me—she is much our junior and a healthy woman."

Raulyn did not reply; he was standing by the desk and he glanced down at the sheet of paper on which he had intended to write to Philippa.

The doctor saw the look and said instantly:

"Write to your friend and tell him to come to Rome."

This pronoun made Raulyn wince, but he answered, still coldly:

"I do not think that my cousin will stay long abroad. He is so absorbed in his place."

"Well, even a short visit will put you in touch with things at home——"

"Home!" echoed Raulyn.

Dr. Michelozzi smiled.

"How often did I tell you to go back when the way was free? And you would not."

Raulyn picked up the sheet of paper and began tearing it across.

"I must go out again," said the doctor. "I promised to attend a consultation at four——"

Then Raulyn remembered what Jiacinta had said to him on the steps.

"The nurse—old Jiacinta told me that she would like to see you on your return. I forgot it till now. I do not think it anything of importance."

But the doctor did not take the matter lightly.

"Wished to see me? Are they upstairs?"

"Yes," answered Raulyn wearily.

"I will go at once."

Raulyn was glad to be alone; he sat down again to his letter.

How pleasant to write to her!

How pleasant to picture her opening his letter in the good bright room looking on the austere woods of English autumn with the neatly ordered table before her, the shining silver, the gleaming damask, the vase of winter violets—all as she had not seen it for years, yes, years now.

He began uneasily:

"My dear Philippa"—why had she put "Philippa Cantelowe"? she, his cousin's wife, his childhood's friend. "My dear Philippa"—the flourish from the "a" underlined the name.

He sat dreaming awhile, of England, and of the woman who was like an epitome of England.

Then he began to write hurriedly.

Of course he could find them a villa, he intended to be in Rome himself all the winter, it would be delightful to have them, she would like the climate, and there was some decent hunting for Piers on the Compagna; he was returning to Rome shortly, with——

Here he stopped; Philippa did not know that he was married; he would have to tell her that; well, why not? she had married first.

—"with my wife, the Marchesina Geva Silvestra Lambruschini——"

The doctor returned; Raulyn, looking round from his letter, frowned at the interruption, but there was a stillness about the other man that chilled his irritation.

"Is Geva ill?" he asked swiftly.

"No. She—you—she is going to have a child. I did not find you in time," said Dr. Michelozzi strongly. "She is going to have a child, and I left her crying for joy."

CHAPTER XII

THEY faced the thing out then like two enemies who have been circling round trees looking for each other and suddenly rush together in the open; only Francesco Michelozzi had always been in the open and Raulyn had been very deep in his hiding from which he was now driven by a legion-headed demon called *fear*.

"I will not go through with it," he said violently. "You must take her away and do what you can. It is impossible for me to stand by. It is like a curse."

And he thought that this horribly grotesque situation did seem like a judgment, and one in which others besides himself were involved. He had refused to marry Philippa, to give Dyprre and Myniott a mistress and an heir that way; and

her son had died and he was to be parent to some monster that would shame him and shame Dyprre.

"I *am* cursed," he added quickly. "I always felt it—but I thought it was waiting at home. I fled from it really, and meet it here!"

"The curse is your own disposition," replied Dr. Michelozzi; "that is the only kind of curse there is anywhere for anyone."

"You blame me?" asked Raulyn angrily.

"Well, how many men would have married Geva under the circumstances that you married her? How many men, even of your rank, leave large possessions, to wander Europe?"

"You think that I have invited my fate?" asked Raulyn resentfully.

"I do. And I think that you must stand up to it—if you don't——"

"If I don't?" challenged Raulyn grimly. "I tell you that I *can't*. I've endured as much as I can already—I'm going to pieces—you said yourself that it was breaking me up."

"You must break," returned the doctor quietly. "I am thinking of Geva."

"Do you suppose that I can forget her? That is what I won't face—Geva——"

"What do you think will happen? The child won't be a deformity or an idiot, it might be as sane as you or I—these things are beyond any skill to determine."

"Might be!" repeated Raulyn bitterly. "My child might be sane!"

"Yes, *your* child, sane or no."

"I will fulfil my obligations, but I must get away now. I am not going to wait here all these months."

"You intend to forsake Geva at this moment? To reveal to her now that you detest her? That indeed is to destroy her reason and that of the child—perhaps the life of both."

"Perhaps that would be the happier fate for them."

"Perhaps. But you would be a double murderer."

Raulyn turned on him: pausing in his walk and standing erect and quivering.

"You expect me to stay here and play the delighted devoted husband?"

"I do."

"And if I don't?"

"If you don't, then it *is* damnation for you. You must see that. To shirk, to know you've shirked, *that's* the only hell. A man like you would know—if you left her now, on *any* excuse, I should have a lunatic to deal with. And you, who can't face things, you'd shoot yourself before the child was born."

"I suppose I should," said Raulyn. "I've thought of it."

"Suicide is a fool's way out of a difficulty. You are not a fool. You must see that there are other people in this besides yourself. That poor girl upstairs, making her first list of baby clothes with such joy, loves you—not just with hysterical caprice, but with genuine devotion. She is sane enough now, I think that it is in your power to keep her so."

"Do not thrust that responsibility on me as well as everything else!"

"You took the responsibility. I tell you what I believe," replied the doctor quietly, "that if she is not provoked or excited or disturbed she may be saved by her love and her maternity, the danger has always been through the emotions, and now she is calm and happy."

Raulyn at once thought of the coming of Philippa and there saw peril; but he hid this deep in his tortured heart, as a sweet consolation that he would not, for any consideration, relinquish.

"And the child?" he asked dully.

"The child will be as the mother," replied the doctor. "The happiness of Geva is your best chance for your child."

Raulyn was silent; nothing kindly stirred in him at the thought of the child, nothing but dread and terror; he could not dissociate this terrible heir from his desertion of Dyprre and of Philippa and the fear of a punishment or revenge to be fulfilled by this means.

"And you can find your salvation this way also," added Dr. Michelozzi firmly, "even, perhaps, happiness also."

"Happiness—amid all this devildom!" cried Raulyn fiercely.

"Yes—it's *fun* fighting devildoms, *fun*. You've got something in your life at last. Something besides dreams and comfort and fantasy. Here is your definite reality, something to pit yourself against even if it is a horror, even if it is a tragedy—what had you before? A blank.

"Those are your devils—negation, cowardice, ignorance. There is nothing else to fear."

Raulyn stood silent, rebellious: as once he had stood silent and rebellious before his father, resenting hotly, now as then, the burden Fate put upon his spirit, seeking now, as then, to evade this burden.

"And you can get beauty out of this," continued Francesco Michelozzi. "She is lovely, the poor child, with her hopes and her joy—it is as if her spirit, always darkened by clouds, had sailed above them."

"Now perhaps," replied Raulyn bitterly, "but when she has her child? You have never allowed her to keep an animal—you recall the ape? She must be watched, I take it separated, probably at once, from her wretched infant——"

"I do not know," said the doctor, and there was a lower note in his voice, for the first time a touch of wistfulness. "One hopes."

"But you can give me no promise?"

"Why should I give you promises?" Francesco Michelozzi spoke now with a force that was not anger, yet a strong reproach. "Can you think of nothing but yourself? You could not have dreamt to be always secure from everything —to never pay any price for indulging your whims."

"But this!" cried Raulyn. "It is the most unheard-of, most unlooked-for chance! Who could have expected to be caught in such a snare——"

"Answer me this," interrupted the other man. "When I came to Venice, were you not, apart from the secret that I told you—weary of Geva?"

Raulyn flushed and bit his unsteady lip nervously.

"You were weary of your marriage," repeated the doctor. "You wanted to get out of it. Well, you can't."

With bitter honesty Raulyn answered:

"Yes, I was tired of it all—of Geva—of Italy."

"As you tired of England?"

"Yes."

"Did no one try to hold you in England, in your own place?"

"Yes—my father."

"But he let you go?"

"Yes again, as you see, he was indifferent really, I think."

"Well, I am not indifferent, and I shall not let you go."

Raulyn again allowed himself to think of Philippa's visit as a possible way of escape from the intolerable prison walls closing round him.

"You *can* be happy," urged the doctor, "you and Geva. There is nothing in the way really, if you will only find your courage."

"Nothing in the way?" echoed Raulyn ironically.

"Nothing whatever. I tell you that you can get something splendid, something worth while out of this. I have got it from the most sordid deathbeds, from the most loathsome diseases, from the foulest objects of horror and despair—beauty, joy—the something worth while."

Raulyn walked to the window and looked out on the wide canal, now in deep shadow.

"That is how it may seem to you," he said slowly, "but life has not been like that to me. I have always felt that a curse lay in wait for me. I remember a house near Dyprre, called Clobbertons, a nightmare to me as a child because it was closed up with a solitary old man living inside. A woman had hanged herself there. I had seen her once, riding in the street—she haunted me. And now in Geva she seems to have come to life again, an exquisite woman, tragic and passionate. It was at the sale at that house that I bought those two trifles. I don't know why."

As he spoke thus, in a low voice and in an incoherent fashion, the grey eyes of Francesco Michelozzi, flashing under drawn-together brows, were watching him with a devastating keenness.

"I saw them in your rooms in Rome; they were, I think, symbols to you?"

"Yes—but of what I don't know! The allure of the strange, the rare, some association with that suicide——"

"You do not know even who your God is?"

"No," returned Raulyn, startled, "is it a god? I am ignorant of Indian mythology."

"The figure," said the doctor sharply and clearly, "is that of Shiva—the deity who symbolizes destruction. In one hand he holds fire, in the other a drum. I also have a statue of Shiva. And one day I will show it to you."

"Destruction. That is very apt," said Raulyn bitterly.

"Destruction followed by transformation," said the doctor. "Destruction that is a re-creation, the shaking together of new forms. That is the symbolism of your little image. You have destroyed your old life, you have destroyed Geva's old life—something new, and if you will, something beautiful, is forming from it."

He turned away abruptly, picked up his hat and a parcel of books he had with him, and left the room before Raulyn could answer, and even before he had moved from his weary attitude and taken his gaze from the dark placid shadowed depths of the canal.

He was utterly unmoved by anything that the other man had said; those brave words awoke no echo in his chilled soul; but he knew that he should not go away, he knew that Francesco Michelozzi would hold him in his place, as Sir Lambert, had he been this type of man, could have held him in Dyprre.

He leant on this foreigner too, leant on this stranger, as he had never leant on his own father.

In this horrible crisis Michelozzi would do everything; he, after all, would only have to stand by; and Philippa would be there.

He was ashamed of his own weakness in relying on this visit of the Cantelowes, he even felt that it was more than weakness, that it was treachery; but he could not bring himself to forgo this one consolation the next passage of his life seemed to hold, and he palliated his conscience with the thought that the idea of Geva being agitated or vexed by Philippa's visit was absurd; why, they might like each other, and if they did not, they need scarcely meet.

He should himself, of course, only see Philippa very seldom, and then always in the presence of other people; he was super-sensitive to hesitate, now, more than ever, that this terrible event was shadowed ahead. He needed, in his exile, some one of his own race and place near him; there would be a certain comfort even in the presence of Piers.

But even while Raulyn argued like this, he knew that if Francesco Michelozzi, the man who was so whole-heartedly acting in the interests of Geva, knew of his, Raulyn's, former relations with Philippa, he would absolutely forbid her coming to Rome. So Raulyn argued with his own weakness, shutting out the future, looking no further than the coming of Philippa.

Reluctantly, a man impelled by his own codes to a distasteful duty, he went upstairs to his wife.

As he opened the door into her large and noble chamber he could not but recall, with a vague remorse, what Michelozzi had said about beauty, for here surely was beauty with no hint nor shadow of any horror.

The blinds had been drawn up, and the tawny sunshine of October filled the rococo apartment, showing every detail of the gilded moulding, the green tapestry hangings and the heavy ornate furniture.

On the stiff yellow empire couch by one of the tall open windows, Geva lay asleep, reclining in an attitude of infinite grace on a pile of black satin pillows: her hair was unbound and the long curls flowed over her shoulders and on to the gently heaving bosom of her white lawn gown, over which was folded a scarlet shawl.

By the head of this couch sat Jiacinta knitting fine white silk; she rose as Raulyn entered and stood mute with folded hands.

Raulyn came to the side of his wife and looked down at her, looked at her tiny crossed feet in white stockings and black slippers with velvet strappings, at the pure line of her figure under the softly draping gown, at her face so much like a child's face, exquisite in happy repose.

Raulyn, looking at her, not only with utter disillusioned eyes, but with aversion, admitted to himself that a woman like this personified poetry; her hair had really the depth and bloom the gloss and perfume of violets, her lips and cheeks might well have been compared with some perfect flower, magnolia or carnation.

There was something frail and unearthly about this beauty, yet strong and complete; there was nothing here of the fantasy with which Raulyn had surrounded this woman; she was scarcely to be recognized as the lady who had driven along the Tiber in the shabby barouche, the coquette who had welcomed him with the porcelain flowers in her gown.

Rather did she look now young and simple, a still and lovely chalice forming the mystic cup of life.

Raulyn glancing at the nurse saw that she was looking down at her mistress with tears in her eyes.

"Is she not happy?" he whispered, spurred by a poignant remorse for his dislike of this poor, fair, cursed creature.

"Excellency, she is very happy, and that is what is so sad."

Raulyn winced, and Geva at the sound of his voice, low as it was, stirred and woke, sat up and caught his hand, resting her cool cheek against his colder fingers.

"Now you will love me more—you will never leave me," she whispered in her sweet Roman tongue. "Tell me that you will love me more and that you will never leave me."

She looked up at him expecting gratitude and joy; he could hardly bring himself to speak.

"Say it," she pleaded.

"I will love you more, Geva; I will never leave you," he answered.

CHAPTER XIII

IT was the end of January before the Myniotts came to Rome; Piers had been making his usual "improvements" to Cantelowe and had been reluctant to leave sooner.

Raulyn met them, in the chill Roman dusk, in the huge dark station lit by dreary gas-lamps.

They came towards him, out of the medley crowd of travellers in the gloom, two tall figures in tweeds and heavy clumsy coats.

He had last seen Philippa that day at Clobbertons when he had nearly taken her in his arms on the threshold of the suicide's room and made her his darling for life, and now he met her in this sober fashion, and she said:

"How do you do, Raulyn? It is a long time since we met."

And Piers said the journey had been hateful and asked about his luggage; he had the manner of despising the very atmosphere he breathed.

In the hired carriage as they drove through the white streets veiled in the last violet glow, Raulyn studied his companions during the desultory awkward conversation. Piers, over forty now, was heavy, almost stout; his small side-whiskers were tinged by grey, his complexion was very florid, but his features had retained the clear-cut Anglo-Saxon handsomeness and he had an air of great dignity and authority, the air of a prosperous, shrewd, satisfied man, who is a considerable personage in his own world.

"A good specimen of a well-fed brute," thought Raulyn unjustly; he nervously searched his cousin's face for some look of contempt for himself, but Piers showed no fleck of scorn or reproach in his well-bred pleasantness; he was really, whatever Raulyn might think, a fine, rather noble type of cultured gentleman.

And Philippa?

Raulyn had a curious, almost shocking, impression of

Philippa ; he had always thought of her as golden, radiant, young and fair ; now she seemed a plain woman in her unbecoming travelling clothes, her face white and tired, her hair hidden under a tweed cap. There were little lines round her grey eyes, a little drag to her soft mouth, her figure, even her movements, seemed clumsy.

And Raulyn realized, with another sense of shock, that Geva, that Italy, had altered his vision for him ; he had become used to a very graceful and exquisite woman, whose surroundings and garments were always beautiful, and to a country full of light and colour, elegance and charm ; it was a long time since he had seen English people ; he had forgotten how solid and square and blonde—and *cold* they were.

Raulyn emphasized this last word in his mind ; it seemed to him that these two people seated in the carriage with him were cold with a coldness that chilled their whole ambient ; he was sure that they were indifferent to each other, and that Philippa had always been indifferent towards himself, and blank disappointment came dully over him. Here was no unhappy pining woman, cherishing an old romance, but a capable, sensible squire's wife, absorbed in her house and servants as her husband was absorbed in his lands and tenants ; Raulyn could see them either side of the drawing-room fire at Cantelowe, she knitting, he dozing, with his newspaper slipping on to the sleeping spaniel by his side As they passed through the Porta Pia down the long road towards the villa Raulyn had hired for them, Piers said :

" You'll want to hear about Dyprre. Withers is a splendid chap. When can we call on your wife ? "

" I ought to have asked that before," added Philippa quickly. " But I think all the sense has been knocked out of me by the long journey. The trains are terrible, aren't they ? "

" Any afternoon that you care to come," replied Raulyn formally. " Of course I shall come round to-morrow and see if you are comfortable."

He left them at the door of the lovely house he had chosen for them ; as he returned to the Palazzo Lambruschini he thought with contemptuous bitterness of his scruples in allowing Philippa to come to Rome.

How grotesque they seemed now !

There was surely nothing to be feared from Philippa that would menace Geva's peace—nor much that would console his tragedy, his trembling remorseful romance was dispelled by

the cool English voice of Philippa saying : " How do you do ? " and asking if she should call on his wife.

He also immediately found that Piers required no shepherding and nothing of his assistance ; he became instantly intimate with the " right sort " of English people in Rome, the people Raulyn had always avoided.

The first week of their stay the Cantelowes dined at the Embassy ; the military attaché was a school-fellow of Piers, and one of the secretaries a connexion by marriage ; Piers was at once occupied and busy in a world with which Raulyn had nothing whatever to do, a world he had deliberately avoided.

Philippa entertained, she gave dances and those big dinners to a crowd of people unacquainted with each other that Raulyn had always detested ; she kept a smart establishment and Piers a smart equipage. They were both considerably out of tune with the Palazzo Lambruschini, with Geva, with Francesco Michelozzi.

Philippa paid a state visit to Geva, distant and a little formal, after the manner of her countrywomen when dealing with the unknown.

Geva received her in the large room on the *piano nobile* with the dim mirrors clamped by bronze clasps, and Raulyn watched the two women with a more than usually poignant sense of the dream-like substance of what we call reality. Philippa spoke little Italian and Geva's English was halting and broken ; Raulyn was frequently called upon to interpret and translate.

Geva on her couch, with the silk shawls drooping from her slender shoulders, and a high comb crowned with balls of coral in her dark hair, was animated and gracious, no shade of vexation or jealousy touched her gay calm ; Raulyn's fears that she might resent the coming of Philippa were entirely dissipated.

And when she came to leave, he lingered without trepidation, in the high music room, showing her the old frescoes on the wall, the busts of the porphyry and granite Cæsars, as Geva had once shown them to him ; this formal woman, so quiet, so changed, had once been Philippa Myniott ; he allowed himself to dwell on that memory.

Philippa paused by the large grand piano ; the open keyboard was full in the light of the one long narrow window, the dark shape was half lost in the shadows of late afternoon, for this room faced east.

" Your wife plays ? "

"And sings. A little——"

Philippa laid her finger-tips, very lightly, on the keys; she wore a dark fur jacket and hat and a plain tight dress; her face in the shadows was pure and chill, the colourless light sent dull gleams through the great knot of her gold-brown hair.

"When will you come back to Dyprre?" she asked. "You should come back, Raulyn."

"Just now it is impossible."

"Of course. But, say, in the autumn, when your wife is strong again."

The man's dark face hardened.

"Can you imagine Geva at Dyprre, Philippa?" She flushed faintly in response to his look.

"Why not? No one could fail to like her. She is lovely and gracious. And, I think, would be happy anywhere."

"Happy," repeated Raulyn curiously. "Does Geva seem to you a happy woman?"

"A very happy woman. And she has everything to make her happy. Bring her to Dyprre, Raulyn."

He fingered some sheets of music lying on the top of the piano.

"Philippa," he asked briefly, "did you know that my father was a dying man when I went away?"

"He told me," she answered slowly, "soon after you went."

"And you never let me know!"

"I had my duty to Sir Lambert. He did not wish you to know."

Fretful anger was struck from Raulyn.

"You, as well as he, thought that I should not come back, even if I had known?"

"I did think so, Raulyn. He—Dyprre, all of us, were wearying you most terribly; you had to escape," she added gently. "But now you must have worked all that out—now you have a new and happy life, surely you can come back."

He wished that she would not keep using the word "happy": it clanged in his head with an almost intolerable irony.

Looking earnestly at his sullen downcast face, she said:

"Are you not sometimes homesick, Raulyn?"

He did not know; acute nostalgia often assailed him, but he could not consider with serenity facing the church at Trawden with Sir Lambert's name added to the list on the walls, nor the great bedroom where Sir Lambert had died, nor the long bright stable where he had said "Good-bye."

"How long are you staying in Rome?" he evaded.

"Not long, I think. Piers does not really like it."

"He seems to find plenty to occupy himself."

"Piers always would. Anywhere. But his heart is at home. And when I have escaped the cold and chill I have no excuse for remaining. Perhaps you could come back with us?"

He did not answer, and with some slight amazement she added:

"Surely you will wish your child to be brought up in Dyprre?"

It was as if his father had spoken; Raulyn was so struck, so wounded, that he turned away abruptly, for fear that he should clamour out his fell secret, and, like a coward, beg her sympathy.

Philippa saw his distress, his embarrassment, and with instinctive pity covered up his confusion, the cause of which she could not even guess.

"I must come again and see your other treasures, Raulyn." She turned to find something about which she could pass some neutral comment and her glance fell on a gilt shelf beneath a tall mirror on which was a white figure gleaming, between two porcelain bouquets. And now her self-control faltered.

"Why, Raulyn," she stammered, "surely those were in Clobbertons' sale?"

"Yes," he answered, "I bought them. They came from that girl's room, you remember?" He looked at her defiantly and added with grimness: "I think Geva is like that girl, don't you? The other flowers Geva wore when I first met her——"

His voice, without his knowledge, had become both raised and broken.

"I remember pleasanter things than the sale at Clobbertons'," said Philippa gently. "Our games together—and the long summer days—and Christmas at Dyprre, at home——"

Raulyn took no heed.

"That little white monster is Shiva, the destroyer," he added feverishly. "That was a fitting deity to preside over that closed room, was it not?"

"Raulyn," said Philippa quickly, "don't think of that—throw the ugly thing away. Think of the lovely trees where we played hide-and-seek—think of the pools where we used to wade for waterlilies, think of how dear and pleasant and kindly it all was——"

Conscious of another presence in the dim room she paused and turned.

A slight figure, moving heavily, was illuminated in the doorway—Geva, with a candle in her hand.

"You also are musician?" she asked; she came to the piano. "Will you sing? Perhaps you know some songs you sing together with my husband when you were children together."

"No," said Philippa, "we never sang together. Sometimes I used to sing to Raulyn's father. Old-fashioned things."

She picked up her white kid gloves.

"I did not know that you and my husband were children together," said Geva.

"We were neighbours," explained Philippa, "and now I am married to his cousin."

She thought this sounded foolish, but Geva was to her a strange little alien, who disturbed all standards of decorum and nicety.

"I did not know," repeated Geva simply, and indeed Raulyn had never said anything to her of his twenty-five years' intimacy with Philippa Myniott. "You must then have much to talk of. Come some evening when I give the music—and you shall sing and I shall sing—come, you and your husband."

"But I don't sing, not in that way," replied Philippa. "I should like to come with Piers one evening."

Geva moved restlessly round the piano.

"Next Friday is the opera—an unlucky day, Friday! But we will go, you and I, and our husbands, eh? And Cecco and Gino. They give 'La Somnambula,' isn't it? You come, please."

"Of course. Thank you so much," said Philippa. "And now good-bye—please don't stand any more."

"Ah, yes, you must go. Your bones get chilled? Good-bye."

She caught her shawl, with a little gesture of dignity, across her breast and turned away, with that pitiful heavy walk.

Raulyn took Philippa down the wide stately stairs; neither of them spoke.

Geva went to her bedroom; she still carried the candle that glowed in the soft dark.

Jiacinta received her anxiously and took the light from her pale hand.

"I am tired," said Lady Dyprre, moving to her dressing-table. "I hate that English woman. Her hair is gold, as my wedding ring—she went into the music-room with my lord and spoke to him of their childhood together. Her voice was very soft."

"Oh, Dio!" murmured the old woman with real anguish. "She never troubles her lovely head about the stranger?"

"No stranger to him," sighed Geva, "but I will challenge her. I will make her sing and I too will sing. And I will take her to the Opera and she shall see how I can dress and hear how I can talk and sing——"

"Not now," pleaded Jiacinta nervously, "not now. There is the little baby to think of, and all goes so well—she has been happy, has she not, waiting for the little baby?"

Geva slipped into the big chair before the low dressing-table and looked at her reflection in the large oval mirror opposite; the nurse, acute, trained and sincerely agonized for the creature she loved, peered over Geva's shoulder and also looked at the brooding reflection in the mirror lit by the one candle. And her terrified eyes, always watchful, alert, and ready to be afraid, saw the fair Madonna look fade on the pale countenance of Geva and slowly replaced by the evil mask that the stern old woman had struggled with in many a fell crisis.

CHAPTER XIV

IT was Jiacinta's rule to acquaint Dr. Michelozzi with every detail concerning Geva, who was really the product of their joint skill and care; only the doctor and this quiet, rather unattractive old woman really knew the dark passages of their patient's life; what had occurred on several ghastly occasions was never referred to between them, but they acted on the basis of their knowledge.

The doctor trusted the nurse, for he knew that she loved Geva; but here she failed him, by reason of that very love which far outweighed her skill; she never told him that Geva had shown any agitation or anger at her husband's friendship with Mrs. Cantelowe; the poor devoted creature could not indeed bear to face it herself, she thrust it away and tried to persuade herself that there was nothing to be feared, and that the expression she had seen on Geva's face in the oval mirror was only a fugitive shadow.

For it was Jiacinta's fervent belief and deep joy that her mistress and her darling was cured by this happy marriage, this happy maternity; she was convinced that the coming child, already her cherished idol, would smile into the face of a mother sweetly sane, and she could not endure that this beautiful certainty should be disturbed; it seemed to her faithful heart like a disloyalty to Geva to betray that expression she had seen in the mirror; so Dr. Michelozzi continued to think that the gentle serenity of his patient was wholly undisturbed, and he also cherished hopes of a complete and wonderful restoration of that clouded intellect and blighted nature.

For Geva was lovely in her consecrated peace, in the dedication of her stillness; she had lost her affectations, her coquetries, her artful tricks; she spoke of little besides her child, and her constant occupation was the making of fine garments ("for my son," she said) in extravagant profusion; she was sure of a son, and had decided that he should be called Lambert, after her husband's father, and Francesco, after her guardian. Jiacinta was further confirmed in her security by Geva's renewed quietude; she said nothing further of Mrs. Cantelowe or of the party for the opera, and Raulyn was rigid in his mechanical attendance on his wife, and, even to the nurse's jealous eyes, appeared to see very little of his English relations.

He had, indeed, avoided them; his relations with Philippa seemed to have come to a dead end; though he was sure that she could not be happy with Piers, her gentle formality had baffled him; he felt that there was a barrier beyond which neither of them could reach.

And so the weeks wore away to the beauty of the Italian May, when the child would be born, and as Geva increased in radiant felicity, Raulyn descended into darker abysses of nervous glooms and terrors.

In such a situation a trifle might prove as a spark of fire to gunpowder and such a trifle was not wanting. Raulyn, walking in the Corso, passed Philippa in her elegant equipage with the English servants; she was alone and she stopped and asked him to accompany her in her drive in the Pincio; his ravaged and dull expression shocked her and her hands trembled slightly as she folded them in her lap.

"Shall we go and fetch your wife?" she asked. "The weather is so exquisite." But Raulyn said no, Geva had said she would not drive till the evening; then he would

take her along the Appian Way—the road she loved best.

"Among the tombs!" smiled Philippa. "I think it so melancholy there——"

"All Rome is melancholy," replied Raulyn. Philippa looked at him sharply; there was a great restraint between them.

Yet he found it soothing to be in her company; the ordered conventionality that he had always so irked at now seemed desirable; the containment and precision of this woman, the exact ordinaryness of her dress, the finish of her carriage and servants, the well-conducted home that he knew was behind her; how preferable in his present mood was this to the exotic atmosphere Geva moved in, to the decayed palace she would not allow him to alter, to the queer old servants she would not allow him to change, to the haphazard dreamy life of the Palazzo Lambruschini.

Yet he knew that he could not live Philippa's routine, and loathing himself for the weak inconsistency, was silent. They drove with the crowd of other carriages round and round the Pincio, and they were continually saluting acquaintances of the Cantelowes who were unknown to Raulyn.

"What a number of English people there are in Rome!" he remarked.

"And you know none of them! Raulyn, what do you *do* all day?"

He had no answer to this; lately he had given up any pretence at occupation, he just somehow lived through the hours.

"I have little leisure beyond the service of Geva," he answered dryly.

Philippa now was silent; she, too, was up against a dead end; she knew as little about his relations with his wife as he knew of hers with her husband. They drove round and round the Pincio under the rich flowering trees and the clear blue sky, among the gay laughing people and the sleek horses and gleaming carriages; and then, as they were turning out into the Piazza del Popolo, they met the Lambruschini barouche, no longer shabby, but still old-fashioned, and seated within was Geva and the nurse; the two carriages stopped, and Philippa, quite unconscious of anything unusual in the incident, was ready with her pretty formalities; Raulyn alighted, prepared to get in his wife's carriage.

"I did not know that you were coming out so soon."

"I changed my mind," replied the Italian, "and you were late."

And Raulyn remembered that the unexpected meeting with Philippa had delayed him from the methodical punctuality to which he had accustomed Geva; how intolerable, he thought, was this jealous supervision!

Geva was looking at Philippa.

"We have not had our evening at the Opera yet, isn't it?" she said. "Next Friday is the last performance; will you please to come with us?"

The Englishwoman hesitated; she thought it very curious that this rather bizarre suggestion should be revived after so many weeks, and it seemed to her that it was hardly possible for Lady Dyprre (she always thought of Raulyn's wife in this way) to show herself in a public theatre just now, and the Italian was really a stranger to her and had shown no wish to follow up her well-meant civilities.

Jiacinta observed this hesitation; she knew a little English: she leant nervously forward and said, very respectfully:

"If the gracious lady would come, it would be a so great pleasure for my signora."

Philippa thought this strange, too; she glanced at the two foreign faces looking at her so intently; both the old woman under the close bonnet and the young woman shaded by the plumed hat and black lace parasol looked grey and wizened and somehow horribly anxious.

Philippa felt a movement of repulsion, of impatience, and, under the stress of what she felt was a false position, she did a foolish thing, perhaps even rather an ill-bred thing.

She leant slightly over the carriage door and said quickly to Raulyn, as if she thought the foreigners would not catch the sense of the quick English:

"Do you want us to come?"

Geva heard.

"He wishes you to come, signora," she said gravely. "He wants you to sing, too, as in the old days you sang! Before the Opera we will have our concert. I, too, will learn an English song."

"Please come," added Raulyn briefly.

"Oh, yes," said Philippa, "indeed we will come."

Geva told her coachman to drive on:

"I go to buy my English song," she said.

Raulyn was left standing, foolishly, on the gravel slope.

"How dreadful! How impossible!" thought Philippa. "And I did not behave well either—but these queer people make one lose one's head."

Biting her lip she opened the carriage door; but Raulyn said that he would walk.

"Please come on Friday," he added awkwardly. "Geva is very overwrought—I must humour her——"

"Of course, of course. And it will be delightful. Good-bye, then."

And she also drove on.

When Raulyn returned home, reluctantly and late, after bitter idling in the streets, he found Geva surrounded by sheets of music.

They were all cheap English songs with hideous showy lithographed covers: the "popular successes" sold by the music-shop in the *Corso*.

"It is a long time since I sang to you," she said as he entered. "Now I learn for you an English song."

"But not these, Geva—these are horrible."

"Why? They are your English songs," she answered petulantly. "What does she sing, your cousin?"

"Oh, simple things, nothing much," he answered, sick at heart. "She doesn't want to sing, you know, Geva."

"But she shall sing," insisted Geva, taking up one of the music books, "and this is what I will learn, because it has two Italian words."

She showed him the sheets; the thing was blatant and crude with jingling words and tune; on the cover was a garland of flowers printed in bright colours, through which looked a woman's head sketched in brown, and underneath in large letters was the title:

"*Cara, Carissima.*"

The vulgarity of the page disgusted Raulyn; yet in the flowers was a caricature likeness to his porcelain bouquet, and in the coquettish female head in Italian costume, a grotesque resemblance to Geva.

"It is rubbish," he said, and cast it down on the work-table where lay all her silks and laces.

Geva caught it up; her big eyes gleamed; she turned over the lithographed cover and began to hum over the air:

"I wore this garland for my grief,
I sought the blossoms from afar,
Jasmine bud and myrtle leaf,
Cara, Carissima!

"I wore this garland for my woe,
I wandered where the lilies are,
Where he and I were wont to go,
Cara, Carissima!"

"It is dreadful," interrupted Raulyn. "I will find you another song, Geva."

But she shook her head obstinately and continued in her thin, clear voice:

"My garland fades about my brow,
My murky night holds no star,
Ah, who shall whisper now,
Cara, Carissima?"

The music was as trivial and tawdry as the verses, yet neither lacked a certain sting of pathos as sung by Geva, and Raulyn left the room abruptly.

"You see!" cried Geva, throwing down the music, "he leaves me! He goes back to her perhaps?"

Jiacinta clasped her hands.

"If she will only be calm, the noble lady, if she will only not think of this!"

"I am calm," the young woman answered, "but I do not remember quite clearly what has happened."

"Nothing! Nothing!"

"Something has happened," replied Geva, with a look of being lost, "for I was full of joy and now it has gone."

The incident had now swelled to a proportion which rendered it impossible to conceal; Jiacinta, with despair, told Dr. Michelozzi, but she could not tell him, for she did not know, the story of Raulyn and Philippa, but only that Geva, without any reason, was jealous of the Englishwoman.

Francesco Michelozzi spoke to Raulyn.

"You should have avoided, at all costs, this agitation now. She was so happy, poor, poor child, and now she is in a mood with which I cannot deal. Nor can I answer for the consequences."

"My position is untenable," replied Raulyn. "I have done what I could. This has resulted from nothing. I will not see my cousin again."

"You must. She has set her mind on this meeting next Friday, she must not be thwarted—let her sing this absurd song, show in her presence that you are indifferent to Mrs. Cantelowe—and this crisis may yet pass away."

"You make a puppet of me," answered Raulyn wearily;

but he submitted. Prince Gino, who was then in Rome, offered his box for Friday ; the Opera was " I Puritani " and the last performance before the summer closing.

" We will take Gino with us," said the doctor. " Gino is a good fellow."

He appeared anxious, and, even to Raulyn's untrained observation, the change in Geva was extraordinary.

She lost her bloom and her vivacity, most pitiful of all, she lost her hoarded calm, she was restless, sullen, at once feverish and dull ; all her energy seemed to be absorbed in learning the doggerel of the cheap little English song.

On the Friday morning she seemed so languid and strange that Raulyn protested against the wretched programme of that evening being carried out.

" Geva is not fit to receive any one—I can hardly expose Mrs. Cantelowe to what must be very painful."

" You have, then, some consideration for Mrs. Cantelowe ? " asked the doctor. " But that cannot be helped. She must take her chance. Geva, I tell you, shall not be crossed."

In the afternoon Raulyn took a lonely and miserable walk ; when he returned he was startled to find his wife hovering on the stairs talking to a young boy who was employed to help in the garden.

He was the only new servant in the establishment, the others having been, Raulyn thought, in the employ of the late Marchese, or at least employed there for many years, and it surprised him to see Geva talking so confidentially with this underling of whose very existence he should not have supposed her to be aware.

She looked round as her husband entered the shadowed vestibule.

" I saw this boy cutting flowers," she said quickly, " and I came down to tell him what I want for to-night."

" But this is not how you give your orders," replied Raulyn, and as he spoke the dark figure of Jiacinta appeared on the stairs.

" Ah, signora ! How you slip away ! " she cried with relief, " if I but turn my back for an instant ! "

Geva, clasping her long white shawl on her bosom, turned and followed the nurse upstairs.

" What does your mistress want ? " asked Raulyn of the abashed young gardener.

" White roses, sir, and lilac, as much as we have left—for to-night."

CHAPTER XV

IT seemed to Raulyn's overwrought nerves as if the scene in the music-room that evening was a staging of his life; as if the whole course of his futile and broken existence was symbolized by these people gathered together so incongruously in this tall, alien chamber. Philippa was at the piano, singing to her own accompaniment, as he had so often seen her sing and play at home.

The visit to the Opera had been abandoned; Geva was not well enough to leave the house, but she had insisted on the "music," and Mrs. Cantelowe, with a rather stately kindness, had humoured her passionate whim.

The room was so filled with lilac, roses, tuberoses, jasmine and carnations that it seemed to be overflowing with luscious white blossoms, even the outer air from the open window did not allay the heavy sweetness of the mingled perfumes.

Philippa Cantelowe was magnificently dressed in formal splendour; her tight gown of pink satin showed her bare arms and shoulders, her full skirt and long train lay on the ground for several yards; she wore a small diadem of diamonds, a necklace of the same luxurious jewels and a long brooch of them fastening the spray of pink orchids across her breast; her radiant fairness, her sparkling gems, her bright hair and pale gleaming satin gathered all the light in the room; illuminated by the tall candles on the dark piano she was very fair to see.

Geva could challenge no comparison, pale and withered, with feverish lips and circled eyes; she sat huddled on the low couch beneath the shelf that held the figure of Shiva and the porcelain flowers, which were almost hidden by clusters of white lilac, drooping from an alabaster vase.

Raulyn, leaning against the wall beside her, was conscious of the flounces of her silver gown, of the long white shawl fastened across her breast and of the little hands working feverishly a fine lace at which she was not looking.

And in the semi-darkness beyond, among the dark gross marble busts, against the dim paintings, sat the other three men, Gino Foscari, in his splendid undress uniform, Francesco Michelozzi in his dark working clothes, and the Englishman in exact and conventional evening attire.

Raulyn was conscious of all these personalities, the dark woman, the fair woman, the three men, so different one from another, as if they were cut-out figures revolving on the lighted circle of a magic lantern.

Philippa came to the end of the simple songs she knew, and rose.

"Will no one take my place?" she said rather faintly. "You must be tired of me."

Geva rose; she was enveloped in bistre shadow through which her draped shawl showed opal white and the silver flounces gleamed faintly at her feet.

"These are the songs you sang at home?" she said quickly; she thrust her work into the long silk bag on her arm and came to the piano. "They are very pretty. My husband he has not heard them for many years, isn't it? But once he heard them very often."

"We were girl and boy together, you know," replied Philippa gently; "there were only the three of us, he and I and my husband."

She spoke carefully as one might speak to an agitated child and she stood still, entirely eclipsing the other woman as sunlight would eclipse moonlight.

"I too have learnt an English song," said Geva. "I will sing to you——"

Raulyn could not control a gesture of impatience; her obsession with the jingling song, her constant desultory singing of it for the last three days had already maddened his strained nerves.

"Sing in Italian, Geva," he muttered, "that thing you bought is rubbish."

It was a false move and he knew it, but it was beyond his power to restrain himself.

"Ah!" cried Geva, "you do not want to hear me sing You like these old home songs your cousin sings!"

Francesco Michelozzi came to the piano.

"I want to hear that song, Geva; you will sing to me and Gino."

She looked at him out of tear-washed eyes.

"Kind Cecco," she murmured, "good, kind Cecco."

And with a pathetic gesture, half timid, she touched his large fine hand that set the music-rest for her. Raulyn saw Philippa withdraw into the window space with an averted look; he was conscious of Piers, who had hardly spoken

the whole evening, Piers despising him, despising these foreigners, scorning the whole miserable display.

Lashed by this, his weakness thrust him into a false display of strength.

He came behind his wife and with shaking fingers took from her the garish sheet of music she had taken from her long silk work-bag.

"Geva, I do not like that foolish song—English people will laugh to hear you sing a thing like that——"

"Ah hush!" whispered the doctor; but this hint of reproof, of coercion, further alienated Raulyn; the whole scene was, to him, a monstrous farce in which he was no longer able to play his part; suddenly this pandering to Geva seemed grotesque; he was angry that she had been allowed, nay, encouraged, to make this display.

"Ah, they will laugh!" cried the Italian in a trembling voice, "and you do not want to hear me sing! But I will sing!"

She placed her gaudy sheet on the rest, she sat down on the hard brocade stool, and she sang her song with an energy of passion, a force of emotion that redeemed the vulgarity of the words, the commonplace setting.

"*Cara, Carissima*——"

As the last note died away in a long cadence she rose and stood looking at her husband, who had remained beside her, Philippa being just behind him and gazing out of the long window on to the moonlight.

"And now you have tired yourself enough, Geva," he said sternly; he had no pity for her, it was Philippa of whom he was thinking, Philippa who had been so generous in lending herself to this painful scene, Philippa who had been slighted, almost insulted.

"Will you sing for us—just once again?" he asked, and his tone was as if he said, "Will you forgive us?"

Geva slipped her hand into her work-bag, which lay on the top of the piano, and was slightly open: the bag she had placed at the far end beside a crystal vase of white lilac and she had to lean forward to get it; then she turned quickly and raised her arm. The sweep of the clinging shawl rose like a white wing in the candle-light, then, in one movement, Francesco Michelozzi knocked over the vase of lilac and the two candles nearest to him. Raulyn gave a raw cry;

the other two men sprang forward from the outer shadow, but Philippa with a movement so swift as to be unnoticed was in front of Raulyn as if she had been standing so all the time; and as soon as the flowers fell, the thick folds of her long pink satin train swept over the fallen sprays and broken glass.

It was her voice that rose, gentle and composed, above the instant's murmurous hush.

"Raulyn hurt himself on the big brooch Geva wore—she is not well and must go upstairs."

Dr. Michelozzi had Geva in his arms; she clung to him tightly in the attitude of a frightened and vexed child; Gino raised the candle he had snatched up from a side table and looked at Raulyn; the Englishman was holding a crimson rag to his wrist and leaning against the piano; small drops of red were falling on to the keys.

A deep and hideous scratch to have been given by a woman's brooch; a horrid gash to have been given by a woman's ornament!

Gino took the wounded man by the shoulder and from the background came Jiacinta and the other woman (they must have been waiting without the door in readiness for some emergency); in two seconds from the white upraising of Geva's arm she was taken away, held up by Francesco Michelozzi, closed round by the other two women.

Piers, who still had not spoken, now touched his wife on the bare arm.

Philippa took no heed, she stooped quickly, as if to gather up the fallen flowers, turned with her hand wrapped in her lace scarf and followed the others out of the room.

The three men left alone heard her voice raised clearly: "Dr. Michelozzi! Dr. Michelozzi!"

Raulyn sat on the music-stool; the young Italian was carefully bandaging the wounded wrist with strips of his own handkerchief and a tourniquet he had deftly made from a pocket pencil.

"You are hurt," said Piers, looking at him.

Raulyn did not answer.

"It is not much," answered Prince Gino quickly, "if we can stop the bleeding. Hold your hand up so. Dr. Michelozzi will look to it when he leaves Geva."

Raulyn shivered.

"Haven't you any brandy?" asked Piers.

Philippa came back into the room, even in these dim, crossed shadows of uncertain depths she seemed a thing of light, gleaming in her hair, her diamonds and her gown, even in her pallor radiant.

She came to the piano and Raulyn rose.

"Are you greatly hurt, Raulyn?" she asked quietly. "It is not much, I think. And Geva is well—it is only," added the Englishwoman steadily, "a slight attack of faintness."

Again her husband touched her lightly on the arm.

"We should leave, Philippa."

This time she responded:

"Yes, we should leave—good-bye, Raulyn."

He opened his lips, but she could not understand the dry mutter that issued from them.

"I will see you to your carriage," said Prince Gino quickly.

"No," answered Piers abruptly, "stay with Sir Raulyn, Prince; he cannot be left."

Philippa hesitated a second as if she checked some impulsive speech or movement towards Raulyn; but he did not even look up. Her husband brought her cloak and put it round her shoulders.

"Good night, Raulyn."

He did not answer.

Piers Cantelowe led his wife away.

As they drove home in the fine carriage through the rough Roman ways she did not speak at all, and he only made dry remarks about the badness of the road and the ill-lighting of the streets.

When they reached the villa, Philippa let down the carriage windows and leant out into the pure moonlight-filled air; when they reached the house she went directly upstairs to her room, leaving Piers in the hall.

Her maid took off her diamonds, her rich formal dress and let down her plenteous hair. Philippa submitted to the familiar routine with her usual courtesy. When the jewels were locked away, the dress hung up in the big press, her hair brushed and plaited, Philippa dismissed the maid and put out all the candles save one on the table by her bed.

The window was open wide on the garden, across which the straight shadow of the Palladian house lay dark and rigid in the moonlight, which turned flowers and shrubs to a bluish silver.

Philippa stood by the wide-flung casement, the luxurious music of nightingales came from the woods beyond the garden, the thrilling melody was too rich, too incessant: it cloyed the senses.

Philippa heard the door open and turned sharply.

In the shadowed room, lit by the square of moonlight, she went swiftly towards him.

"What happened to-night?" he asked before she could speak.

"Piers, I cannot say."

"It was very horrible," he said guardedly; "it was the kind of thing that would happen to Raulyn. Who are all those people—and the woman he has married?"

Philippa sank into the low chair at the foot of the canopied bed; she was so, in her pale wrap and bright braided hair, full in the silver illumination of the moon.

"I know no more than you," she answered.

"The woman is crazy, surely," added Piers in a tone of deep disgust. "What happened at the piano?"

"Oh, Piers, do not you see how ill she is? She fainted, I think."

"She was trying to insult you the whole evening. We should not have gone. I said so."

"You were right, I think," agreed Philippa. "It is always my impulse against your logic! And you give way and I am wrong!"

Piers gave a short laugh; the moonlight dazzled on the gleaming front of his shirt as he walked up and down uneasily.

"Well," he said at length with an air of reluctance, "there is no more to be said."

Philippa, without rising, made a movement towards him that seemed strangely like one of terror.

"Piers—if you have anything to say—don't, ah, don't keep it back."

He paused in front of her, so tall and large that he blocked out the moonlight from her place.

"You want to hear it, Philippa?"

"Yes," she said.

"Well, then, what of Raulyn? I am in a situation that I don't understand. Raulyn was never spoken of between us till you heard he was in Italy. And then you wanted to come out and find him."

"Go on, please."

"I agreed, Philippa. We found him—not changed at all, entangled as Sir Lambert said he would be entangled—well——" he obviously checked a fierce expression.

"Say what you think of Raulyn, Piers."

"What I think? Well, then, a waster, a slacker, a ne'er-do-weel—the kind of man who, if he hadn't money, would be begging in the streets——"

"Poor Raulyn!" murmured the woman softly.

"I'm sorry. But you told me to go on."

"Yes, go on, Piers."

"You've hardly mentioned the fellow since we have been in Rome, and not seen much of him—but he is *there*. And I've seen how he looks at you. I remember what Sir Lambert said about that, too."

"About me and Raulyn?" she asked simply.

"Yes," answered Piers thickly. "He said Raulyn would be faithful in his fashion—that he always meant to come back—some day. Perhaps he counted on that coming back."

"Have you been thinking—of that—ever since we came here?" asked Philippa.

"I have been thinking—of you and Raulyn, of course——"

They had never spoken of this since the day that she had promised to marry him, and the words he used came with a shock to Philippa like a cold hand shaking away warm sleep and dreams.

"I know your early fancy," he went on sombrely. "I did not think much of it—a girl, a child; caprice—I—well, it didn't seem *real*. Nothing to bother about. Now, it seems more important—you and Raulyn!"

"Don't," whispered Philippa, "don't."

"I must, I must. We have been here months now. Philippa, tell me——"

He checked himself again.

"What shall I tell you?" she asked softly. "Have I ever done anything to offend you—to hurt you?"

"No, no—it could never be that. With you. Never. Don't think I mean that," he went on eagerly. "I was considering you—wondering what it means to you to see him like this—married—to that woman—and, Philippa"—he came beside her and put his hand on her shoulder—"she is going to have his child—*my* child died—I have given you nothing. I thought you would consider that."

She was startled with a vast amazement that this material ordinary proud man could have been capable of a thought so finely delicate; she was greatly shaken.

"I did think of it," she whispered. "Yes, it struck me, hurt me, Piers. You deserve the truth—another woman—but it is not as you think. I've got to tell you. We have been too silent."

And she sighed, thinking how easy was silence, how difficult was speech.

"Tell me," said Piers, standing rigid.

"You know so much," she whispered, bowed in his shadow. "I would have died because of Raulyn—except for Sir Lambert—you know that—how strange to be talking about it, Piers! And I can't explain," she added, shrinking farther into the depths of the chair and the shadow. "After all, I can't explain, Piers."

"You said I deserved the truth."

"But how can I give it to you? Don't you *know*—after these years together?"

"I thought I knew till we came to Rome," he replied slowly. "But let it all go. As you say—how can you explain? Good night, Philippa."

But at that fear touched her, an infinite sense of loss overwhelmed her reluctances; she rose with a swiftness almost violent and stood beside her husband, nearly as tall and stately as he, bending towards him and touching his hands which were folded rather stiffly in his arms crossed on his breast.

"Don't go, Piers. I should be sorry all my life if you went like that now."

Her tone instantly arrested him; he stood looking down at her, but his back was towards the light and the candle behind the bed drapery could not show her his face.

"Piers—people talk about love—I don't know what they mean—it is so difficult—just a word for something so complex—Raulyn was a dream to me, all my girlhood went in that dream. I didn't know. Anything. I loved—in him my own fancies. You—will understand?—made the other seem very pale, very far away. You were so kind—so nobly kind."

"No—no."

"That sounds trivial? But women are trivial, dear, and kindness means so much. You've never thought of that?" She spoke quickly now as if she was pleading. "And then you are my husband—it is an extraordinary bond, to a woman.

We've been married some years, we had our dear, dear child, I've never found a fault in you—you round my life for me. My husband! Could anything efface that?"

"But do you care for me, Philippa?"

"How could I live with you and not care for you—a man like you? You made me forget everything."

"Have I made you happy?"

"Yes," she answered at once. "You took a silly girl's despair and humiliation and loneliness, and turned them into pride and thankfulness and fullness. You have made me happy, Piers, you have."

"And content?" he urged. "Even now, when you see Raulyn again?"

"Seeing him," she said, "has shown me how steadfast I am to you. Poor Raulyn, you can afford to pity him, Piers. To be very sorry and kind. As I pity him and hope to be kind."

"You chose him first," he answered, and she thought he smiled.

"I choose you now," she said. "Piers, don't frighten me. Don't pretend that there is anything between us. I thought you were more sure of me——"

She looked at him as he had looked at her in the days before they were married, before he was certain of even her tolerance.

"I cannot say any more," she added, faint and hoarse. "I love you; I loved you from the first moment you took me in your arms. I've thanked God for you every time I've put up a prayer—are you satisfied now?"

Piers raised and kissed the poor, chill, trembling hands that had clung to his folded arms; with a sigh of relief she leant her head against his heavy shoulder.

He remembered his long wooing, the dogged concentration of purpose that had, after patient waiting, at last won her, the reservations with which she had come to him, this phantom lover always about them, and then the meeting with this lover that Piers had been too wise and too proud to obstruct, and now this and the stately woman wholly his, in generous loyalty, in warm affection. He smiled; he had triumphed in a long and difficult task, and the reward was prodigious.

Aloud he said quietly:

"You are very tired, dear. We will see, in the morning, how we can help Raulyn."

CHAPTER XVI

ONLY the certainty that she would not see Geva enabled Philippa to visit the Palazzo Lambruschini, which had become to her a house of horror, awful and fell as the destiny that involved Raulyn Dyprre; she recalled Clobbertons, the setting in which she had last seen Raulyn in England, and the atmosphere of the gloomy northern dwelling and the flamboyant Italian palace seemed the same to her; yet it was her duty to force herself back into this shadow, and Philippa, neither by nature nor training, was likely to shirk a duty.

Piers had wished to accompany her; but he did not know what she knew, and she chose to go alone.

She asked to see Dr. Michelozzi, and found that he had, as she suspected, spent the night in the palace.

She was left to wait in the *salone* with the thick clamped mirrors, and from her stiff velvet seat she could see the inner room of last night's scene: the grand piano, the busts of the Cæsars, the heavy stone vases, the painted walls, all now brightly illuminated by a joyous sunshine.

The flowers were gone; there was no stain on the ivory keys, nor on the floor, but on the lid of the piano lay Geva's long yellow-silk work-bag, and on the music-rest stood the garish sheet of the cheap English song which Geva had sung with such a fury of passion.

When the Italian entered, Philippa felt her heart beat quickly; she was tired and nervous, and acutely conscious of dealing not only with an obscure situation, but with material quite unknown to her. She dreaded and distrusted these alien people, who to her disturbed fancy seemed the fleshly embodiment of all the ills that had always haunted Raulyn. Yet she could not but be won by Francesco Michelozzi, his noble serenity, his air of gaiety, of tenderness, of compassion towards all things, his unconscious authority—the authority of a great intelligence.

Philippa began awkwardly in her stiff Italian:

"I felt I must come to see how Lady Dyprre was——"

"Use English if you will. I can speak your language and know something of your life." He smiled.

They looked at each other earnestly; she was eclipsed from her radiance of last night and wore a gown too dark and

plain for the Italian spring, and a close hat that hid her lovely hair and did not shadow her pallid face.

His fine good looks, so unusual, so magnificent, were also ravaged by the sunlight; he had not slept that night.

They looked at each other and trusted each other.

"Please tell me," said Philippa faintly. "My husband and myself are Sir Raulyn's nearest friends."

"Does your husband know what you found under the flowers, Mrs. Cantelowe?"

"No," she answered swiftly, "no one saw save myself."

"But you—saw?"

"Yes."

"It must have been," he said gently, "a great shock to you."

"Why should you think of me, Dr. Michelozzi? Will you tell me how I can help?"

"Tell me, first, exactly what happened."

Philippa glanced at him, pulled out her handkerchief, pressed it to her lips and said hurriedly:

"She pulled the knife out of her work-bag, she made to strike Raulyn, but he caught the blow on his wrist by throwing up his hand to protect himself—you cast over the flowers and I put my gown over them—and the knife he had knocked out of her hand—afterwards I picked up the knife, wrapped it in my scarf and brought it to you. Of course, she did not know what she was doing."

"No," replied the doctor, "she did not know. She is insane."

"Oh!" whispered Philippa, "Raulyn's wife!"

"He married her behind my back," said Francesco Michelozzi sternly; "he did not listen nor wait—the case was most peculiar, and of all the contingencies Prince Gino and I reckoned with, we never reckoned on this—that a foreigner would marry her secretly out of hand."

"That is what Raulyn did?"

"Yes."

"Oh, how ghastly! It has always been like that with Raulyn—as if some malicious spirit was behind him, urging to destruction."

"The spirit is within, Mrs. Cantelowe. He is a man out of tune with himself, weak, whimsical, dazed with dreams he cannot master, the child of an unfortunate marriage, the last of an over-refined race."

Philippa sat mute; in these kind but unfaltering terms she heard described the man on whom she had wasted the romantic love of her youth.

"And Sir Raulyn cannot quite play fair," continued the doctor. "I learnt that, in England, you think a great deal of it, do you not—fair play?"

"Everything," said Philippa. "It is our word for honour."

"In our country we should say honour. We should say that Sir Raulyn was not quite honourable."

Philippa started as if she had been pricked over the heart.

"I was away," said Dr. Michelozzi earnestly, "but Prince Gino warned him—about Geva—and he, by a play of words, deceived the boy into thinking he had no intention of marriage."

Philippa could not speak; she remembered Clobbertons; she knew now, what she had scarcely known then in her vast inexperience, that very few men of Raulyn's breeding would have left her as he had left, to follow some will-o'-the-wisp and leave a woman's heart bruised, a woman's pride abased.

"And I think," continued the doctor, lowering his beautiful strong voice, "that he has deceived us again. My poor little girl was much better, Mrs. Cantelowe, very happy in her affections and glorified by the thought of the child. I even dared to hope for a cure, for these fits of insanity came always through the emotions. She adores Sir Raulyn in a fashion you would hardly understand, and I warned him that her reason, even her life, and the reason and life of the child depended on him. And he failed me."

"Even in that!" exclaimed Philippa miserably. "How did he fail you?"

"By allowing you to come to Rome, Mrs. Cantelowe," he replied directly.

Philippa was taken utterly by surprise; a deep colour rushed up into her face, she clasped hands together nervously, tightly, and could find nothing to say.

Francesco Michelozzi, looking at her keenly, saw an instant confirmation of what had been surmise on his part.

He continued, with an even softer note of kindness and consideration in his deep voice:

"Sir Raulyn told me that his cousin and his wife were coming—he spoke of you indifferently, there was nothing to make me suspect the truth."

"What do you consider the truth?" she faltered.

"That you are a beautiful woman, Mrs. Cantelowe—that Sir Raulyn admired you, was your suitor, was rejected, and that in his unhappiness at the failure of his marriage, he encouraged your visit as a palliative to his misery. And Geva, poor child, saw all this—and was provoked to—last night."

It was all very clear to Philippa: her strong intelligence and her upright character were alike appealed to; she saw the great evil she had innocently caused, and her heart was hot against Raulyn.

"It is true what you say," she answered. "Raulyn was the man I was expected to marry, the man I myself thought to marry, but he left me, as he left his father, with no word of return. And I," she added bravely, "very happy in my marriage, wished to find Raulyn and perhaps bring him back. Even when I heard of his marriage I could not imagine that my coming would cause trouble—for Raulyn never cared for me"—she smiled—"and if he has liked to see me here—and now," she added sadly, "I see why he cannot go home."

"Raulyn," said Francesco Michelozzi, "cares more for you than you think. He is always contrasting his wife with you, thinking of what he missed—and she, sharp and fine as only the insane are, feels it, and it rouses in her the homicidal mania she inherits from her mother."

Philippa looked at him in fresh terror.

"And the child?" she whispered.

The doctor raised his hand and let it fall.

"I cannot tell," he said soberly. "No one could tell."

Philippa was thinking of Dyprre: that ancient, beautiful heritage to go to a criminal lunatic! She was passionately glad that Sir Lambert was dead.

"Cannot I do something?" she asked piteously. "Cannot I go to her and let her see there is nothing in what she thinks?"

"My poor girl lies in a drugged sleep," he answered simply, "from which she only wakes to rave and sing her poor little song she learnt to rival you——"

"Oh, this is unbearable!" cried Philippa, tears stung her eyes as she thought of last night, her singing, her diamonds, the display for the Opera. "I cannot forgive Raulyn this! He should have warned me—it was cruel."

"Sir Raulyn can be cruel," replied the doctor, "but we must pity him. He has fooled me twice, yet I must pity him."

Philippa glanced up at him with a swift intuition.

"He has wronged you, too, I think."

She had got behind his guard as shrewdly as he had got behind hers when he had spoken of the danger to Geva in this Roman visit, and Philippa saw him, no longer as the compassionate judge and tender guardian of others, but as a man whose own feelings were deeply involved in this fantastic tragic comedy.

But he would not betray himself, nor was there any cloud on the serenity of his face.

"Geva was always dear to me. I owed much to her father. She was, in a way, my work."

"And Raulyn has turned all your effort to failure," said Philippa ashamedly.

"No, I will not admit that," he answered. "My hope is in the child, even now, in the child."

Philippa looked at him, wondering; she had thought of Raulyn as entangled among these alien people, who were, in every way, his inferiors, and, also in every way, taking advantage of him; and now she had heard this foreigner use the word "dishonourable" in connection with Raulyn, and she saw that it was he who was, not the victim but the mischief-maker; unconsciously, no doubt, but still the mischief-maker in the lives of other people: here, as he had been at home, in her life, in the life of her parents, and of Sir Lambert.

Francesco Michelozzi was silent, as if he suddenly felt the fatigue of his long vigil, and the Englishwoman looked at him curiously, weighing his attraction, his charm, the magnificence of his personality, of which he seemed so wholly unconscious.

And his faith in—what?—amid this chaos of destinies around him, moved and almost startled her; for she could see nothing but fell horror in this disastrous marriage, this pitiful birth.

"Perhaps the child will not live," she said faintly, as if she offered consolation.

He flashed into his lovable animation at that.

"Of course it will live. I shall see that it lives. My hopes of something out of all this is in the child."

"But everything is against you," whispered Philippa.

"Everything—except——"

He paused, and she, leaning forward, asked eagerly:

"Except what? Dr. Michelozzi, what *do* you believe in?"

He answered quickly, smiling:

"'The Presence and the Power'—that is in one of your English poets—Wordsworth. Do you know what I mean? That quotation expresses it very well—'The Presence and the Power' behind it all—in the lowest depths, in the darkest places."

Philippa felt a faint glow of consolation conveyed from the man's personality and from his words; the sheer courage of his attitude appealed to her nature that had something of the heroic.

"I think I understand." She rose. "I take your time. Is there nothing I can do?"

The Italian was instantly on his feet also, looking at her gravely, yet with a smile behind the gravity.

"Sir Raulyn will not see you. He is very shaken. For the moment, he lives for Geva."

Philippa thought of the tie between herself and Piers: the sheer fact of marriage was a mighty bond.

"My husband," she said. "Could he do anything? You think him stiff, perhaps, but he is most generously kind—in—in—times like this. Believe me, he would do anything."

Dr. Michelozzi looked at her as if he was aware of her story: that was the impression she received from his glance, and she slightly coloured; but of course it was impossible for him to know under what circumstances she had married Piers.

"I like your husband very much, though he has scarcely spoken to me. If all the men in the world were as Mr. Cantelowe, there would be no trouble for anyone. But here, there is nothing he can do."

Philippa, in moving to the door, had come nearer the inner room; she looked nervously at the setting for last night's horrid little scene.

"Would you not take away the work-bag and the song?" she whispered hesitatingly.

"A kind thought," said Dr. Michelozzi. Instantly he entered the music room, and she half-fearfully followed him.

He rolled up the song and slipped it into the yellow silk bag.

"I ordered all the flowers to be removed," he added, "but the servants would not think of taking these, of

course. These people have always been the difficulty, Mrs. Cantelowe—I have always tried to surround Geva with old servants of her father's. Yesterday the new lad in the garden was the cause of her getting the knife. She ran down and asked for it to cut some flowers. Poor Jiacinta is heart-broken, but it is not her fault—the insane are so cunning."

At these words, which revealed to her the ceaseless vigilance, the endless patience required in the Palazzo Lambruschini, and gave her some glimpse into the tragedy of Raulyn's marriage, Philippa shivered and moved restlessly away from the piano.

"It is strange to me to see that there," she said, pausing before the shelf under the gilt mirror. "That little white figure and one of the bouquets of porcelain flowers was in a house at Trawden, at home—in the room of a girl who had hanged herself many years before. Raulyn bought them, I suppose, and had kept them all this time!"

Now that the cluster of lilac and tuberoses had been removed, the milky opal colour of the image stood out starkly between the pure tints and rigid forms of the porcelain flowers.

"One bouquet belongs to Geva," said the doctor. "I told her I had seen one in Sir Raulyn's rooms and she wore hers when he came to her reception, poor child. The figure is Shiva, the God of Destruction."

"Oh!" exclaimed Philippa, frowning.

"I have a picture of Shiva," continued Dr. Michelozzi. "He is dancing the Tandava dance—the great vibration of the universal spirit, shaking old forms into new forms—his drum, shaped like an hour-glass, quivers to the throb of ceaseless life, and fire which purifies worn-out matter; he has three eyes, for he sees with the soul as well as with the body, and he is crowned with white flowers of supreme loveliness. Destruction, Mrs. Cantelowe, is another name for re-creation, transformation."

"So you let Raulyn keep the image?" said Philippa thoughtfully.

"Yes, I want him to see the symbol as I see it."

She half-smiled, half-frowned.

"But you see nothing ugly, nothing horrible anywhere, Dr. Michelozzi."

"No. Do you, really? Ugliness and horror are the last delusions of intelligence—the last superstition of our civilization."

"But terrible things *do* happen."

"We could prevent them. By believing in them we allow them to occur, by trembling before them we let them dominate. Sin is as preventable as disease. Both are only negations of natural activities."

"I see"—Philippa looked at the gleaming image. "So that is your 'The Presence and the Power'—Shiva, who destroys to re-create."

"If you will, yes, that is something of what I mean." He smiled kindly, looking at her with pleasant interest.

"Re-creation," said Philippa, "and that is why you believe in the child. You mean any child—but I think of this one. I—you make me believe in it, too, Dr. Michelozzi. Thank you for what you have said." She held out her fair fine hand. "May I have that bag and the sheet of music? I will see that neither Raulyn nor Geva see it again."

He put it into her hand without any question; he saw that to her it meant something, the pitiful relics of a pitiful dream.

"I—we, shall not come till you send for us, Dr. Michelozzi—but let me know—about the child."

CHAPTER XVII

THE purple clouds of a light thunderstorm hung over Rome and the delicate flashes of summer lightning darted through the withering creepers into the empty *salone* of the Palazzo Lambruschini. Raulyn, whose life hung in a void of melancholy idleness, of sick fears and bitter dreams, stood at the long window holding a letter from Philippa Cantelowe.

She had written—after a pause of weeks—to ask for his news, and to say that she must soon leave Rome; they had already dared the great heat—waiting for his news, wondering if they could help.

Raulyn, in cold loyalty to the woman upstairs, had not seen or written to Philippa since the night of the horrible little scene by the grand piano; in a sullen solitude he had lived the pallid life of nightmare, moving softly about the huge, decayed, empty rooms of the palace, or seated for long hours of hideous duty in the apartment of his wife, now palpably, even to his layman's eyes, a creature insane, where wild gaiety

alternated with savage furies and long, silent, deep grief.

Now he had not seen her for several days : his nerves, never strong, had given way utterly ; it had become an impossibility for him to endure the company of his wife ; not even when Francesco Michelozzi told him of the suffering his absence was inflicting on Geva would he go upstairs again.

And now that he had received this timid friendly note from Philippa he decided, in his misery, to go to see the Cantelowes, to mingle, even for a few hours, in that healthy normal life, so orderly, so pleasant, so sane.

He frowned at the scar on his wrist ; what harm could it do Geva if he left the house for a short time ?

The thunderclouds rolled across the sky, blown by a fresh wind from the sea ; the thunder-claps murmured farther in the distance at longer intervals, the lightning darted into the sombre room and was shattered in a thousand reflections in the heavy bronze-clamped mirrors that lined the walls. It was early morning. Raulyn had not seen anyone yet beyond the servants, and he roused himself to the distasteful duty of inquiring after his wife ; he did this personally every morning ; it was an engrained habit of courtesy that no weakness of his character could efface.

But to-day it was not necessary, for, as he turned reluctantly from the window, the great door opened and Francesco Michelozzi entered, looking so cheerful and full of radiant high spirits that Raulyn was further unnerved and vexed.

" The child is born," said the Italian, as if he announced joyful news.

Raulyn experienced that desolating sense of unreality that is often the culmination of long suspense when the expected actually happens ; the dragging months of the torture of ghastly anticipation ended in this feeling of flatness, of fatigue. Raulyn said dully :

" The child ? "

" A boy."

" Lambert Dyprre," muttered Raulyn ; then he roused himself and added, " and Geva ? "

" Geva is beautiful. Geva is healed. Will you come and see them ? "

Raulyn folded up the letter he held and put it in his pocket ; he reflected stupidly that now he would not be able to go and see Philippa.

Francesco Michelozzi was looking at him keenly, almost

resentfully: it was the glance of the man who has almost exhausted a strong and beautiful patience.

Raulyn instantly scented the flash of antagonism in the man who had borne with him so long—and it stiffened him in his revolt.

"Don't you see, Dr. Michelozzi," he asked coldly, "what this is to me? A boy, you say. An idiot boy. A lunatic boy. A criminal boy."

And again he frowned at the scar on his wrist.

"Neither," replied the Italian firmly. The dim light, the fainter lightning, showed him standing, massive and authoritative, in front of the heavy mirrors, in front of the granite Cæsars. "He starts a fresh race, don't hang him round with the trophies of your defeats to lame his fleetness. If you are afraid, leave the boy to me."

"My son," said Raulyn bitterly, "how unmerciful Life is!"

"But it is just," returned the other, "and a *man* should not wish for mercy. Will you come upstairs?"

Raulyn followed him.

Geva's rooms were in the top of the palace, high above the tops of the trees in the garden so that pure light flowed in, unchecked, direct from the sky.

This light was shadowed now by the azure violet of the thunderclouds that were so rapidly rolling away towards the Sabine Hills, and as Raulyn entered the bed-chamber a faint sunshine of a dusty gold colour had penetrated these clouds and floated in through the wide open windows from which the curtains of pale brocade had been looped back. Raulyn hesitated on the threshold: his training had taught him to associate the birth of a human being with pain, with mystery, with sickness—with a curse, as something to be shuddered away from, the martyrdom of a woman, the misery of a helpless, suffering, little creature, repulsive and pitiful.

This Gothic horror of birth, like the Gothic horror of death, clung to the Englishman, a superstition bred in the bone, and he shuddered inwardly at the prospect of the white, suffering woman, the wailing puny babe.

The air of the large chamber was faintly drenched with the perfume of violets; the balcony in front of that open window was filled with carnations in glazed Persian pots. Raulyn looked at the bed, fearfully, with dislike and resentment.

Serene and lovely Geva looked back at him; she rested on a quantity of silk pillows, and wore a little jacket of white

silk and silver embroidery, over which her black hair hung in fine little ringlets; the rich curtains of the bed were drawn back, and the breeze from without and the last faint flashes of the summer lightning played on her face.

Beyond the bed was Jiacinta, arranging oranges and grapes in deep green leaves in a majolica bowl; she was smiling as Raulyn had never seen her smile before.

Joy and tranquillity rested like a blessing in a fragrant chamber. The woman was calm and beautiful as the golden statue of the Madonna that stood in the niche beside her bed; she stretched out her hands to Raulyn, and he saw in her again the meek, docile, fair creature of the halcyon days of their marriage before the coming of Philippa Cantelowe.

"She has forgotten," whispered Francesco Michelozzi. "Cannot you forget?"

Raulyn went slowly up to the bed that was covered with silk and velvet quilts, and Geva with joyous eyes and quivering lips continued to look up at him, while, with an exquisite movement, her long pale hand on which he saw his wedding-ring, swept back the bedclothes from a little hollow at her left side.

Raulyn looked down on his son.

The child was wrapped in one of the lace robes his mother had made, and lay curled on a silk cushion; he was asleep, and there seemed to be a glow about him as he slept, for his skin was the colour of pale amber, and his head was dusted over with sparkling gold hair.

Raulyn had never seen anything so strange nor so beautiful; he bent lower in a gentle silence.

The baby was no weakling: he had an air of pride and dignity of utter serenity; there was something noble in the abandonment of his confiding repose, in the finish and delicacy of his limbs.

"He is twelve hours old," said Geva softly, "but we have been asleep, he and I, so they would not send for you sooner."

Raulyn looked up from the child to the mother, and as he remembered what she was and what the child must be, the agony of this lovely delusion seemed more terrible than the hobgoblin horrors his frantic imagination had foretold.

Yet he must speak to her. The doctor had gone out on to the balcony; Jiacinta had placed her bowl of fruit on a table the far end of the room; the thunderstorm had passed, and a flood of sunlight filled the chamber to the farthest corners.

Raulyn sat on the low stool beside his wife and timidly touched the child.

"Are you happy, Geva?" he asked falteringly; he thought the words ironic, but they seemed to come without his volition.

She repeated one of the words:

"Happy."

She was leaning back against her pillows now, her left arm folded, in a line of exceeding grace, round the sleeping body of her son. Her dark large eyes, that were so much the eyes of a child or an animal, searched with a curious expression the haggard, downcast features of her husband; it was as if she was trying to remember something, endeavouring to piece together some recollections of a broken dream.

"Why are you *not* happy?" she asked, puzzled. "There is some reason, I think, but I cannot recall it."

The look of childish distress dawning on her face frightened him. He put his cold hand over hers and said convulsively:

"Don't think about it. The baby is lovely—you must try to sleep, like he sleeps."

"Why? I am not ill." She smiled now in instant response to his momentary tenderness. "His name is Lambert—from your father and Francesco, from Cecco—and it was one of my father's names also."

"Lambert Dyprre."

A Lambert Dyprre who was disinherited before his birth, who could never tread the pleasant ways of his ancestors, nor know their stately place.

Raulyn would have wished to give the child some other name, but "Lambert Dyprre," as it fell from the lips of Geva, had the sound of an inevitable fate: this little golden creature *was* Lambert Dyprre, whether he willed it so or not.

He had been awake all night, and the reaction after his long tension, his many vigils, made him drowsy; he abandoned himself to this delusion of beauty and peace.

The sleeping child, the fair woman, the luxuriant detail of the rich apartment, the atmosphere of joy and cheerfulness (delusion, all delusion) soothed him; he watched the delicate breath heaving the little body of his son as it flowed in and out; he watched Geva, radiant in her triumphant tranquil content, and for a brief space he dreamed that he also was tranquil and content.

When he raised his head he could see on the balcony, among the glazed pots of the carnations tied to straight sticks, the

heavy figure of Francesco Michelozzi, leaning on the railing and looking over Rome and across the sky from which the last trails of purple thunderclouds were disappearing in the dazzling azure.

Geva drooped closer round her child, sank deeper into the soft cushions, sighed, and was asleep with her smiling face turned towards her husband.

When Raulyn observed this he roused himself and bent over the infant with a close and anxious scrutiny; he could not believe that this little being was without some trace of his fell heritage, that his mellow rosiness was not marred somewhere by some brand of the devil.

All his nervous dreads and fears of some hobgoblin, some deformity to be born of this poor mad woman revived, and he peered close and closer, turning back the laces and linens from the curled-up limbs of his son.

Francesco Michelozzi left the balcony and came to the strange little group, of which two were so sweetly asleep and one was so fearfully awake.

"Is he—normal—in every way?" asked Raulyn quickly.

"A superb boy."

"I feel incredulous," said Raulyn, with a pallid and mocking smile, "when I think of her state these last few weeks——"

"It was an ugly crisis—but it passed, and all the while she was really thinking of him—you must remember that; there is no wonder that he is beautiful: for months she has been thinking of him and loving him."

Raulyn looked up at the strong face above him; the doctor's words had a fantastic sound, he thought.

"How long," he asked feverishly, "before we *know*—about the boy?"

"Who could tell? He may be altogether free from taint. It will depend much on you—how you treat him—how happy he is."

Raulyn rose.

"I am likely," he said bitterly, "to be able to make my son happy—I, with this burden on me!"

He made a movement of his thin hand towards the sleeping woman.

"The child will be her salvation," said Dr. Michelozzi, again with unmistakable hostility in his manner. "Her reason may never again be clouded."

And Raulyn replied with intentional brutality:

"You know that she is a homicidal maniac who will have to be guarded night and day—the rest of my life must be spent in making hers a burden to her."

"Ah! ah!" cried Francesco Michelozzi angrily.

"Does it not seem to you that I speak the truth?" asked Raulyn with cold defiance.

"It seems to me that you profane the place you stand in," replied the doctor. "Have you no tenderness, no hope, even at this moment? Leave us, lest she wakes and you trouble her."

And he took the stool from which Raulyn had risen, as if he placed himself before Geva as her protector and guardian.

Raulyn said no more, but neither did he retract his words.

He went downstairs and wrote to Philippa Cantelowe.

He told her of the birth of his son, and added his great hope that he might see her before she left Rome.

CHAPTER XVIII

MRS. CANTELOWE received another letter from the Palazzo Lambruschini: this was from Dr. Michelozzi, and courteously redeemed his promise to let her know when Lady Dyprre's child was born.

Philippa compared the two notes in some bewilderment; it had been definitely but tacitly understood between herself and Francesco Michelozzi that she should not see Geva again, and therefore she had kept away, strange as her behaviour must appear to outsiders; and Raulyn surely must have been in agreement with the doctor's wish. Now he wrote as if he hoped she would come to the Palazzo Lambruschini.

Philippa consulted Piers.

"Why not go?" he advised. "It seems the kind thing, the common-sense thing to do."

Piers always stood for kindness and common sense; he was glad they were leaving Rome, glad that this whole episode was nearly over, and that he was taking back *home* a Philippa wholly his, but he wished to be generous to that poor fool, Raulyn, and the crazy creature, his wife; he was even willing to undertake the distasteful task of calling on his cousin, but this Philippa had assured him was a needless effort: she was so sure that Raulyn would rather be "left alone"; and

Piers, remembering his ungraciousness at the Palazzo Lambruschini, willingly agreed.

His own life had always been too full of pleasant activities and healthy interests to allow him leisure to trouble much about alien emotions and the subtleties of other people's character, but he was always ready to be generous and helpful, so now, out of the plenitude of his own quiet happiness, he urged:

"Go and see them—why not? We ought to send the child something, too—a Lambert Dyprre again!"

Piers did not know and must never know the secret of that little scene at the piano; what Francesco Michelozzi had told Philippa she kept close in her own heart.

But she permitted herself to answer:

"But Lady Dyprre—Geva—dislikes me; it seems unkind to go to her house, knowing that."

"It's my opinion," said Piers, "that the woman is not right in her mind. It is the most extraordinary marriage I ever heard of; so exactly what one thought would happen to Raulyn that one can hardly believe it——"

"But the child," replied Philippa, thinking of Francesco Michelozzi's words which had so impressed her—"the child may redeem all."

This tender point of view did not recommend itself to the practical sense of Piers; he smiled indulgently.

"With such parents I would not give much for the chances of the child; still, go and see them, Philippa; it is really the only decent thing to do."

But his wife still hesitated; she wondered if had Piers known the whole truth he would still have wished her to visit the Palazzo Lambruschini.

"I don't want to risk a scene with that poor woman," she said.

"Well, don't see her, Philippa. She'll be upstairs for weeks yet. Go and speak to Raulyn and that doctor fellow; tell 'em we're leaving Rome. I'll come if you wish, but it seems a woman's business."

Philippa glanced gratefully at her husband; he was always so reassuring, he made so light of the delicate difficulties that troubled her; and his common-sense point of view was always so right; of course there was no need for her to see Geva; civility and kindness could be well served without forcing that issue; she need not even see Raulyn; she would ask for Dr. Michelozzi.

So when Lambert Dyprre was just a week old, the Cantelowe carriage drew up outside the Palladian porch of the Palazzo Lambruschini, and from this plain but glittering English equipage Mrs. Cantelowe descended, carrying a huge sheaf of white roses and tuberoses. She found Dr. Michelozzi was not there: he no longer lived with the Dyprres, having, after all, his own life to live, and he had returned to his house in the Via della Rotonda. Sir Raulyn was also out, but he would soon return; the servant hesitated as he delivered his message. Unexpected visitors were never admitted in this house, and the man remembered this fair Englishwoman in the embroidered muslins as being present on the disastrous evening when his mistress had been taken ill.

Philippa hesitated also; foolishly enough, she told herself, she had overlooked this chance, and now was at a loss. She was about to leave her flowers and her card and some message, when she saw, on the dim stairs beyond the dim vestibule, Raulyn's wife.

"It is kind of you to come," said Geva. "Will you enter, Mrs. Cantelowe?"

Philippa felt her heart pounding in sheer dismay; of all things she had not thought of this; she had taken it for granted that Geva would be in her own room, carefully guarded for weeks, perhaps months: she knew nothing of the customs of Italian women, and to see Geva walking about was in itself a shock.

Raulyn's wife smiled at her discomposure, and came through the pillared vestibule; she looked tall and slender in her black silk dress and black lace shawl, her high piled hair crowned by the comb with the brilliant coral balls.

"Come upstairs," she said graciously. "Do you know, I had forgotten you. Then I was at my window and saw you drive up. And so remembered everything."

She spoke in Italian and smiled again.

Philippa, in her acute confusion and distress, stammered:

"I had no thought of disturbing you, Lady Dyprre—I meant just to leave these flowers and a message——"

"Did you think I was ill?" asked Geva, in English now. "That is so funny. I was ill, but that was before my baby came. You must see my baby."

Philippa noticed with relief the figure of an elderly woman on the stairs—the nurse, surely.

"I will come up for a little while," she said nervously, "but you must not let me tire you."

And she followed Geva and the quiet dark attendant up the grandiose stairs into the great *salone* with the mirrors clamped in bronze lining the walls.

"I love this room," said Geva simply. "Presently Raulyn will come in and we will have your English tea."

She spoke so naturally and sweetly that all Philippa knew of her seemed an evil dream; only, through the open doors, there was the grand piano, the white figure from Clobbertons gleaming in front of the long mirror.

Philippa laid her flowers on one of the gilt rococo tables; they were the most expensive flowers she had been able to procure in Rome, but now she noticed with remorse that they were too like the blossoms that had decorated the music-room that ghastly Friday evening.

"They are for me?" asked Geva, taking up the sheaf of white fragrant purity. "I thank you—come and see Lambert——"

Philippa moved across the gleaming floor; with another sense of shock she saw an ornate, gilded cradle by the window; she approached, and saw a baby lying there asleep, wrapped in silk and brocade and lace.

The whole thing was grotesque to the Englishwoman, so entirely different to anything she had ever seen or even imagined; she thought of her own nurseries, so plain, so precise, so briefly tenanted. . . . She was glad to sit on the stiff Empire couch and look down at the child.

The little creature seemed to her of an almost unearthly beauty, and this, in view of what she knew, was a keen irony; golden, happy, warmly curved into his opulent nest, he lay in a profound repose; and she noticed, as Raulyn had noticed, the air of careless pride about this helpless creature.

It was Jiacinta who moved back the delicate coverings from the cradle and adjusted the blinds so that no ray of sun fell near him; Philippa noticed the old brown hand trembling.

"All my lady's work," murmured the old nurse, "all the embroidery and the lace."

Her face was bent low over the child, and Philippa saw tears on her withered cheeks.

"It is very beautiful," said Mrs. Cantelowe timidly. "You must be happy."

Geva gave the child a darting glance of passionate, almost agonized, love.

"You are going to England soon?" she asked.

"Yes, in a few days now; this is really to say good-bye."

"I want my baby to go to England," said Geva jealously, "to see his own place—but Raulyn will not take us."

Philippa was transfixed by helpless pity.

"Oh, later, surely—when you are quite strong?"

The Italian laughed.

"I am strong enough!"

"Raulyn thinks perhaps you would not like the life—it is very different."

"What do I matter?" answered Geva, with a kind of grandeur in her demeanour. "I think of my son. He is English. And he has his heritage."

This last sentence was almost unbearable to Philippa.

"Of course, Raulyn will take you both later on," she said desperately.

And indeed she could see no valid reason why Raulyn should not bring these beautiful unhappy beings to his own home, where surely they could be tenderly cared for.

"I hope so." She added, on a genuine impulse of affection: "I would like you to live near us—I am sure we should be really friends, and if I have children, as I pray to have, dear Geva—they could——"

And here she faltered, frightened at her crazy impulsiveness. How could she ever foster an intimacy between any possible children of hers and this lovely child with such a hideous inheritance?

Geva was looking at her, sitting erect with an imperious carriage.

"I understand you very well," she said clearly.

Philippa glanced at her in terrified amazement, for the Italian had spoken just as if she had read her thought; they looked at each other, and Geva's tragic eyes seemed to Philippa the eyes of a sane woman. Mrs. Cantelowe rose; the situation had become unbearable; almost in a panic she picked up her gloves and parasol.

Geva, still gazing at her, neither moved nor spoke.

"I tire you, I take your time," murmured Philippa, holding out her hand; then to her relief, even to her pleasure, Raulyn entered the room.

And, in her nervousness, conscious though she was of Geva's

intense gaze, she could not altogether eliminate this relief and pleasure from her manner.

And Raulyn's gratitude and delight at this visit could not either be wholly disguised; it was a warm hand-clasp and an affectionate salutation that Geva witnessed as she gazed at them, sitting upright on the hard couch; then, instantly Raulyn remembered his wife, looked at her apprehensively and crossed to the couch. And Geva, slightly lifting her delicate hand, repeated, queerly:

"I understand it all, very well."

Then she rose swiftly and added, in her slightly old-fashioned manner of a great lady:

"Will you not remain to tea now, Mrs. Cantelowe?"

Philippa stood hesitant, fearful of doing the wrong thing, but Raulyn said quietly:

"Of course you will stay awhile, Philippa—this is a farewell visit, isn't it?"

"But we shall meet in England," said Mrs. Cantelowe.

"No, we have no prospect of coming to England," replied Raulyn.

Again Geva gave that glance of passionate, almost furious, love at her son; and Philippa began murmuring praises of the child.

But Geva whispered to the old nurse, who picked up little Lambert Dyprre and carried him away.

Philippa saw the baby open his eyes and stretch with a little sound of content as he was lifted up, and the beauty of him, when the eyes lit the tiny face, thrilled the Englishwoman; she checked an involuntary movement to take him in her own arms. Raulyn stood behind; even in the greenish shadow of the close sun-blinds his face looked ravaged, the greying of his dark hair very apparent. Philippa, recalling him as the hero of her romantic girlhood, when he had been Sir Launcelot, Sir Tristram, Romeo to her childish fancy, was frightened to see him now a middle-aged, haggard, wretched man; to realize that she looked at him without a shred of illusion and knew him for middle-aged, haggard and wretched.

The tea, Geva's idea of an English "afternoon tea," was brought in, and the two of them made what talk they could, for Geva remained silent, sitting upright, with a musing face.

And always in Philippa's mind was the sense of Geva's intense desire to go to England with her son, a desire that had sprung to life with her maternity, and one which Philippa,

with her pride of place, her strong sense of possession and heritage, could thoroughly understand ; and, half-unconsciously, she ranged herself on the side of the woman against the man : she thought that Raulyn ought to take his wife and child to Dyprre and risk the consequences.

And she wondered if she could snatch a moment with Raulyn to tell him so and to impress on him how lovely and fine the child was.

But there was no opportunity : Raulyn would not leave his wife's side even at the moment of Philippa's departure ; he went with her to the door of the *salone* and from there a footman was her escort.

Geva rose and offered her hand ; Philippa remembered afterwards how burning hot that hand was, and with what curious intentness the Italian gazed at her. Again Philippa had the impression that she looked into the eyes of a completely sane woman, and, more than that, that she saw into the essence of a soul, and a soul that was pure innocence.

" Good-bye," said Geva, and then in Italian the form of farewell that is only used in the sense of finality, " *Addio.*"

The Cantelowe equipage rolled away from the decayed front of the palace ; the sound of the departing wheels echoed in the shadowed room where Raulyn stood beside his wife.

" I did not know that she was coming," he said.

" But you are glad that she came," answered Geva.

She was shivering, and he noticed how brilliantly carmine her lips were, how vivid was the flush beneath the extraordinary lustre of her eyes ; he took her hand and felt, as Philippa had felt, the unnatural heat.

" Geva, you are feverish—you must go upstairs ; you should not have come down so soon, I always felt it madness."

" I want Cecco," she said simply.

" He is coming soon. He said he would return to-night."

" Stay with me till he comes," she answered, shivering again.

Raulyn looked at her in sick alarm ; it seemed to him that not only was she suddenly ill, but that her mind had changed. He saw, as Philippa had seen, a perfect innocence looking out of her tragic eyes, but also a devastating knowledge.

" Geva ! " he cried, terrified, seating himself beside her, " won't you come upstairs ? Don't you want your baby ? "

" No. Not now. Poor baby. Stay with me, Raulyn. Sit beside me. I want to think."

He obeyed, still frightened ; she leant back against the

cushions at the head of the couch; continually she shivered, and Raulyn, holding that burning little hand, thought that she drowsed into a half-sleep.

So Francesco Michelozzi found them; he came at once to Geva and bent over her; she opened her eyes and smiled.

"What is this?" he asked sharply.

"I think she is not well," replied Raulyn, rising from his cramped position. "I felt it wrong for her to be about so soon——"

The doctor impatiently ignored that.

"Something had happened. Did you stay with her all the time I was away?"

"No. I went out for awhile."

"*Dio!* But you promised me you would stay."

"Did I?" replied Raulyn haughtily. "I don't remember. It is of no importance. Nothing happened. Mrs. Cantelowe called," he added coldly, "and Geva was pleased to see her."

"Mrs. Cantelowe," repeated the doctor angrily. "Ah! What am I to say to you?"

"Look to your patient," said Raulyn in the same tone. "I told you, I think she is not well."

The antagonism between the two men was undisguised; Raulyn turned sharply away and left the room.

Geva, with a faint movement of her hand, motioned the doctor to the couch beside her.

"That was the woman he loves," she said quickly. "When I saw her and those flowers she brought," pointing to the still unbound sheaf on the rococo table, "I remembered everything."

"Remembered what, my poor child?"

She came close to him, eagerly, holding to the revers of his light coat.

"My head is quite clear. I have no bad dreams now. I know I have been a wicked woman. I tried to kill him with a knife I got from the gardener's boy."

"Oh no, Geva, no!" he cried strongly, desperately.

"Yes. I know. I look backwards and see myself—often like that, got hold of by the devil, doing wicked things. But it *is* the devil, Cecco. I am not like that—really——"

"Hush, you must not talk so," he interrupted, shaken to the soul by her clear sanity, child-like but at last unclouded.

"I want to speak!" she pleaded. "Perhaps I shall forget again—but I think the devils flew away when the baby was

born, I think I should have been good now, and understanding. But *he* hates me, you know, he is afraid of me. And that is why he will not take us to England——"

"Geva, my darling, my sweet child, what makes you think of such things?"

She looked at him with a tender keenness.

"I see by your face it is true, Cecco, but you didn't want me to know. So good and kind you are, dear, dear Cecco——"

"It came to me to-day when I saw that woman—everything was quite clear; I saw how they hated and pitied me, and what a trouble I had been——"

"Never to me, Geva, never anything but a joy to me."

"But *he* came and took me away from you. That isn't clear, because he hates me—and will not take me to England. I loved him, you know——"

"You will love him still, Geva; you are going to be very happy with him yet."

She shook her delicate lovely head.

"That is over. I'm going to die——"

"Geva! I will not permit you to speak like that——"

"But I must," she insisted; "it came to me just now—my heart seemed to turn over, something in my blood changed—I willed myself to die. So Raulyn will be free again——"

"But the baby," he stammered, utterly overcome.

"Poor baby. I am not fit to have him, Cecco—I might become wicked again. Will he hate the baby because of me? I willed myself to die because I love the baby so much—he also must be free of me."

She sighed and put her head on the cushions again.

Francesco Michelozzi sat still; for the first time in his life he was utterly at a loss in a crisis, this tragic turn of affairs had taken him completely by surprise; he had believed it possible that Geva might become for years, perhaps permanently, a sane woman, but he had never reckoned on the chance that she would recognize the fact of her own sanity, realize the full horror of her position; and there seemed to him something fatal in this lucidity of this poor deranged mind, as if the shock that had given her this clarity of vision must have destroyed her frail body; and he knew too well the power of the "will to die" and feared her simple yet heroic resolution.

His high spirits, his confidence, his gay courage failed him; he had nothing to say. She had defeated him; he sat bowed like a weakling.

"Take me upstairs," she said faintly. "My head is heavy."

A few hours later Raulyn met Jiacinta on the stairs, followed by a tall, robust, peasant woman.

"Who is that?" he asked, startled.

"That is the wet nurse for your son," replied Jiacinta grimly. "My lady is very ill."

CHAPTER XIX

RAULYN did not visit his wife's apartments; he waited, miserably, about the large empty rooms, waiting for her summons, but Francesco Michelozzi never left her; he had spoken to Raulyn once at the door of the sick chamber:

"She knows," he said, "and it has killed her."

Raulyn went away; as always, he was shut out: even tragedy rejected him.

He felt that as Philippa belonged, in the serious matter of life, to Piers, so Geva, in the serious matter of death, belonged to Francesco Michelozzi.

In the lives of both these women he was an intruder, not wanted. Philippa had left Rome, not knowing of the shadow over the Palazzo Lambruschini, and Raulyn did not write to her; he felt indifferent towards her, as towards everything in earth and Heaven. Only he remembered the great wish that Geva had expressed since the birth of the child—to go to England, to Dyprre, with her son.

And he wrote on a slip of paper which he gave to Jiacinta for the doctor:

"Tell her I will take her home—to England," and the paper was brought back with "Too late" scribbled underneath in the doctor's fine hand.

The child that had been so content and silent now cried often on the alien bosom that nourished him. Raulyn heard these cries coming from the closed room, and his nerves were tortured so that his very soul seemed to be answering these laments, so muffled, yet so penetrating.

On the third day they came to tell him that she was dying, and he went dully upstairs.

She lay, as he had seen her so recently, propped up against silk pillows, but so changed that Raulyn thought of the old song Philippa used to sing to him at home; the old song that

Sir Lambert had liked to hear in the quiet music-roon at Dyprre Manor House:

> "Thou seem'st a lily cut in the bud
> And fading at its place."

So sudden had been the change from radiant life to this inanimate pallor that Raulyn thought of this image "cut down," struck with a mortal wound, from some immortal hand; he came up softly and stood, tall and dark, by her pillows.

A priest was leaving the room by an inner door; a perfume of incense stirred in the air; Jiacinta, a silent huddled figure, was by the window which stood open on the great expanse of evening sky, flushed with saffron and topaz.

The other side of the large bed stood Francesco Michelozzi, and he made no movement whatever when Raulyn entered.

Geva raised her hand and beckoned her husband to come closer; he bent down; never before had he realized what a little thing she was, how slight and frail and pitiful; her small limbs scarcely disturbed the bedclothes laid so lightly over her; the face sunk between the dank black curls seemed a child's face.

"Good-bye," she whispered, "I am so glad to go. Cecco tried to keep me—but I meant to go. Forgive me."

"Nothing to forgive," he muttered. "Nothing, ah, nothing."

"I've been so wicked," she laboured on. "I had bad dreams and bad angels, but the priest says God will have pity—*pieta, pieta,* for I did not know. You too have pity: when the baby came I was good again, but you would always have hated me——"

"No, Geva, no!"

"You were ashamed of me. You loved that other woman," she smiled wanly, "and you do not love my baby."

"Geva, I swear to you——"

"My baby is for Cecco. *Addio,* Raulyn." She closed her eyes; her trembling hand, that had fluttered towards him, fell back on the quilt.

"Rouse her," said Raulyn in a low fierce voice. "I must make her understand——"

"Say farewell," replied Dr. Michelozzi.

"No, I wish to stay by her—she cared for me."

He shuddered as she spoke, and fumbled for the cold little

hand on the brocade coverlet. But Geva roused herself with a movement that was away from him.

"My love for you was a flame that flared out," she whispered, in her own language, "because I did not know. *Addio —Addio.* Cecco, send him away."

"Say farewell," repeated the doctor.

"*Addio,* Geva," said Raulyn dully.

She closed her eyes again; he would have stooped and kissed her, but a light motion of the doctor's hand stayed him; he went away, closing the door softly, slowly, as if he prolonged the moment of his going.

Geva opened her eyes.

"Has he gone, Cecco?"

"Yes."

"And he won't come back?"

"Never again."

"Then it will be like it used to be before he came."

"Like it used to be."

"Just you and I, Cecco."

"Just we two, darling."

He sat down, so as to be nearer to her, and putting his strong arm under her pillows drew her gently towards him; looking up at him she continued faintly:

"I asked him to forgive me—I said all I could think of——"

"Everything, my darling, everything; don't trouble with him any more."

"All trouble is nearly over, isn't it, Cecco?"

A long shuddering sigh ran through her frame and then she relaxed as if she slept; bending over, Francesco drew his arm closer round the pillows that supported her. The child stirred in the cradle by the window: Jiacinta hushed it; the sun sank behind the trees in the garden, and the silent shadows of twilight invaded the quiet room.

Geva moved and asked for a drink; Jiacinta was instantly ready with it; between them they raised her and held the silver cup to her lips.

A little of her strength ebbed back.

"How clear everything is," she murmured. "You always loved me, Cecco, didn't you?"

"Always, my beautiful darling."

"And I loved you, but the clouds got in the way. And this stranger came, Cecco; listen, hold me up against your shoulder——"

He obeyed, and her feeble lips whispered in his ear:

"Would you have married me, Cecco . . . if I had been like other women?"

At these words, which sighed in his heart like the sob of some spirit which knew the secret of his life, the man bowed his head.

"So gladly, if I had dared. Oh, my little love, because of you I wed no other woman——"

Geva smiled.

"All so clear now, Cecco, let us pretend. A fairy story. You used to tell me fairy stories. Let us pretend—so that I forget to be afraid——"

Her faint voice trailed away—"Afraid to die" fell across his ear.

"Geva, you need not die, even now you need not die."

"I am more afraid—to live——"

She rested in his arms a second; he did not dare to speak for fear of disturbing her; the shadows advanced, enclosing them, and the stretch of open sky beyond the window showed cold and luminous.

Jiacinta softly lit a candle that she placed on the table by the bed.

"Let us pretend," whispered the dying woman, "we are together—nothing ever happened; it was all a bad dream, and now we are awake——"

"Awake, yes, my sweet child."

"Pretend I am well," she stammered, "pretend . . . I am . . . your wife . . . pretend we are not going to part . . . pretend I always knew I loved you——"

"*I* always knew," he whispered.

"A fairy tale," she said drowsily, "the white swans flying home. . . . Kiss me, you are so warm and strong, I am so cold and tired . . . the white swans went to find their loves, beyond the sunset——"

Francesco turned his head towards the window.

"Bring the child," he commanded quickly.

The old woman came swiftly and laid the baby, wrapped in his mother's handiwork, on the bed, across Geva's knees.

"*My son*——" she murmured. "Yours—take him from me."

The child moved and gave a soft cry; Francesco supported him in his free arm, so that both mother and baby lay in his embrace.

"I will give my whole life to him," he said strongly.

"Don't let Raulyn take him away—pretend he is yours—your son——"

"I will stand by him, whatever happens."

"As you stood by me, through life, till death."

"Through life, till death, my darling."

He kissed the damp brow and the half-closed eyes, from which large slow tears were trickling down over the colourless cheeks; she tried to put up her hands and clasp them round his neck, but had no strength, and shook her head sadly.

"Is it nearly over?" she contrived to gasp.

"Very nearly over, my beautiful love."

She tried to smile up at him; by bending low he could just hear her words.

"*Remember . . . your . . . son.*"

He looked into her face; he laid her back on her pillows; the baby cried suddenly as if aware of his loss, a bitter little wail that shook in the chamber now filled by the encroaching shadows.

"*Many waters cannot quench love, nor the floods drown it.*"

Francesco went on his knees by the bed, and hid his face near the child, deep in the dead woman's coverlet, close to her still limbs.

Book III

LAMBERT DYPRRE

1924

CHAPTER I

"YOU would like to see the church?" asked Philippa Cantelowe. "There is nothing much to see, but somehow one always takes people there."

"Please, Miss Cantelowe. Your little churches are just wonderful to me," replied the young man with an engaging air of deference.

The girl stopped the buff-coloured two-seater at the churchyard gate; it was a January day, and the thick white mist clung close to the frozen ground and obscured sky and distance in one pall of pale fog. Against this background rose abruptly the squat Norman tower of the church, the slanting yellowed gravestones, and the dark, almost black, outlines of the gigantic hollowed yew-tree.

Philippa Cantelowe and her companion entered by the west door, which chanced to stand open because an old woman was cleaning the floor. The girl greeted her pleasantly, and passed down between the dark pews. She was a very tall, brightly fair girl, wearing a shabby tweed suit and hat, big motoring gloves, and a pale woollen scarf; both her manner and her expression were rather serious for her age and she had more of dignity than charm. Michael Warden, the young American who was with her, admired her as a perfect type of Anglo-Saxon beauty. With an expressionless courtesy she pointed out the knightly monuments, the faded escutcheons, the rows of funeral hatchments, the elaborate mural tablets.

"There are only three names, you see," she explained, "Cantelowe, Myniott and Dyprre—mother is the last of the Myniotts, and I am the last of the Cantelowes."

"And Dyprre?"

"Oh, that is about to come to an end, too—there is a Dyprre somewhere, but he is awfully eccentric, and the place is always let."

"It seems a pity," said the American.

"Why? Most people nowadays think all this"—her heavily gloved hand made a light gesture round the walls—"such rubbish. It doesn't mean much any longer."

He looked at her sharply; in her strength and her fineness and her beauty she was directly the product of all the dust that lay about her; she might represent the end of something that had to go, perhaps that deserved to go, but the young man could never think that it was not something splendid and magnificent.

"They are really not to be regretted," she added, with the slightest touch of bitterness, looking steadily at the tablets and monuments on which the three names were so continually repeated. "They were tyrannical and narrow and bigoted. I'm glad I wasn't one of their women."

"I can't feel that way," replied the young man earnestly. "It seems to me, there was a lot in 'all this' as you put it, Miss Cantelowe, and I don't know just how we are going to get on without it—common sense and science will take the place of a good deal, but I don't know that they'll ever take the place of religion *and* tradition, plus good breeding."

"You think we've lost something?"

"I think the women have," he answered, his pleasant eyes smiling at her from behind his thick glasses. "If you're not good because your mother was, or God expects it of you, why should you be good just because of a code of ethics?"

Philippa Cantelowe smiled in return.

"Good—that is a nice old-fashioned word, Mr. Warden. Now why do you think women should be good?"

"Your grandmother wouldn't have asked that question? Good? Well, 'virtue,' they used to call it—your sex had the monopoly," he finished whimsically, "and I don't see why they wanted anything else."

"Well, the women didn't," said Philippa Cantelowe—"look at them, all those Annes, Janes, Susannahs, and Philippas; they are what you call virtuous and perfectly content, too."

"Well, I expect they were," agreed the young man soberly.

"I remember, just, my grandmother Myniott—she'd been in caps since she was thirty-five—and in blinkers all her life——"

"Why, Miss Cantelowe, that isn't fair. You might say rose-coloured spectacles."

Philippa moved away; her glance, steady and slightly cold, flickered along the names of dead people.

Her own father, whom she could never think of without thinking of life and energy, was among them:

"*Piers Cantelowe, 1910.*"

She was glad that a kinder custom had closed the old vaults, and that this gallant dust was not mingling with its kindred. There were two other cenotaphs bearing her name:

"*Piers Cantelowe, 1917.*"

and:

"*Roger Cantelowe, 1918.*"

"Those are my brothers," she told her companion quietly. "They were both killed in France." She turned away quickly and indicated with a steady hand some older stones. "Raulyn Dyprre, 1889," she read out, "and Lambert Dyprre, 1884—that was Raulyn's father—can you see, the shadow is over the stone, the arms are beautifully cut. Sir Lambert was the last Dyprre to live here. Raulyn went abroad and never came back; he died in Paris."

"And there's a son, you said?"

"Yes, another Lambert Dyprre, but we have none of us ever seen him—he was born and lived abroad—this is to his mother."

She pointed to an exquisite vase of Italian alabaster set in a niche which bore in gilt lettering the name of "*Geva Silvestra, wife of Raulyn Dyprre, and born Marchesina Lambruschini, who died in Rome, 1888.*"

"An Italian," said Mr. Warden, "and died the year before her husband, that looks like a story——"

"I think there was a story. She isn't buried here, of course. She was a Roman Catholic—and I don't know who had this put up, but it seems to me the only pretty thing in the church, and I often watch it on Sundays."

The vase was indeed of extreme grace, and the most delicate alabaster, flushed with a rosy tint, and falling from the mouth were clusters of exotic flowers wrought with delicate and foreign workmanship; the inscription underneath was in fine gilt letters of graceful form.

"I wonder who she was?" speculated the American. "Doesn't it seem strange, this foreign name and this bit of rococo stuff among all the Gothic skulls and cross-bones."

"Mother met that Lady Dyprre once in Rome," said Miss Cantelowe; "but she never talks about it."

"Some tragedy?" suggested Mr. Warden sympathetically.

"I think so. The romantic 'eighties,' you know! When people really fell in love and pined and had broken hearts and went into declines"—she spoke lightly but not flippantly—"a sort of twilight time, wasn't it, when everything was taken seriously?"

"Well, I expect they had as much sunshine as we do."

"Not in their lives—it was all so serious," repeated Miss Cantelowe. "One senses a deathly melancholy over it all—fathers disinherited their sons and women had hopeless 'affairs' and were fine ladies.'

The young American looked at her straightly.

"Some are fine ladies now," he said. "I like fine ladies—in Richmond, where I come from, we think a great deal of fine ladies."

Philippa looked at him, with no attempt to mistake, or to undervalue, his meaning.

"It's nice of you," she said softly, with a more feminine tenderness in her manner than she had yet shown, "but I really meant what I said."

"But you're only just sure that you really meant it," he insisted bravely. "You hesitated—now didn't you?"

"Yes," admitted Philippa gently. "I like you very much, you know that. You're the only man I've ever thought of marrying—but I can't, no really. I don't even know why, but I'm quite sure."

"I'm sorry," he said.

They stood facing each other, the two young people, forgetful of the closely gathered names of the dead, forgetful of the skulls and cross-bones and of the dust beneath the stones on which they stood, the composed young girl in the loose tweeds and the quiet young man in the big motoring coat; then she spoke:

"I'm sorry, too. And now we had better go on or you will miss your train."

"There are other trains," said Mr. Warden wistfully.

"Well, it is cold in here, isn't it?"

She moved lightly in front of him and passed down the nave; at the door she stood looking down Trawden Street.

"I never know if I like the church or not," she remarked.

"You find it depressing?"

"Oh no! No one is depressed by death nowadays, surely!—it's the mustiness I dislike, I think——"

The mist had slightly lifted to settle into a uniform grey-

ness of sky against which the rolling fields showed in dun tones of bistre, fawn, bronze, and dim purple.

The yew-tree showed clearly now: it had the immemorial look of granite; there was no suggestion of life in the dark leaves, in the hollow, polished, mighty trunk; indeed, the extreme stillness of the day gave this lifeless look to the entire landscape.

As they got into the little car and the girl took the wheel the young man said:

"You might be friendly enough to tell me what you mean to do?"

Philippa did not answer.

"I've known you years now," he urged.

"You mean," said Miss Cantelowe clearly, "that I'm nearly thirty, and ought to be—yes, I believe you are the kind of man to use that word—'settled.'"

"You've got a big responsibility," he answered gravely. "Land's a heap of worry just now, and a great place like this——"

"Yes," she interrupted, "it's a burden. You know we are frightfully hard up? Three death duties, one on top of another, and the taxes; all we had was in the land," she added simply, as the car sped through the village. "Father would never put any money into anything else. Of course, in father's day it was all right."

She spoke to him more frankly than she had ever spoken before. Now that his long-expected offer of marriage had been made and dealt with, he was firmly and simply a friend to whom you could talk plainly.

"Mortgaged, I suppose?" he said wistfully.

"You must have guessed that. We've sold, too, which is worse. Farming doesn't pay now really—and there is so much unproductive land at Myniott."

"That great park! I suppose Mrs. Cantelowe wouldn't sell?"

"Oh no. We let very well up to a year ago, but we don't get any more worth-while offers; the place is too big, people cannot afford the servants now, at least, not the kind of people mother would like to have at Myniott."

"Well, what are you going to do?"

"Oh, just go on, I suppose!" she answered lightly. "What else?"

She drove in silence for awhile and he sat still, considering

her authoritative profile against the motionless grey of sky and bronze of hedgerow.

He thought of these two great, encumbered, useless estates, planned on old-time lines and never modernized, the two large, difficult, overpowering houses as combining into something monstrous—something monstrous at least from this young woman's point of view; he smiled too, in tender irony, for, though she had spoken so carelessly of her ancestors, she was doing her gallant best to tread exactly in their path.

"So you'll just stay at Hamblethorpe?" he asked regretfully. "Going less and less to town—less and less abroad——"

"The place takes all my time," she admitted. "I try to learn things that will help. You see," she added, with unconscious pathos, "there is no one else to take an interest save mother and myself."

"You didn't speak in Trawden Church just now as if you thought so much of old tradition. What just keeps you at it?"

Philippa pulled up the car at the level-crossing: the wide white gates with the scarlet lozenge were just shutting.

"I thought you would nearly miss it!" said Philippa Cantelowe, springing out of the car; then, as he was beside her, she added: "I do it because of father and the boys—we, mother and I, couldn't bear to let things go to pieces, knowing how they cared."

She smiled composedly, anxious to balance the sentiment in her words, stripped off her great glove, and offered her hand to slip into his bare fingers. The train ran into the little open station, Michael Warden stepped into it; his pleasant face showed for a moment at the carriage window; the train passed on, and Philippa Cantelowe was alone; she was conscious of feeling alone. The short day was ending, and the mist had only cleared in time to allow a melancholy sunset to appear.

Philippa Cantelowe drove home.

Iron-grey woods stood up starkly between the faded green fields; the mist still veiled the undulating hills that bounded the marsh in the distances; the ice-filmed pools gleamed between the reddish willows covered with jade-blue lichen and the glossy brightness of poisonous ivy; here and there a man in earth-coloured clothes was cutting the fox-tinted boughs of bramble from the hedge or clearing the thick clayey mud, matted with dead leaves, from the ditches. Behind this landscape the high heavens were covered in faint, long, dark

pearl clouds that seemed to extend to an infinite distance away, and that faded to show a wistful glow of tender and fading rose, and the orb of the sun crossed by a band of grey cloud.

When Philippa turned from the station road, the west was behind her, and she faced a prospect that was palely illuminated with these last rays of fading light; eastwards a warm gold showed in the trees, a dusky purple on the horizon, a rich crimson on the roofs of houses, tawny in hay-stacks that had all looked drab in the west. A lovely light sparkled in the marl-pit ponds by the scattered houses and glittered fiercely in the window-panes of farms; the frozen road stretched bleached and brittle under the stripped trees, and another mist, thick and white as milk, began to rise from the frozen ground and drenched fields.

Philippa Cantelowe turned in between her great gates and drove through the long park land that was now so costly a luxury.

She took the little car round to the garage and then went slowly up to the house that stood darkling against the winter sky.

The after-glow was now fading; Philippa's shadow was just discernible on the stone steps before her; eastwards deep smoky clouds closed over rifts of pale azure; to the west the sunset was a dull smear of crimson in the heavy greyness of the sky.

Unconsciously the Englishwoman shivered in the rigid melancholy of the season; winter in the north is only found endurable by the very happy people.

Philippa took off her gloves and her scarf and entered the big drawing-room that looked on the terrace; the rich damask curtains were drawn, and a great fire filled the room with warm shade and glowing light.

Mrs. Cantelowe sat by this fire; though well over sixty, she was a beautiful woman, with a noble air of serenity. Her daughter came and stood by her chair.

"Well, dear," said Mrs. Cantelowe gently. "Did you send him away?"

"Yes, mother. I sent him away. I'm glad it is over."

CHAPTER II

MRS. CANTELOWE answered very quietly, as if anxious not to influence, by even an inflection, the person to whom she spoke.

"He was in many ways the right husband for you, Philippa —an aristocrat with a great deal of money and a career. And a very charming man, dear."

"I know, mother. But not English—and I should almost have had to give the place up—*his* home would always be in Virginia."

"Yes, I agree. I know what you mean; still—there was not ever anyone else more suitable.'

The girl frowned down into the fire, and Mrs. Cantelowe rose, a tall, richly dressed figure against the shadows beyond the fire-glow that seemed to at once retreat and advance in a fluttering uncertainty.

"I am quite sure that whatever you did was right, Philippa," she said gently, "but I think we ought to talk a little about the future. You see, dear, though I am not a bit disappointed that you aren't going to marry Michael Warden—I rather thought that you would."

"So did I," returned Philippa candidly. "Until yesterday I was quite sure I should; then when he came to-day, I was uncertain, and when he asked me, I was quite sure that I couldn't."

She went upstairs, and Mrs. Cantelowe rang for tea; while this was being set she went to the window and looked out on to the park where the last trace of the afterglow ran like a shudder of light through the bare still trees.

Remote and stately as her life might be, Mrs. Cantelowe had not lost the sense of the values of a changing world; intelligence and experience had changed the sweetly ignorant girl into a sweetly wise woman; the inviolate courage that belonged to her race had helped her to endure swift and horrible sorrows, not only with fortitude but with gentleness. She stood there now in the dusk looking over her home lands, an old, a stripped woman, but neither desolate nor bitter.

Though she was not fanciful nor even imaginative she felt dimly the working of some fate against her family and her husband's family and the family of Dyprre with which they were both so nearly and so poignantly connected.

She recalled the old jingle which joined the fortunes and downfall of the three:

"The end of one is the end of all."

And there had been an end of Dyprre in her mind for many years now; by reason of the secret she had been trusted with thirty-five years ago, she held Dyprre to be utterly effaced.

And she was the last of the Myniotts and Philippa was the last of the Cantelowes.

With meek courage she ran over in her mind the steps that had led to its culmination: the hopeless love of Sir Lambert for Constance Cantelowe, his late marriage to her sister, the one child, Raulyn, who had broken away so perversely from all tradition and restraint, and then the marriage of Raulyn, fantastic, incredible, ghastly, plunging his line into sudden extinction; then Piers Cantelowe had inherited after the death of an elder brother, and her father had lost two sons before Myniott fell to her, and then, when these two names at least had seemed to be proudly and strongly represented by Piers and his two sons, Piers, in full strength and happiness, had slipped crossing a muddy stile and been killed instantly by the accidental discharge of the gun he was carrying; and yet still the name had seemed safe enough in the keeping of his two fine young sons, and then had come war, like a monster out of the unclouded blue, and devoured both these splendid young men.

And now there were just these two women, burdened and bereaved, and she who had been Philippa Myniott was bewildered, secretly bewildered, as well.

She had no personal concern in life beyond her daughter, and she did not know what was best for this other Philippa who was outwardly so different from what she had been herself and inwardly so much the same.

For Mrs. Cantelowe could see now that she had herself largely been a creature of her environment. "If I had been brought up as Philippa was, with so much freedom, so much knowledge, such a variety of experience, such dreadful griefs, I should have been like she is—very possibly I should never have fallen in love with Raulyn Dyprre; very possibly that was only because I had nothing to do."

And she remembered, curiously, the fact of that romantic passion, the fact of the pain and shame, but she could not

recall what either of these sensations were like; vivid actual happenings had blotted them out.

Philippa came downstairs in a pearl-coloured velvet gown that took a hundred hues from the amber-shaded electric lights; her rich hair, of which she had almost too much, was piled up, rather carelessly, and fastened by a black comb; she looked tired and was too quiet.

Mrs. Cantelowe nearly wished that she had promised to marry Michael Warden, the clever young American diplomat, for Mrs. Cantelowe had divested herself of most of her prejudices but not of that of thinking it a disaster for a woman to remain unmarried after thirty and Philippa was twenty-eight.

"You caught the train easily?" She made this tentative opening delicately.

"No, we nearly missed it! I took Michael Warden into the church—you know, though I've met him so often, he has never been here before, and he wanted to see the church." The girl, serving the tea, was too composed; there was a flatness in her demeanour that depressed the older woman.

"There is nothing much in the church," she remarked wistfully.

"Oh, he liked it! And we *did* just catch the train—his car was picking him up at the Junction, so it was all right." She smiled slightly. "Poor Michael, he is very devoted to fine things—I wish it might have been possible. I'm tired of standing alone."

"I know," said Mrs. Cantelowe quickly. "Why wasn't it possible, dear?"

"I suppose I don't love him——"

"I thought there wasn't such a thing as love nowadays, Philippa, not what we used to call love——"

"Isn't there? I don't know. I've never seen it nor felt it," replied Philippa listlessly. "I want too much, I expect. I always hated flirtations."

"I think I should have hated flirtations, too, had they been possible in my day," smiled Mrs. Cantelowe; "but, darling, Michael Warden doesn't want to flirt——"

"No—but it is all I could do with him—I'm quite fond of him, but not fond enough except to flirt. It isn't what others feel, it's what I want to feel myself—and of course, poor Michael's sentiment for me isn't what I want, either."

She spoke disconnectedly, almost vaguely, sinking back into the deep satin cushions in the satin chair.

"You don't want the second best."

"No," smiled Philippa slowly, "but the worst of it is, I'm not sure that the very best exists."

"I could tell you that it does, but that wouldn't help you, Philippa. You want your own experience."

"Yes," said the girl gently. "And it might have existed for you—but not for me."

Mrs. Cantelowe sipped her tea for a second, then she said diffidently:

"A woman can be tremendously happy, dear, with a man she wasn't in love with at first—even if she thought she was in love with some one else."

"Oh, happy!" exclaimed Philippa, almost sharply. "I don't mean happiness! I expect what I mean is pain all the time—I'm *happy* now. I should have been *happy* with Michael Warden——"

Mrs. Cantelowe, broad-minded as she thought herself, was startled by this modern view-point.

"What *are* you in search of, then, Philippa, if it isn't happiness?"

"I don't know. But it isn't happiness. I feel as if my whole life had been dedicated to some single aim. But I don't know what it is."

Mrs. Cantelowe had never heard her daughter say this before, but it convinced her, instantly, as being true; she remembered Philippa as a rather grave child not much moved by childish things; she remembered her rather untouched by the strain and dread, the work and sacrifice of war-time, entirely untouched by the licence, the feverish gaiety, the wildness, the hard brilliancy of post-war time; always Philippa had been quietly individual, standing apart from the crowd; she would have been called "old-fashioned" had she not been intelligent and well-placed enough to set a fashion of her own. She had travelled, she had nursed, she had worked, she had had a great number of friends and an even greater number of acquaintances, but she had not, somehow, been much affected by any of this. Mrs. Cantelowe, who had witnessed her agonies on the deaths of her brothers, could never think her cold or heartless, but she did sometimes, as now, think her warped in too deep a reserve.

"So you don't want happiness, Philippa?"

"No, mother—I know that sounds foolish, but I don't."

"And you couldn't tell me what you do want?"

"Only that it is something bigger than happiness, something much more difficult to find."

Mrs. Cantelowe sighed; she could not follow her daughter here; her ideal had never gone beyond this same "being happy."

"So you aren't going to marry, then?" she asked, bringing the matter between them on to safer ground.

"It doesn't seem like it, mother," replied Philippa as if in self-defence. "After all, I haven't had so many proposals—men are rather afraid of me. I'm a queer sort of match—a girl with a big encumbered estate and no money and two old names she wants to keep."

"I know," said Mrs. Cantelowe.

"After all, if a man has a decent place of his own that he has managed to hang on to, he wants to absorb his wife in that—and if he has nothing—or just money, well, it would be like marrying one's bailiff or one's banker."

"You mean you couldn't find anyone to feel about the place as we do?"

"Yes," replied Philippa quickly. "Of course there is plenty to absorb and interest any man here—but well, it *would* be like marrying one's bailiff, wouldn't it?"

Mrs. Cantelowe saw the point; how easy her own youth had been compared to these problems!

"But some man might love the place for your sake," she argued, rather feebly.

"I don't want a Prince consort," said Philippa swiftly; she set down her bright blue teacup and clasped her long hands round her knees. She was leaning forward now, gazing into the long logs on the fire as they broke and fell with a little shower of sparks.

"Philippa," said Mrs. Cantelowe earnestly, "tell me what you do want."

As Sir Lambert and Raulyn Dyprre had talked over their own relations to each other and their responsibilities nearly forty years ago, so these two women talked over their responsibilities now; only, where the father had striven by every means in his power to chain his son to a tradition then already outworn and hold him to a state of affairs already beginning to decay, the mother now tried to free her daughter from the last tatters of these traditions to release her from the decayed remnants of a dead system.

"Philippa, don't let the place weigh on you. If the boys had lived—but now! Why should you sacrifice yourself

here? I am so afraid that you may be doing it for me—so afraid of that. I want you to be free; go away, take up anything you like, singing, the stage—anything that appeals to you, as long as you have a full life. Sell every acre you possess if you wish."

"Sell!" echoed Philippa.

Mrs. Cantelowe smiled.

"Who are we keeping it for, dear? As you say, the kind of man you want to marry will want his children for his own kingdom, and the other kind wouldn't want it at all, save as a money-making concern, which it isn't and never will be."

Philippa looked at her sharply.

"But, mother, you must be simply bound up in the place—both Myniott and Cantelowe——"

"Well," replied Mrs. Cantelowe bravely, "do you think anything can be worse than to see Dyprre in the hands of strangers, Myniott shut up and Hamblethorpe without a man as master?"

"No, I suppose not," said Philippa slowly; "but it is the boys' heritage."

"I don't want you to be sacrificed even to the memory of the boys—they would hate it so," she added simply.

Philippa frowned into the fire.

"I couldn't give it up," she answered.

"Do you *really* feel that?"

Mrs. Cantelowe looked at her intently, anxiously; just as, nearly forty years ago, Lambert Dyprre had tried to impose his will on his son to keep him in his appointed place, so now Philippa Cantelowe tried to impose her will on this other Philippa to set her free. Her noble face under the coronal of white hair was eager and earnest in expression as she endeavoured to make herself understood.

"If the boys had lived," she said steadily (for they did not shut away their dead in any outer glooms of horror, but brought them cheerfully into the life of every day), "I should have never thought of giving up—I would, of course, have made any sacrifice rather than part with an inch of Cantelowe or Myniott, but as it is, I am so keenly afraid of sacrificing you to something that is dead."

"Is it dead?" asked Philippa wistfully.

"What I mean is dead, dear. It seems so curious, looking back, to think that what I thought was immutable, eternal, was just slipping to decay and extinction.

"My world was very narrow—there were only two men that I could possibly marry, only two places where I could possibly live—there was not a thought of anything outside the estate—one was 'placed,' and there was an end of it—one was 'kind' to the tenantry and the servants—and that was all there was. It was a very narrow world, I can see now. And we were so very ignorant.'

"But I should have liked to have lived then," replied Philippa thoughtfully.

Mrs. Cantelowe smiled.

"Oh, my dear! Can you imagine life without your education, your friends, your travels and changes, your freedom?"

"Yes, I can. I would like to have everything arranged for me—no perplexities! A settled order. No choice! The future lying level ahead. Ignorance shutting out all the horrors of the world. Some male creature whom you believed to be half-divine to take all the worries and bothers of life off your shoulders. Wasn't it like that, mother?"

"It was like that for me," replied Mrs. Cantelowe softly, "but I was a fortunate woman."

"I might have been fortunate also. I should have liked that life, mother." The girl spoke with a wistfulness not untinged by bitterness; she rose and stood leaning against the old mantelshelf; she was still frowning; her expression of absorbed introspection gave her blonde face a hard expression.

She took a cigarette from a box on the mantelshelf, lit it, put it to her lips, then tossed it into the fire.

The mother, sitting rather droopingly in the deep brocade chair, was considering her with a passionate tenderness.

She remembered her own youth; what a different figure she had been, in her stiff bodices and draped furbelowed skirts and trains, her tight plaits of hair, her ruffles and trimming, to this slim creature whose gown fell in one lonely line, unbroken from neck to hem, whose loose locks were softly knotted on a neck that had never been confined nor hidden; but was the difference any deeper than the frills and furbelows, was this tall, fair, young woman too stately, too composed, almost hard, really exactly the same sort of young woman that she had been herself?

A young woman whose youth had first been nourished on and then blasted by a romantic love-affair, who had trembled and wept in anguish at her lover's departure, who had sung

sentimental ballads and nearly, very nearly, slipped out of life with a broken heart ; Mrs. Cantelowe asked herself—was it possible ?

She did not know ; tricks of speech, fashions of manner, environment, were too powerful even for her maternal penetration ; but it did come to her, with a sort of flash of insight, that perhaps what Philippa wanted—the thing that wasn't happiness—was some such love, such passion, as her own thwarted half-forgotten love and passion, that estasy, shame and agony of her own sheltered youth.

And, while she thought this, the brooding girl, by some of that telepathy so usual between two silent people thinking deeply, said :

" You say that there were two men you might have married, mother—was the other Sir Raulyn Dyprre ? "

" Yes," replied Mrs. Cantelowe quietly. " There were only the three families."

" How curious," mused Philippa. " I've never thought of it before, and you haven't mentioned it—I was looking at his name in the church to-day, and that curious memorial to his wife—Michael Warden thought that there must be a story."

" Yes," said Mrs. Cantelowe again, " there was a story. Sir Raulyn felt the coming changes, I think ; he was the only one of us who was not content to stay on the old tracks. He went abroad. His father tried to keep him ; he was an only child, and it was very pitiful, Philippa. When Sir Lambert died he would not send for Raulyn, so he never came home, even then."

" That was hateful of the old man."

" No, I never thought so. He had his pride, too ; he couldn't bring his son back by a sort of appeal. And he didn't want to find out that perhaps Raulyn wouldn't have come."

" Wouldn't have come ? " wondered Philippa.

" Sir Raulyn was very sensitive, overstrung, almost morbid —he dreaded death—I think the graves in Trawden Church drove him away—all those rows of his own name and the names of his friends. He was fretted by his life, too, by being taken for granted and forced to do things he disliked ; he was quite idle, for he would not do the work expected of him, and he had never, of course, been trained for anything else, so as he detested vices he fell into melancholy : the eighties

was a cruel time for people like that—no one understood them."

"So he just wandered away and married a foreigner? Were they happy?"

This encroached on the secret Mrs. Cantelowe had so long held sacred; she became evasive, as her daughter instantly noted.

"I saw so little of them. Only a glimpse that one season in Rome, where I went after little Anthony died."

"Was she lovely—like the urn in the church?"

"Yes. Queer, of course. I remember her room, all mirrors clamped with bronze, a huge place, and granite busts, and the baby in a gilt cradle covered with old lace and embroideries—it was an extraordinarily lovely child."

This was more than she had meant to say; Philippa instantly followed up her last allusion.

"The child? Did Lady Dyprre die of the child?"

"I don't know," replied Mrs. Cantelowe rather nervously. "I saw her just before I left Rome, and she was quite well—then when we reached England we heard that she had died suddenly. They were so careless, in those days; she caught some infectious fever. I suppose Rome was a deadly place then, and it was late in the year, very hot."

"And Sir Raulyn died a year afterwards?"

"Yes, in Paris. He had the weak heart of Sir Lambert—some obscure disease accelerated, of course, by grief and worry."

"And he never came home?"

"Never."

"How strange," mused Philippa. "And the child?"

She said this diffidently, for her mother had always obviously avoided this subject, and it required a little effort for her to force another person's reserve; but now curiosity was strong within her and she pressed her chance of gratifying it. Mrs. Cantelowe did not answer immediately; she spread her fine hands to the fire blaze and watched the deep gleams of colours from her big old-fashioned rings.

"I don't know anything about him at all," she said at length. "He was brought up abroad; he has never been to Dyprre, which is in the hands of lawyers as you know—let."

"Who brought him up?"

"A man who had been his mother's guardian—a doctor, a remarkable person like a Michelangelo drawing."

"But why didn't he let him come home?—he must be

thirty-four or so by now—1888 to 1923; why, mother, he's almost middle-aged!"

"I dare say he is quite eccentric," said Mrs. Cantelowe nervously. "A foreigner in everything, I suppose."

"This doctor," urged Philippa, "is he alive?"

"I don't know. He was rather a great personage, and seemed older than he was, but I don't think he was much above my age really."

"Then he is still young," smiled Philippa tenderly.

Mrs. Cantelowe gave her a humorous look.

"Well, I do think I feel younger now than I did that spring in Rome. People are more willing to concede youth to sixty-five now than they were to thirty odd then!"

She spoke lightly, pleased at having escaped from the subject of the Dyprres, but Philippa would by no means let her off.

"I have often thought," she said diffidently yet firmly, "that it is strange that you and father and the boys so lost sight of Lambert Dyprre—Sir Raulyn was father's cousin, wasn't he?"

Mrs. Cantelowe, with a catch at her heart, remembered her youngest son Roger once asking this same question, almost in the same words; and with a considerable effort she replied now as she had replied to the charming and kindly young Guardsman.

"There was no link between us, dear; we drifted very far apart. And when I returned from Rome my life became very full with you three children—your father was tremendously good to Raulyn: he went over to Paris when he heard he was ill—and brought him back to Trawden Church."

"How Sir Raulyn would have hated to be brought back to Trawden Church!"

"No, at the end he asked for this. Your father had the memorial to Lady Dyprre put up too—it was sent from Italy. But when Raulyn died that seemed an end."

"But it wasn't an end," persisted Philippa; "there was another Dyprre—Lambert, wasn't it?"

"Yes, they called the baby Lambert."

"It is so strange to have lost sight of him, mother."

Mrs. Cantelowe gathered her forces for a firm and final effort.

"My dear, Lambert Dyprre must be a very rich man, far richer than we are. I know old Sir Lambert had a great

deal of money invested apart from the land, and a very good firm of lawyers have been looking after that for him; then the place has been well let for years——"

"Mother," protested Philippa, smiling, "I wasn't thinking of his money, but of this queer sort of exile, and no one knowing anything about him."

"Well," said Mrs. Cantelowe, driven to her last defences, "I could not tell you anything at all. We just lost sight of him; as you say."

"I believe Sir Raulyn cherished a hopeless passion for you, mother, and father was jealous," replied Philippa tenderly, "and there were quarrels and he had to go away."

Mrs. Cantelowe shook her head.

"No. You think that was such a romantic time, dear, but it was really very hard and pitiless and uncomfortable, Don't wish to have lived then, Philippa."

She had again closed the subject of the Dyprres, and this time the girl felt that she could not open it again; so she stood silent, still frowning into the fire.

"But we have got away from ourselves," ventured Mrs. Cantelowe. "What are you going to do?"

"Carry on," said the girl briefly. "I don't know why, or for what purpose. I really hate a lot of what it entails —but——"

"Yes," prompted the mother.

"Oh, I feel as if I was holding the place for something or some purpose. A foolishness, of course."

CHAPTER III

PHILIPPA, who had so broken off personal confidences with her mother by introducing the subject of the Dyprres, returned abruptly to the matter a few days later; the two women had been much alone together that winter. From the crowded years of her childhood and youth Philippa was steering towards loneliness as the ship, leaving a full river, slowly is isolated on the open seas.

Guests, chance visitors, the coming and going of acquaintances became less and less. With increasing seriousness Philippa devoted herself to "running" her two large estates; there was a great deal about this work that she did not like, a great deal else for which she was not suited, but she kept

at her task with painful assiduity, and she never allowed the dry, kindly old Scotsman who was her bailiff to be anything but her bailiff.

Troubled, as none of her ancestors had ever been troubled, by new ideals of democracy that made her question her very right to the land, she had spent too lavishly on her tenantry: her farms and cottages were "model," her rents low, her rule over-gentle and generous; even Myniott had always been let on low terms to "people like ourselves, mother," who were "hard up"; so while, under her half-hesitant, slightly bewildered, wholly feminine policy Myniott and Cantelowe sank lower and lower into financial difficulties, Dyprre, shorn as it had been since the death of the grandfather of the present baronet, had flourished exceeding under the care of an astute lawyer and the grimly capable agent who had succeeded the grimly capable Mr. Withers.

Dyprre Manor House was always let to the people who would pay the most, and since the war to people on whom Mrs. Cantelowe did not care to call; and now the house stood empty waiting for another wealthy tenant.

And the money Philippa had lavished on housing, drains, clubs, committees, sports and playgrounds for her people, those responsible for Dyprre had put into the land; large glass houses, a modern nursery garden, fields of vegetables grown on the intensive system, an up-to-date poultry-farm —all these enterprises, most efficiently managed, helped to swell the revenues of the absent Sir Lambert Dyprre.

Philippa had thought of these matters, and it was largely because of them that she was curious about her neighbour; but she did not care to give her mother this reason, for it seemed to point her own capacity.

But this cold morning, as the two women stood in the oriel window where Piers Cantelowe had stood when Sir Lambert had come to him on behalf of Philippa Myniott, she did lightly refer to Dyprre Manor.

"You know, mother, Dyprre is awfully well run—they seem to do extremely well, despite everything."

"It is just run by experts who don't care about anything but doing what they are paid to do, Philippa. A bloodless sort of business arrangement."

"That is what is the matter with me," said Philippa. "I'm too sentimental."

Then, in response to her mother's look of inquiry, she

changed the subject, for she did not want Mrs. Cantelowe to know quite how badly their affairs were going.

"I'm running in to look at a house for the Mintons," she added quickly. "You know how frightfully poor they are now; they can only afford a small place——"

"Offer them Myniott, dear."

"Mother, as if they could keep up Myniott! Why, it is bigger than their own place, and they have had to let that—Bobbie has got a job, but Mrs. Minton and Mary will have to live very quietly somewhere."

"Which was the house that you thought of, Philippa?"

"That one just as you go into the High Street; it's just on the market, and I'm afraid it will be snapped up at once. It's a dear old Georgian place and beautifully modernized, exactly the size people want nowadays."

"You don't mean," said Mrs. Cantelowe slowly, "Clobbertons?"

"Yes, Clobbertons. It's been a little boys' school for years and years, but it wouldn't require much alteration."

"So Clobbertons is empty again!" mused Mrs. Cantelowe.

"Again? Why, mother, it's been occupied ever since I can remember."

"Of course. How foolish of me! I was thinking of nearly forty years ago, dear. I once went to an auction sale at Clobbertons. That was the last time that I saw Raulyn Dyprre before he went abroad. He bought two little china ornaments. I saw them afterwards in Rome."

She spoke quietly, but Philippa was moved by some constraint in her manner; there was a most sensitive sympathy between the two women.

"Will you come with me, mother?" she asked.

For a second Mrs. Cantelowe appeared startled.

"To Clobbertons? No, dear, I don't think I will. I've never been inside the house but that once."

Philippa hesitated; she stood by the window in her light worn tweeds; behind her showed the landscape, pitted and scarred with white, for yesterday there had been a heavy fall of snow, and above the colourless grey sky as a background to the dull purple and dull indigo of the straight copses.

Mrs. Cantelowe stood at a heavy table arranging some hothouse carnations in a black vase. She wore a dress of deep violet with a great deal of gold on it, and the clear light of

the northern winter morning revealed every line and hollow in her patient face, the lilac shadows on the eyes, the white faded lids, the mouth and cheeks that had lost all the contours and freshness of youth, but which were yet delicate and sweet in line and faintly tinted with a look of pale roses.

As the girl looked at her mother the expression of hardness that marred her own face was softened by a glow of most tender love ; she felt as if every pang her mother had endured was suddenly understandable to her own heart; a rush of passionate kindness for this dear bereaved woman who was all she had left of blood relatives, made her disclose a precious experience, now her dearest treasure that hitherto she had decided not to reveal.

"Mother," she said in a changed voice, "I don't really want to go to Clobbertons because of the Mintons. That took me there first, but now I want to go again because something happened there, in that old house."

Mrs. Cantelowe glanced round quickly.

"Something happened—in Clobbertons, Philippa ?".

The girl came nearer into the room. Her features were flushed and animated ; as she stood there was an edge of light to her face and to her hair, and to the older woman this light seemed to come from within as well as from without.

"It was because of that I refused Michael Warden, mother."

The heavy-headed flowers fell from Mrs. Cantelowe's fragrant hands on to the table.

"Because of something that happened to you in Clobbertons, Philippa ?"

"Yes, I wanted to tell you the other evening after Michael Warden went away—but——"

"Tell me now," interrupted Mrs. Cantelowe.

"I want to," replied the girl eagerly, "but oh, I wonder if I can put it into words ? I am sure that it would sound grotesque to anyone but you."

"Did you meet anyone ?"

"No. I got the keys from Bentall's shop and went over the house alone. It was cleaned up, you know, and quite empty; the garden was in nice condition, and I thought how pleasant it all looked. I was just thinking of that and what a homely sweet atmosphere those little English boys had left—just that and the Mintons and whether the place would suit them."

Philippa paused, her air was one of radiant excitement.

"Well, I went upstairs—I was very practical, mother,

thinking of drains and bath-rooms and the stairs for old Mrs. Minton—I came to a big upper room, a front bedroom, and I just opened this and looked in—there was nothing there, of course, the room was quite empty."

She paused again, as if withdrawn into her own thoughts.

"The room was quite empty?" prompted Mrs. Cantelowe softly.

"But, mother, the sensation I had! It was just as if that room was full of—something—that rushed at me—that overwhelmed me—I leant against the wall; it was as if I was taken out of the ordinary world completely—I was absolutely absorbed in what had happened, no, what had *been* there——"

"What was it, Philippa?"

"I can't tell." The girl's face was tense with the effort that she made to express her inmost feeling. "It seemed as if I suddenly *knew* that things I had just glimpsed in dreams were true, more true than any of what we call reality—it was like living in a misty alley all one's life, then—one day, there were the mountains, the sun, and the clear sky."

"You felt that, Philippa, in that room at Clobbertons?"

"Yes, mother. But words are so crude, I simply can't express it. It seemed to me that something, the most tremendous thing there is, had been in that room, had died there once, in agony, but the agony was half-rapture, too, and had come there again, expectant, and had been sent away, thwarted—repulsed. I saw myself in all this; I thought that, among dreams and shadows, I had been there before. I thought this thing that had died, then come again, and been rejected, was waiting for me."

She paused, breathing quickly and looking past her mother at the still landscape beyond the oriel window.

"Mother, it was such ecstasy, such joy, quite beyond my power of expression, I felt I could not miss the least chance of what I glimpsed there, so I sent Michael Warden away."

"What do you think it was—Philippa, waiting for you?" Mrs. Cantelowe had sat down and waited, with her hands folded in her lap.

Philippa turned round slowly and looked down at her mother.

"I was on the threshold," she said, "the threshold of the room. And of something else. I've never been fanciful, have I, mother, or silly? There was some one there, just

behind me, in the open doorway, some one I loved—so much——"

"Philippa! Did you see anything?"

"Nothing."

Mrs. Cantelowe's clasped hands fluttered in her lap; her face was wan in the chill light.

"You must have met the ghost of some woman's youth, Philippa," she said with a faint smile. "Perhaps two ghosts—a woman who died for love and a woman who was rejected by love——"

"Do you know anything of the history of the house, then, mother?" interrupted Philippa keenly.

Mrs. Cantelowe evaded the question.

"Why, it has been a school, hasn't it, ever since you can remember? But many things must have happened in these old houses."

"It wasn't a ghost," replied the girl. "Only a sensation, a conviction. I thought that this thing that had been killed, that had come again, and been forsaken, was coming again in me, by me, to be fulfilled."

She suddenly laughed, as if frightened at her own earnestness.

"It sounds grotesque. You'll think me crazy."

"No, Philippa, no. But how can one account for such things?" Mrs. Cantelowe spoke nervously. "It is race memory, perhaps—some influence left in the place. I shouldn't go again."

"I must," declared Philippa with exultant eyes. "I feel as if I were *expected*."

Mrs. Cantelowe appeared startled, but she made no further protest; she had risen again, and her slim fingers were aimlessly busy with the carnations.

Philippa approached her and kissed her fair cheek.

"Mother, whatever it is, I'm *glad* that it happened—so *glad*."

She picked up her gloves and was gone; Mrs. Cantelowe's hands fell idle to her sides; she looked at the closed door.

"There goes myself, my youth, my hope, my love, my beauty. Everything I had when I stood with Raulyn Dyprre on that threshold and he was going to take me—there I go, back to that room, back to that moment—*nearly forty years ago*."

CHAPTER IV

PHILIPPA CANTELOWE drove her modest little car through a landscape of muted colours; the snow was rapidly melting from the higher ground, and the marsh water was changing from a frozen white to the gleaming grey that reflected the loose clouds that hung low over the sky; the air was damp and raw, a slight wind was rising that fluttered the girl's thick bright hair back from her face.

Fences and barns, covered by green mould, blended with the drab tone of the landscape; only in the shy golden flush in the long branches of the weeping willows, in the purple bloom on the distant woods, was there any colour in the sunless afternoon.

Philippa fetched the key, left her car in the little lane leading to Clobbertons and entered the empty house.

As she mounted the shadowed staircase she recalled with wonder the hundreds of times she must have passed this house, which had been familiar to her from childhood, without ever guessing the important secret it held for her.

She went upstairs eagerly; purposely she had delayed a return visit to this room so that she might, in cool reflection, weigh up her experience, judge and consider it, and then, with quiet reverent deliberation, endeavour to repeat, to confirm her delicious experience.

Her talk with her mother, which she had not intended, had made her much later than she had meant to be, and the January day was beginning to fade, and, as Philippa stood on the threshold of the large bare room, a scatter of fine rain fell against the panes of the big windows; a vague and luminous glow overspread the sky as the wind that hurled the rain thinned the clouds so that the sunlight dimly showed through the flying veils of vapour.

The light in the room was thus muted, but very apparent, for there was no shadow. The old dark woodwork had long disappeared under white distemper, and this, scarcely marked or stained, failed to give the impression of walls or any limit to the chamber, which seemed now, in the erasing of all lines and shadows, as if it was as boundless as the clouds without.

Philippa stood quite motionless, stilling her heart, her breath.

She had not the least doubt that her last experience would

be in some way repeated, and that the earnest reaching of her spirit towards the rapture that had visited it before would be in some way answered; she did not confuse with questions her glad expectancy, nor to label it with any words, for though she was not neither a dreamer nor a dabbler in any modern means of piercing beyond fleshly knowledge, she knew well enough of all the open doors by which the soul may glimpse the outer universe.

At first, though she was acutely aware of the atmosphere of the old room, there was no repetition of her former sense of rapture; yet the very recollection of what she had felt here before was sufficient to thrill her with a tense excitement.

She crossed to the bare window and gazed out at the trim garden, where faint wreaths of snow still lingered round the shorn clumps of last year's flowers, the shaved lawns were bloomed with melting frost and the close-clipped rose-trees, where dry sticks were tied tightly to their stakes.

"Something happened here," thought Philippa, "something wonderful which has never left the place."

Her sharp feeling of what this was, and its own meaning to herself was now blurred; she did not even know what she was concentrating to evoke.

She moved from the window and walked round the walls; she was sure that this had been a bedroom: it was easy to visualize the heavy four-poster with the tapestry hangings, the massive chests and cupboards, the ponderous ornaments on that broad mantelshelf.

"A woman's room," she thought, "surely a woman's room."

Then swiftly, as if another's personality had suddenly overwhelmed her own, she was aware of this other woman, waiting for some one: two women, with herself as a third, waiting for some one.

Philippa strove with a sense of losing her identity; she caught hold of the mantelpiece; it was impossible for her to keep her gaze from the door. And some one was coming up the stairs.

With a sudden panic dread of losing herself in complete hallucination, she made an effort, and this effort required a certain violence of will, to move from her attitude of expectancy; as she stepped into the centre of the room one of the oak boards, slightly loose, creaked under her feet.

At the same moment the door was opened gently and a man stood on the threshold.

Something that was infinitely older than themselves looked out of each of their eyes in greeting, but this was only for one fleet second; then he had raised his cap formally and said:

"I'm sorry—I didn't know that anyone was here."

"I'm only looking at the house for a friend," said Philippa mechanically; she had no sense of any strangeness in this encounter.

"I came to look round again, and found the door open—but I thought it was the caretaker inside," repeated the man; and he also spoke as if they were meeting in the most usual fashion.

He was a stranger. Philippa had never seen him before, nor indeed anyone like him. She remembered now the fact that she had been told in Smeed that some one was "after" the house.

She returned to the window, much shaken, and looked down at her bunch of keys.

"Would you like these?" she added, still mechanically. She did not know why she spoke, save as an attempt to gain time. "A great many rooms are locked up, and I am not at all sure that my friends will want the house—so if you care to have them——"

"I've seen over the place," replied the stranger. "This room attracts me. Somehow, I wanted to come back here."

He also spoke formally, but without the least embarrassment; he had a slight foreign accent.

"This room attracts you? You wanted to come back here?"

Philippa leant against the window and watched the raindrops on the glass slide one into another and then slip into one stream that fled away.

"Yes," answered the stranger. "You know how one sometimes feels drawn to a place——"

"What do you see here?" asked Philippa. "Who do you think lived here? It was just a boys' school, you know."

"But it is a very old house. I don't know anything about it, though."

"What associations come into your mind with this room?" asked Philippa.

"Oh, I don't know. Nothing much. I'm not psychic." He smiled now. "All I think of here is—women's clothes, dark green silk and white muslin. Two different women wore these frocks, I think."

"There were two women," said Philippa. "It was a woman's room. I don't know any more than that." She added gravely: "Will you take the keys? I must be going back."

"I don't want to see the rest of the place again. I was going to make an offer for it—but if your friends want it——"

"They don't even know about it," replied Philippa. "Do take it if you wish. I think it would be too large for them."

"It's too large for me. I'm used to little houses. And tents."

"Then I'll take the keys back. Will you come now? I'll have to lock up. And it's getting dark."

They left the room together, carefully shutting the door after them.

"I think the place is haunted," he said easily. "I must find out the history."

"I've known the house all my life, and I have never heard of any ghosts."

"But perhaps we are the only people who have ever been there who can sense ghosts."

At this sentence, which seemed to involve them in intimacy, Philippa, in the darkness of the stairs, shivered.

They stood in the neat garden, under the light rain; she handed him the keys and watched him, in the waning light, as he locked the door.

His figure was obscured by a loose dingy raincoat and a clumsy scarf; his leggings were soiled with the clayey mud of the roads, his whole dress was shabby: he might have been one of the farmers who came into Smeed on market days. The shapeless cap was now well over his hair, but Philippa had seen, when he lifted it, that his colouring was an uncommon reddish tone, dark yet bright; he was slightly built, about her own height; the hands locking the door were beautiful; of his face she had an impression as vague as if he had been indeed a ghost she had evoked from the old room.

She only knew that it was a peculiar face, and that she would never forget it. He was not, she thought, a very young man. Well over thirty perhaps.

He straightened himself, dangling the keys.

"Can't I leave these for you? It is a bitter night—you'll want to be getting home."

"Thank you—yes, I don't pass through Smeed."

"Is that your car?"

They were walking together down the old brick path.

"Yes."

"Shall I put the hood up for you?"

"Thank you—if you're in no hurry."

"Oh no. I've nothing to do. I'm staying at *The Woolpack*—there is time enough on my hands."

"A stranger?" She could not forbear the question.

"Yes. To Smeed and to England."

Dusk blurred them to each other; they closed the gate and walked down the narrow muddy lane.

"But you're English?" asked Philippa.

"Partly English. But I don't live in England. I shall be off again soon."

"Where do you live?"

"Nowhere. I move about. I should hate to be tied to one place."

They had reached the car, and he had switched on the lights and was unstrapping the hood.

"You're Philippa Cantelowe, aren't you?" he asked.

"Yes—how did you know?"

"Well, every one here knows you, don't they? And I was told that Miss Cantelowe was considering Clobbertons. But that isn't the real reason," he added, as he swung the hood into place and buckled it there. "My father had a photo of your mother. And you're awfully like her."

"Oh!" exclaimed Philippa. "Then you—you *are* Lambert Dyprre?"

"Yes, I'm Lambert Dyprre. I think I've fixed it now. Will you get in? You're getting so wet."

"I knew you were not a stranger," said Philippa. "I knew from the first that you were Lambert Dyprre."

"I felt you would," he replied. "I've heard so much of the Cantelowes—I was looking this morning at the names in the church——"

"Our fathers were cousins." Philippa stood still in the misty bitter rain. "Of course you are coming to see us?"

It was too dark for her to note his expression, but there was a hint of withdrawal in his voice as he answered:

"It would be stupid to pretend with you—but no one else here knows I'm Lambert Dyprre—I'm an engineer, and I've always called myself Cory for my work. I use that name here."

"And no one knows you've come home—at last?" Her

voice that had been joyous was touched with disappointment.

"Home? I don't think it is home to me. I don't want a fuss."

"I won't tell," said Philippa, getting into the car. "But I don't understand why it isn't home to you," she added wistfully. "I may tell mother you are here?"

"Would Mrs. Cantelowe be interested?"

"Of course."

"That's kind of you."

He neither gave his consent nor withheld it. Philippa started the car and swung off down the bluish strip of road that gleamed through the twilight.

"Good-bye," she called out.

"Good-bye," he answered.

And the queer, almost incredible, episode was over.

As she drove swiftly through the closing dark she realized how extraordinary it was that neither of them had been in the least surprised by this remarkable meeting, that she had felt no tremor of fear or even curiosity or doubt. She had ever been sure, from the moment he had opened the door on to the dusky room, that this stranger was Lambert Dyprre; and his coming so swiftly on her experience about the room did not seem curious at all but natural, as if her attraction to Clobbertons, and his attraction to Clobbertons, was simply an unusual impulse on the part of each to find the other. Her own feelings about the room and what he had said about "ghosts" she had almost forgotten; her sensations had blended into the one excitement of the meeting.

As she drove along she strove against this excitement, and tried to consider the affair in a practical light.

There was much to be wondered at, much that was strange and difficult to understand.

Why had Lambert Dyprre kept away for a lifetime?

Why did he come back now under an assumed name?

He said he was an engineer, he appeared to have travelled a great deal—he spoke of "moving on"—of Dyprre not being "home"; yet Dyprre was a splendid property and he must be a very wealthy man . . . of course he was partially a foreigner: that ornate memorial in Trawden Church was to his mother, the woman with the exotic name—Geva Lambruschini.

He was looking at Clobbertons; he spoke of making an offer for Clobbertons—when he possessed Dyprre, with half a dozen houses larger than Clobbertons on the estate!

By the time she reached home Philippa had herself well in hand; a reaction even of doubt and coldness, a certain lassitude of the spirit possessed her; the glow and the thrill were eclipsed by the shadow of hard doubts.

She was distracted during dinner; Mrs. Cantelowe talked gently, never mentioning Clobbertons.

When they were alone together, Philippa said abruptly:

"Mother, Lambert Dyprre has come back. I met him to-day."

CHAPTER V

MRS. CANTELOWE was startled and alarmed to an extent that even to herself seemed instantly ridiculous.

"Lambert Dyprre," she repeated unsteadily. "You met him?"

"Did I startle you?" asked Philippa quickly. "I'm sorry, mother—it is strange, isn't it?"

Mrs. Cantelowe rallied her forces.

"Well, really I don't suppose it is strange at all, dear. It is his place, and I suppose he was sure to come back sooner or later."

"But strange that I should meet him like that," urged Philippa, intent on her own thoughts, yet masking them with a light manner. "He came into Clobbertons while I was there—I left the door open, never thinking that anyone would be likely to come, but he wanted to see the house again, and, finding it open, came up—straight to the room where I was; he said that room attracted him."

"He told you who he was?"

"Not at first. He was extraordinarily self-assured; he told me he thought of buying the house—I felt as if—well, I really think I knew who he was. We came down together, and then he asked me if I was not Philippa Cantelowe."

"He knew you?"

"Yes. I suppose I had been pointed out to him in Smeed. And he had heard that I was looking at Clobbertons."

A deep delicacy restrained Philippa from mentioning the photograph that had been in the possession of Raulyn Dyprre.

"Where is he staying?" asked Mrs. Cantelowe cautiously, fearfully feeling her way along dark paths.

"At *The Woolpack*. He said he wasn't staying, that Dyprre wasn't home to him."

Mrs. Cantelowe felt the darkness lift.

"Oh, he isn't staying? I suppose he is tolerably settled elsewhere."

"I should think so. Probably married and, as you say, 'settled,'" replied Philippa; "but he spoke of always moving about. And, mother, he is an engineer, under another name: he calls himself Cory, and only you and I are to know who he really is."

"Is he coming here?" asked Mrs. Cantelowe sharply.

"He didn't say so. But I asked him to—you would want to see him, wouldn't you, mother?"

Mrs. Cantelowe winced under the slight hint of defiance in the tone of this question; above everything she must not offend her daughter, must not allow herself to be shut out of Philippa's confidence.

"Of course I should wish to see him, dear. Old Sir Lambert's grandson! How strange of him not to have come before."

Philippa noted that she did not say "Sir Raulyn's son," and the girl's eyes became tender; it was wonderful and beautiful to her that romance had once connected her mother and the father of the man she had met at Clobbertons.

"I don't know that he will come now, mother; he said nothing whatever about it—and he doesn't want any one to know that he is here."

Mrs. Cantelowe could no longer forbear a question she yet dreaded to ask.

"What is he like, Philippa?"

"I hardly saw him—it was so dark, and I was only with him a few minutes. I only had an impression——"

"What was the impression?"

Philippa laughed, almost uneasily.

"I think I have never met anything quite so definite, more like a force than a personality, absolutely clear-cut and definite."

"In what way—definite?"

"Oh, I can't explain—something quite assured, self-confident, unhesitating, unperplexed, unalterable."

This, the son of Raulyn, weak, futile, irresolute, who had blenched from every issue—the son of Geva, wild, undisciplined, with her secret curse!

And then Mrs. Cantelowe, from very far away, seemed to hear the voice of Francesco Michelozzi saying: "I have hope in the child."

"Oh, Philippa," she said, no longer able to quite disguise how moved she was. "This is the baby I saw in the gaudy cradle in that queer room—such a beautiful baby."

"I think he is beautiful now," replied Philippa, "in a curious way. He isn't ordinary, and not like an Englishman; he speaks strangely, uses different words—a different manner."

"Do you think that I should like him?" asked Mrs. Cantelowe with painful quiet.

The answer confirmed her lurking fear.

"Oh, anyone would like him. He is delightful."

Then there was silence; and, by tacit consent, neither of the women spoke again of Lambert Dyprre.

For several days Philippa avoided Smeed: since the man who was constantly in her thoughts had taken no further notice of their meeting, she did not wish, by even the fraction of a chance, to put herself in his way; and as he was staying at *The Woolpack*, which was in the very centre of the one street of the little town, it would be difficult for him not to notice the appearance of so conspicuous a person as Miss Cantelowe.

Philippa had half-hoped that her mother would suggest a letter or a visit to Lambert Dyprre, but Mrs. Cantelowe had gone no further than a remark, rather artificially casual, that evidently Sir Lambert did not intend to pursue the acquaintance, and that therefore it would be kinder to leave him to himself.

"No doubt he is very eccentric," she added anxiously. "As you said, yourself, Philippa, not in the least like an Englishman."

The girl did not answer, but she had not thought Lambert Dyprre in the least eccentric.

On Sunday they saw him in Trawden Church; not in the big Dyprre pew occupied by the uninteresting people to whom Dyprre Manor House was let, but in the north aisle seated near the memorials of his father and his mother.

Philippa's glance, though instantly averted, had discovered him to Mrs. Cantelowe.

She who had been Philippa Myniott studied covertly Raulyn Dyprre's son.

She would have known him at once, whenever she had

met him, for, while he did not resemble either Raulyn or Geva, he reminded her vividly of both these people; he was an intensely individual personality compounded of these two other intensely individual personalities.

At the first glance Mrs. Cantelowe had the swift impression that he was all that his father had wished to be, had failed to be—as if Raulyn had been the smouldering embers from which this bright flame had been fanned, and that, added to this fruition of his father's character, he was also the fulfilment of his mother's clouded, obscured and marred spirit.

So, knowing his history, did Mrs. Cantelowe judge him in that first instant; for she could not ignore the splendour of his person, and that overwhelming sense of immovable purpose and definite power which he conveyed, even now, when he sat subdued and quiescent in his humble pew.

He was slight and lean, in superb physical condition; he had an air of Southern elegance half-effaced by the rough carelessness of his dress; his face, long-nosed, faintly hollowed in the cheeks, firm in the full lips and short chin, had the look of a Crusader's mask carved delicately beneath his close helmet; his eyes were rather close set and light brown under dark brows and lashes; his close-cropped hair, of a dark reddish-brown, showed the exact proportions of a nobly shaped head; in Mrs. Cantelowe's mind the image of a straight-faced, slender Norman warrior, austere, serene, dominant, with simple mail and warrior shield—Donatello's St. George—persisted.

The marvel of this man being the son of Raulyn and Geva remained with Mrs. Cantelowe throughout the service, and an intense curiosity overcame the dread of the name Dyprre which had remained dormant in her heart since the day Francesco Michelozzi had confided to her the secret of the Lambruschini. She now felt not only that every instinct of courtesy and kindness urged her to know this young man, but that she really wished to do so. She was glad that he was not staying long in Smeed, but while he did stay there she was sure that she could not, for many reasons, ignore him.

And as she sat there, meekly, with folded hands, not listening to the arid and childish discourse of the old Vicar, she was thinking of Raulyn Dyprre; and the poignancy of the recollection pierced through the tranquillity of her happiness with Piers, the sorrow of her own tragedies, and troubled the serenity of her old age.

Poor Raulyn—so driven by his own doubts and hesitancies, so unfitted for everything that was expected from him, evading responsibility, fleeing from his duty and his place, to be enmeshed, by the caprice of his own fantasy, in a despair that killed him—poor Raulyn.

She who had been Philippa Myniott would think of him with tenderest pity, with deepest understanding now as she looked at his name on his funeral stone, so near the delicate and curious memorial he had sent to Trawden Church to commemorate his wife.

And there was the amazing son seated beneath these two names ; the son that neither Geva nor Raulyn had known save as an infant, and who himself probably knew little or nothing of what he sprang from, probably was even unaware of his secret inheritance.

Across all the events of her own life, both happy and terrible, that lay between, Mrs. Cantelowe recalled that summer in Rome—the room with the bronzed-clamped mirrors and the heavy busts, the music chamber with the large gleaming grand piano in front of the tall window which showed the moon high above the garden trees, the confusion of white, perfumed, exotic, languid flowers—the quick little scene round the piano ; Geva with her arm raised, Raulyn watching the red drops from her wrist fall on the ivory keys ; she even saw herself, as if she saw another woman, in the stiff State dress of the "eighties," the tight corsage, the full-gored, glittering, pink-silk train that she had flung over the knife lying hidden beneath the fallen lilacs.

How clearly now she could see Raulyn's thin dark face, the beautiful grave countenance of Prince Foscari, Piers' expression of vexed amaze, the look of infinite pity and regret in the doctor's noble features—and the marred tear-blotched mask of Geva, all illuminated by the artificial light of the clustered wax-candles.

Mrs. Cantelowe, acutely aware of this image of her own youth, was as acutely aware of the reincarnation of her own youth in the tall girl seated beside her ; this other Philippa, a little hard, a little on the defensive, slightly in a false position, as were so many girls of this era, but essentially the same as the Philippa who had loved Raulyn Dyprre.

She rose to leave the church with a faint little tremor in the heart she had long believed stilled to peace ; this old story was faint indeed, overlaid by the real things that had

happened to her, the birth of her children, the loss of her gallant husband and her splendid sons, but it was not with apathy that she could greet Raulyn's son.

In the porch Philippa touched her arm.

"Mother, are you going to speak to him?"

"Yes, of course I must speak to him, dear."

They lingered by the huge, dark, hollow yew, speaking pleasantly to a few acquaintances who passed them on their way to the cars waiting beyond the lich-gate.

The young man came slowly out of the church; English decorum completely ignored him, though a stranger was no common sight in Trawden Church. Mrs. Cantelowe moved, also slowly, down the brick path, as if to delay the moment of meeting; but Philippa remained motionless under the blackish-green flat boughs of the yew-tree; she wore a bronze-coloured velvet coat and hat, and long, soft, dark furs so that, save for her fair pale face, she seemed to merge in the undefined but deep shadow of the tree.

He met her, as he had met her for the first time, without the least embarrassment.

"I thought you might be here. I was hoping for this," he said. "I suppose you come to Trawden Church every Sunday?"

"My mother is here," answered Philippa. "I told her you were in Smeed. She would like to meet you."

Lambert Dyprre glanced beyond the girl to the tall woman in the black and gold, whose long veil floated lightly from a plumed hat.

"Mrs. Cantelowe? Yes, I was looking at her in church."

And Philippa, advancing, said:

"This is Lambert Dyprre, mother."

She who had been Philippa Myniott turned and gave her ungloved hand to Raulyn Dyprre's son's; he, bareheaded, bowed in a wholly foreign fashion over the pale fingers.

"It is strange to see you here, after so long since there has been a Dyprre in Trawden," she said. They were alone in the churchyard now, and she used the name, as Philippa had used it, without fear of being overheard, and then she paused, slightly overwhelmed by the moment, slightly confused by this vital personality.

But the young man was absolutely at his ease.

"I came to look at the place," he smiled. "I never felt any curiosity before, but suddenly I just did have the desire to see this part of the world——"

"But it is *yours,*" said Philippa. "Surely you want to come back here?"

"Come back? But I've never been here before, Miss Cantelowe. And I don't like it."

"You don't like it?" repeated the girl in amaze, and even to Mrs. Cantelowe the words sounded strange.

"It is alien to you?" she suggested uneasily. "You do not know England?"

"Not at all, save London a little."

They moved from the yew-tree, and the sun parted the winter clouds and shone clear and pale on to the slanting graves; beyond the slope of the churchyard the marsh waters flashed like mirrors in the sudden light.

"I suppose you live in Rome?" asked Mrs. Cantelowe tentatively; she could associate him with no other city.

"Rome? I hardly know Rome. And I don't live anywhere, Mrs.Cantelowe. I came from South America, just now."

Mrs. Cantelowe felt herself bewildered in dark places: so he knew Rome as little as he knew Dyprre; his mother's heritage was as ignored as his father's heritage!

She stood at the lich-gate, hesitant.

"Will you come and see us?" she asked. "We really are relations, you know, Sir Lambert."

"How kind of you to remember," he said, smiling from one to the other; and Mrs. Cantelowe, conscious of her long neglect of him, flushed as if the pleasant, rather peculiar, voice had been sarcastic.

"You know nothing of us, perhaps," she continued with quiet dignity, "but my husband and your father were cousins. I saw you once, in Rome, in your cradle, Sir Lambert. I remember very well your mother's guardian, Francesco Michelozzi."

She spoke the name deliberately, and Sir Lambert's face warmed into a flash of pleasure.

"Ah, yes. He has mentioned you, Mrs. Cantelowe. He brought me up, you see, and was both parents and country also to me."

"He is well?"

"Very well. He has been with me in South America."

Mrs. Cantelowe was pleased that the doctor was alive; the very fact lent stability to this rather incredible young man.

They stood beside the big blue Cantelowe car, and Philippa, almost imperiously, said:

"Of course you are coming back to lunch with us?"

But he declined, quite definitely.

"I've a friend at *The Woolpack*; he will be waiting for me."

"We can telephone to your friend," said the beautiful woman, and her smile was like a challenge. "We can send the car for him—I don't think *The Woolpack* can be so very attractive——"

"I'm so sorry," replied Sir Lambert, "but I'm quite sure I must go back to Trawden—may we come before we leave? My friend is Gino Foscari." He turned quickly to Mrs. Cantelowe. "You will, perhaps, also remember him?"

Yes, Mrs. Cantelowe remembered him, she would like to see him again—was he also under an assumed name?

Sir Lambert smiled.

"No—he is called 'Mr. Foscarry'—I'm Mr. Cory: that's the firm's name; mine is too well known here, I didn't want a fuss."

"Good-bye, then," said Mrs. Cantelowe, getting into her car. "I hope you will come to see me, both of you."

She spoke more naturally now, for her fear of this new Dyprre was soothed by the thought of the other man, the older man who must know everything, in the background, but Philippa, the handsome girl in the bronze velvet, the soft furs and dark feathers, was unappeased.

"I think you should come," she said; then, as the car drove away, leaving him standing by the lich-gate, she added with a heightened colour: "Rather a wild man, isn't he?"

But Mrs. Cantelowe was not deceived.

CHAPTER VI

MRS. CANTELOWE did not sleep that night; she sat long before the wood fire, and even the skilfully muted light of her electric lamp could not wholly soften the shadows and hollows in her face. Even in this kind light she looked wan and ashy, her hair, thick but colourless, looked a dead wreath above her pallid forehead, the hands, disfigured by the massive old-fashioned rings, were shrunk in the flesh, swollen in the veins and knuckles still exquisite, still fragrant, but the hands of an old woman.

She had achieved a serenity not easily troubled, a serenity

that perhaps could never be troubled to the depths again: with her, peace was the chill sweet fruit of a noble delicate life; the humility of mind, the gratitude of heart, the almost passionate sense of duty that had always been her great gifts, and that had enabled her to transform the unloved lover into the loved husband, caused her to consider her life with deep and tender thankfulness; her bereavements were softened by the intense quality of her devotion. For the prim theology of her youth she had gradually evoked some vague but powerful sense of things spiritual that enabled her to dwell with her loved ones in an inner world of rapture that was half-memory, half-anticipation; she was as acutely aware as her daughter of the many doors now opening on to the ways of the invisible world.

And now, as she sat here, thinking quietly, she was aware how dismal life had been a generation ago, when these doors had not only been shut but marked "forbidden." She considered Sir Lambert Dyprre as she had first known him, the austere man enclosed in his traditions, so utterly unaware that he marked the end of an epoch, the dreariness of his dutiful marriage to a woman dulled by waiting, the dim misery of his thwarted affection for the woman on whom a social blight had descended because of her marriage for a meanly considered marriage, and then Raulyn, the child of this ill-adjusted union, child of the plain ageing mother, with her pent-up passion, her sealed heart, child of the disappointed reserved father, stifling his yearnings, his desires, two pathetic figures walking straightly in the arid way of decorum and convention.

Raulyn, inheriting negations, hesitations, repressions, complex urgings towards joy and loveliness, complex loathings of the earthy and the definite, shadowed by a lonely childhood, lived in the gloom of outworn traditions and a grim and material dogma, all blurred and darkened by the Gothic imagination, mediæval figures of Death, Sin and the Devil clanking their withered bones in their tattered trappings in a last dance down the age of rationalism.

Sir Lambert had stayed at his post, believing that he loved the symbols and formulas to which he had clung so fiercely. Raulyn had fled, afraid of reality, betrayed by fantastic believing that he loved his freedom; and she who had been Philippa Myniott knew that both men had been homesick, Sir Lambert for the fairy seas beyond the common shore, Sir

Raulyn for the home he had abandoned; tragic figures both of them, and now Time had laid them gently aside, and the road was open to other travellers who would not be impeded by their advice or their laments.

Mrs. Cantelowe thought of her father, of her husband. Both these men had been absolutely suited for their position, supremely content with their fortune, untroubled by any doubts or hesitations or regrets; yet Roger Myniott had lived to lose his sons, to see his name merged in that of another, and Piers Cantelowe had been snatched violently out of life and his sons had passed quickly after him, they also snatched violently away.

Of these two strong virile men there was no heir beyond this one girl who bore the two names that must also in their turn be merged into that of a stranger.

While from the dreamer, the idler, had sprung this vital branch, this other amazing Lambert Dyprre, who cared nothing at all for the heritage which had been the idol of his grandfather, the dread of his father, an obsession to both of these men, to all his ancestors, no doubt.

And now Mrs. Cantelowe came to this point: the sudden converging together of this one heiress of Cantelowe and Myniott with this one heir of Dyprre.

The meeting of the woman who, a little bewildered, a little defiant, but gallant and stubborn, was holding the last forlorn ramparts of her family, and the man who had before his birth abandoned his family.

Philippa was trying, almost unconsciously, to live up to the traditions of her race, to fulfil the ideals of generations of men like Roger Myniott and Piers Cantelowe; her spirit was chained to the instincts in her blood. She was slightly baffled by modernity, she was slightly confused by changing issues, she had masked herself with every careless device of the day, she was casual, flippant, hard, but underneath this she was as tenacious of her heritage as had been any of her ancestors who had ridden behind the Plantagenet kings.

Mrs. Cantelowe knew this; she had watched how the family pride in Philippa had burnt up fiercely after the death of her brothers, and that, as valiantly as any Elizabeth Tudor, she had refused every match that seemed to encroach on her kingdom.

And there was only one match that would not encroach on her kingdom—a match with Lambert Dyprre.

Mrs. Cantelowe faced that fact.

Marriage with Lambert Dyprre would flatter Philippa's pride, it would consolidate her position, it would secure her estates, it would supply the money she needed, it would indeed overcome all her difficulties, and her children, in whom all three names and all three lands would be combined, might count on a fair clear inheritance.

With devastating clearness Mrs. Cantelowe saw how enticing this would appear to the girl's imagination, what castles in the air she would build on the mere hope of such a marriage; and she, also with devastating clearness, saw that the matter was worse than that, saw that Philippa had been caught, held enthralled by the glamour of Lambert Dyprres' personality, as much as by his name.

Her mother admitted, not without a smile of tender irony, that the man was nicely calculated to win a girl, lonely, bereaved, proud, fastidious, a girl who had never been very popular with ordinary people, a girl who was reserved, straining to act up to a part, but full of very secret, very romantic, dreams.

For Lambert Dyprre, with a person likely to appeal to any woman, was also vividly individual, almost overwhelmingly vital and, as Philippa had said, "definite"; not in any way to be confused with those ordinary people who did not care for Philippa and whom she despised—a king for her queen, thought Mrs. Cantelowe with the deepening of the tender irony of her smile. And he had abundant charm. And probably great gifts and talents.

Mrs. Cantelowe did not undervalue him; she saw that the combination of the person and the man would prove irresistible, that they had probably already proved irresistible, and that Philippa, to the depth of her heart, was already committed to Lambert Dyprre.

Apart from this poignant aspect of Philippa's happiness, Mrs. Cantelowe knew that this was a marriage that all her dear dead would have approved. Sir Lambert, her father, her husband, her sons, poor Raulyn, all would have been glad to think of this union of the old names.

There was one other name in the past, though, and this balanced all the others.

The name of Geva Lambruschini.

Mrs. Cantelowe, seated by her bright fire, in the rosy light of her electric light, shivered throughout her soul.

This magnificent marriage—this fine young man was absolutely impossible.

She knew nothing whatever of his history: she had only seen him for a few moments; she was keenly sensitive to his attractions, to the impression he must have made on Philippa, but she could not see any woman marry the son of Geva Lambruschini.

Not while memory remained to her of that scene by the piano, in the candle-light, not while she could recall what Francesco Michelozzi had told her, not while, among her secret relics, was locked away a sheet of old music and a yellow silk work-bag that had once held a knife.

The risk was too ghastly to her, even for a moment contemplated.

Mrs. Cantelowe thought that this was the most terrible thing that had ever happened to her, worse than death, and the slow difficult tears of old age rose to her smarting eyes.

She recalled (and it seemed indeed like an episode in another life, even the life of a different person) some premonition of this terrible trouble.

It was before Philippa was born—years before she was born—and she, Mrs. Cantelowe, had sat beside Lambert Dyprre in his cradle and tried to persuade his mother to come to England; she had even, in her kindness, mentioned her possible children as companions for the baby lying there in his absurd rococo cradle, and then she had checked herself, for the sharp state of her knowledge of this baby's heritage had darted into her mind.

And the poor, lovely, young Italian had seemed to understand her frightened pause, had seemed to brush aside her evasive words and look straight into her soul.

Mrs. Cantelowe remembered wincing before the air of grandeur there was about this unhappy young woman, an air as if she realized and faced the doom hung over herself and her child.

"I believe she did know and that it killed her," thought Mrs. Cantelowe now, and the pang of thirty-five years ago and the pang of to-day together forced the slow tears over her sunken cheeks.

She had been very faithful to Geva's secret; it seemed horrible that she must betray it now, in defence of the one dear thing left to her, dreadful to consider that she very likely must bruise and wound Philippa with the story of that scene by the piano.

She rose, rigid from fatigue, and her tall figure moved stiffly to the window; she was old for a vigil, and it was the whole night through that she had sat over the fire, turning her problems to and fro in her mind, for now, as she pulled apart the thick curtain, she saw, eastwards, a faint light edging the sky, a yellow rind to the dusky heavens that still held in the centre clusters of stars.

She opened the window; the night air was keen but not bitter, and faintly sweet with the serene shy sweetness of the very early year. Mrs. Cantelowe was glad to shudder in her loose gown as the gentle breeze crept round her throat and arm, glad to look into the dark peace of the chill pure night. And as she stood there, watching that distant spreading rim of light, she thought that the solution of her problem probably lay with Lambert Dyprre himself, and she saw how grotesquely onesided all her calculations had been.

Absorbed in her daughter, she had never once looked at the matter from the man's point of view, and now she did come to consider that, she could not persuade herself for a moment that there was the least ground for supposing that Lambert Dyprre was attracted by Philippa or remotely considered a marriage with the heiress whose lands marched with his own.

He might even (though this was hardly likely in Francesco Michelozzi's lifetime) be married; he certainly seemed a man whose life was full, direct, already planned and settled; he had no interest in his father's home, and he had shown no interest in reviving any old ties with the Cantelowes. It seemed very likely that he would return to his own life without the least gesture of even friendliness towards Philippa.

He had his work; Mrs. Cantelowe was the immense importance of that fact; he was absorbed in work, *a man's work.*

This aspect of the matter was a relief, yet it only shifted the trouble, for if Philippa was involved as much as her mother thought she was, she would have to suffer through Lambert Dyprre what that other Philippa had suffered through his father; and this time there was no Piers waiting to take the sting away.

Mrs. Cantelowe closed the window sharply; she was trembling in a pitiful agitation: the thought of Philippa enduring what she had endured was anguish.

She never reflected that her passion had been the result of a lifetime's companionship, and that this passion was the

result of a couple of meetings, for there seemed to her something inexorable, like a decree of destiny, in this coming of Lambert Dyprre to Clobbertons—of all places, Clobbertons, where her own romance had been truncated.

An immense yearning for her daughter shook her; an ecstasy of tenderness such as she used to feel when bending over the little face in her arms, close to her bosom, the last and loveliest of her babies.

Her emotions slipped her control.

"I must go to Philippa," she muttered, half-aloud.

She put a shawl over her shoulders and went out into the passage; her trembling hand found the electric switch, and the opal-coloured lamps glowed along the corridor. Her tall figure passed quickly to her daughter's door; she knocked eagerly and entered.

She saw at once, with a sense of shock, that Philippa was also awake; there was no fire, for the girl had always ignored this mere adornment of a central heated room, and all the lights were turned off, except the one tall lamp by the bed; the curtains were drawn, the window was open, and Philippa also faced the dawn which now cast over her a pallid but steady light.

For a second Mrs. Cantelowe looked at her own ghost in this tall girl, the ghost of the Philippa who had watched through so many nights, dreamed over so many dawns for the sake of Raulyn Dyprre.

She was aware, too, of loveliness as an abstract thing, the loveliness so often veiled, masked, concealed in the press, lost in the hurry, unguarded in the struggle of daily life, but which is always there, the loveliness that had been hers and which she had prized so little, even muffled up as if in shame.

For Philippa was lovely in the austere pallor of the dawn; she stood erect and graceful as a young larch, her light satin wrapper revealing the virginal yet most womanly curves of her figure: she was just blooming into early maternity, when the ravishing prettiness of mere youth either fades or becomes beauty. The mask of reserve, of hardness, was gone; her fair features were soft, radiant, as if a blush of light rested on them; she bloomed, she glowed; the heavy bright hair, so obscured by day-time fashion, swung free to her waist in one strong curve, like the sweep of a wave; the fair neck and bosom, the fair arms and shoulders showed the tender rounding of feminine flowering so hidden away in fashion's uniform which is kinder to defects than perfections.

She was not a child to be petted, not a girl to be comforted, but a fine woman of the Northern stock: the type of woman the first Sir Raulyn Dyprre had left behind to guard his honour and his lands when he followed his master to the wars.

Mrs. Cantelowe felt old and useless.

"Why, mother, are you awake too? You aren't ill?" She shut the window and pulled out a chair. "How strange that you should be awake—too," she repeated.

"I was thinking of you so much." Mrs. Cantelowe felt her lips trembling. "I had a foolish feeling that I wanted to see if you were really all right."

"Dear mother, and you are quite cold——"

She picked up a big scarf edged with swansdown and put it round Mrs. Cantelowe's shoulders.

"You are all right, Philippa?" Mrs. Cantelowe was grateful for the chair and the scarf; she was really shivering.

"Yes, of course."

"But you are awake, you were worried about something."

"Not worried, mother."

The girl sat on the couch at the foot of the low bed and took her mother's cold hand between her warm palms.

"I know what you are thinking of," she said softly. "You must have seen it——"

And Mrs. Cantelowe, in a panic, as if warding off a blow, said:

"Not Lambert Dyprre?"

"Yes," smiled Philippa.

And Mrs. Cantelowe:

"How foolish of me to say that, dear. Of course I knew it was Lambert Dyprre."

In her heart she was saying, desperately: "She has got to suffer one way; if he goes there will be no need for me to tell her, and I can comfort her by my story. I will tell her how his father left me."

"Of course you knew," said Philippa. "Was there anything more clear of intention? Mother darling, I believe Sir Raulyn loved you. Lambert Dyprre said he had a photograph of you that had belonged to his father——"

Mrs. Cantelowe sat blanched, mute.

"It is beautiful," continued the absorbed girl. "We complete it all, don't we? I think Sir Raulyn loved you very much, and that you loved him a little too."

Mrs. Cantelowe made a brusque movement with her quivering hand.

"Do you love this man?" she asked, and now Philippa noticed her quiet distress.

"Why, mother, aren't you pleased? Isn't he different to anyone else? A Dyprre, too, that means something——"

"Tell me if you love him——"

"Do you want to hear me say so? Well, I love him. I know now what I have been waiting for."

"And he?"

"He? He must love me," said Philippa with a quivering smile. "I challenge him not to love me!—after he came like that, to Clobbertons—where I was waiting for my dream."

Mrs. Cantelowe sighed.

"Oh, my darling! If he goes away."

Philippa rose; a faint reflection of her mother's pain showed in her uplifted face.

"If he goes away? Why should he go away?"

"Philippa, we know nothing of him," said the poor mother, bowing her head, instinctively thrusting her feeble strength against the implacable forces arrayed against her beloved.

Philippa looked at her swiftly, and stood for a second silent, then:

"Well, perhaps he goes away. But for me it will be the same. I said I didn't want happiness, didn't I?"

CHAPTER VII

AFTERWARDS it seemed rather incredible to Philippa that she had made that confidence to her mother and that her mother had received it with distress, even with a certain sad hostility; she felt that this was a sharp rift in the sympathy that had always existed between them, and for the first time she said to herself, "Mother is old, and the old don't understand."

She withdrew again into her reserve; she knew that Mrs. Cantelowe would never speak of this matter again unless she herself gave leave, and she resolved never to give this leave.

With more than her usual patience and care she devoted herself to her duties: she visited her estate office, she dealt personally with her correspondence, she was minute in her instructions to the efficient young secretary she had lately engaged; she listened to schemes for a village concert, for a

village tea, and gave her advice pleasantly and sensibly; she did not in the least seem the same as the girl who had stood and watched the dawn break over the winter landscape.

And all the time, behind her amiable demeanour, her dutiful attention, there was a revolt against all of it, a sense that she was playing a part and not playing it very well.

The bailiff spoke of the shooting; it was rather going to pieces lately; there had only been small parties this year—would Miss Cantelowe care to let the shooting?

The people who had Dyprre Manor might take it; of course, there ought to be more money spent on it; the gamekeepers were insufficient, and the birds, through lack of hand-tending, were becoming wild and scarce.

"Let it go," said Philippa. "I dare say we shall have larger house parties next year."

But she knew that this sounded foolish, and also that she did not mean it. She had daily less and less interest in entertaining numbers of people she did not care for; and she really was indifferent about the shooting; but tugging at her conscience was her duty to Cantelowe.

Therefore she slightly flushed under the glance of the bailiff.

"Please do as you like about it," she added quickly. "I should like everything kept up as it was in my brother's time—I'll ask some more people down to shoot——"

And she wondered if the bailiff was thinking that she was very inadequate, and that it seemed a waste of energy to drag along this encumbered estate for which there was no heir.

He showed her an estimate for the repairs required at Myniott House, which had stood empty too long.

"It is more than you ought to spend just now, Miss Cantelowe," he smiled, "but you'll want to keep the place in repair or Mrs. Cantelowe——"

"Can't we let?"

"Well, it's never been modernized, you see, and there is so much old-fashioned furniture there—you wouldn't sell?"

"No," said Philippa.

"And then there are the two dower houses; you'll never get much for them unless they are altered——"

"And we can't afford to do that, can we?"

"Well, hardly. It's been an awfully bad year. And the taxes——"

"Oh, please," said Miss Cantelowe, "I can't economize

more, you know, without giving up altogether—let the dower houses go on at the same rent——"

"You'd hardly get more."

"Well, carry on," smiled Philippa. "If we've got to sell, we'll sell some more of the farms."

She went away with a feeling of disdain for herself: the place wanted a master; the bailiff was excellent, no doubt, but he worked almost too scrupulously under her orders, and her orders were inadequate, she knew that: with two brothers she had never been trained to this sort of thing, and Mrs. Cantelowe was absolutely incapable of anything in this nature.

And not wholly with free hands had the girl undertaken her uncongenial task; the second Piers Cantelowe had not been the man his father was, and he had come into his kingdom too young; Roger, the second son, had gone into the Army, and always exceeded a generous allowance, while during his brief rule he had contrived to considerably encumber the estate; since his death Philippa had paid off rather heavier debts than she had imagined any young man could contract, and of which Mrs. Cantelowe knew nothing at all.

Myniott was settled on Mrs. Cantelowe, and she had left it to this darling younger son, and therefore this property was the more heavily damaged. Now it was supposed to be kept for Mrs. Cantelowe in the case of Philippa's marriage, but unless this event brought great wealth to the two women there was no prospect of Mrs. Cantelowe being able to "keep up" a place like Myniott.

Philippa frowned as she walked through the park.

"We are living on superstition, tradition, shams," she thought, "and yet I couldn't give one of them up."

And then she allowed herself to think, quite deliberately, of marriage with Lambert Dyprre and the salvation that this would mean to her; soul, body, estate—this marriage, and this only, would save and exalt her, fulfil and glorify her life.

At luncheon that day Mrs. Cantelowe said, with no affectation of indifference, yet as if she spoke on an ordinary topic:

"Philippa, I met Prince Foscari in Rome all those years ago, and I thought I ought to show him some courtesy—I telephoned to *The Woolpack* this morning and asked him to come over with Sir Lambert."

"I should like to meet him," said Philippa carefully. "When are they coming?"

"Well, Sir Lambert has gone to town for a few days, but Prince Foscari said he would come over this afternoon. I think you will like him, Philippa."

"Who is he?"

"He *was* a very wealthy man, a cousin of Sir Lambert's mother, I believe, a fine type of Italian, ascetic, with a really beautiful Giorgione face, but that, of course, is nearly your lifetime ago, dear."

Mrs. Cantelowe spoke rather hurriedly; she felt that she possessed a guilty secret, for when she had spoken to Gino Foscari on the telephone she had said:

"I want you to tell me about Lambert Dyprre."

And she had spoken quite confidently because of that secret of thirty-five years ago which they shared, and which she had so faithfully kept.

It had been providential that Sir Lambert should have gone to town, and Mrs. Cantelowe had, on hearing this, instantly arranged a little plot.

"I shall be shopping in Smeed this afternoon," she had said, "and I will call for you about three."

And she thought that they could drive round Dyprre and Cantelowe rather slowly, and that before they came home to tea she would have had time to learn all she wanted to know about Lambert Dyprre.

"I was going out this afternoon," said Philippa, "but I'll be in about five."

"That will do, dear. Sir Lambert is returning to Smeed. Prince Foscari said that he was really going to buy Clobbertons. Isn't that curious?"

"Very." Philippa was on the defensive. "I should think he is eccentric."

But Mrs. Cantelowe had her own thoughts of Clobbertons: curious indeed that it should have been bought by a son of Raulyn Dyprre!

That afternoon, in her comfortable, but not very new or luxurious, car, driven by her trustworthy, but not very young or smart, chauffeur, Mrs. Cantelowe went into Smeed; there were very many more imposing equipages than this in the neighbourhood, for the new families who had lately settled here were forced to impress with evidences of their wealth to hide their other shortcomings and put a glow over the raw crudeness of their positions.

Mrs. Cantelowe did not think of money at all, nor remotely

of trying to create an effect: she had always been so definitely placed that she could hardly understand either the climber or the society that made the climber possible.

She did not even know that she was different to all the other women in the expensive cars, wearing the expensive frocks, whom she entertained so courteously, different even from her own daughter in the austere sweetness of her rigid breeding, in the exquisite finish of her perfect training; she came from the generation when the ideal of a great lady was linked with graciousness, gentleness, timidity of manner and courage of soul, an infinite delicacy and an infinite endurance; she had lived to hear these things called "old-fashioned," but she could never discard them: they were hers with the blood of all her honourable ancestors.

So now, in her modest car, with her grey-haired servants, she drove towards a task bitter as wormwood.

She was heavy-eyed and haggard from her wakeful night; the grey hair, like a withered wreath, was carefully twisted above a lined pallid brow; she was very richly dressed in clothes few other women would dare to wear: a full cloak of wine-coloured brocade and beaver fur flowed over her black-and-gold gown; from her close black hat hung black-and-gold veils; she carried on her breast a bunch of her own violets, fresh from the frames.

She looked out of the window at the still misty landscape; the sky was an even grey without colour, the distant woods and hills showed like shadows of a faintly deeper grey against this; the fields' dim, faded greens and golds, the dun-coloured hedges and gates, barns and haystacks were blurred by the faint damp; the dead-looking surface of the pools reflected the low colourless pall of the sky, so that they looked like mirrors dulled by vapour.

Here and there men and horses moved in the half distance, and they also looked like shadows seen flat and smudged between the dusky boughs of alder and maple, hawthorn and bramble, all muted now to indefinite tones.

It was a day without life or light, without colour or radiance; only in the tremulous notes of the birds and in the quiver of warm tint in the willow branches was there any hope or promise of spring.

Mrs. Cantelowe remembered so many days like this, remembered so many rides into Smeed—so many January days, so many rides with Raulyn Dyprre by her side.

Prince Gino Foscari was punctually and dutifully waiting outside the two painted pillars of the portico of *The Woolpack.*

Mrs. Cantelowe would not have known him, but she guessed who he was, with perfect tact.

A slender elderly man, obviously a foreigner, looking rather resigned and chilled, with his great-coat collar turned up and his hands in big fur gloves.

Mrs. Cantelowe had only known him casually and under peculiar circumstances: a long while ago, too; but there was that scene at the piano linking them together across the years, and Mrs. Cantelowe lowered the window with the friendliest gesture.

"It is Prince Foscari? A really great pleasure. Please get in; you must detest such a day like this."

He responded eagerly, and she was instantly relieved of some of her apprehensions by the almost pathetic desire to be friendly and helpful that he showed. The car passed on down the very wide street of Smeed, and Mrs. Cantelowe sat beside the man she had not seen for a lifetime and felt no sense of strangeness.

He was still fine, though he looked a good deal older than his fifty odd years and all the splendour of his handsomeness had disappeared; there only remained the beautiful proportion of head and face, the delicate structure that time could not destroy. For the rest, he had withered utterly, and his hair showed the positive whiteness of snow above his sallow complexion; his eyes, sunken and faded behind the glittering glasses, expressed a thoughtful and anxious kindness, as if he was always slightly bewildered by the great needs of the world and his own incapacity to administer to these needs.

He spoke in French at first, and afterwards in an English much better than Mrs. Cantelowe remembered him using in Rome, those long years ago.

"When you rang up this morning, Mrs. Cantelowe, I was considering how I might make myself known to you. I felt that I wanted to see you—because of that I allowed Lambert to persuade me to come here. I have thought very often that one of us should write to you."

"But why? It is I who have felt heartless never to have asked after Lambert. But my life has been very full. And I suppose I never had the courage."

"One understands that. But now he has come back."

"Yes," said Mrs. Cantelowe, "he has come back. And now I want to know something about him. That you will understand also, Prince?"

"That one understands also. But I do not think that he will be your neighbour. He is going away again, quite soon."

Mrs. Cantelowe looked out of the window; they were through Smeed now and out on the bare road; the blankness of the mist was encroaching on them.

Going away? Well, at best, it had never been anything but a choice between two pains, and this was the less terrible.

"Then if he is not staying," said Mrs. Cantelowe gently, "perhaps I have no right, no need, to know anything about him."

And as she spoke she wondered if her companion guessed anything about her daughter, visualized any remote possibility there. . . .

"I want you to know," insisted the Italian with an air of deep respect and close attention. "You already are aware of the only part of Lambert's story that is—horrible."

"No one ever knew it from me, not even my husband, not even my boys."

"We were always certain of that."

"And Lambert?—does he know?"

The Italian shook his head.

"Lambert does not know."

Mrs. Cantelowe shivered.

"How damp it is!" She drew the fur rug closer about her knees. "We will drive home now."

And as they turned and went slowly back to Cantelowe, Gino Foscari, speaking in a low tone as if he dreaded that the two men outside might hear what he said, told the story of Lambert Dyprre.

There was not much in the story; it consisted of plain facts.

Lambert, who on his mother's death became Marchese Lambruschini, and on his father's death a baronet and a very wealthy man, had been surrendered entirely by both his parents to the care of Francesco Michelozzi and Gino Foscari.

On Raulyn's decease the boy had been taken to the Tyrol and brought up there among the mountains; his first schooling had been at Innsbrück, afterwards he had gone to Heidel-

berg and Leyden; his holidays had been spent with one or other of his guardians: always he had been under the constant care of Dr. Michelozzi.

When he left the university he had gone from one technical college to another studying engineering—Vienna, Berlin, Milan; at twenty-five he had been a very accomplished engineer.

Then had come the war, and Lambert, under his Italian title, had joined the Italian Army; here he had distinguished himself among the engineers on the Carso, been rapidly promoted and decorated for valour.

At the close of the war he had left the Army and bought a partnership in a famous firm of engineers, in whose operations he had always taken an active part; from '18 onwards—four years—he had travelled all over the world, building bridges, harbours, railways, absorbed in his work.

He had been kept away from Rome as he had been kept away from Dyprre: the old palace had been made into a hospital for the outcast, the castle in the Apennines restored and modernized; he had had, of course, more money than he would use, but he had lavishly disposed of most of it in philanthropic schemes, and probably at the moment was only moderately wealthy.

His character Prince Gino summed up in a few words: he was absolutely determined, a man of invincible will, endless patience, ceaseless industry, cool, courageous and generous to a fault.

Never, on any occasion, had he shown the slightest sign of having inherited his mother's insanity; but his emotions had never been excited, thwarted, or even roused: perpetual change, perpetual work, perpetual interests had absorbed his nature; his mentality was as hard, as trained, as perfect a thing as his hard trained body.

He was a famous athlete, and he had a number of rather severe hobbies, such as Saracenic literature and Archaic Chinese sculpture; no woman so far had counted in his life: he had no affection for any human being save Francesco Michelozzi; it was rather as if, in hardening his mind and body, they had hardened his heart also.

This was the man Francesco Michelozzi had made of Geva's child.

Mrs. Cantelowe listened with a sense of something very bleak and alien, grim and unattractive. In the light of this

story she recalled as something rather sinister the long, smooth, straight Crusader's face, the golden eyes too close set, the mouth too crisply cut, the manner too confidently assured.

CHAPTER VIII

As the car turned into the home lands, Mrs. Cantelowe said:

"And Dyprre? Didn't he want to know about Dyprre?"

"The estate? Of course he was always told that he had land in England—land that brought in a certain amount of money. But he was never told till he was quite grown up that he was a wealthy man. And by that time he was indifferent to money."

"But Dyprre," insisted Mrs. Cantelowe. "Didn't he want to know why he was being kept away from Dyprre?"

"But, madame, it did not seem to him that he was being 'kept away'—why should it? His life was so full, he has always had tremendous interests. Until just now he never had the curiosity to want to see Dyprre."

"But it is his father's place. He is an Englishman."

"I do not know that he feels particularly like an Englishman. And he knew how his father had fled from Dyprre. And, madame, he was brought up to think very little of tradition and ties to one place or one idea."

"That is Dr. Michelozzi's training," replied Mrs. Cantelowe with the faintest suggestion of hostility.

"Francesco Michelozzi has given up the best years of his life to him," said Prince Gino gently. "I never interfered. I knew that he could do no more for his own son."

Mrs. Cantelowe was silent; hitherto she had been thankful that the last of the Dyprres had been kept away from Dyprre; now something in her faintly resented this; it even seemed to her rather monstrous, as if a human being had been deliberately altered from Nature's original intention.

And broad-minded as she was, she became baffled by this triumph of environment and upbringing over hereditary tendencies and influences; she had never met it before, hardly thought about it, and these deep instincts in her that

hated it. At that moment the picture of Lambert Dyprre brought up in Dyprre under the sway of the traditions of his house was more pleasing than Lambert Dyprre brought up a cosmopolitan, with, it seemed, no regard for anything belonging to his race or his ancestors.

"After all"—the Italian's pleasant voice broke in on her reflections—"it is a fine place, no doubt—but to one not used to the climate, to one who has had the world to wander in, well——"

"I suppose it seems very dull and provincial," finished Mrs. Cantelowe quickly; but she did not mean that at all. She was startled at the bare suggestion of any depreciation of Dyprre: she could not focus the place as something in the background, something unimportant; she could not think of it as "some land in England that you get an income from"; she even quickly tried to see Dyprre with alien eyes as a patched, not very beautiful, house, built raggedly from the fourteenth to the eighteenth century, a good many smaller Tudor houses and farms, a good many acres of pleasant English land—nothing more than that; not a really important place, nor a vast imposing place, nor a place that had left any mark on history; nothing really remarkable about it at all except that the one family had lived there for six hundred years.

But Mrs. Cantelowe could not wrench herself to this view of Dyprre; it would always be to her supremely important, vital and significant; she had tried to free Philippa from the claim of the past, but she would never be free herself; and in the sense that she would never be able to see Dyprre, Myniott and Cantelowe with the eyes of an outsider, she was herself provincial.

"Has Sir Lambert no home?" she asked rather nervously, as the car turned into Cantelowe Park.

"Several. A little villa on Lago di Garda, a flat in Paris, a casino outside Turin, and there is the castle in the Apennines where he keeps his collections."

"Dr. Michelozzi has produced a curious type of man," smiled Mrs. Cantelowe.

Prince Foscari seemed surprised at this; he lightly shrugged his shoulders, not knowing what to answer, and Mrs. Cantelowe, seeing that he did not understand her, realized how very far apart in reality she was from this amiable foreigner; and she considered, with a quick pang, how different Lambert

would have been if he had been brought up by an Englishman of his own rank, a man like Piers.

Why hadn't she risked it and taken the child and educated him with her own boys?

Piers would have been willing, but she, with her awful secret, had dispersuaded him, and now that seemed a cowardly action.

"I blame myself"—she spoke under the impulse of this thought—"for not doing more for Lambert."

And Prince Gino answered with a faintly acid delicacy:

"What more could anyone do, madame, than has been done? He is a sane, healthy, happy man."

"Yes. I am sure it is most wonderful. But he isn't English. I feel that. You, of course, couldn't. He is hardly a Dyprre. I feel that, too."

"He is a half-breed," said Prince Gino; it was not a word one better acquainted with the language would have used, not a word that an Englishman would have thought of even in this connection, but it seemed to Mrs. Cantelowe to be bitterly correct.

"Yes. What you have made of him is another matter—he seems to me to be an artificial product."

"Not entirely. There was always a remarkable character there that helped. And a great gift for engineering, a blessing from the gods."

They were nearly at the wide steps of the house, and Prince Gino, with his kind friendly instincts, tried to dissipate the cloud that rested on Mrs. Cantelowe's wan face.

"You are disappointed, madame? You don't like Lambert?"

"No," she replied, as if forced to speak. "I don't really like him."

"But you must think of what he might have been—of poor Geva! *Mon Dieu!* And will you not console yourself, madame, that Sir Raulyn gave instructions that his son was to be *free*—free of Dyprre?"

"Did he?"

"Indeed, yes. And cannot you further console yourself, madame, that Lambert is what his father wished to be?—a fulfilment of many suppressed desires."

Mrs. Cantelowe roused herself as the car stopped.

"But, of course, I am really impertinently curious. It has nothing to do with me."

Prince Gino did not escape so lightly from Philippa as he had escaped from her mother. The girl came in early and seated herself before the large oak bookcase that bore the arms of Cantelowe in little painted shields along the top; she wore the bronzed velvet gown and the big plumed hat, and a huge over-fed collie dog sat beside her; it was a gracious picture in the setting of the old dark hall so prettily lit by candles and wood fires, so warm, comfortable and homely, but Prince Gino admired without being moved; he infinitely preferred Mrs. Cantelowe to her daughter; he thought the girl hard and hostile beneath the too-assured confidence of her courtesy.

And she went clearly to her point with the cool frankness of her generation.

"It seems strange that Sir Lambert has never been to Dyprre before. People will wonder very much. Why ever should he stay away so long?"

"There was the war, mademoiselle—as soon as he left college——"

Philippa brushed that aside.

"But why was he not educated in England? And why did he not fight for England?"

Her questions were almost challenging demands; the Italian was taken aback, and Mrs. Cantelowe had to interpose quickly.

"Philippa, Dr. Michelozzi was left by Sir Raulyn in charge of Lambert, and brought him up according to his wishes."

But the girl was not satisfied; she smiled, and her long fingers caressed the smooth pointed face of the collie.

"How curious! It will make things rather difficult for Sir Lambert, won't it? I mean, he won't seem quite like an Englishman."

Mrs. Cantelowe knew that her own kind of faint hostility was flashing intensely in the girl's heart, that she detested these foreigners who had taken the heir of Dyprre.

"How difficult?" asked Prince Gino anxiously.

She turned to him with superficial deference.

"Oh, Prince, you know how narrow we are in England; we have so many fetishes, little tin gods, stupid things that mean a lot to us—a man who isn't brought up here could never understand them——"

"One understands—what you call public school?"

Philippa laughed.

"Well, perhaps."

"But what one does not understand is what it matters to Sir Lambert that he is not what you call English public school?"

"Don't you see?" Philippa looked up directly. "Of course, it would sound impertinent if I was talking of a foreigner. But Sir Lambert is English, and, well, some one will have to teach him a lot, or he will find it difficult."

"Why, dear," smiled Mrs. Cantelowe uneasily, "I thought you were so modern and so broad-minded."

"Am I being old-fashioned? I'm sorry. I was only thinking of the great disadvantage Sir Lambert will be under. A really unfair disadvantage."

And behind her steady smile was now, unquestionably, alert antagonism.

Prince Gino looked at her kindly but without approval.

"But I do not think, mademoiselle, that you have realized that Sir Lambert does not mean to live in England, so it really will be of no importance that he is not a typical Englishman."

Mrs. Cantelowe looked sharply away from her daughter, but Philippa answered with unshaken confidence:

"Really? He is going to abandon Dyprre? Going away?"

"Oh yes. This was only a visit of curiosity. He is going home, mademoiselle, quite soon."

Philippa rose abruptly and took a long blue enamel box of cigarettes from one of the heavy little side tables.

"You have done your work very well, Prince Foscari," she said lightly, "and it can't be easy to cut a man off from six hundred years of ancestors."

"No one can be cut off from his ancestors, mademoiselle," he replied, accepting the cigarette she offered, "but he may be cut off from associations—subconscious memories—he may be set free from old, galling—what would you say, chains?"

"I see. Because Sir Raulyn wasn't happy here his son is never to know the place. That seems like shirking." Philippa's eyes were dark and chill. "If I were Lambert Dyprre I think I should rather hate you."

"He doesn't," said Mrs. Cantelowe nervously. "He rather hates England, dear."

"He has his work," put in Prince Gino lamely.

"Work?" replied Philippa. "There is plenty of work in Dyprre. Is he really an engineer?"

"But yes. And already famous. I suppose, mademoiselle, that seems strange to you?"

"It does," she agreed; "quite strange."

"You speak from prejudice, mademoiselle, perhaps?"

"Yes—the prejudice of preferring an Englishman to——"

She paused quite sharply, and Mrs. Cantelowe thought of the ugly word "half-breed" that Gino Foscari had used as perhaps the word her daughter was checking.

"Philippa, I know what you mean: you prefer the kind of man Sir Lambert might have been to the kind of man he is—but it is a little grotesque for us to be discussing it at all, because we don't really know Sir Lambert. And you must remember," added Mrs. Cantelowe with an obvious effort, "that he had a foreign mother, and that his father wasn't in the least the ordinary type of Englishman."

But even while she spoke she felt an acute sympathy with her daughter, for she knew exactly what the girl was feeling, robbed and cheated, as if something that had always belonged to her had been taken away and returned to her slightly spoiled.

She knew that Philippa was jealous for Sir Lambert, and that she resented the fact that he might be looked upon as "strange" or "queer" or "inadequate" by the well-bred English world to which he rightly belonged. And because of her acute sympathy she tried to emphasize the point, which Philippa seemed to find it so difficult to grasp, that Lambert Dyprre was going away.

"He isn't staying, Philippa, so I don't suppose we shall get to know him well."

"He is buying Clobbertons," said Philippa coldly.

"Ah, yes," put in Prince Gino Foscari eagerly. "He thought that he would like some little place here, and that house pleased him. He sees things in places, madame—of course he has to see things in his work—bridges, towers, harbours, and how they will look. A gift of vision. And in that house he saw a vision of peace. 'It will do for my old age,' he said."

Philippa looked at the speaker very keenly, so much, as if she suspected him of fooling her, that he flushed.

"My poor English, I make a muddle of it," he apologized.

But Mrs. Cantelowe said instantly:

"I understand exactly what you mean."

Philippa ignored this.

"How long are you staying, Prince Foscari?"

"Only a few days, I think—I really do not know. It depends on Sir Lambert."

Mrs. Cantelowe felt the tension in her daughter's manner, but as if by tacit agreement both women now felt the subject so near to the heart of each and discoursed on indifferent matters till the Prince left.

When he had gone Philippa said:

"I felt a brute not to ask them to stay here—but it is impossible with Sir Lambert 'incognito'—and I suppose they would rather be free."

Mrs. Cantelowe's heart ached at the wistfulness in the accent on this word "free."

CHAPTER IX

FOR several days the subject of Lambert Dyprre was waived between Mrs. Cantelowe and her daughter; then the elder lady, having occasion to drive through Smeed on a visit to a distant acquaintance, saw in the pale light of a stormy afternoon Philippa and Lambert walking together down the wide High Street.

Mrs. Cantelowe had a moment of foolish panic; this was instantly controlled, but she could not forbear stopping the car and speaking to her daughter.

It was, of course, the most ordinary occurrence. Philippa had come into Smeed on some trivial errand, and Sir Lambert had been walking from the station on his return from London when she had overtaken him and offered him a seat in her little two-seater; Mrs. Cantelowe knew Philippa well enough to know that this meeting was not premeditated; indeed, that very likely Philippa would never have come into Smeed had she not believed that Sir Lambert was still in town.

Still, Mrs. Cantelowe was disturbed; her pleasant civility was a mere mask.

"When are you coming to see me?" She addressed the young man, but could not use his real name for fear of the passers-by, and his assumed name she could not bring herself to utter.

"Whenever you are good enough to ask me, Mrs. Cantelowe."

"To-morrow then—I shall be at home to-morrow—will you come to lunch? At one o'clock."

"Thank you very much. It is kind of you."

And then Mrs. Cantelowe could do nothing but tell the chauffeur to drive on; she had not wanted to ask this young man to lunch, but had done so partly out of the necessity of her nature to do the courteous thing, and partly from an old-fashioned idea of countenancing her daughter's escort in front of inferiors.

But as she drove away, she thought, ironically, how foolish and useless both these impulses were, and she remembered, almost with a sense of horror, the complete independence of Philippa.

Standing, still bare-headed, to look after the modest car, Sir Lambert said:

"She is still exactly like that photograph I have."

And he smiled, with some meaning that Philippa could not guess.

Three o'clock struck from the church, and the chimes followed in a faint, sweet, jingling hymn tune.

"I dare believe," added Sir Lambert, still smiling, "that you, although you live so near, have never been round Smeed churchyard, or not for years and years?"

"It's true," replied Philippa. "I've been to the church for weddings and things, but not round the churchyard—why?"

"Those chimes made me think of it. I like the churchyard. It is so amusing."

Philippa liked his queer choice of English, and his attractive, slightly slurred, voice.

"Take me round the churchyard," she answered, "and let me see if I find it amusing."

The church stood just above the High Street of Smeed at the back of the old houses, now all turned into shops, that lined the wide road, and was completely surrounded by even older, smaller and more humble dwellings, that were only divided from the graveyard by a narrow stone pavement, so that the bow and lattice windows, slanting and twisted from age, looked directly on to the weather-beaten tombs, and friendly fire, candle and lamp light of the living cast warm rays on the names of the dead. Paved paths in the form of a

cross ran across the graveyard, and between the brick tombs, broken columns, draped urns and headstones grew several blackish-green yew-trees; at the top of the slope rose the fine, carefully restored Norman church with the high tower that was a landmark for miles around.

Lambert and Philippa took a few steps down a narrow passage and found themselves in this enclosed space. Philippa observed curiously the backs of the shops in the High Street, the milk cans outside the dairy, the trays of warm bread at the baker's window, the piles of boxes showing through the dusky panes of the draper's.

"Aren't the backs of things queer," she remarked. "And one so seldom sees them."

"Not even the backs of our own minds," said Lambert. "Look, this is a tomb I've wanted to show some one."

He pointed to a heavy headstone that was one of the most modern there, the date on it being 1890.

"Caleb Content," read out Sir Lambert, "of Content Hill in this parish. And listen to the rhyme:

"'Content my name, but to my shame,
Content I never found.
I passed my life, in sin and strife,
And now I'm underground.
Content the sheep who o'er my sleep
Will graze the grass away.
Content the trees that in the breeze,
Above me seem to pray.
Content my God, above my sod,
Safe on His Judgment Throne.
But disContent, my monument,
Where here I sleep alone.'"

Philippa had never noticed this tomb; and the rhymes fell on her ear queerly, almost unpleasantly.

"He wrote that himself, poor devil," added Sir Lambert. "Of course they all called him mad. It interested me so much that I went over to Content Hill, but the farm is turned into a little villa place, and there are no Contents left. But I found out about him, and he is connected with Clobbertons."

"Clobbertons?"

"Yes, that little house where we met," he replied with his calm boldness, and he idly ran his hand over the rough mossy stone above Caleb Content. "I've found out about that too: it was a private house till about forty years ago, belonged to an old Admiral called Hislop who died then, about ninety

years old—his grave is here too ; and about thirty years before that his daughter Clarissa was in love with this man Content. No one would hear of it—he was only a yeoman, does one say ? —so the poor fool hanged herself. It must have been in that room where we met."

"I never heard of this," replied Philippa, with a certain violence. "No one ever told me. Are you quite sure ?"

"Quite. People don't talk of it. They are afraid. But I don't think that the little boys saw any ghost," and he smiled again with that queer steady boldness, looking from her to the tomb. "I think," he added, "that it was that woman, Clarissa Hislop, that I was aware of—a green, very dark-green, silk dress—yes, I often am aware of what has happened in places."

"One cannot help being aware of something in that room.' replied Philippa hastily. "The atmosphere is very powerful. I also felt aware of a woman—two women, I thought ; but I don't know, these impressions become confused. It is strange that you care to take the house."

Still smiling, he looked at her and in a manner that made her feel that she had said something childish.

This smile spurred her into an attempt, an impetuous attempt, to get behind his guard.

"Why *do* you buy Clobbertons when you have Dyprre ?" she asked as they walked slowly through the graveyard.

"But I don't like Dyprre. I was up there this morning again, looking at it," he replied. "The house is too low, flat and dull, I thought, and the grounds uninteresting."

"But perhaps you find everything round here flat, dull and uninteresting ?" challenged Philippa.

"If I had to live here, I should," he answered at once. "Imagine my father—he was thirty before he broke away. Thirty years of idleness and this !"

He made a light gesture towards the gravestones.

"Sir Raulyn didn't live in a churchyard," said Philippa defiantly.

"But he did—exactly in a churchyard. The dead were around him all the time—dead people, dead laws, dead customs ; he had to do exactly as dead centuries had decided for him. And he thought of death as something horrible. He never got away from the idea of the decay of the body. He thought he believed in God, but he never really believed in anything but the tomb. Was it not awful ?"

The young man spoke with a certain vehemence not at all English, and Philippa said:

"How do you know what your father felt?"

"Dr. Michelozzi told me. He said that it killed my father—the weight of all that superstition about life, and death."

"But a great many men were not killed by it—my father was very happy."

"He was another type. But your brothers, would they have lived here?"

"Surely," said Philippa quickly, but she was a little taken aback; Roger, at least, had spent a very small portion of his time at Cantelowe; but then there was the war. "I don't know," she added, and it occurred to her that she was perhaps looking at things with the eyes of an older generation than her own. "Mother has urged me to be free—to go away. But no one is free, are they? I mean, going away from anything doesn't mean that you are free of it. I expect Sir Raulyn never got free of Dyprre really."

"That is where I'm lucky. I've never been tied up with anything."

The clear winter sunbeams that glanced past the yew-trees and the graves seemed to rest on him lovingly as he paused, alert, resolute, boldly self-confident, his eyes sharp as yellow steel, the long, smooth, slightly hollow face set with an expression so cool, so determined, so self-assured.

"They've made an alien of you," said Philippa.

"An alien?"

"To Dyprre. Yes."

"But Dyprre is not the centre of the universe. Surely you don't think so?"

The amusement in his voice was edged with intolerance. Philippa palely coloured.

"Are you perfectly happy not thinking so?" she counter-questioned.

"Happy? I don't see how one can be really happy unless every one else is, seeing one is just a segment of such a vast organization as this civilization of ours. We've got all to be happy or none, as I take it—but I don't contribute any misery to the general scheme—not like old Caleb there. I'm fairly content. I find things great fun."

"What makes you content?"

"Work, of course."

"You like work?"

And where an Englishman would have replied "*Rather*," he answered, with queer correctness:

"Altogether."

"Just—engineering?"

Sir Lambert flashed into keen animation.

"Just engineering? Why, it's one of the few things left really worth doing—man's work still, something the women haven't got hold of yet. Why, you can change the face of the earth with it and the lives of millions. Electricity. Do you know what that means? What they are discovering there? What's going to be done? It's all big—elemental forces chained and made to work, all sorts of disease and misery done away with—the ugly skull and cross-bones done away with!"

"You can't do away with death," said Philippa.

"You can do away with what people have made of it—all this horror—misery."

Philippa turned away.

"But isn't your place here—looking after these people on your own land?"

"I'm looking after them. I'm going to let them buy their farms and cottages for a low figure—I'll have that big house made into a home or something for poor brats. I must get Michelozzi over to see the place." Then he added, with quick regret: "I fear though that he will not travel any more—he has, just the last few years, seemed so much older."

He continued to talk (he had the foreigner's easy flow of language) about his work, with many technicalities, about places alien to Philippa outside Europe, outside her farthest experience; but she did not listen.

She was considering what he had said of Dyprre: that statement of his had come like a blow at her pride, her tenderness, a blow at the very roots of her being.

He was going to break up Dyprre, to turn it into some chill charity school or home, to cut up the land into small-holdings. This seemed to Philippa plebeian, almost vulgar; generous and soft as she was herself towards distress and misery, she could not admire these sweeping schemes of organized philanthropy.

"But can you?" she asked sharply, suddenly. "Isn't there an entail?"

"Well, yes, that is partly what I went up to town for, to see my lawyers about. As there is no heir whatever, probably I

might be allowed to sell—as it is, there is a great deal free."

"I know," said Philippa. "That is what I had to sell and your people bought back. I didn't mind really, as it had belonged to old Sir Lambert and he left it to my father."

"Have it back again, then," he smiled, "at your price. But what do you want with so much land?"

She did not answer this, but said:

"I dislike your indifference. A Dyprre and a cosmopolitan! I think I hate your Dr. Michelozzi."

The low, swift, lilac clouds closed over the sun, and a shadow fell about the two walking round the paved paths between the brick tombs and slanting headstones; but high above the lofty church tower the sky was a vernal blue.

Philippa thought of what might have been; thought of a Lambert Dyprre secure in all the traditions of his race, defying the influences of an age of change, firmly averse to the confusions of the time, standing side by side with her to guard and cherish their kingdom.

As they completed their circling walk by the grave of Caleb Content, she looked at him with something of the hostility she had felt for Prince Gino. His feeling for Dyprre had blurred her feeling for him; he appeared entirely unconscious of this withdrawal of her kindness, and she wondered, antagonistically, whether anything ever would pierce his serene self-confidence, and if he would be ever moved enough to make any deliberate effort to please anyone.

At the gate, just before they came into the lazy life of the High Street, he said, with startling change of subject:

"Do you know why I came to Clobbertons that afternoon?"

"Why you came?"

"I saw you go in. I thought that I should like to meet you there."

She turned and their gaze met; his glance was unruffled, but hers showed a troubled dislike.

"Why should you want to meet me anywhere?"

"I'd seen you in Smeed, the day before—you were just coming out of that ironmonger's. I noticed how like you were to your mother."

"And how should that affect you?"

She was still defiant, but her gaze sank beneath his; as they turned into the street beside the little pastrycook's he answered:

"I have always been in love with your mother's picture."

CHAPTER X

MRS. CANTELOWE recalled some old saying that had once impressed her mind: "The storm is also God's weather"; for the storm had invaded her life and she knew not where to turn for consolation save to this thought.

Lambert Dyprre came to Cantelowe, Lambert Dyprre went about with Philippa; Mrs. Cantelowe saw very little of her daughter, but enough to discern that she was absorbed, mutinous, involved to the last fibre of her being, entirely withdrawn from her mother's confidence and protection.

And Mrs. Cantelowe stood aside, like a frail craft that sees a sister ship struggling with a whirlpool, unable to help, only able to stand by and know that presently the same horror would overtake her, the same dark waves close over her wrecked hopes.

For Mrs. Cantelowe had grimly before her the one alternative.

"If he leaves her I shall have her heart broken on my hands; if he stays I must tell her the truth."

And she had to also face the fact that even this truth, which she was reserving as a last weapon, might fail of effect in Philippa's present state of excited passion; and in that case Lambert Dyprre himself would have to be told, and she, Philippa Cantelowe, would have to use her thirty-five years' old secret as a devastating plague to blast two lives, one of them her daughter's life, and the other that of the son of Raulyn Dyprre.

The hidden anguish of this knowledge withered Mrs. Cantelowe; she seemed a figure of frost beside the radiant bloom of Philippa in love, a symbol of age beside the symbol of youth. She made no attempt whatever to check or argue with her daughter: she knew how useless that would be; everything now depended on Lambert Dyprre, this strange, alien, young man whom she disliked.

But while an instinct deep as life itself prevented her from interfering with Philippa, she did think, in the extremity of her misery, of appealing to Lambert, of beseeching him to go away, to leave her daughter; yet a moment's reflection showed her that this was impossible; not only was she utterly unable to open her intimate feeling to a man and a stranger, but she knew that this generation was not as the last, and that she could not count on the chivalry of this man as she had so securely

counted on the chivalry of that other Lambert Dyprre, of Piers Cantelowe. No doubt he was as honourable and fine in his way, but his values were entirely different, and Mrs. Cantelowe was certain that he would not sacrifice himself for a scruple nor deny himself anything for a punctilio, and that probably he regarded the chivalrous ideas of women as out of date as duelling.

Mrs. Cantelowe remembered the delicacy of Sir Lambert's treatment of her when Raulyn went away, the delicacy of Piers' long waiting, the whole atmosphere of sympathy and tenderness, loyalty and high-minded honour that had glorified an incident ordinary enough—just, in the bare bones of it, a girl being left by her lover—jilted.

And then there had been her own attitude towards her tragedy, her reserve, her cloistered grief, her years of dumb pain—this other Philippa would not be like that in face of such a situation ; she would have the matter quickly out with her lover ; for good or ill, she would swiftly bring her affairs to a crisis.

" I was a bird in a gilt cage, waiting for sugar and kisses," thought Mrs. Cantelowe. " She is a bird on the wing, fighting for her birthright."

There was only one person who could guess at Mrs. Cantelowe's state of mind (for the stormy lovers took no notice of her at all), and that was Gino Foscari.

With equal terror and alarm he watched the headlong infatuation, with an equal sense of helplessness he stood aside, fearful of interfering, dreading to read " old fool " written in Lambert's confident yellow eyes.

Only once he spoke to Mrs. Cantelowe :

" You will not permit it ? "

And Mrs. Cantelowe, ashy and wan :

" When she tells me that she is going to marry him, I must tell her the truth."

" But is he going to marry her ? They quarrel a great deal, they irritate each other extremely."

" What can they quarrel about ? I am bewildered. They are so obviously in love."

" Ah, *chère madame*, that does not mean what it did when I was young ! It is all tempest nowadays. And Lambert is very masterful, and not used to English women."

And at this there suddenly sprang to life in Mrs. Cantelowe's harassed brain another and very ghastly fear.

The knife over which she had thrown her pink silk train in the Palazzo Lambruschini flashed before her imagination, and she knew no peace from the most material terrors; she even brought herself to say:

"Philippa, don't exasperate Lambert, he has a violent temper and he is really a foreigner."

But the girl laughed indulgently, as if a child had spoken to her, laughed with youthful cruelty.

Then Mrs. Cantelowe did a thing that filled her afterwards with amazement: she turned in a panic-stricken desperation to the big collie who loved Philippa and who had already discovered jealousy of Lambert; she pointed the young man out to him, she urged the animal to consider him as an enemy, she besought him never to allow his mistress out of his sight.

And it seemed to her as though the beast, so fine, so intelligent, understood her perfectly, and never did Lambert and Philippa go out without the collie, and never were they together in the house that he was not beside his mistress.

Philippa laughed again at the jealousy of the dog, and even sometimes forbade him to accompany her; but the animal was persistent in sullen devotion, and Mrs. Cantelowe knew some comfort.

Gino Foscari asked:

"Can I do anything?"

And Mrs. Cantelowe replied:

"Nothing. We must wait."

The end came suddenly; the whole tempest had only been the matter of a couple of weeks, then Philippa did what she had not done since Lambert Dyprre had first come to Cantelowe—she entered her mother's room where Mrs. Cantelowe sat lonely by the big fire, holding in her hand a little pot in which bloomed the first snowdrops from the woods.

"Mother," said the girl hoarsely.

"It has come," thought Mrs. Cantelowe, and she bowed her head lower over the chill pale flowerets.

"Lambert has gone away," continued Philippa, drawing nearer the fire. "Mother, Lambert has gone away—ah, how cold I am, so cold."

"Gone?" asked Mrs. Cantelowe faintly. "Where?"

"London. He goes to Paris to-night."

"He isn't coming back?"

"Not for me," cried Philippa passionately. "I sent him away."

Mrs. Cantelowe had not expected this turn ; of all things she had never considered that Lambert might be refused by Philippa ; bewilderment clouded her relief.

" You have sent him away, dear ? "

Her shaking hands set the snowdrops on the table beside her low chair.

Philippa sank on one of the big cushions by the open fireplace ; as if there was no spirit nor strength left in her she sat huddled, her face and hair were damp with moisture ; she had just flung off coat, cap and scarf, and her close dress of rough white wool unpleasantly emphasized her unnatural pallor, the dullness of her flushed eyes, the drag at her mouth and nostrils.

" You know how it was with me from the first," she murmured passionately, not looking up. " I've been a beast—I've not been near you for weeks, and now I come creeping back when I'm hurt."

" That is when I want you to come, darling," replied Mrs. Cantelowe eagerly. " That is the only time when I can expect to be of any use."

" Oh no, mother ! " Philippa turned now, and her ruined eyes were flashing with love. " I'm always very near to you. I was just carried away, lovesick, a fool. And I knew you hated him."

" Not hated," Mrs. Cantelowe was glad to be able to say. " I didn't like him much, but that is nothing. I don't like a great many modern young men. And I thought that you might get hurt. But, darling, I couldn't do anything but stand by."

" Of course not." Philippa was looking again into the fire and her voice was rough and muffled. " I walked straight into the fire, no one could have pulled me out—I was such a confident idiot, I really thought one could make a man do anything if he cared for one."

" Some men," said Mrs. Cantelowe, loyal to her traditions.

" Well," replied Philippa bitterly, " not this man. I can't move him an inch—I never believed that anyone could be so immovable ! It's insulting ! humiliating ! for he told me that he loved me. He asked me to marry him."

Mrs. Cantelowe shivered, as one who just escapes a crashing danger, as one hushed by the very shadow of disaster.

" And you sent him away ? " she asked, faintly, delicately.

" Yes. At last." Philippa's broken sentences tumbled

out hotly. "I'm thankful that I had the courage. I warned him—I told him I would send him away, I told him that I should be lost—and for ever. *And he let me go.*"

The extremity of anguish was in these last words.

"Rather than give in he let me go," she repeated. "He has no heart, no feeling. I cannot ever hope that he suffers. Oh, mother, why did he ever come?"

"For our torment," thought Mrs. Cantelowe, and she considered bitterly that if she had risked more at first, had not been so sure that Geva's child was cursed, had sought him out, even helped in his education, she might have avoided this catastrophe now. Lambert Dyprre growing up more or less at Dyprre would after all not have been so dangerous as a Lambert Dyprre appearing with this dramatic romantic suddenness, a complete, powerful, new personality armed with all the allure of strangeness.

"What did you part on?" she asked feebly.

"He hates this place," replied Philippa, still without looking up. "He intends to give up Dyprre, cut it up, throw it away, I don't know what! He expects me to do the same with Cantelowe, just throw up everything and go about the world with him. He has no idea of money or responsibility, or name or tradition; all is to be tossed away, and we are just to live on what he can earn."

"I suppose that is a great deal." Mrs. Cantelowe spoke for the sake of speaking.

"Oh yes, more than I have now—but I should be dependent on that, his money, and all this is to be for you——'

"A concession to antiquity," interrupted Mrs. Cantelowe with the faintest smile.

"And afterwards just to be scattered. He has no feeling at all for any of it."

Mrs. Cantelowe timidly touched her daughter's bowed shoulder.

"I suppose it is natural, dear. He was very carefully educated to think little of what we stress so much. And this is rather a backwater. We get out of touch with the world. Don't cry, darling, it is so much better to have this pain now than long regrets afterwards."

And as she spoke she knew how vain and fatuous the words were, how irritating, even in their emptiness, and she added, desperately:

"Don't take any notice of what I say, Philippa. Words are so stupid. It has happened, and it is horrible."

"Horrible," echoed Philippa. "I'm so humiliated."

She spoke as if it was her pride more than her love that suffered; at least, she was taking her pain fiercely, in a fury of suffering, not with that meek resignation with which, in Mrs. Cantelowe's day, women had been trained to accept their agonies both physical and spiritual.

And Mrs. Cantelowe faintly wondered if even Dyprre, even Cantelowe and Myniott would have seemed so important in her eyes compared with her lover; surely she, at Philippa's age, would have followed the man and let the lands go!

Philippa, still huddled on the cushion, staring into the fire, laboured to explain herself.

"It isn't so much that he is so un-English—his point of view so alien—it is the opposition to me, the antagonism, the contempt almost for everything I am and come from—he seems to have a powerful feeling for his mother, he would never sell *her* place, and a certain feeling for Italy, but for his father and Dyprre—nothing!"

"A feeling for his mother?" asked Mrs. Cantelowe fearfully.

"Yes—he has got that from the man Michelozzi, who seems to have worshipped her; between them they have made an idol of her—you know whatSoutherners are with their mothers."

"But Dr. Michelozzi would never teach him to despise his father, Philippa, surely."

"I don't know. He just seems sorry for his father—sorry, as it were, for this place and all of us; he said I was a forlorn sentinel standing on the watch-tower when the city had been taken! And yet he came back here, something worked in him to bring him back—that was the Dyprre blood in him."

She lifted her swollen eyes timidly now.

"May I tell you? He had always been impressed by your photograph that his father had; he heard of me and he came to see if I was like that picture—something, oh, mother, *what?*—brought him to me, and something more powerful has taken him away."

With instantaneous vividness Mrs. Cantelowe remembered that photograph: it had been taken in a fashionable studio in Baker Street; she was wearing a draped wreathed skirt, a festooned bodice, her hair in a "chignon"; she had given a copy to old Sir Lambert, and Raulyn, she had learnt afterwards, had taken it away with him when he went abroad.

"And, mother, he showed me a little diary his father used

to keep, and there was an entry under a day in July, 1883: 'Resolved to marry Philippa Myniott.' "

Mrs. Cantelowe sat very still; she remembered that July, when she had known of that resolve as clearly as if she had seen the written entry; she remembered the day at Clobbertons when he had just been about to take her in his arms when something, some atmosphere, some influence from the very chamber itself had startled him and held him off.

She remembered the icy shock with which she had heard of the suicide of Clarissa Hislop, the sudden glimpse of the horror of torture love may mean, the dreadful realization that it was in the power of the young man beside her to inflict such torture on herself.

"You see," continued Philippa in a soft broken voice, "I suppose you sent Sir Raulyn away, that he went abroad heart-sick—and always cared—and somehow, oh, I don't know, but I think he has inherited his father's romance—and I yours—for you cared a little too?"

"Yes, I cared," said Mrs. Cantelowe, "but I never sent Raulyn away. He went because, like his son, he wanted freedom and he didn't like Dyprre."

"Oh, mother! How strange it is, how unbearably strange. I've been waiting all my life for this man—I knew when I went to Clobbertons that I should meet him there."

"It was at Clobbertons," said Mrs. Cantelowe faintly, "that I last saw Raulyn before he went away. There was a sale on, and there were two little ornaments on the mantelshelf of that room—Raulyn bought them, and I saw them again in Rome."

"What room was it?" asked Philippa, awed by the disclosure of her mother's heart.

"Clarissa Hislop's bedroom. She hanged herself there because of an unhappy love-affair with a farmer named Content. It was all hushed up, and I don't suppose you have ever heard of it."

"Never. But Lambert found it all out and took me to see the man's grave:

> 'But disContent, my monument,
> Where here I sleep alone.' "

"He found out? And he has bought Clobbertons?"

"Yes. He thinks it a happy place now, because of the little boys. He thinks"—Philippa broke into nervous laughter

—" that we might live there whenever we want to come to England."

Mrs. Cantelowe put her old, chill hand on the distraught girl's bowed shoulder.

" It is all very curious, Philippa, yet perhaps only curious because we can see so little beyond the veil. These strong passions, these deep impulses cannot exhaust themselves in one generation ; sometimes it takes many lives to make the circle complete. We all of us carry a heavier heritage than we wot of. These three families here, always intermarrying—think what a strong attraction you and I, Raulyn and Lambert, must have towards each other——"

" But it isn't strong enough," answered Philippa. " That would have been so right and fine if he had come back to me and we had, just the two last of us, taken on our work together —I am so tired of doing it all alone,"—she showed her long concealed heart now; " but he will not——"

" That is the foreign influence," sighed Mrs. Cantelowe. " Raulyn snapped the links; I don't suppose any one could put them together again——"

And it seemed to her that she saw, as in a vision, two dark spirits contending for Lambert Dyprre; Raulyn urging him back to the land, the woman, the gods he had forsaken; Geva urging him to follow her people, to ignore these Northern claims.

And Geva would win in the shadowy contest, thought Mrs. Cantelowe, for she had left her son in charge of a man who loved her and who had been indifferent towards Raulyn, towards Dyprre and England, and who had seen nothing in Philippa Cantelowe but a menace to Geva Lambruschini's always perilous happiness.

" And what do you think his last words were ? " broke out Philippa, violently across her mother's musing. " He said—' When you change your mind, this is my address '—and he gave me a leaf out of his notebook, scribbled on—he was actually smiling. He said ' *when,*' mother, not even ' if.' "

" He never came to say good-bye to me at all," Mrs. Cantelowe smiled ironically.

" I forbade him. I left him at those words. I shall never see him again, willingly. And I don't know how I shall live."

That night the big collie came up to Mrs. Cantelowe and laid his long handsome face in her lap ; she thought that he seemed relieved, relaxed, and that as she caressed him a glance

of understanding passed between the animal and herself.

Philippa went early to her room ; with a heavy spirit Mrs. Cantelowe heard the bolt slip on the girl and her misery.

When she reached her own chamber and was quite alone, she unlocked an old press in the wall and took out a faded, tarnished, yellow-silk work-bag in which was folded a worn sheet of music.

Mrs. Cantelowe spread this out ; how crude, how cheap looked the lithographed cover—yet in the dark face with the old-fashioned curls was a grotesque likeness to Geva Lambruschini. The heavy lettering of the title of the song seemed to dance before Mrs. Cantelowe's tired eyes. She heard the two words of it like a sigh behind her :

" Cara Carissima ! "

CHAPTER XI

THROUGH the unhappy days that followed Philippa pursued her duties and her pleasures now with arduous activity, now with sullen reluctance ; guests came to Cantelowe, and neither their coming nor their going served in the least to distract her from her inner anguish.

And Mrs. Cantelowe stood by, suffering every pang that rent her daughter's heart, enduring every phase of the agony that was never mentioned between the two women after the first desperate fiery outbreak from Philippa. So closely had she identified herself with her daughter, and so closely similar was her daughter's situation to her own at an identical age, that Mrs. Cantelowe was conscious at times of an overpowering sense of loss of personality, of merging of herself in another.

This was brought home to her painfully, almost immediately after Lambert Dyprre had left Smeed.

Driving out with Philippa, she passed the hunt ; it was a still dripping day, everything veiled in a moisture that lay low on the fallow fields ; the muddy dogs were loping wearily down the dirty lane, a few scattered pink coats showed against the soaked hedgerows, groups of people in earth-coloured clothes stood about the cross-roads.

" They want us to give the hunt ball this year," remarked Philippa listlessly.

There came into Mrs. Cantelowe's mind her own first hunt

ball at Myniott, and how, a girl of eighteen, she had sat on the daïs in the ball-room with the Lord-Lieutenant and his party wearing a book-muslin dress and a close-pressed wreath of flat white roses.

And Philippa's voice broke this picture with:

"Mother, do you remember the hunt ball when I was allowed to come down and sit on the daïs with the Lord-Lieutenant and the big people? I was just sixteen; I felt so important, and I wore a white *crêpe de Chine* dress——"

Then Mrs. Cantelowe had that almost suffocating feeling of having lost her identity; she was aware of both those young girls, and it seemed to her impossible to tell whether she had been the child in book-muslin at Myniott or the child in *crêpe de Chine* at Cantelowe.

To collect her wits she said, quickly and steadily:

"I think we ought to offer this year, dear; it is, I know, expected."

But Philippa said "No" with such vehemence that Mrs. Cantelowe was silenced.

They drove on, past the gates of empty Myniott, past Dyprre in the hands of strangers, back to Cantelowe, empty also save for their own sad presences.

And so the days flowed on until the intolerable tension broke with Philippa's:

"Mother, I can't go on. He hasn't written—never a word. And I must write to him."

Mrs. Cantelowe had been expecting this as a result of the long tedious struggle, but now the blow fell she could hardly rally to it, and said dully, in a hopeless attempt to gain time:

"Are you going to give it all up, Philippa? Do exactly as this man tells you?"

"I must," replied the girl, standing pale and powerless in the winter light. "After all, what does Dyprre matter?"

"What do you mean to do?"

"I thought that I would go to Paris and see this Dr. Michelozzi—he must have some influence on Lambert—but, what is the use of pretending, mother? I'll go to him on any terms."

Mrs. Cantelowe winced before this complete surrender, and, wincing, said almost mechanically:

"There is another reason against your marriage with Lambert Dyprre besides your difference of ideas. And now I must tell you what it is."

"There is something!" cried Philippa. "I thought there might be: this long exile, the assumed name, the way we have always ignored him!"

"Yes, there is something."

And Philippa, quite unexpectedly, said:

"There was something wrong with that foreign marriage? His position is dubious—not assured? Well, I guessed it, and I don't mind—*even that*——"

"Oh, Philippa! Have you had that in your mind? It is worse, far worse!"

"Worse? Mother, don't look so, you frighten me—dear mother."

"It is hard to tell you, Philippa, a secret I have had so long. I don't know how I can bring myself to it, my poor, poor child——"

So withered, wan and distressed was she that the girl was moved to impulsively put her arm round her with a gesture of protection.

"Mother, you shan't tell me, if it hurts you——"

"But I must—unless you will give him up."

"I can't."

"Then I must tell you."

"Does this Dr. Michelozzi know?"

"Yes."

"Then," said Philippa, "let him tell me."

They stood together, clasping each other, the two tall women, alike in everything, yet sharply divided by nearly forty years.

"Let Dr. Michelozzi tell you?" murmured Mrs. Cantelowe in a piteous wavering voice.

And Philippa, holding her closer, said:

"Oh, mother, am I hurting you? I can't bear that—is this some secret that belongs to you?—that I intrude upon?"

"No, no," answered Mrs. Cantelowe. "It has nothing to do with me. I found it out, almost by chance, but though I never promised not to tell, somehow I never meant to do so—and the silence of so many years, Philippa, is a heavy thing to lift. It is all so strange that it should have come to this. I feel bewildered."

"Let this old man tell me," said Philippa, "for whatever it is, whatever your secret, I shall go to Paris and see who it is working on Lambert——"

"He loved Lambert's mother," admitted Mrs. Cantelowe.

"I thought so. Why didn't he marry her?"

This came so near the secret that Mrs. Cantelowe could not reply; but Philippa, frowning and absorbed, continued:

"I suppose she preferred Sir Raulyn. But don't trouble any more. I don't want you to do anything, mother. I intend to go to Paris and find out everything for myself."

"I think it would be better, Philippa," Mrs. Cantelowe assented sadly, "for what I say will not impress you much; you will think that I am prejudiced, that I dislike him because of his attitude towards us."

"No, I shouldn't think that."

"You might not want to, dear, but you would. And I think it would be more fair to Lambert if you were to hear this from some one who cares for him; this must be faced out, Philippa, and it is better that you should go to Paris and see Dr. Michelozzi."

"I will go. And you will come with me, mother?"

Mrs. Cantelowe hesitated, her glance wavered round the room; it was absolutely the first time that Philippa had asked for her protection or support.

"Please come," urged the girl. "It seemed as if you were involved too, as if it was part of your life as well as mine to be worked out—I want you with me."

Mrs. Cantelowe braced her spirit; she also felt that she was unavoidably entangled in this, not only on her daughter's behalf, but personally, and that something far stronger than any volition of her own was impelling her forward to the last act of her life's drama.

Now that a clear and definite movement had been decided upon the two women became calm and cheerful; the dark cloud lifted from Cantelowe, the nervous tension was broken. Philippa, deeply tender towards her mother, occupied herself in leaving her affairs precisely in order. When they drove to the station the sky was a vernal blue and the hedgerows lovely with primroses and cuckoo flowers, the sallow willow veiled in gold and silver, the sharp stiff boughs of the hawthorn pearled with shut blossoms.

In London it was damp and cold, and the spring seemed very far away from the grey streets and the dun sky. The night in the big hotel was noisy, confusing, cheerless, a medley of distasteful impressions; Mrs. Cantelowe felt overwhelming, insignificant and futile, and full of gloomy forebodings.

But once in the coast-bound train the sensation of rushing speed, of leaping ahead to some sharply seen goal raised her spirits. She looked at Philippa; calm and confident the girl appeared, and more happy than she had looked since Lambert Dyprre left, no, since he *came*.

The iron-coloured ocean heaving beneath a threatening sky was to Mrs. Cantelowe a veritable gulf between her intensely personal localized self and the vast world that cared nothing about her. When they reached Paris she too could understand that to Lambert Dyprre the old home places must seem small, provincial, unimportant.

For this was the first time that she had been abroad in a state of detachment; always she had felt that she belonged to Cantelowe, that Cantelowe was a centre from which she radiated as it were, but always on a chain.

Now she felt free of this chain, as if she was completely detached and could look back at the home of her ancestors with alien eyes.

This she knew was the result of her complete sympathy with Philippa; the girl was freeing herself from all that she meant to abandon, and this was reacting on her mother.

Philippa also had never been abroad in this spirit before; in her case active passion glorified the world to her and thrilled her in response to every activity, every beauty, every wonder she beheld.

She rejoiced in the great station, full of noise, confusion, human beings full of emotion, of toil, of fatigue and joy, dark with the smoke of throttled engines standing still after thundering journeys, bright with the glare of the acrid blue electric lights.

And in the streets how animating, how exciting, the whirling traffic, the staccato hoots of the motor horns, the jostle of people before the blaze of the shops, the strings of vivid street lamps sharp in the clear May air, the smell of flowers, of food, of petrol, of coffee, the flashing signs of the theatres, cafés and dancing booths, the press of faces, sharp and eager, intelligent, careless, showing in the acrid illumination of the luminous crash of electricity that dispersed the violet twilight.

They had engaged rooms at the *St. George and Clarence*, in deference to Mrs. Cantelowe's old connection with this very quiet and expensive hotel. Philippa had been too, before, but the hotel, like everything, was changed for her by the most powerful mental alembic in the world.

The apartments for themselves and their one rather old-fashioned English maid looked on to the Rue St. Honoré; the spacious sitting-room was adorned by tapestry panels illustrating *Æsop's Fables*, and furnished with squat gilt chairs covered in maroon velvet; very heavy curtains hung either side of the tall windows, and in front of each panels of *filet* lace concealed the narrow street; the carpet was covered with bouquets of roses, and there were bronze ornaments on the marble chimney-piece.

The room had a very definite atmosphere; it could hardly have been anything but a room in an old-fashioned but still first-class hotel in Paris.

Philippa felt her sense of excitement growing when she went to the window, lifted the thin lace and looked into the street radiant with artificial light, and heard the jolt and jostle of the traffic; she seemed to hear trumpets in the air, calling her to action.

Long after her mother had gone to bed she sat looking down into the shifting crowd of strangers, listening to the grind of innumerable wheels, the screams of innumerable horns, the whirr of innumerable machines, with now and then a human voice, a laugh, a whistle, a broken song.

The morrow, in the dull light of a sunless day, Mrs. Cantelowe spoke the name that had not been mentioned between them since they had decided on this journey.

"Before you do anything, Philippa, I must ask you just to consider once more. Now we have got away from home perhaps it will be easier."

"Consider, mother?"

"I'm an old woman, dear," pleaded Mrs. Cantelowe. "I can't avoid talking as an old woman—standing at the end of things and looking back. And I just want you to consider if really this is worth everything to you. It was so sudden, so swift, are you quite sure that won't pass?"

"I don't know," replied Philippa, "but I do know that I've got to go on, mother."

"You couldn't, Philippa, take my word that this marriage is impossible! And the reason better left in obscurity!"

"I've got to go on, mother," repeated Philippa with soft violence.

Mrs. Cantelowe had no more to say.

Philippa went downstairs and telephoned to the address that Lambert Dyprre had given her; she asked for Dr. Michelozzi.

While she waited to be put through, a shivering and dreadful panic gripped her; but when the answer came she spoke in a steady voice:

"May I speak to Dr. Michelozzi?"

"It is Dr. Michelozzi who speaks now."

"Ah, I am Philippa Cantelowe; you have perhaps heard of me?"

"Of course."

"May I come and see you?"

"May I not wait on you, Miss Cantelowe?"

"Thank you, but we are just in an hotel, my mother and I. I would like to see you in your own home, if you don't mind."

"Of course not. This afternoon? Four o'clock?"

"Yes. Thank you." A pause, then: "Sir Lambert Dyprre is not with you?"

"No," came the pleasant, old, serene voice, "he is in Rome."

"This afternoon, then. Good-bye."

Upstairs Mrs. Cantelowe was wrapping up the yellow-silk work-bag and the sheet of faded music in tissue paper. When Philippa came into the room she gave them to her, and said:

"Take these to Dr. Michelozzi, and tell him that I want him to tell you what they mean, and how I came to have them."

CHAPTER XII

PHILIPPA found herself in a plain white room in a flat at the top of a high building; the sun that had at last dispersed the clouds over the city cast the pale radiance of spring through uncurtained windows.

There were quantities of books, papers, several comfortable shabby chairs, a plainly framed drawing of a visionary design for a church and market-place, and a large model of a horse in plaster from which the colour had been rubbed away, but still showed here and there in faint stains of red on the skin and blue on the trappings.

This model, like everything else in the room, was austere and noble; the clean economy of line, the faint suggestion of colour was typical of the whole atmosphere of the place; there were no flowers, yet the place was fragrant.

Philippa was both reassured and awed; she felt that she would not be dreadfully nor harshly dealt with, yet at the same time that here there would not be much sympathy for the weakness of mundane passion; as she waited in the uncommon room she became slightly depressed by a sense of remoteness: the excitement that she had felt on entering Paris had died away.

When Francesco Michelozzi entered she rose up timidly. He was at this time nearly eighty years of age and full of power and mental vitality; his frame, that had been so vigorous, still showed massive under the shrunken flesh; his grand head was still that of a hero and a conqueror, serene, thoughtful, majestic; the large features had fallen into heavy lines, the thick brows were well drawn down over the light eyes; the mouth was yet firm, had yet an expression of calm sweetness.

"I am fortunate to find you," said Philippa faintly.

"I am fortunate to be here," he replied in English. "I am not often in Paris now."

He went up to her, took both her hands in his, and added warmly:

"How kind and pleasant of Philippa Cantelowe to come and see me! You are like your mother as she was when I saw her in Rome, long before you were born."

"I come on a selfish errand," replied the girl. "You may hate me before I leave——"

He smiled tolerantly at her protest and made her sit down opposite the model of the horse.

"Do you like that, Miss Cantelowe? It belongs to Lambert Dyprre."

"I like it. Is it Greek?"

"No, very early Chinese. Lambert collects them—these archaic Chinese things. You will call that a queer taste."

He turned to the one drawing in the room.

"That is some of Lambert's work. A vision. He has hundreds of such drawings, yet he is very practical. I think it is of Lambert you have come to speak, isn't it?"

He spoke with a gentleness that melted into tenderness and seated himself opposite the girl, but did not look at her as she answered.

"I don't know how much you know, Dr. Michelozzi—but Lambert, when he was in England, asked me to marry him," she hurried out, "and I would have consented but for one thing——"

"I know. Lambert told me. You, of course, wished to stay in your home, he wished to be quite free."

"It was not altogether that," argued Philippa, as if defending herself. "I found him really very alien, not even English, quite indifferent to all the things I had been thought to regard as so important. I could not understand, Dr. Michelozzi, why he had not been brought up as an Englishman, why he had been allowed to get so out of touch with his father's place."

"That was his father's wish."

"I don't understand," repeated Philippa. "It seems to me, forgive me, a great wrong to Lambert. To us—to any English people of his class—he seems strange, as I said, alien."

"Yet—you would have married him?" smiled the old man kindly.

Philippa clasped her hands tightly in her lap, but continued bravely:

"It was because I wanted to marry him that I was angry that he was—spoilt. I could not help thinking of what he might have been and of the life we might have had. I'd been rather cherishing my poor little heritage, Dr. Michelozzi. I am the last of my mother's and of my father's name, and I should have liked to have carried on. I've a feeling for Dyprre too; we've intermarried so often, there is Dyprre blood in me. I was shocked and angry at his attitude."

"Well and boldly said," replied Francesco Michelozzi. "So you sent him away? He told me this, but you can explain it better."

"Yes. But I found I could not do it. I will give up everything. I came to say that."

Dr. Michelozzi sat silent, looking at her with her pale shadowed face under the dark drooping hat, her tall figure in the dark graceful dress, her narrow hands clasping and unclasping on her knee.

"And when I told my mother this she said that there was something else in the way, something that I ought to know—I would not let her tell me and she seemed relieved. I said I would come to you and hear from you myself. And to-day mother gave me this"—from her silk bag she drew a tissue paper parcel carefully pinned, "and asked me to show it—to show it to you—and to beg you to explain what it means."

Slowly the old man took the pins out and turned back the

paper: a faded yellow-silk bag, a folded sheet of music were revealed. Philippa gazed uncomprehendingly, but Dr. Michelozzi said something sharply in his own language which she could not understand.

She drew the sheet of music from his unresisting hand and gazed at the rough lithograph.

"An old piece of music—1888," she murmured.

"Yes, the year that Lambert was born."

She put down the music on the littered table; that crudely done dark face meant nothing to her, nor did the large printed words, "Cara Carissima," of the title.

"Won't you tell me?" she asked gently.

And then Dr. Michelozzi proceeded to do what her mother had done, to endeavour to persuade her to forego this marriage.

"Before I tell you—are you sure that Lambert can or will make you happy? That he is worth all you propose to sacrifice?"

"I don't expect happiness, I don't even want it," she answered quickly. "I expect Lambert will often make me suffer—terribly. I feel that: we shall quarrel, there will be storms, perhaps heart-break in the end. But it is the only thing in the world for me."

"I know Lambert," replied the old man slowly, "as well as one human being can know another. I made him, as far as one human being can make another. From his babyhood I took him, plastic to my hands, and made him what he is now. And you have already found, Miss Cantelowe, that what he is now is alien, even hostile to all you stand for."

Faintly Philippa felt—"And you also, under your charming urbanity, are alien, hostile to me."

And she answered, in rather proud self-defence:

"I have not come to dispute him with you. I have come to surrender everything, even to the ideals I have had all my life."

"But can you? Can you become in a moment what it has taken a lifetime to make of Lambert?"

"Perhaps I can't change, but I can surrender," said Philippa.

"But at heart you will be always a rebel, eh? You know very little of Lambert, really, and there is a great deal about him, and his ways and his friends that you won't like. There are no compromises for him, only the one way, the straight way; you have just seen that he won't turn aside."

"I want to risk it," breathed Philippa.

Francesco Michelozzi sighed.

"Lambert is not easy. Many people dislike him—*his whole life is already planned out: you won't alter it an iota.*"

"You are being very merciless," said the girl wearily, piteously; "and after all, he did come to me; something in him brought him back to Dyprre, to a Philippa Cantelowe."

"Cross-currents," answered the doctor. "Yes, it is strange that he has that from his father—the pull back to the Englishwoman; he always admired your mother's photo."

He sat musing a moment and Philippa waited.

"So you'll marry Lambert, despite my arguments?" he said at last.

"Yes."

"And it might be the ruin of both of you. I never meant him to marry. But," he roused himself, "I must tell you what your mother wished you to know."

"Do *you* wish me to know?"

"Yes. I am bound to tell you. My poor girl."

He looked at her sharply and then away again.

"Lambert's mother was a lunatic."

"Oh!" Philippa gave a jolting movement forward, then put her hands to her face. "A lunatic!"

"She had homicidal tendencies inherited from her mother, who committed suicide. One evening, just before Lambert was born, his mother, out of an unfounded jealousy of your mother, tried to murder her husband—she was singing this song at the time, and that bag was what she had concealed the knife in."

Philippa rose and began to walk violently up and down the room; her strength was struck from her, and all her ideas smitten into incoherency.

"Mrs. Cantelowe was present," continued the doctor. "She tried to conceal what had happened. I don't think her husband ever knew."

"She—this woman," stammered Philippa—"was she always insane?"

"Her intellect was always clouded, and emotional excitement always brought on an attack of mania, but she was a dear beautiful woman, and for long periods would appear rational and quiet, even docile and sweet."

"And Sir Raulyn married her?"

"He did not know; he took her behind my back—poor fellow, poor fellow."

Philippa paused in her walk, endeavouring to grasp yet another point in these ghastly revelations.

"You were looking after her? Sir Raulyn didn't behave well about it?"

"Miss Cantelowe, it is a great many years ago, and I could never presume to judge any one."

To and fro she paced again.

"Lambert was born—when his mother was insane?" she muttered; it was more like a cry than a question.

"She was very happy at the thought of the child. I had great hopes that she might become almost normal, that, at least, these fits of mania would become very rare—but she was disturbed, excited, and the last weeks before Lambert was born she was insane."

"And afterwards?"

"Afterwards she recovered—she became so lucid that she even understood, vaguely yet deeply, her own terrible misfortune. And that killed her. In the horror of her discovery, she willed herself to die."

"Is it possible!" whispered Philippa. "Is it possible!"

"I have told you the exact truth, as it is known to very few people now. You will understand why I brought up Lambert as I did. I had to keep him away from everything associated with his parents. I had to give him a strong body, a trained mind, a heart hardened against both sentiment and passion—I had to distract him from any possible brooding or introspection or melancholy. I had the opinion of the first alienists of the day and they agreed with me."

The old man paused, as if a little weary, but Philippa did not speak; she stood by the window, gazing into the upper space of sky.

"I had good material," added the old man. "Very often people of this mixed blood are extraordinary. Lambert has great force of character, strong gifts, vast patience, a fine intelligence and unbounded self-confidence—he responded to the training: he is not perhaps lovable, but he is a definite personality."

"But," said Philippa dully, "what of his mother's—malady? He is free—or no?"

"He has never given any sign of mental unstability. But if his emotions were to be terribly roused, if something was

to happen to remind him of his mother's experience, I don't know—I couldn't answer."

"What do you mean—terribly roused?"

Dr. Michelozzi looked at her sadly.

"I mean that he might love—you—for instance, very much, and might become jealous or bereaved, and the shock might——"

"Don't," interrupted Philippa sharply.

"You would never be quite sure—of him. There does not seem much danger, yet you could never be quite sure. It is much better for him never to care for any one very deeply, better for him to be wholly absorbed in his work and his Chinese horses."

"Do *you* love him?" demanded the girl.

The old man's noble head was bowed on his chest.

"Yes, I love him," he answered simply. "He is Geva's child."

Philippa looked away again, out towards the untroubled sky.

"You must think of that," added Francesco Michelozzi; "the children. Lambert might escape, and the curse might fall on the children. He should not marry."

"But they might be rescued, even as you rescued Lambert."

The great physician answered modestly.

"You might not find anyone with the knowledge I possess to devote himself to them as I have devoted myself to Lambert. I am very old, Miss Cantelowe, and my work is done."

Philippa put her chill hands to her sick head.

"I must think," she said. "I don't know what to do. I can't decide."

Her face, her pose, her gesture of clutched hands revealed the turbulence of her soul; she was not resigned to the shaft that had struck her, but rebellious against both the weapon and the hand that had directed it; there was antagonism in the glance that she cast at the superb old man who regarded her with such serene compassion.

"This should have been known from the first," she added fiercely. "Lambert should not have been allowed to go about under false pretences—don't you know that women fall in love with men like Lambert, Dr. Michelozzi?"

"I had to risk it," he answered humbly. "To tell Lambert would have been to damn him."

She sighed under the goad of her intolerable pain.

"Forgive me, I had no right to say that," she admitted dully, "but this is the end of so much for me. The end of Dyprre too. He may as well sell the place," she finished irrelevantly. "It is really the end of us all. I hadn't realized that till now."

"No, Miss Cantelowe—a pause, but not an end. And you, if you can forget Lambert, should be a happy woman. There is no curse on you."

"But I can't forget Lambert." She began to draw on her soft loose glove. "That is impossible. I know that, even now. Presently I shall think of other people, of mother, and you and the possible children, but now I can only think of myself and my need of him. I don't feel capable of standing aside."

And Francesco Michelozzi answered, unexpectedly:

"What do you think Lambert would decide if he knew? Shall we tell him?"

She turned and faced him at that; he had his hand on the yellow-silk bag, the worn sheet of notepaper.

"If we showed him these," continued the doctor, "if he hears you sing this song, I think it would be a good test—he might know then without the need of telling."

She did not speak.

"There is still the room with the mirrors and the busts of the Cæsars; we could put in the old piano again and the vases of white flowers——"

"What are you talking of?" asked Philippa sharply.

"The room where it happened, where this song was last sung. Lambert is in Rome now, we might go to him——"

"But this is all what you have so painfully guarded him from!"

"You reminded me, Miss Cantelowe, that I had not reckoned on the woman who would love Lambert. I think it is in your hands now. You and he will do as you like, whatever I can say or do."

He rose and they faced each other across the cool austere pale room.

"I leave it all in your hands," said Francesco Michelozzi.

CHAPTER XIII

PHILIPPA, standing rigid in the hotel sitting-room, looking at the stiff pattern of roses in the carpet, said:

"It isn't really a problem as far as it concerns myself. Only as it concerns other people."

"You mean," answered Mrs. Cantelowe, "that, even now you know everything, you wish to marry Lambert?"

"Yes, but I must think of you who are afraid for me, and of Dr. Michelozzi, who is afraid for him——"

"Don't think of me," said Mrs. Cantelowe eagerly. "Affection can be such a dead weight, such a chain. I want to stand aside, absolutely."

A look of relief softened Philippa's ravaged face.

"Ah, mother, if I could believe that!"

"Do believe it, dear. I implore you to act as if I was not there."

"Then there is the old man: though he will not say so, he will be terribly hurt."

"He is not your responsibility," replied Mrs. Cantelowe. "He is very old and has lived his life. You must do as you think best."

"Mother, I want to marry him. I am not afraid at all." Philippa spoke as if on her defence. "People risk these things every day—vice, disease, feebleness, people transmit them without consideration or remorse—why shouldn't I risk this? and these things are held differently nowadays. Dr. Michelozzi speaks according to his generation: that poor woman might have been cured now, they *can* cure insanity, and perhaps Lady Dyprre was only neurotic, hysterical, unbalanced, a Southerner, you know, Spanish-Italian!"

She hurled down her defiance bravely.

"Perhaps you are right," assented Mrs. Cantelowe faintly. "I know opinion has changed on these matters. When I was young we just had the one word, madness. And we thought that it was a very terrible word."

"Mother, I would swear that Lambert is sane. I never met any one more controlled, who had himself so well in hand—he seems even afraid of emotion, that is his great fault. Dr. Michelozzi suggested a test," she went on hurriedly, "suggested telling him. I don't think either would affect him at all."

"Are you going to try?"

"No—I am sure that would distress Dr. Michelozzi horribly, and I feel that Lambert belongs to him. I don't want to wound him more than I need. I'll marry Lambert and risk everything."

Mrs. Cantelowe stirred faintly in her tapestried chair.

"Are you telling Dr. Michelozzi your decision, Philippa?"

"Yes, I shall go round to-day, that is kinder than bringing him here. He seldom goes out. He told me that he is leaving Paris for ever soon and retiring to Lago di Garda."

"He used to live in Rome," said Mrs. Cantelowe dully. "Has he given that up—and all his work there?"

"Yes. Because of Lambert. And he has done no work for many years, but he has many old pupils of his who consult with him—they run hospitals and clinics that he and Lambert support—research work, I think."

Philippa made an effort to speak reasonably and casually, as if she referred to indifferent matters.

"There isn't any tragedy and trouble in this really, mother," she added. "It is all in the way that you look at it. I am tremendously happy, really."

But when Mrs. Cantelowe had seen her depart a sense of desolation came over the stricken woman lonely in the foreign hotel; this was so acute that she called the elderly maid and made a list with her of articles for Cantelowe that they might buy in Paris.

As if anything would ever be wanted again for Cantelowe or Myniott or Dyprre!

Mrs. Cantelowe had played her part well; she had acted up to her ideal of freedom; she had not hampered her daughter by as much as a look, but it was all a surface acquiescence. Inwardly she revolted fiercely against Philippa's decision; every fibre of her being was repelled by the thought of this union between her child, the child of Piers, and the son of the man she had loved and his disastrous alien wife.

She could hardly have conceived of a more painful and ugly end to the three houses; she loathed and shrank from the thought of Geva's insanity; it might well be discounted nowadays; it was more than possible that Lambert himself might take the point of view that Philippa took, and not be very much affected by the hoarded secret that had seemed so deadly; but Mrs. Cantelowe could not forget that scene at the piano: the fallen candles, the scattered white flowers,

the upraised knife, and the blood dripping on the keyboard.

She remembered the beautiful child in his rococo cradle; how ghastly strange that he should have grown up to snatch away from her the last of her race!

And as with patient courtesy she helped the maid with the list of things that she would never want, she was thinking of herself, futile, useless, withering alone at Hamblethorpe, which would so soon be in the possession of strangers.

While Philippa, going to tell Francesco Michelozzi her decision, was thinking that these two old people had made something monstrous out of something not so fearful after all, an ogre of fierce aspect that when approached proved to be made of smoke.

She found the doctor subtly changed from yesterday, shaken, almost nervous in manner; vitality seemed to have suddenly ebbed in him; she had, what she had by no means had before, an impression of great age.

Without speaking she put in his arms a sheaf of red damask roses that she had bought as she came along the bright streets.

"Please be good to me," she said humbly. "I want Lambert, but I am going to be happy. *We* are going to be happy, and you will see it."

He looked over the flowers into her honest eyes radiant in her tired face.

"You are kind to an old man," he answered. "Your flowers are very pretty. So you will marry Lambert? I wired to him yesterday, and he will be here to-morrow."

As he marked how she flushed and thrilled he sighed.

"You have quite decided?" he added.

"Quite."

She took the roses from him and placed them in an earthenware vase on one of the crowded tables.

"Then we will talk no more about it. You will have some coffee?"

He rang the bell.

"No, tea," he corrected himself. "You prefer tea?"

"I like coffee."

"But you have much to do? You want to be away? This room is a cage for a young woman in Paris on a spring day."

He said this with such deprecating sweetness that the tears came into Philippa's eyes.

"Please, I would like to stay with you, if I may."

An Italian servant entered and Dr. Michelozzi ordered coffee; Philippa noted that he asked for water for the roses.

"I will show you Lambert's room," he said when the man had gone. "You will like to see that?"

Before she could answer, he opened an inner door and she beheld a big chamber with a southern aspect, bare, uncarpeted, uncurtained, full of sunshine.

Here again were books, in all languages, mostly in paper covers, and several plainly mounted drawings, fine yet vague, those visionary plans of cities, ships, harbours, castles, like the sketches of Leonardo da Vinci, which Lambert Dyprre drew for his amusement. There was a large locked desk, two cupboards, a hard chair and a shelf between the windows.

On this stood a gleaming figure in Chinese *blanc de Chine* and two French porcelain bouquets of stiff gay flowers.

"He works here," said the doctor. "His bedroom is beyond. He is not here very often, but all his rooms are like this."

Philippa looked at the figure on the shelf, and Francesco Michelozzi saw her glance.

"Sir Raulyn bought that in England; he was the type of man to cling to symbols—that and the Sèvres bouquet—the other belonged to Geva.

"You allowed Lambert to keep them?"

Philippa crossed the polished floor and looked at the milk-white image that her mother had looked at in Clarissa Hislop's bedroom at Clobbertons, forty years before.

"Yes, I allowed him to keep them, to grow up with them," said the old man quietly. "That is Shiva, a good god."

"But is he not the god of destruction?"

"What is destruction? Re-creation. Shiva is the vibration of life, the endless pulse of the universe, the eternal dying down and springing up of the flame, the ceaseless flowing in and out of the breath—the continuity of existence."

"Has Lambert no other god?" asked Philippa.

"What other gods are there? Life is the one God—perfected Life; do we not all know that?—when we cry, 'O God' in joy or pain, do we not mean 'O Life'? *When we pray, do not we pray to Life?*"

He smiled at her, and added:

"The silly, frivolous, little flowers in their dainty vases have their meaning too—they are the feminine side of things, allure, temptation, too often they mean also disaster and failure."

He turned back into the other room and Philippa followed him, closing the door of Lambert's chamber.

"You mean to rebuke me," she said; "but all women are not like that—some can be fine and noble."

"There are men," he replied, "to whom even a fine and noble woman can be only a danger."

"You think that Lambert is one of them?"

"Yes. I believe that Lambert should be free of all affections."

The coffee came in and the servant carefully poured water into the jar of roses. Philippa looked at the old man with pity; she was sorry, sorry, sorry that she must strike him through her love for Lambert, curiously enough almost more sorry for him than she was for her own dear mother.

As they drank their coffee he said:

"I shall tell Lambert about his mother. I think that just. I shall show him the bag and the sheet of music. I shall tell him the whole story."

At first Philippa was startled, then she said steadily:

"That is as you wish. I am not afraid."

"I think you have no cause to be," he answered quietly. "Lambert now, will not, I expect, be very much moved by what I have to tell him."

"But," replied Philippa with quick sympathy, "you dislike this greatly. You do not want to tell him."

"Yes. I am afraid for myself. I do not want to destroy a lifetime's illusion."

"A lifetime's illusion?" she questioned gently.

"The image I have created of Geva," replied the old man sadly. "That has been my joy, to make Lambert love his mother—*she* would have loved *him* so much——"

Philippa was troubled; she had not thought of this aspect of the case; these old romances! Her mother and Lambert's father—this man and Lambert's mother; all these old, old interwoven loves and sentiments, still so potent, still so tragic.

"Need you tell him?" she asked. "I do not wish it."

But he replied with his kind serenity:

"I decided that if Lambert came to this point, of marriage, I would tell him. And I shall do so before you see him. But do not let us talk of it any more."

Again Philippa felt infinitely sorry and regretful, not for herself, not for Lambert. She saw them standing staunchly together fronting a rapturous if stormy future; they were young, the world was before them. She gave no pity, she asked no pity here, but she was infinitely sorry, infinitely regretful towards this old, old man.

"Shall I tell Lambert?" she suggested softly.

But he rejected this, almost proudly.

"It is between Lambert and myself," he said, "and Geva. It is Geva's secret, you know."

Philippa's thought was "but Geva was dead so long ago," but she could not say this, for she knew that to Francesco Michelozzi death was but a little barrier between himself and his love.

She sat silent, resenting the fact that by fulfilling her own life she must trouble and embitter these other lives, and he seemed to guess this, for he turned his grand head towards her and said in accents of a noble compassion:

"Are you grieving for me? There is no need. I have been a very happy man."

"You can say that?" she asked wistfully. "What made you happy?"

He smiled; there was a vagueness in his glance that made her think that his thoughts were far away, but his words were as ever, collected and quiet.

"I remember quoting once to Mrs. Cantelowe a line from your poet Wordsworth." He raised his hand to the bookcase behind him. "The volume should be here, I marked the place—I don't know, I can't find it." His hand dropped again. "'The Presence and the Power'—do you understand what I mean? That is the same as Shiva. Perfected Life—God. That held me happy—just the glimpse of it that I was allowed to have."

"'The Presence and the Power,'" repeated Philippa. "I shall remember."

He touched her hand.

"You are a good girl. So different to my poor little Geva. She was a tiny trifle of a thing, a small creature out of a fairy-tale. You could make her happy with sweetmeats and presents."

He abruptly checked himself and began, with his charming urban courtesy, to tell her of the arrangements he had made.

"Lambert will be here to-morrow evening: as soon as he comes I will see him, and then send him to you, if he is not too late."

"Let him come the next morning," said Philippa. "Keep him, that evening, to yourself."

As the doctor did not answer, she added:

"He knows I am here?"

"Why else is he hurrying back to Paris?" smiled the old man. "I gave him your hotel, also, if he cared to wire——"

"He has not sent any message," said Philippa. "I will wait till I hear."

They sat silent a little while together, then she rose.

"Good-bye, then, Dr. Michelozzi. And forgive me."

"Forgive me," he replied swiftly, "for the pain I have given you."

They stood beside each other a second, and he laid his hand on her shoulder, then raised it above her head as if in benediction; yet she knew that he had forgotten her before she had left his door.

This talk of Geva!—it was like the intrusion of yet another personality into her affairs, the influence of Geva, after all these years, drawing her son away from the daughter of the woman she must have feared and even hated as her rival; the foreigner, the alien, the disastrous madwoman asserting herself now to draw her son away from England, from the old ways of his father in the North.

But Geva had lost.

Through Philippa Cantelowe Lambert would return to at least some of his ancestors' paths: the girl meant that he should, in time, return to Dyprre; she had great confidence in herself, in her own love: slowly, but certainly, she would win him back to England.

Geva and all Geva meant should be blotted out.

The living woman decreed this doom to the dead woman with pity but with no faltering.

CHAPTER XIV

PHILIPPA told Mrs. Cantelowe the brief outline of her interview with the doctor and of the coming of Lambert.

The subject was not discussed between them; Mrs. Cantelowe only said, with a wistful smile:

"I am sorry that he has to tell about Geva after all these years; he will feel that, cruelly."

Philippa, who had hoped that this would not occur to her mother, was silent; she had to harden herself against these old people and their tragedies.

The day of waiting the two women spent in driving in the

lovely artificial woods beyond Paris, but with all the pretty distractions of the May weather the hours were long and weary.

Long before she expected to hear from any one, Philippa was called to the telephone.

"Can it be Lambert? He can have only just arrived. But no one else knows that I am here."

She felt weak and powerless as she lifted the receiver, as she questioned who was there?

Lambert's voice, vibrant, uncommon, charming, answered:

"Philippa, Philippa, can I come to you?"

"Of course. At once. I've been waiting."

"My dear—I'll come, in about an hour. I can't at once——"

"Why not?"

"Something has happened. I wanted to hear your voice."

"When did you arrive?"

"Just now. I'm at the flat——"

"You haven't heard?"

"Heard? Nothing."

"Lambert," she called desperately, "are you in trouble?"

He seemed to hesitate.

"Trouble? No. I'll come round. I can't stay now, even to speak to you——"

He rang off abruptly.

Philippa went to her mother.

"Something has happened to Lambert, he seemed disturbed; but there has not been time for Dr. Michelozzi to tell him anything."

"Is he coming here?" asked Mrs. Cantelowe. "Do you want to see him alone?"

"No. We will see him together—unless it displeases you."

Mrs. Cantelowe slightly shook her head.

It was nearly two hours later when the young man, announced now as "Sir Lambert Dyprre," entered the conventional hotel sitting-room.

Mrs. Cantelowe acknowledged at once that this fresh and second impression of the man allowed him an added attractiveness, dignity and grace. As he stood there, so uncommon, so resolute, so vital and finished, she could sympathize with Philippa more than she had been able to do so far: Lambert Dyprre was undoubtedly a type of manhood which can compel women to both foolish and heroic actions. He gained also by the use of his own name and the fact that he was on his own

ground; his air of authority was even greater than it had been in England.

He still wore travelling clothes, and Mrs. Cantelowe thought that the exact finely sculptured features, the long smooth face, were slightly pallid.

He greeted the two women, and Philippa said at once:

"What has happened?"

He counter-questioned:

"You came to Paris to see me?"

"Yes. Don't you know?"

He took her hand again and kissed it impulsively.

"Has Dr. Michelozzi told you anything?" asked Philippa faintly.

Lambert lifted his queer light-brown eyes that were not hard exactly, but so clear and definite in shape, colour and expression.

"Dr. Michelozzi told me nothing. He is dead."

Mrs. Cantelowe gave a sharp exclamation, and Philippa stammered incredulously:

"But only yesterday—dead—I saw him——"

"I know." Even now Lambert was cool, decided, precise. "It must have been very sudden. He was sitting in his usual chair, waiting for me, the valet said; he had his face to the door, he was quite dead. The doctor I called in said it was the most natural thing. He was very old, you know. But to me," added the young man with unconscious drama, "it is the most terrible loss, the most overwhelming misfortune." He looked from one woman to the other. "You could hardly understand what it means to me. And to think that I was not there!"

Philippa was silent, but Mrs. Cantelowe said, her voice tremulous:

"I can understand your awful loss. He was a very noble man."

"The noblest!" Lambert replied quickly, gratefully. "Philippa,"—he turned to her with an air of possession, as if she was already his wife—"you were there yesterday, I hear. What passed between you?"

"Why do you ask?" she faltered. "This is a great shock to me——"

"I know, dear. But there is something I don't understand. He had this on his knee—he was seated by the bookshelf, and my little image of Shiva had been moved there: it was just under a jar of red roses——"

Philippa put out her hand in protest.

"Please, Lambert, no more now——"

"But I want to know," he insisted; he drew from his pocket a yellow-silk bag and a sheet of music. "These things were on his knee. I have never seen them before; do you know anything about them?"

"Why should you ask?" Philippa with difficulty managed the evasion.

"There was this note, in his handwriting."

Sir Lambert drew half a sheet of notepaper from inside the music and read out:

"'The test. Do you remember a room with the moon looking in, candle-light, bronze-clamped mirrors and busts of Cæsars in porphyry and granite? Do you remember *these* and vases of exotic white flowers, one shattered and broken, a woman in a pink satin dress and diamonds of the fashion of the eighties? This bag, a knife, blood on the piano—above all, this song? Sing it, see if you remember'—(here the writing trails off)——"

The young man glanced up from the paper from one woman to the other and mistook their amazed terror for the blankness of pure amazement.

"Of course," he added, "this might refer to many things. The doctor had always much on his hands, a hundred cases and interests; he was continually making notes."

"Then what," Philippa managed to say, "should make you think that it had anything to do with us—with me?"

"I heard that you had been there twice, yesterday, and then before," he answered at once. "I thought that curious unless you had something important to say to Dr. Michelozzi. I thought it rather curious that you should go to him at all, instead of waiting for my return."

"You are very acute, Lambert," said Philippa with the faintest irony, "but don't you think it was natural enough for me to want to see this man who was so much to you, of whom we had so often spoken together?"

"I suppose so," he answered dubiously. "But the valet told me that the doctor was in great agitation after your visit yesterday——"

"He has always been opposed to any marriage for you, hasn't he?"

"Always—yes."

"That perhaps disturbed him, Lambert, the thought of that——"

"Then there was nothing to do with me in this?" He held out the music, the work-bag and the note. "It wasn't something that you had given him, and he meant to speak to me about?"

"I can't think why you should think so, Lambert."

Philippa, careful not to glance at the immobile figure of her mother, kept her candid gaze courageously on the young man's grave, even slightly hostile, face.

"There really is no reason," he replied slowly, "except that I know he was waiting to speak to me. And just this; when I was in Rome I went to the Palazzo Lambruschini—it really belongs to Dr. Michelozzi and it was turned into a hospital when I was a child. I don't often go there," he explained with the exactitude of a clear thinker and a fluent speaker, "but I wanted an old servant of mine admitted, and the house surgeon spoke to me about another board room, he said they were very crowded, and would I ask Dr. Michelozzi if they might use the rooms that were kept closed—on the *piano nobile*, two of the best rooms that were only used for entertainments for the patients, occasionally."

Wan and powerless, Mrs. Cantelowe watched and listened, not daring to look at her daughter, keeping her fascinated glance on the man who had been the baby in the rococo cradle in those rooms. . . .

With his foreign vehemence of accent and gesture that was yet not in the least heated nor passionate, Sir Lambert continued:

"The surgeon said, 'Marchese, will you see these rooms?" and I went. I should think I have been before, as a child, for they were somehow familiar to me——"

"Lambert," interrupted Philippa desperately, "this can't have anything to do with what you hold in your hand——"

But Mrs. Cantelowe spoke.

"Let Sir Lambert finish, dear—he has something he wishes to explain——"

"The first room," he continued, "had heavy mirrors clamped by bronze, and there were some busts of Emperors, and the second—there was no piano, nor flowers—but they called it a music-room."

"It is curious," answered Mrs. Cantelowe steadily, "but there must be many rooms in Italy with mirrors and busts——"

"That is true," he assented, "and I certainly cannot see any connection between this bag, this old piece of music—which is very foolish and poor—with the rooms in the Palazzo Lambruschini—besides, the music is English."

He looked directly at Philippa.

"So if you tell me that you know nothing at all about it, I must think it just a coincidence."

"I know nothing at all about it," said Philippa. "That music—have you read it—it means nothing at all to you?"

"Yes, I read it over; it certainly means nothing at all to me. But Shiva, mentioned in this note, that is my image, and it was moved from my room to the bookshelf——"

Mrs. Cantelowe rose and came in front of her daughter, who had remained standing as if powerless to move, even to a chair.

"Dear Lambert," she said gently, "don't you think that Dr. Michelozzi felt that he was coming to an earthly end, and that time and space did not exist any longer for him? He remembered something very long ago, his own youth, perhaps, and he brought out some of his little relics—like we old people always have, and he fetched the figure of Shiva, which to him, as you know, meant re-creation, not destruction. It was his habit to be continually scribbling, making notes—and as he waited there, not for you but for some one else, he scribbled down these broken thoughts—of the past, of a person he felt he was joining very soon——"

"But he mentions blood," said Lambert, frowning, "blood on a piano——"

"I believe," replied Mrs. Cantelowe, "I can explain that. Once I was at your mother's house, before you were born, and it was in that room you mentioned just now, a music-room. Your mother was playing at a piano and there were big white roses lying on the piano—she, when she had finished playing, moved these roses, and the thorns scratched her finger—Dr. Michelozzi bound it up, but I saw a few drops of blood on the keys."

"Why, that is it," cried Sir Lambert in relief. "He would think of my mother, she was continually in his thoughts. So you saw them together. Mrs. Cantelowe, that seems wonderful to me! Perhaps the music is hers and the little bag——"

"I expect it is, Lambert."

At this he reverently folded up the scrap of silk, the sheet of music, the note, and put them in his overcoat pocket.

"What did you think of my mother, Mrs. Cantelowe?" he

asked with a simplicity neither of the women had noticed in his demeanour before.

"She was truly beautiful, both in body and spirit," replied Mrs. Cantelowe warmly.

Sir Lambert sighed.

"You must tell me more of her some time; now I must go back to him. You will stay in Paris for awhile?"

"Till you wish to see me again," said Philippa. "In two—three days you will come back?"

He turned to her with a sudden radiance in his whole personality.

"I have much to say to you," he smiled, "but these things are not for now, my darling. Philippa, don't let this sadden you, there is so much ahead for us. Mrs. Cantelowe, take care of her for me, and soon I will take care of both of you——"

With a frank and natural gesture he took the tall girl in his arms and kissed her forehead; in that moment he had all of Geva's charm, all of Raulyn's grace. . . .

When he had gone Philippa tottered to a chair and broke into nervous sobs, hiding her face childishly with her hands.

"Philippa," said Mrs. Cantelowe, "I could not do differently, you saw that? It is not for us to tell now; we couldn't tell."

"No," sobbed the girl, "it isn't our secret, it belongs to the dead people now; no, we can't ever tell——"

"And there is no need. You saw how he took the test? There is no memory there, he is a sane man."

But Philippa continued to weep.

Mrs. Cantelowe sat beside her, embraced her, kissed her, wiped away her bitter tears with fragrant handkerchiefs.

"Aren't you happy now, darling child? He is a fine man, a splendid lover——"

But Philippa was bowed by uncontrollable grief.

"Love's selfish, isn't it?" she laughed hysterically, looking up at last. "It will even steal from the dead—he belongs to his mother, to Dr. Michelozzi. I am just creeping in and stealing him——"

"Philippa, you are overwrought; this has been too much for you; come and lie down quietly——"

"Quiet? Yes, I'll be quiet for the rest of my life, but give me this one night, mother——"

She rose, turning away from Mrs. Cantelowe.

"Mother, there are more things for a woman than love,

marriage, children, don't you think? Passion passes; it only seems tremendous for a little while—mother, aren't there other things for a woman?"

Startled, Mrs. Cantelowe gazed at the girl's grand distracted face.

"There was never anything else for me," she answered, "but for others, yes. Nowadays, yes, Philippa, there are other things. I am sure of that."

Philippa did not heed the answer, she seemed to have forgotten the question; she raised her arm above her head in a curious gesture of protest and despair, then turned, passed into the bedroom, and locked the door.

"Give me this one night," she had pleaded.

Mrs. Cantelowe sat outside the door and listened patiently to the long sobs that came from the other chamber.

CHAPTER XV

ON the second day after Dr. Michelozzi's death Lambert Dyprre returned to the *St. George and Clarence.*

It was a morning of the most tender sunshine that had something of magic even falling through the pale lace curtains of the gaunt windows into the hotel sitting-room.

Philippa was alone; she gave Lambert her hand, and said at once:

"We are returning to England to-morrow."

"So soon?"

"You'll be surprised, perhaps hurt, Lambert, but I had no chance to tell you before. I went to Dr. Michelozzi to find out from him if there was any chance of you altering your mind—about Dyprre."

"Yes?"

"And he said 'No.'"

"He was quite right."

"I've seen that. You are quite committed to the kind of life you lead?"

"Quite."

"Then it is good-bye, Lambert."

This was within the first moment of their meeting, to which he had come as a lover, and he stood angry, amazed.

"Good-bye?" he echoed hotly.

"I can't give up," she smiled wistfully, "any more easily than you can—I'm bound to my narrow way as you are bound to your wide one. I belong to Cantelowe."

He had been, from the first, so sure of her ultimate surrender, so amusedly scornful of her feminine stand against him, so confident that he had won her for ever that he was completely bewildered: it was the first time that he had failed in anything on which he had set his heart; he remembered that as he looked at Philippa Cantelowe: he was too cute to believe that she was speaking from caprice or whim; there was an almost cold resolution in her demeanour.

"You see," she continued, "it would be such a mistake: as Dr. Michelozzi said, I might surrender, but I should always be in revolt——"

He interrupted sharply.

"But you cared enough to come to Paris?"

"Lambert, I cared enough for anything except altering my whole existence, and I think of you—*he* thought you should never marry; don't you think also that you would like to be always quite free?"

"This is fairly cold-blooded," he answered dryly.

"I want to be cold-blooded."

He shrugged his shoulders, half-turning away.

"If those few acres in England are more to you——"

"Lambert, don't let us argue and analyse. I've considered everything, but I can't talk about it; talk is so futile."

"I agree," he said harshly. "I'm afraid I've no patience with intelligent women! *There is something horrible about logic applied to love.*"

She sat humbly before him, her hands locked in her lap; she wore her dark hat and a bronze-coloured cloak; she looked eclipsed, shadowed, withdrawn, although the bright sunshine was over her whole figure.

"I only put the one meaning on your coming," he said sadly. "That was foolish, no doubt."

Philippa did not answer; she looked at him as if she appealed for silence, and when Lambert Dyprre saw that look which was so insuperable a barrier between them, that look which pleaded for pity, for peace, he checked his speech and a slow colour came into his smooth face; he did not easily bear this check, but his immense pride and self-assurance supported him easily, too.

And through his present pain and sense of loss, his present

mortification and grief, he did feel, even now, a quickening of the spirit at the thought of a future absolutely untrammelled, his work and all the world before him, with no woman's claim, no woman's interference to confuse or distract him. After all, Philippa Cantelowe was, in much, alien to him; and Francesco Michelozzi would be pleased. Through these reflections of his her voice came still and careful.

"If you ever sell Dyprre or part of Dyprre, will you give me a chance to buy? I might save up the money somehow."

He was touched by this, as he might have been by something a child had said.

"Of course—Dyprre is yours whenever you want it—I've got Clobbertons. I shall come there sometimes."

"Good-bye, Lambert."

She was on her feet, holding out her hand; he took it; they looked at each other curiously, yearningly.

"You really want me to go away?" he asked.

"Yes."

He dropped her hand at that.

"Well, good-bye, Philippa."

He was gone.

"Mother," called Philippa quickly.

Mrs. Cantelowe came from the inner room and joined her daughter in the shaft of sunlight.

"It is over, mother. I think he was glad to go, really. He will be happier without me. Dr. Michelozzi was right."

"But you, Philippa, but you?"

"I shall be happy, too," said the girl quietly. "I'll go back and carry on, in my own place. Love isn't everything. And if it were I could not take him from those two dead people—they're too strong for me."

"Is it because of them that you are doing this, Philippa?"

Mrs. Cantelowe, standing between the past and the present, the living and the dead, was regretful, hesitant, afraid, but for Philippa there was neither doubt nor fear; the words Francesco Michelozzi had used, "the Presence and the Power," lingered in her soul, uplifting her to that heroism that sometimes grows from passion as the fruit from the flower; she saw the man she loved, quite free from her alien influence, going straight on his way, ending his line that might have ended so miserably on a sharp "crescendo" of achievement; she saw herself tending all the things her forbears had held dear, keeping her heritage, such as it was, for the children who

might love it, if, soberly, honestly she might marry in the future some man who would care for Cantelowe, for Myniott and Dyprre.

If not, then rounding off her name not without nobility, true to what her forefathers had made her, to what they would have expected of her, free from Lambert Dyprre as he was free from her, free of Geva's secret, free of the remorse of interfering with Francesco Michelozzi's work.

"Mother, it is so much better like this."

And Mrs. Cantelowe could sincerely say:

"*It is so much better.*"

"And now we will go home, mother, there is a great deal to do."

In his room in the flat where Dr. Michelozzi had died, Lambert Dyprre sat drawing one of his dream cities, where austere towers ventured starkly into high cold clouds, and winding streets surrounded a chill cathedral hung with banners.

As he worked he now and then looked up at the figure of Shiva, white, translucent, gleaming; the god was now alone.

Lambert had put away the bouquets of porcelain flowers.

They were in the locked drawer with the pretty trifles that had once belonged to Geva Lambruschini, with the sheet of music, the yellow-silk bag: it was not likely that Lambert Dyprre would often look at any of these things.

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