

from Samarkand, one loves to rest beside the fountains under the hedges of roses, one is aware of the other love, intercourse with which has made Damascus an earthly paradise for them and for you.

And one knows why Damascus has a spell. It is the city of shade, of waters,

of marble minarets, and of roses. But it is also the great city of the desert.

From the sacred mountain it looks like an exquisite mirage, and it is near to the mirage.

Its spell is the spell of the desert and the spell of the oasis.

(To be continued)



THE CREATORS: A COMEDY

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XIV

A WEEK after his visit to Jane Holland, Tanqueray was settled, as he called it, in rooms in Bloomsbury. He had got all his books and things sent down from Hampstead, to stay in Bloomsbury forever, because Bloomsbury was cheap.

It had not occurred to him to think what Rose was to do with herself in Bloomsbury, or he with Rose. He had brought her up out of the little village in Sussex where they had lodged in a farmhouse ever since their marriage. Rose had been happy down in Sussex.

And for the first few weeks Tanqueray had been happy, too. He was never tired of playing with Rose, caressing Rose, talking nonsense to Rose, teasing and tormenting Rose forever. The more so as she provoked him by turning an imperturbable face to the attack. He liked to lie with his head in Rose's lap, while Rose's fingers played with his hair, stirring up new ideas to torment her with. He was content for the first few weeks to be what he had become, a sane and happy animal, mated with an animal, a dear little animal, superlatively happy and incorruptibly sane.

He might have gone on like that for an interminable number of weeks but that the mere rest from all intellectual labor had a prodigiously recuperative effect. His genius, just because he had forgotten all about it, began with characteristic perversity to worry him again. It would not

let him alone. It made him more restless than Rose had ever made him. It led him into ways that were so many subtle infidelities to Rose. It tore him from Rose, and took him out with it for long tramps beyond the downs; wherever they went, it was always too far for Rose to go. He would basely try to get off without her seeing him, and managed it, for Rose was so sensible that she never saw.

Then it made him begin a book. He wrote all morning in a room by himself. All afternoon he walked by himself. All evening he lay with his head in Rose's lap, too tired even to tease her.

But because she had Tanqueray's head to nurse in the evenings Rose had been happy down in Sussex. She went about the farm and stroked all the animals. She borrowed the baby at the farm, and nursed it half the day. And in the evening she nursed Tanqueray's head. Tanqueray's head never bothered to think what Rose was doing when she was not nursing it.

Then because his book made him think of Jane Holland, he sat down one day and wrote that letter to Jinny.

He did not know that it was because of Jinny that he had come back to live in Bloomsbury.

They had been a month in Bloomsbury. Rose was sitting alone in the ground-floor room that looked straight on to the pavement, sitting with her hands before her, waiting for Tanqueray to come to lunch. Tanqueray was up-stairs, two flights away, in his study, writing. She was

afraid to go and tell him lunch was ready. She had gone up once that morning to see that he did not let his fire out, and he had not liked it; so she waited. There was a dish of cutlets keeping hot for him on the hearth. Presently he would come down, and she would have the pleasure of putting the cutlets on the table and seeing him eat them. It was about the only pleasure she could count on now.

For to Rose, as she sat there, the thought had come that, for all she saw of her husband, she might as well not be married to him. She had been better off at Hampstead, when she waited on him hand and foot; when she was doing things for him half the day; when, more often than not, he had a minute to spare for a word or a look that set her heart fairly dancing. She had agreed to their marriage chiefly because it would enable her to wait on him and nobody but him, to wait on him all day long.

And he had said to her, the first thing, as they dined together on their wedding-day, that he was not going to let his wife wait on him. That was why they lived in rooms, since he could not afford a house and servant, that she might be waited on. He had hated to see her working, he said; and now she would not have to work. No, never again. And when she asked him if he liked to see her sitting with her hands before her, doing nothing, he said that was precisely what he did like. And it had been all very well as long as he had been there to see her; but now he was not ever there.

It was worse than it was down in Sussex. All morning he shut himself up in his study to write. After lunch he went up there again to smoke. Then he would go out by himself, and he might or might not come in for dinner. All evening he shut himself up again and wrote. At midnight, or after, he would come to her, worn out and sleepy, lying like a dead man at her side.

She was startled by the sound of the postman's knock and the flapping fall of a letter in the letter-box. It was for Tanqueray, and she took it up to him, and laid it beside him without a word. To speak would have been fatal. He had let his fire go out (she knew he would); so, while he was reading his letter, she knelt down by the hearth and made it up again.

She went to work very softly, but he heard her.

"What are you doing there?" he said.

"I thought," said she, "I was as quiet as a mouse."

"So you were, just about—a horrid little mouse that keeps scratching at the wainscot and creeping about the room and startling me."

"Do I startle you?"

"You do; horribly."

Rose put down the poker without a sound.

He had finished his letter, and had not begun writing again. He was only looking at his letter. So Rose remarked that lunch was ready. He put the letter into a drawer, and they went down.

About half-way through lunch he spoke.

"Look here," he said, "you *must* keep out of the room when I'm writing."

"You're always writing now."

Yes, he was always writing now, because he did not want to talk to Rose, and it was the best way of keeping her out of the room; but as yet he did not know that was why, any more than he knew that he had come back to live in London because he wanted to talk to Jinny. The letter in his drawer up-stairs was from Jinny, asking him if she might not come and see his wife. He was not sure that he wanted her to come and see his wife. Why should she?

"You'll 'urt your brains," his wife was saying, "if you keep on writ—writin', lettin' the best of the day go by before you put your foot out of doors. It would do you all the good in the world if you was to come sometimes for a walk with me—"

It all went in at one ear and out of the other.

So all morning, all afternoon, all evening, Rose sat by herself in the room looking on the pavement. She had nothing to do in this house that did not belong to them. When she had helped the untidy little servant to clear away the breakfast things, when she had dusted their sitting-room and bedroom, when she had gone out and completed her minute marketings, she had nothing to do—nothing to do for herself; worse than all, nothing to do for Tanqueray. She would hunt in drawers for things of his to mend, going over his socks again and again in the hope of finding a hole in one of them. Rose, who

loved taking care of people, who was born into the world and fashioned by Nature to that end—Rose had nothing to take care of. You could not take care of Tanqueray.

Sometimes she found herself wishing that he were ill, not dangerously ill, but ill enough to be put to bed and taken care of. Not that Rose was really aware of this cruel hope of hers. It came to her rather as a picture of Tanqueray, lying in his sleeping suit, adorably helpless, and she nursing him. Her heart yearned to that vision.

For she saw visions. From perpetual activities of hands and feet, from running up and down stairs, from sweeping and dusting, from the making of beds, the washing of clothes and china, she had passed to the life of sedentary contemplation. She was always thinking. Sometimes she thought of nothing but Tanqueray. Sometimes she thought of Aunt and Uncle, of Minny and the seven little dogs. She could see them of a Sunday evening, sitting in the basement parlor, Aunt in her black cashmere with the gimp trimmings, Uncle in his tight broadcloth, with his pipe in his mouth, and Mrs. Smoker sleeping with her nose on the fender. Mr. Robinson would come in sometimes, dressed as Mr. Robinson could dress, and sit down at the little piano and sing in his beautiful voice, "Ark, 'Ark, my Soul," and "The Church's one Foundation," while Joey howled at all his top-notes, and the smoke came curling out of Uncle's pipe, and Rose sat very still, dreaming of Mr. Tanqueray. She could never hear "Hark, Hark, my Soul," now without thinking of Tanqueray.

Sometimes she thought of that other life further back, in her mistress's house at Fleet, all the innocent service and affection, the careful, exquisite tending of the delicious person of Baby, her humble, dutiful intimacy with Baby's mother. She would shut her eyes and feel Baby's hands on her neck, and the wounding pressure of his body against her breasts. And then Rose dreamed another dream.

She no longer cared to sew now, but when Tanqueray's mending was done, she would sit for hours with her hands before her, dreaming.

He found her thus occupied one evening when he had come home after seeing Jane.

After seeing Jane he was always rather more aware of his wife's existence than he had been, so that he was struck now by the strange dejection of her figure. He came to her and stood leaning against the chimneypiece and looking down at her, as he had stood once and looked down at Jane.

"What is it?" he said.

"It's nothing. I've a cold in me head."

"Cold in your head! You've been crying. There's a blob on your dress."

—He kissed her—"What are you crying about?"

"I'm not cryin' about *anything*."

"But—you're crying." It gave him pain to see Rose crying.

"If I am, it's the first time I've done it."

"Are you quite sure?"

"Certain. I never *was* one for cryin' nor for bein' seen cry. It's just—it's just sittin' here with me 'ands before me, havin' nothing to do."

"I suppose there is n't very much for you to do."

"I've done all there is and a great deal there is n't."

"I say, shall we go to the play to-night?"

She smiled with pleasure at his thought for her. Then she shook her head. "It's not plays I want, it's work. I'd like to have me 'ands full. If we had a little house—"

"Oh, no. No, no, no." He looked terrified.

"It would come a lot cheaper. Only a *little* house, where I could do all the work."

"I've told you before I won't let you."

"With a girl," she pleaded, "to scrub. A little house up Hampstead way."

"I don't want to live up Hampstead way."

"If you mean Uncle and Aunt," she said, "they would n't think of intrudin'. We settled that, me and Uncle. I'd be as happy as the day is long."

"You're *not*? And the day is very long, is it?"

He kissed her, first on her mouth and then on the lobe of the ear that was next to him.

"Kissin' 's all very well," said Rose. "You never kissed me at Hampstead, and

you don't know how happy I was there, doin' things for you."

"I don't want things done for me."

"No. I wish you did."

"And, Rose, I don't want to be bothered with a house, to be tied to a house, to have anything to do with a house."

"Would it worry you?"

"Abominably. And think of the horrors of moving?"

"I'd move you," said Rose.

"I could n't. Look here. It would kill that book. I must have peace. This is a beastly hole, I know, but there's peace in it. You don't know what that damned book is."

She gave up the idea of the house, and seven months after her marriage she fell into a melancholy.

Sometimes, now, on a fine afternoon, she would go out into the streets and look listlessly through shop windows at hats and gowns and all the pretty things she would have thought it sin so much as to desire to wear. Where Rose lingered longest was outside those heavenly places where you saw far off a flutter of white in the windows, which turned out to be absurd, tiny, short-waisted frocks and diminutive undergarments, little heartrending shoes—things of desire, things of impossible dream, to be approached with a sacred dumbness of the heart.

The toy-shops, too, they carried her away in a flight, so that Rose caught herself saying to herself, "Some day, perhaps, I shall be here buying one of them fur animals or that there Noah's ark." Then, p'r'aps, she said to her very inmost self, things might be different.

Sometimes she would go up to Hampstead, "ridin'," as she phrased it, in a bus, to see her Aunt and Uncle and a friend she had, Polly White. Not often, for Rose did not hold with gadding about when you had a husband; besides, she was afraid of Aunt asking her, "Wot's 'e doin'?" By always referring to Tanqueray as "'e," Mrs. Eldred evaded the problem of what she was expected to call the gentleman who had so singularly married her husband's niece. Most of all Rose dreaded the question, "W'en is 'e goin' to take a little 'ouse?" For in Rose's world it is somewhat of a reflection on a married man if he is not a householder.

And last time Mrs. Eldred's inquiries

had taken a more terrible and searching form, "Is 'e lookin' for anything to do besides 'is writin'?" Rose had said then, no, that he need n't; they'd got enough, an answer that brought Mrs. Eldred round to her point again. "Then why does n't 'e take a little 'ouse?"

Sometimes Polly White came to tea in Bloomsbury. Very seldom, though, and only when Tanqueray was not there. Rose knew and Polly knew that her friends had to keep away when her husband was about. As for *his* friends, she had never caught a sight of them.

Then, all of a sudden, when Rose had given up wondering whether things would ever be different, Tanqueray, instead of going up-stairs as usual, sat down and lit a pipe, as if he were going to spend the evening with her. Rose did not know whether she would be allowed to talk. He seemed thoughtful, and Rose knew better than to interrupt him when he was thinking.

"Rose," he said at last, apparently as the result of his meditation, "a friend of mine wants to call on you to-morrow."

"To call on *me*?"

"On you, certainly."

"Shall I have to see him?"

"She, Rose, she. Yes; I think you'll have to see her."

"I did n't know," said Rose, "you had a friend."

She meant what she would have called a "lady friend."

"I've dozens," said Tanqueray, knowing what she meant.

"You have n't told me this one's name yet."

"Her name is Jane Holland."

It was Rose who now became thoughtful.

"'As she anything to do with the Jane Holland that's on those books of yours?"

"She wrote 'em."

"You did n't tell me you knew her."

"Did n't I?"

"I suppose that's how you knew her."

"Yes; that's how I knew her."

"What made 'er take to writin'? Is she married?"

"No."

"I see," said Rose, almost as if she really saw. "And what shall I 'ave to do?"

"You'll write a pretty little note to her and ask her to tea."

"Oh, dear!"

"You need n't be afraid of her."

"I 'm not afraid; but goodness knows what I shall find to talk about."

"You can talk about me."

"I suppose I *shall* 'ave to talk to her?"

"Well—yes. Or—I can talk to her."

Rose became very thoughtful indeed.

"What 's she like?"

He considered. What *was* Jinny like? Like nothing on earth that Rose had ever seen.

"I mean," said Rose, "to look at."

"I don't know that I can tell you what she 's like."

"Is she like Miss Kentish? You remember Miss Kentish at Hampstead?"

He smiled. "Not in the very least."

Rose looked depressed. "Is she like Mrs. 'Enderson down at Fleet?"

"That 's nearer. But she 's not like Mrs. Henderson. She—she 's charming."

"So 's Mrs. 'Enderson."

"It 's another sort of charm. I don't even know whether you 'd see it."

"Ah, *you* should have seen Mrs. 'Enderson with Baby. They was a perfect picture."

"That 's it. I can't see Miss Holland with Baby. I can only see her by herself."

"I wish," said Rose, "she was married, because, if she 'ad been, there might be something—"

"Something?"

"Well—to talk about."

It was his turn to say, "I see."

He knocked the ashes out of his pipe, thus closing the sitting, and settled down to a long correspondence in arrears.

At bedtime Rose spoke again.

"How old is she?" Rose said.

XV

JANE had known all the time that if she was not to go on thinking about George Tanqueray she must see his wife. When she had once thoroughly realized his wife, it would be easier to give him up to her.

It was George who had tried to prevent her realizing Rose. He, for his part, refused to be given up to Rose or in any way identified with her. Nina was right. His marriage had made no difference to George.

But now that she realized Rose, it made all the difference to Jane. Rose was realized so completely that she turned George

out of the place he persisted in occupying in Jane's mind. Jane had not allowed herself to feel that there was anything to be sorry about in George's marriage. She was afraid of having to be sorry for George, because, in that case, there would be no end to her thinking about him. But if there was any sorrow in George's marriage, it was not going to affect George. She would not have to be sorry about him.

Like Nina, Jane was sorry for the woman.

That little figure strayed in and out of Jane's mind without disturbing her renewed communion with Hambleby.

Up till now she had contrived to keep the very existence of Hambleby a secret from her publishers. But they had got wind of him somehow, and had written many times, inquiring when he would be ready. As if she could tell, as if her object was to get him ready, and not rather to prolong the divine moments of his creation. She would have liked to keep him with her in perpetual manuscript, for in this state he still seemed a part of herself. Publicity of any sort was a profanation. When published, he would be made to stand in shop windows coarsely labeled, offering himself for sale at four-and-six; he would go into the houses of people who could not possibly appreciate him, and would suffer unspeakable things at their hands. As the supreme indignity, he would be reviewed. And she, his creator, would be living on him, profiting by his degradation at percentages which made her blush. To be thinking of what Hambleby would "fetch" was an outrage to his delicate perfection.

But she had to think of it; and, after all, when she had reckoned it up, he would not "fetch" so very much. She had failed to gather in one half of the golden harvest. The serial rights of Hambleby lay rotting in the field. George used to manage all these dreadful things for her. For though George was not much cleverer than she was, he liked to think he was. It was his weakness to imagine that he had a head for business. And, in the perversity of things, he had really done better for her than he had been able to do for himself. That was the irony of it, when, if she could, she would have taken her luck and shared it with him.

Anyhow, business without George had

been very uninteresting, and therefore she had not attended to it. There had been opportunities as golden as you please, but she had not seized them. There had been glorious openings for Hambleby, far-reaching prospects, noble vistas, if only he had been born six months sooner. And when George said that Hambleby would be popular, he was of course only tormenting her. He never meant half of the unpleasant things he said.

It was now April. Hambleby waited only for the crowning chapter. The arrangements for his publication had been made, all but the date, which was left unsettled, in case at the last moment a new opening should be found.

At four o'clock on an April afternoon Jane was meditating on her affairs when the staircase bell rang somewhat imperiously. It sounded like somebody determined to get in. A month ago she would have taken no notice of it. Now she was afraid not to open her door lest Tanqueray should be there.

It was not Tanqueray. It was Hugh Brodrick.

For a second she wondered at him, not taking him in. She had forgotten that Brodrick existed. It was his eyes by which she recognized him. They were fixed on her, smiling at her wonder. He stood on the little square of landing between the door and the foot of the staircase.

"Of course," he said, "you're just going out?"

"No; do come in."

"May I? I don't believe you know in the least who I am."

"I do, really. I'm very glad to see you."

He followed her up the stairs and into her sitting-room, the small, white-painted sitting-room, with its three straight windows looking on the square. He went to one of the windows and looked out.

"Yes," he said, "there is a charm about it."

He spoke as if his mind had been long occupied with this place she lived in; as if they had disputed together many times as to the attraction of Kensington Square, and he had been won over at last, reluctantly, to her view. It all strengthened the impression he gave of being absorbed in her.

He turned to her.

"You like living here all alone, cut off from everybody?"

She remembered then how they had really discussed this question.

"I like it very much indeed."

"Well,"—he said it sadly,—“do you write in this room? At that table?"

"Yes."

He looked at the table, as if he thought it all very interesting and very incomprehensible and very sad. He looked at the books on the shelf close to the table, and read George Tanqueray's name on them. He frowned slightly at the books and turned away.

She sat down. He did not take the chair she indicated, but chose another where he could see her rather better. He was certainly a man who knew his own mind.

"I've called," he said, "a great many times. But I've always missed you."

"So at last you gave it up? Like everybody else."

"Does it look as if I'd given it up?"

She could not say it did.

"No," he said; "I never give anything up. In that I'm not like everybody else."

He was not, she reflected. And yet somehow he ought to have been. There was nothing so very remarkable about him.

He smiled. "I believe," he said, "you thought I was the man come to tune the piano."

"Did I look as if I did?"

"A little."

"Do I now?" She was beginning to like Brodrick.

"Not so much. As it happens, I have come partly for the pleasure of seeing you and partly to discuss, if you don't mind, some business."

Jane was aware of a certain relief. If it was that he came for—

"I don't know whether you've heard that I'm bringing out a magazine?"

"Oh, yes. I remember you were bringing it out—"

"I was thinking of bringing it out when I last met you. It may interest you because it's to have nothing in it that is n't literature. I'm going in for novels, short stories, essays, poems, no politics."

"Won't that limit your circulation?"

"Of course it'll limit it. Still, it's

not easy to keep honest if you go in for politics."

"I see. Rather than not be honest you prefer to limit your circulation?"

He blushed like a man detected in some meanness, the supreme meanness of vaunting his own honesty.

"Oh, well, I don't know about that. Politics means my brother-in-law. If I keep them out, I keep him out, and run the thing my own way. I daresay that's all there is in it."

Certainly she liked him. He struck her as powerful and determined. With his magazine, he had the air of charging sublimely at the head of the forlorn hope of literature.

"It's taken me all this time to get the capital together, but I've got it."

"Yes, you would get it."

He looked up, gravely inquiring.

"You strike me as being able to get things."

He flushed with pleasure. "Do I? I don't know. If I can get the authors I want, I believe I can make the magazine one of the big things of the century." He said it quietly, as if inspired by caution rather than by enthusiasm. "*They* 'll make it—if I can get them."

"Are they so difficult?"

"The ones I want are. I don't want any but the best."

She smiled.

"It's all very well to smile; but this kind of magazine has n't really been tried before. There's room for it."

"Oh, oceans of room."

"And it will have all the room there is. Now's its moment. All the good old magazines are dead."

"And gone to heaven because they were so good."

"Because they were old. My magazine will be young."

"There has been frightful mortality among the young."

"I know the things you mean. They were decadent, neurotic, morbid, worse than old. My magazine will be really young. It's the young writers that I want. And there is n't one of them I want as much as you."

She seemed to have hardly heard him.

"Have you asked Mr. Tanqueray?"

"Not yet. You're the first I've asked, the very first."

"You should have asked him first."

"I did n't want him first."

"You should have wanted him. Why," she persisted, "did you come to me before him?"

"Because you're so much more valuable to me."

"In what way?"

"Your name is better known."

"It ought n't to be. If it's names you want—" She gave him a string of them.

"Your name stands for more."

"And Mr. Tanqueray's? Does it not stand?"

He hesitated.

She insisted: "If mine does."

"I am corrupt," said Brodrick, "and mercenary and brutal."

"I wish you were n't," said she so earnestly that he laughed.

"My dear Miss Holland, we cannot blink the fact that you have a name and he has n't."

"Or that my name sells and his does n't. Is that it?"

"Not altogether. If I could n't get you, I'd try to get him."

"Would you? How do you know that you're going to get me?"

He smiled. "I don't. I only know that I'm prepared, if I may say so, to pay for you."

"Oh," she said, "it is n't that!"

He smiled again at her horror.

"I know it is n't that. Still—" He named a round sum, a sum so perfect in its roundness that it took her breath away. With such a sum she could do all that she wanted for her sister Effy at once, and secure herself against gross poverty for years.

"It's more than we could give Mr. Tanqueray."

"Is it?"

"Much more."

"That's what's so awful," she said.

He noticed how she clenched her hands as she said it.

"It's not my fault, is it?"

"Oh, I don't care whose fault it is!"

"But you care?"

"Yes." She almost whispered it.

He was struck by that sudden drop from vehemence to pathos.

"He is a very great friend of yours?"

"Yes."

"And—he's just married, is n't he?"

"Yes; and he is n't very well off. I don't think he could afford—" she said.

He colored painfully, as if she had suspected him of a desire to traffic in Tanqueray's poverty.

"We should pay him very well," he said.

"His book," she pressed it on him, "is not arranged for."

"And yours is?"

"Virtually it is. The contract's drawn up, but the date's not settled."

"If the date's not settled, surely I've still a chance?"

"And he," she said, "has still a chance if—I fail you?"

"Of course, if you *fail* me."

"And supposing that I had n't got a book?"

"But you have."

"Supposing?"

"Then I should fall back on Mr. Tanqueray."

"Fall back on him! The date is settled."

"But I thought—"

"I've settled it."

"Oh. And it can't be unsettled?"

"It can't possibly."

"Why not?"

She meditated. "Because—it would spoil the chances of the book."

"I see. The chances of the book."

Their eyes met in conflict. It was as if they were measuring each other's moral value.

"I should make you a bigger offer, Miss Holland," he said, "only I believe you don't want that."

"No; certainly I don't want that."

He paused. "Do you mind telling me if you've any other chance?"

"None; not the ghost of one."

"So that, but for this all-important question of the date, I might have had you?"

"You might have had me."

"I'm almost glad," he said, "to have lost you—that way."

"Which way?" said she.

At that moment a servant of the house brought in tea. She announced that Mr. Nicholson was down-stairs and would like to see Miss Holland.

"Very well. You'll stay?" Jane said to Brodrick.

He did. He was, Jane reflected, the sort of man who stayed.

"Here's Mr. Brodrick," said she as Nicky entered. "He's going to make all our fortunes."

"His own, too, I hope," said Brodrick; but he looked sulky, as if he resented Nicholson's coming in.

"Of course," he said, "they tell me the whole thing's a dream, a delusion, that it won't pay. But I know how to make it pay. The reason why magazines go smash is because they're owned by men with no business connections, no business organization, no business capacity. I could n't do it if I had n't the newspaper at my back. Virtually I make the paper pay for the magazine."

And he went into it in his quick, quiet voice, expounding and expanding his scheme, laying it down fairly and squarely, with lucidity, but no apparent ardor.

It was Nicky who was excited. Jane could see cupidity in Nicky's eyes as Brodrick talked about his magazine. Brodrick dwelt now on the commercial side of it, which had no interest for Nicky. Yet Nicky was excited. He wanted badly to get into Brodrick's magazine, and Brodrick wanted, Brodrick was determined, to keep him out. There was a brief struggle between Nicky's decency and his desire, and then Nicky's desire and Brodrick's determination fairly skirmished together in the open. Brodrick tried heavily to keep Nicky off it, but Nicky hovered airily, intangibly about it. He fanned it as with wings; when Brodrick dropped it, he picked it up, he sustained it, he kept it flying high. Every movement intimated in Nicky's most exquisite manner that if Brodrick really meant it, if he had positively surrendered to the expensive dream, if he wanted, in short, to keep it up and keep it high, he could n't be off letting Nicky in.

Brodrick's shameless intention had been to out-stay Nicky, and as long as Nicky's approaches were so delicate as to provoke only delicate evasions, Brodrick stayed. But in the end poor Nicky turned desperate and put it to him point-blank. "Was there or was there not to be a place for poets in the magazine?"

At that Brodrick got up and went.

"Nicky," said Jane, as the door closed on the retreating editor, "he came for my book, and I've made him take George Tanqueray's instead."



Drawn by Arthur I. Keller

Half-tone plate engraved by R. Varley

“‘AND HE,’ SHE SAID, ‘HAS STILL A CHANCE IF—I FAIL YOU?’”

"I wish," said he, "you 'd make him take my poem. But you can't. Nobody can *make* Brodrick do anything he does n't want to."

"Oh," said Jane, and dismissed Brodrick. "It 's ages since I 've seen you."

"I heard that you were immersed, and so I kept away."

"That was very good of you," said she.

It struck her when she had said it that perhaps it was not altogether what Nicky would have liked her to say.

"I *was* immersed," she said, "in Hambleby."

"Is he finished?"

"All but. I 'm waiting to put a crown upon his head."

"Were you by any chance making it—the crown?"

"I have n't even begun to make it."

"I sha'n't spoil him then if I stay?"

"No. I doubt if anything could spoil him now."

"You 've got him so safe?"

"So safe. And yet, Nicky, there are moments when I can hardly bear to think of Hambleby for fear he should n't be all right. It 's almost as if he came too easily."

"He could n't. All my best things come," said Nicky, "like *that*!"

A furious sweep of Nicky's arm simulated the onrush of his inspiration.

"Oh, Nicky, how splendid it must be to be so certain."

"It is," said Nicky, solemnly.

But Nicky, so far from enlarging on his certainty, meditated with his eyes fixed upon the clock.

"You don't dine, do you," he said suddenly, "till half-past seven?"

"You 'll stay, won't you?"

"I think I must n't, thanks. I only wanted to know how long I had."

"You 've really half an hour, if you *won't* dine."

"I say, you 're not expecting anybody else?"

"I did n't expect Mr. Brodrick. I 've kept everybody out so long that they 've left off coming."

"I wonder," said he, still meditating, "if I 've come too soon."

She held her breath. Nicky's voice was charged with curious emotion.

"I knew," he went on, "it was n't any use my coming as long as you were im-

mersed. I would n't for worlds do anything that could possibly injure your career."

"Oh, my career—"

"The question is," he meditated, "would it?"

"Your coming, Nicky?"

"My not keeping away. I suppose I ought to be content to stand aside and watch it, your genius, when it 's so tremendous. I 've no right to get in its way—"

"You don't, you don't."

"I would n't. I always should be standing aside and watching. That," said Nicky, "would be, you see, my attitude."

"Dear Nicky," she murmured, "it 's a beautiful attitude! It could n't—your attitude—be anything but beautiful."

"Only of course," he added, "I 'd be there."

"But you are. You are there. And it 's delightful to have you."

His face, which had turned very white, flushed, but not with pleasure. It quivered with some somber and sultry wave of pain.

"I meant," he said, "if I were always there."

His eyes searched her. She would not look at him.

"Nobody," she said, "can be—always."

"You would n't know it. You would n't see me—when you were immersed."

"I 'm afraid," she said, "I always am, I always shall be—immersed."

"Won't there be moments?"

"Oh, moments! Very few."

"I would n't care how few there were," he said; "I know there can't be many."

She understood him. There was nothing on earth like Nicky's delicacy. He was telling her that he would accept any terms, the very lowest; that he knew how Tanqueray had impoverished her; that he could live on moments—the moments that Tanqueray had left.

"There are none, Nicky. None," she said.

"I see this is n't one of them."

"All the moments—when there are any—will be more or less like this. I 'm sorry," she said.

"So am I," said he. It was as if they were saying they were sorry he could not dine.

So monstrous was Nicky's capacity for illusion that he went away with the idea that he had given Jane up for the sake of her career.

And Jane tried to think of Nicky and be sorry for him. But she could n't. She was immoderately happy. She had given up Brodrick's magazine and Brodrick's money for Tanqueray's sake. Tanks would have his chance. He would be able to take a house, and then that little wife of his would n't have to sit with her hands before her, fretting her heart away because of Tanks. She was pleased, too, because she had made Brodrick do what he had not meant and did not want to do.

But as she lay in bed that night, not thinking of Brodrick, she saw suddenly Brodrick's eyes fixed on her with a look in them which she had not regarded at the time; and she heard him saying in that queer, quiet voice of his, "I'm almost glad to have lost you that way."

"I wonder," she said to herself, "if he really spotted me."

XVI

BRODRICK'S house, Moor Grange, stood on the Roehampton side of Putney Heath, just discernible between the silver and green of the birches. With its queer red-tiled roofs, pitched at every possible slope, white, rough-cast, many-cornered walls, green storm shutters, lattice windows of many sorts and sizes, Brodrick's house had all the brilliant eccentricity of the twentieth century.

But Brodrick's garden was at least a hundred years older than his house. It had a beautiful green lawn, with a lime-tree in the middle, and a stone-flagged terrace at the back, overlooking the north end of the heath. Behind the house there was a kitchen-garden that had survived modernity.

Brodrick's garden was kept very smooth and very straight, no impudent little flowers hanging out of their beds, no dissolute straggling of creepers upon walls. Even the sweet-peas at the back were trained to a perfect order and propriety.

And in Brodrick's house propriety and order were carried to the point of superstition. Nothing in that queer-cornered modern exterior was ever out of place. No dust ever lay on floor or furniture. All the white-painted woodwork was ex-

quisitely white. Time there was measured by a silver-chiming clock that struck the quiet hours with an infallible regularity.

And yet Brodrick was not a tidy or a punctual man. In his library the spirit of order contended against fearful odds. For Brodrick lived in his library, the long, book-lined up-stairs room that ran half the length of the house on the north side. But even there, violate as he would his own sanctuary, the indestructible propriety renewed itself by a diurnal miracle. He found books restored to their place, papers sorted, everything an editor could want lying ready to his hand. For the spirit of order rose punctually to perform its task.

But in the drawing-room its struggles and its triumph were complete.

It had been, so Brodrick's sisters told him, a man's idea of a drawing-room. And now there were feminine touches so incongruous and scattered that they seemed the work of a person establishing herself tentatively, almost furtively, by small, inconspicuous advances and instalments. A little work-table stood beside the low settle in the corner by the fireplace. Gay, shining chintz covered the ugly chairs. There were cushions here and there, where a woman's back most needed them. Books, too, classics in slender *duodecimo*, bought for their cheapness, novels (from the circulating library) of the kind that Brodrick never read. On the top of a writing-table flagrantly feminine in its appointment there stood, well in sight of the low chair, a photograph of Brodrick which Brodrick could not possibly have framed and put there.

The woman who entered this room now had all the air of being its mistress, she moved in it so naturally and with such assurance, as in her sphere. You would have judged her occupied with some mysterious personal predilections with regard to drawing-rooms. She paused in her passage to reinstate some article dishonored by the parlor-maid, to pat a cushion into shape, and place a chair better to her liking. At each of these small, fastidious operations she frowned like one who resents interference with the perfected system of her own arrangements.

She sat down at the writing-table and took from a pigeonhole a sheaf of tradesmen's bills. These she checked and dock-

eted conscientiously, after entering their totals in a book marked "Household." From all these acts she seemed to draw some secret enjoyment and satisfaction. She was evidently now in a realm secure from the interference of the incompetent.

With a key attached to her person she now unlocked the inmost shrine of the writing-table. A small, squat heap of silver and copper sat there like the god of the shrine. She took it in her hand and counted it and restored it to its consecrated seat. She then made a final entry, "Cash in hand, thirty-five shillings."

She sat smiling in tender contemplation of this legend. It stood for the savings of the last month effected by her deft manipulation of the household. There was no suggestion of cupidity in her smile, nor any hint of economy adored and pursued for its sake.

She was Gertrude Collett, the lady who for three years had acted as Brodrick's housekeeper, or, as she now preferred to call herself, his secretary. She had contrived, out of this poor material of his weekly bills, to fashion for herself a religion and an incorporeal romance.

She raised her face to the photograph of Brodrick, as if, spiritually, she rendered her account to him. And Brodrick's face, from the ledge of the writing-table, looked over Gertrude's head with an air of being unmoved by it all, with eyes intent on their own object.

She, Brodrick's secretary, might have been about five and thirty. She was fair with the fairness which is treacherous to women of her age, which suffers when they suffer. But Gertrude's skin still held the colors of her youth, as some strong fabric holds its dye. Her face puzzled you; it was so broad across the cheek-bones that you would have judged it coarse; it narrowed suddenly in the jaws, pointing her chin to subtlety. Her nose, broad also across the nostrils and the bridge, showed a sharp edge in profile; it was alert, competent, inquisitive. But there was mystery again in the long-drawn, pale-rose lines of her mouth—a wide mouth with irregular lips, not coarse, but coarsely finished. Its corners must once have drooped with pathos, but this tendency was overcome or corrected by the serene habit of her smile.

It was not the face of a dreamer. Yet

at the moment you would have said she dreamed. Her eyes, light-colored, slightly prominent, stared unsheltered under their pale lashes and insufficient brows. They were eyes that at first sight had no depths in them. Yet they seemed to hold vapor. They dreamed. They showed her dream.

She started as the silver-chiming clock struck the half-hour.

She went up-stairs to the room that was her own, and examined herself carefully in the looking-glass. Then she did something to her hair. Waved slightly and kept in place by small, amber-colored combs, Gertrude's hair, though fragile, sustained the effect of her almost Scandinavian fairness. Next she changed her cotton blouse for an immaculate muslin one. As she drew down the blouse and smoothed it under the clipping belt, she showed a body flat in the back, sharp-breasted, curbed in the waist—the body of a thoroughly competent, serviceable person. Her face now almost suggested prettiness as she turned and turned its little, tilted profile between two looking-glasses.

At three o'clock she was seated at her place in Brodrick's library. A table was set apart for her and her type-writer in a corner by the window.

The editor was at work at his own table in the center of the room. He did not look up at her as she came in. His eyes were lowered, fixed on the proof he was reading. Once, as he read, he shrugged his shoulders slightly, and once he sighed. Then he called her to him.

She rose and came, moving dreamily, as if drawn, yet holding herself stiffly and aloof. He continued to gaze at the proof.

"You sat up half the night to correct this, I suppose?"

"Have I done it very badly?"

He did not tell her that she had, that he had spent the best part of his morning correcting her corrections. She was an inimitable housekeeper and a really admirable secretary, but her weakness was that she desired to be considered admirable and inimitable in everything she undertook. It would distress her to know that this time she had not succeeded, and he did not like distressing people who were dependent on him. It used to be so easy, so mysteriously easy, to distress Miss Collett: but she had got over that; she was

used to him now; she had settled down into the silent and serene performance of her duties. And she had brought to her secretarial work a silence and serenity that were invaluable to a man who detested argument and agitation.

So, instead of insisting on her failure, he tried to diminish her disturbing sense of it; and when she inquired if she had done her work very badly, he smiled and said, No, she had done it much too well.

"Too well?" She flushed as she echoed him.

"Yes. You've corrected all Mr. Tanqueray's punctuation and nearly all his grammar."

"But it's all wrong. Look there—and there."

"How do you know it's all wrong?"

"But—it's so simple. There are rules."

"Yes; but Mr. Tanqueray's a great author, and great authors are born to break half the rules there are. What you and I have got to know is where they *may* break them, and where they *may* n't."

A liquid film swam over Gertrude's eyes, deepening their shallows. It was the first signal of distress.

"It's all right," he said. "I wanted you to do it. I wanted to see what you could do." He considered her quietly. "It struck me you might perhaps prefer it to your other duties."

"What made you think that?"

"I did n't think. I only wondered. Well—"

The next hour was occupied with the morning's correspondence, till Brodrick announced that they had no time for more.

"It's only just past four," she said.

"I know; but—is there anything for tea?" he said, speaking vaguely like a man in a dream.

"What an opinion you must have of my housekeeping!" she said.

"Your housekeeping, Miss Collett, is perfection."

She flushed with pleasure, so that he kept it up.

"Everything," he said, "runs on greased wheels. I don't know how you do it."

"Oh, it's easy enough to do."

"And it does n't matter if a lady comes to tea?"

He took up a pencil and began to sharpen it.

"Is there," said Miss Collett, "a lady coming to tea?"

"Yes. And we'll have it in the garden—tea, I mean."

"And who," said she, "is the lady?"

"Miss Jane Holland." Brodrick did not look up. He was absorbed in his pencil.

"Another author?"

"Another author," said Brodrick to his pencil.

She smiled. The editor's attitude to authors was one of prolonged amusement. Prodigious people, authors, in Brodrick's opinion. More than once, by way of relieving his somewhat perfunctory communion with Miss Collett, he had discussed the eccentricity, the vanity, the inexhaustible absurdity of authors. So that it was permissible for her to smile.

"You are not," he said, "expecting either of my sisters?"

He said it in his most casual, most uninterested voice. And yet she detected an undertone of anxiety. He did not want his sisters to be there when Miss Holland came. She had spent three years in studying his inflections and his wants.

"Not specially to-day," she said.

Brodrick became manifestly entangled in the process of his thought. The thought itself was as yet obscure to her. She inquired, therefore, where Miss Holland was to be "shown in." Was she a drawing-room author or a library author?

In the perfect and unspoken conventions of Brodrick's house the drawing-room was Miss Collett's place and the library was his. Tea in the drawing-room meant that he desired Miss Collett's society; tea in the library, that he preferred his own. There were also rules for the reception of visitors. Men were shown into the library and stayed there. Great journalistic ladies like Miss Caroline Bickersteth were shown into the drawing-room. Little journalistic ladies, with dubious manners, calling, as they did, solely on business, were treated as men and confined strictly to the library.

Brodrick's stare of surprise showed Gertrude that she had blundered. He had a superstitious reverence for those authors who, like Mr. Tanqueray, were great.

"My dear Miss Collett, do you know who she is? The drawing-room, of course, and all possible honor."

She laughed. She had cultivated, for Brodrick's sake, the art of laughter, and prided herself upon knowing the precise moments to be gay.

"I see," she said. And yet she did not see. How could there be any honor if he did n't want his sisters to be there?

"That means the best tea-service and my best manners?"

He did not know, he said, that she had any but the best.

How good they were she let him see when he presented Miss Holland on her arrival, her trailing, conspicuous arrival. Gertrude had never given him occasion to feel that his guests could have a more efficient hostess than his secretary. She spoke of the pleasure it gave her to see Miss Holland, and of the honor that she felt, and of how she had heard of Miss Holland from Mr. Brodrick. There was no becoming thing that Gertrude did not say. And all the time she was aware of Brodrick's eyes fixed on Miss Holland with that curious lack of diffuseness in their vision.

Brodrick was carrying it off by explaining Gertrude to Miss Holland.

"Miss Collett," he said, "is a wonderful lady. She's always doing the most beautiful things so quietly that you never know they're done."

"Does anybody," said Jane, "know how the really beautiful things are done?"

"There's a really beautiful tea," said Miss Collett, gaily, "in the garden. There are scones and the kind of cake you like."

"You see," Brodrick said, "how she spoils me; how I lie on roses."

"You'd better come," said Miss Collett, "while the scones are still hot."

"While," said Jane, "the roses are still fresh."

He held the door open for her, and on the threshold Miss Collett followed her.

"Are you sure," said Jane, "he's the horrid Sybarite you think him?"

"I am," said Brodrick, "whatever Miss Collett thinks me. If it pleases her to think I'm a Sybarite, I've got to be a Sybarite."

"I see. And when the rose-leaves are crumpled, you bring them to Miss Collett, and she irons them out, and makes them all smooth again, so that you don't know they're the same rose-leaves."

"The roses' leaves never are crumpled."

"Except by some sudden, unconsidered movement of your own?"

"My movements," said Brodrick, "are never sudden and unconsidered."

"What? Never?"

Miss Collett looked a little surprised at this light-handed treatment of the editor.

And Jane observed Brodrick with a new interest as they sat there in the garden and Miss Collett poured out tea. "Mr. Brodrick," she said to herself, "is going to marry Miss Collett, though he does n't know it."

By the end of the afternoon it seemed to her an inevitable consummation, the marriage of Mr. Brodrick and Miss Collett. She could almost see it working, the predestined attraction of the eternally compatible, the incomparably fit. And when Brodrick left off taking any notice of Miss Collett, and finally lured Jane away into the library on the flimsiest pretense, she wondered what game he was up to. Perhaps in his innocence he was blind to Miss Collett's adoration. He was not sure of Miss Collett. He was trying to draw her.

Jane, intensely interested, advanced from theory to theory of Brodrick and Miss Collett, while Brodrick removed himself to the writing-table and turned on her a mysterious back.

"I want to show you something," he said.

She went to him. In the bared center of the writing-table he had placed a great pile of manuscript. He drew out his chair for her, so that she could sit down and look well at the wonder.

Her heart leaped to the handwriting and to George Tanqueray's name on the title-page.

"You've seen it?" he said.

"No; Mr. Tanqueray never shows his work."

From some lair in the back of the desk he swept forward a prodigious array of galley-proofs. Tanqueray's novel was in the first number of the "New Monthly."

"Oh!" she cried, looking up at him.

"I've pleased you?" he said.

"You have pleased me very much."

She rose and turned away, overcome as by some desired and unexpected joy. He followed her, making a cushioned place for her in the chair by the hearth, and seated himself opposite her.

"I was very glad to do it," he said simply.

"It will do you more good than Hambleby," she said.

"You know I did n't think so," said he. There was a pause between them.

"Mr. Brodrick," she said presently, "do you really want a serial from me?"

"Do I want it!"

"As much as you think you do?"

"I always," said he, "want things as much as I think I do."

She smiled, wondering whether he thought he wanted Miss Collett as much as he obviously did.

"What?" he said. "Are you going to let me have the next?"

"I had thought of it. If you really do—"

"Have you had any other offers?"

"Yes, several. But—"

"You must remember mine is only a new venture, and you may do better—"

It was odd, but a curious uncertainty, a modesty, had come upon him since she last met him. He had then been so absurd, so arrogant about his magazine.

"I don't want to do better."

"Of course if it's only a question of terms—"

It was incredible, Brodrick's depreciating himself to a mere question of terms. She flushed at his dreadful thought.

"It is n't," she said. "Oh! I did n't mean *that*!"

"You never mean that, which is why I must think of it for you. I can at least offer you higher terms."

"But," she persisted, "I should hate to take them. I *want* you to have the thing. That's to say I want *you* to have it. You must not go paying me more for that."

"I see," he said; "you want to make up."

She looked at him. He was smiling complacently in his fullness of his understanding of her.

"My dear Miss Holland," he went on, "there must be no making up. Nothing of that sort between you and me."

"There is n't," she said. "What is there to make up for? For your not getting me?"

He smiled again as if that idea amused him.

"Or," said she, "for my making you take Mr. Tanqueray?"

"You did n't *make* me," he said. "I took him to please you."

"Well," she said, "and you'll take me now to please me."

She rose.

"I must say good-by to Miss Collett. How nice," she said, "Miss Collett is!"

"Is n't she?" said he.

He saw her politely to the station.

That evening he drank his coffee politely in the drawing-room with Miss Collett.

"Do you know," he said, "Miss Holland thinks you're nice."

To his wonder, Miss Collett did not look as if the information gave her any joy.

"Did she say so?"

"Yes. Do you think *her* nice?"

"Of course I do."

"What," said he, "do you really think of her?"

He was in the habit of asking Miss Collett what she thought of people. It interested him to know what women thought, especially what they thought of other women.

It was in the spirit of their old discussions that she now replied.

"You can see she is a great genius. They say geniuses are bad to live with; but I do not think she would be."

He did not answer. He was considering very profoundly the question she had raised. Which was precisely what Miss Collett meant that he should do.

As the silver-chiming clock struck ten she rose and said good night. She never allowed these sittings to be prolonged past ten. Neither did Brodrick.

"And I am not to read any more proofs?" she said.

"Do you like reading them?"

She smiled. "It's not because I like it. I simply wanted to save you."

"You do save me most things."

"I try," she said sweetly, "to save you all."

He smiled now. "There are limits," he said, "even to your power of saving me—and to my capacity for being saved."

The words were charged with a significance that Brodrick himself was not aware of, as if the powers that worked in him obscurely had used him for the utterance of a divination not his own.

His secretary understood him better

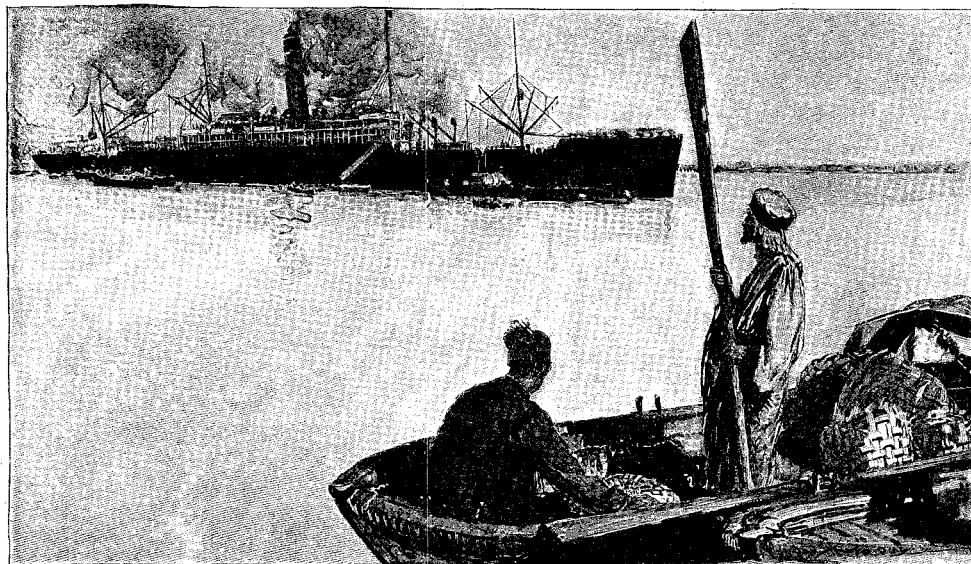
than he did himself. She had spent three years in understanding him. And now, for the first time in three years, her lucidity was painful.

She could not contemplate serenely the thing she thought she had seen. There-

fore she drew a veil over it and refused to believe that it was there.

"He did not mean anything," said Gertrude to herself. "He is not the sort of man who means things." Which was true.

(To be continued)



Drawn by Jay Hambidge

STEALING A MARCH ON THE FAR EAST¹

BEING THE ADVENTURES OF A STOWAWAY FROM
CAIRO TO CEYLON

BY HARRY A. FRANCK

AS the American "hobo" studies the folders of the railway-lines, so the vagrant beyond seas scans the posters of the steamship-companies. Few were the ships plying to the far East whose movements I had not followed during my sojourn in Cairo. Hence it was that I knew well the names on the bow of every steamer that crawled by close at hand through the canal as our train wheezed from Ismailia to the coast. Yet what a gulf intervened between me, on the edge of the desert, and those fortunate mortals already eastward bound!

Had I been permitted to choose my next port, it would have been Bombay. He who is stranded at the mouth of the Suez Canal, however, talks not of choice. He clutches desperately at any chance of escape, and is content to be gone, be it east or west, on any craft that floats. It is not that ships are lacking, for they pass the canal in hundreds every week; but their crews are yellow men, or brown, and their anchorage is well out in the stream.

"A man on the beach here," the American consul declared, "is down and out. He had better be sitting with the penguins on

¹ See "Tramping in Palestine," in the January CENTURY, by the same writer.