

THE CREATORS: A COMEDY

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XXXII

FOR six months Jane concentrated all her passion on her little son. The Brodricks, who had never been surprised at anything, owned that this was certainly not what they had expected. Jane seemed created to confound their judgments and overthrow their expectations. Neither Frances Heron nor Sophy Levine was ever so possessed by the ecstasy and martyrdom of motherhood. They confessed as much. Frances looked at Sophy and said, "Whoever would have thought that Jinny—" And Sophy looked at Frances and replied: "My dear, I did n't even think she could have had one. She's a marvel and a mystery."

The baby was a link binding Jane to her husband's family. She was a marvel and a mystery to them more than ever, but she was no longer an alien. The tie of the flesh was strong. She was Hugh's wife, who had gone near to death for him, and had returned in triumph. She was glorified in their eyes by all the powers of life.

The baby himself had a powerful attraction for them. From John's house in Augustus Road, from Henry's house in Roehampton Lane, from the house of the Levines in St. John's Wood, there was now an incessant converging upon Brodrick's house. The women took an unwavering and unwandering interest in Hugh's amazing son. (It was a girl they had expected.) First thing in the morning, or at noon, or in the early evening, at his bedtime, John's wife, Mabel, came with her red-eyed, sad-hearted worship. Winny Heron hung about him and Jane forever. Jane discovered in Sophy and in Frances an undercurrent of positive affection that set from her child to her.

John Brodrick regarded her with solemn but tender approval, and Henry, who might have owed her a grudge for upsetting his verdict—Henry loved her even more than he approved. She had performed her part beyond all hope; she linked the generations; she was wedded and made one with the solidarity of the Brodricks.

Jane with a baby was a mystery and a marvel to herself. She spent days in worshipping the small divinity of his person, and in the contemplation of his heart-reading human attributes. She fretted herself to fever at his untimely weaning. She ached with longing for the work of his hands upon her, for the wonder of his eyes, opening at her for a moment, bright and small, over the white rim of her breast.

In his presence there perished in her all consciousness of time. Time was nothing to him. He laid his diminutive hands upon the hours, and destroyed them for his play.

You would have said that time was no more to Jane than it was to the baby. For six months she watched with indifference the slaughter and ruin of the perfect hours. For six months she remained untormented by the desire to write. Brodrick looked upon her as a woman made perfect, wholly satisfied and appeased.

At the end of the six months she was attacked by a mysterious restlessness and fatigue. Brodrick, at Henry's suggestion, took her to the seaside. They were away six weeks.

She came back declaring herself strong.

But there was something about her that Henry did not like. She was, if anything, more restless; unnaturally (he said) abstracted when you spoke to her; hardly aware of you at times. John had noticed



Drawn by Arthur I. Keller. Half-tone plate engraved by R. Varley

"IT WAS JINNY WHO LAY THERE, JINNY, HIS WIFE."

that, too, and had not liked it. They had all noticed it. They were afraid it must be worrying Hugh. She seemed, Sophy said, to be letting things go all round. Frances thought she was not nearly so much taken up with the baby. When she mentioned it to Henry he replied gravely that it was physical. It would pass.

And yet it did not pass.

The crisis came in May of nineteen hundred and six, when the baby was seven months old. It all turned on the baby.

Every morning about nine o'clock, now that summer was come, you found him in the garden, in his perambulator, barefooted and bareheaded, taking the air before the sun had power. Every morning his nurse brought him to his mother to be made much of—at nine, when he went out, and at eleven, when he came in, full of sleep. In and out he went through the French window of Jane's study, which opened straight on to the garden. He was wheeled processionally up and down, up and down the gravel walk outside it, or had his divine seat under the lime-tree on the lawn. Always he was within sight of Jane's windows.

One Sunday morning (it was early, and he had not been out for five minutes, poor lamb!) Jane called to the nurse to take him away out of her sight.

"Take him away," she said. "Take him down to the bottom of the garden, where I can't see him."

Brodrick heard her. He was standing on the gravel path contemplating his son. It was his great merit that at these moments, and in the presence of other people, he betrayed no fatuous emotion. And now his face, fixed on the adorable infant, was destitute of all expression. At Jane's cry it flushed heavily.

The flush was the only sign he gave that he had heard her. Without a word he turned and followed thoughtfully the windings of the exiled perambulator. From her place at the writing-table, where she sat tormented, Jane watched them go.

Ten minutes later Brodrick appeared at the window. He was about to enter.

"Oh, no, no!" she cried. "Not you!" He entered.

"Jinny," he said gently, "what's the matter with you?"

His voice made her weak and tender.

"I want to write a book," she said—"such a pretty book!"

"It's that, is it?"

He sighed, and stood contemplating her in ponderous thought.

Jane took up some pens and played with them.

"I can't write it if you look at me like that," she said.

"I won't look at you; but I'm going to talk to you."

He sat down. She saw with terror his hostility to the thing she was about to do.

"Talking's no good," she said. "It's got to be done."

"I don't see the necessity."

"It's not one of those things that can be seen."

"No; but look here,—” He was very gentle and forbearing,—“need you do it quite so soon?”

"So soon? If I don't do it now, when shall I do it?"

He did not answer her. He sat looking at her hands in their nervous, restless play.

Her grave eyes, under their flattening brows, gazed thoughtfully at him. The corners of her mouth lifted a little with their winglike, quivering motion. Two moods were in her, one of the brooding, tragic eyes, one of the mysterious, mocking lips.

"It's no use, dear," she said. "You'll never turn me into that sort of woman."

"What sort of woman?"

"The sort of woman you like."

He waited in silence for what she would say next.

"It's not my fault; it's yours and Henry's. You should n't have made me go away and get strong. The thing always comes back to me when I get strong. It's *me*, you see."

"No, Jinny; the whole point is that you're not strong. You're not fit for anything creative."

At that she laughed.

"You're not, really. Why, how old is that child?"

"Six months. No, seven."

"Well, Henry said it would take you a whole year to get over it."

"I thought I should never get over it. We were both wrong."

"My child, it's palpable. You're nervous to the last degree. I never saw you so horribly restless."

"Not more so than when I first knew Baby was coming."

"Well, quite as much."

She gave him a little look that he did not understand.

"Quite as much," she said. "And you were patient with me then."

He maintained a composure that invited her to observe how extremely patient he was now.

"And do you remember afterward, before he came, how quiet I was and how contented? I was n't a bit nervous, or restless, or—or troublesome."

He smiled, remembering.

"Can't you see that anything creative—everything creative must be like that?"

He became grave again, having failed to follow her.

"Presently, if this thing goes all right, I shall be quite, quite sane. That 's the way it takes you just at first. Then, when you feel it coming to life and shaping itself, you settle down into a peace."

Now he understood.

"Yes," he said, "and you pay for it after."

"My dear, we pay for everything—after."

She leaned back in her chair. The movement withdrew her a little from Brodrick's unremitting gaze.

"There are women—angels naturally—who become devils if they can't have children. I 'm an angel,—you *know* I 'm an angel,—but I shall be a devil if I can't have *this*. Can't you see that it 's just as natural and normal—for *me*?"

"It 's pretty evident," he said, "that you can't have both. You were n't built to stand the double strain—"

"And you mean—you mean—"

"I mean that it would be better for you if you could keep off it for a while—at any rate, while the child 's young."

"But he 'll be young, though, for ages. And if—if there are any more of him, there 'll be no end to the keeping off."

"You need n't think about that," he said.

"It would be all very well," she said, "if it were simpler—if either you or I could deal with the thing; if we could just wring its neck and destroy it. I would, if it would make you any happier; but I can't. It 's stronger than I. I *can't* keep off it."

He pondered. He was trying painfully

to understand the nature of this woman whom he thought he knew, whom, after all, it seemed, he did not know.

"You used to understand," she said. "Why can't you now?"

Why could n't he? He had reckoned with her genius when he married her. He had honestly believed that he cared for it as he cared for her, that Jinny was not to be thought of apart from her genius. He had found Henry's opinion of it revolting, absurd, intolerable. And imperceptibly his attitude had changed. In spite of himself he was coming round to Henry's view, regarding genius as a malady, a thing abnormal, disastrous, not of nature; or if normal and natural for Jinny, a thing altogether subordinate to Jinny's functions as a wife and mother. There was no sane man who would not take that view, who would not feel that nature was supreme. And Jinny had proved that, left to nature, to her womanhood, she was sound and perfect. Jinny's genius had had, as he put it, pretty well its fling. It was nature's turn.

Underneath all his arguments there lurked, unrecognized and unsuspected, the natural man's fear of the thing not of nature, of its dominion, coming between him and her, slackening, perhaps sundering, the tie of flesh. Through the tie of flesh he had insensibly come to look on Jinny as his possession.

"What would you do," he said, "if the little chap were to get ill?"

She turned as if he had struck her.

"Ill? Why could n't you *tell* me he was ill?"

"But he is n't; I was only—"

"Does Henry say he 's ill?"

"Henry? Oh, Lord, no!"

"You 're lying. I 'll go to him and see—"

She made a rush for the window. He sprang after her and caught her. She struggled in his arms.

"Jinny, you little fool! there 's nothing—nothing! He 's bursting with health."

"What did you mean, then?"

"I meant—supposing he were ill—"

"You meant to frighten me?"

She sat down, and he saw her fighting for her breath. He knelt beside her and took her in his arms, murmuring inarticulate things in his terror. At his touch she turned to him and kissed him.

"Hugh dear," she said, "don't frighten me again. It's not necessary."

All that week, and for many weeks, she busied herself with the child and with the house. It was as if she were trying passionately to make up for some brief disloyalty, some lapse of tenderness.

Then, all of a sudden she flagged; she was overcome by an intolerable fatigue and depression. Brodrick was worried, but he kept his anxiety to himself. He was afraid now of doing or saying the wrong thing.

One Saturday evening Jinny came to him in his study. She carried a dreadfully familiar pile of bills and tradesman's books.

"Is it those horrible accounts?" he said.

She was so sick, so white, and so harassed, so piteously humble, that he knew. She had got them all wrong again.

"I did *try* to keep them," she said.

"Don't try. Leave the things alone."

"I *have* left them," she wailed. "And look at them!"

He looked. A child, he thought, could have kept them straight, they were so absurdly simple. But out of their simplicity, their limpid, facile, elementary innocence, Jinny had wrought fantasies, marvels of confusion and intricate complexity.

That was bad enough; but it was nothing to the disorder of what Jinny called her own little affairs. There seemed at first to be no relation between Jinny's proved takings and the sums that Jinny was aware of as having passed into her hands. And then Brodrick found the checks at the back of a drawer, where they had lain for many months, forgotten, Brodrick said, as if they had never been.

"I'm dreadful," said Jinny.

"You are. What on earth did you do before you married me?"

"George Tanqueray helped me."

He frowned.

"Well, you can leave it to me now," he said.

"It takes it out of me more than all the books I ever wrote."

That touched him, and he smiled in spite of himself.

"If," said she, "we only had a housekeeper."

"A housekeeper?"

"It's a housekeeper you want."

She put her face to his, brushing his cheek with a shy and fugitive caress.

"You really ought," she said, "to have married Gertrude."

"You've told me that several times already."

"*She* would n't have plagued you night and day."

He owned it.

"Is n't it rather a pity that she ever left?"

"Why, what else could the poor woman do?"

"Stay, of course."

He had never thought of that solution; if he had been asked, he would have judged it unthinkable.

"Supposing," said Jinny, "you asked her very nicely to come back, don't you think that would save us?"

No, he never would have thought of it himself; but since she had put it that way, —as saving them; saving Jinny, that was to say,—well, he owned, would n't it?

"I say, but would n't you mind?" he said at last.

"Why should I?" said she.

In the afternoon of the next day, which was a Sunday, Brodrick appeared at the house in Augustus Road. He asked to see Miss Collett.

She came to him, as she used to come to him in his study, with her uplifted, sacrificial face, holding herself stiffly and tensely, half in surrender, half resisting the impulse that drew her.

He curtly laid before her the situation.

"If you were to come back," he said, "it would solve all our problems."

She reddened, suspecting, as was her way, significance in everything that Brodrick said. Did he, she wondered, recognize that she, too, had her problem; and was he providing for her, too, the simple and beautiful solution? It was possible, then, she argued inwardly, that in some way that was not any other man's way—in some immaterial and perfect way—he cared. There was, after all, a tie. He desired, as she had desired, to preserve it in its purity and its perfection.

Putting all that aside, it remained certain that she was indispensable.

There was a deepening in the gray shallows of her eyes; they darted such light as comes only from the deeps. Her upper lip quivered with a movement that was

between a tremor and a smile, subtler than either.

"Are you sure that Mrs. Brodrick would n't mind?"

"Jinny? Oh, dear me, no! It was her idea."

Her face changed again. The light and flush of life withdrew. Her sallowness returned. She had the fixed look of one who watches the perishing under her eyes of the beloved dream.

"And you," she said, as if she read him, "are not quite sure whether you really want me?"

"Should I ask you if I did n't want you? My only doubt was whether you would care to come. Will you?"

He looked at her with his intent look. It bore some faint resemblance to the look he had for Jane. Her light rose. She met his gaze with a flame of the sacrificial fire.

"I'll do whatever you want," she said.

That was how Gertrude came back to Brodrick's house.

Once again, with immutable punctuality, the silver-chiming clock told out the hours—fair hours made perfect by the spirit of order moving in its round. It moved in the garden, and the lawn was clean and smooth; the roses rioted no longer; the borders and the paths were straight again. Indoors, all things on which Gertrude laid her hand slid sweetly and inaudibly into their place. The little, squat god appeared again within his shrine; and a great peace came upon Brodrick and on Brodrick's house.

It came upon Jane. She sank into it, and it closed over her, a marvelous, incredible peace. At the turning-point, when everything depended upon time, when time was all she wanted and was the one thing she could not get, suddenly time was made new and golden for her. It was given to her without measure, without break or stint.

Only once, and for a moment, Gertrude Collett intruded on the peace she had made, looking in at the study window as she passed on soft feet through the garden.

"Are you happy *now*?" she said.

XXXIII

SHE moved with such soft feet, on so fine and light a wing, that but for the blessed

effect of it, they were hardly aware of her presence in the house. Owing to her consummate genius for self-effacement, Brodrick remained peculiarly unaware. The bond of her secretaryship no longer held them. It had lapsed when Brodrick married, and Gertrude found herself superseded as the editor grew great.

For more than a year Brodrick's magazine had had a staff of its own, and its own office, where Miss Addy Ranger sat in Gertrude's seat. Addy no longer railed at the impermanence and mutability of things. Having attained the extreme pitch of speed and competence, she was now established as Brodrick's secretary for good. She owed her position to Jane—a position from which, Addy exultantly declared, not even an earthquake could remove her.

You would have said that nothing short of an earthquake could remove "The Monthly Review." It looked as if Brodrick's magazine, for all its dangerous splendor, had come to stay; as if Brodrick, by sheer fixity and the power he had of getting what he wanted, would yet force the world to accept his preposterous dream. He had gone straight on, deaf to his brother-in-law's warning and remonstrance; he had not checked one flight of his fantasy, or changed by one nervous movement his high attitude. Month after month the appearance of the magazine was as punctual, as inalterable as the courses of the moon.

Bold as Brodrick was, there was no vulgar audacity about his venture. The magazine was not hurled at people's heads; it was not thrust on them. It was barely offered. By the restraint and dignity of his advertisements the editor seemed to be saying to his public: "There it is. You take it or you leave it. In either case it is there; and it will remain there."

And strangely, inconceivably, it did remain. In nineteen hundred and five Brodrick found himself planted with apparent security on the summit of his ambition. He had a unique position, a reputation for caring (caring with the candid purity of high passion) only for the best. He counted as a power unapproachable, implacable to mediocrity. Authors believed in him, adored, feared, or detested him, according to their quality. Other editors admired him cautiously; they praised him to his face; in secret they

judged him preposterous, but not absurd. They all prophesied his failure; they gave him a year or at the most three years.

Some wondered that a man like Brodrick, solid, if you like, but, after all, well, of no more than ordinary brilliance, should have gone so far. It was said among them that Jane Holland was the power behind Brodrick and his ordinary brilliance and his most extraordinary magazine. The imagination he displayed, the fine, the infallible discernment, the secret for the perfect thing, were hers; they could not by any possibility be Brodrick's.

Caro Bickersteth, who gathered these impressions in her continuous communion with the right people, met them with one invariable argument. If Brodrick was not fine, if he was not perceptive, if he had not got the scent, Caro challenged them, how on earth did he discern Jane Holland? His appreciation of her, Caro informed one or two eminent critics, had considerably forestalled their own. He was the first to see; he always was the first. He had taken up George Tanqueray when other editors would not look at him, when he was absolutely unknown. And when Caro was reminded that there, at any rate, Jane Holland had been notoriously behind Brodrick's back, and that the editor was, notoriously again, in love with her, Caro made her point triumphantly, maintaining that to be in love with Jane Holland required some subtlety, if it came to that; and, pray, how, if Brodrick was devoid of it, did Jane Holland come to be in love with *him*?

It was generous of Caro, for even as sub-editor she was no longer Brodrick's right hand. To the right and to the left of him, at his back, and perpetually before him,—all round about him,—she saw Jane.

The wonder, to Caro, was that she saw her happy. It was Jane who observed to Caro how admirably all of them—she, Addy Ranger, Gertrude, Brodrick, and those two queer women, Jane Brodrick and Jane Holland—were settled down into their right places, with everything about them incomparably ordered and adjusted.

Jane marveled at the concessions that had been made to her, at the extent to which things were being done for her. Her hours were no longer confounded and consumed in supervising servants, inter-

viewing tradespeople, and struggling with the demon of finance. They were all—Jane's hours—severely and equitably disposed. She gave her mornings to her work, a portion of the afternoon to her son, and her evenings to her husband. Sometimes she sat up late with him, working on the magazine. Brodrick and the baby between them divided the three hours which were hers before dinner. The social round had ceased for Jane. She was freed from the destroyers, from the pressure of the dreadful clever little people. What remained to her of time belonged indisputably to her husband's family and to her own friends—to George Tanqueray, to the Protheros, to Nina Lempriere. She seldom went to see them; she could not afford to lose time in going and returning. If they wished to see her, they had to come to Putney.

The editor was more than ever identified with the group, now that his house had become their meeting-place. There Tanqueray came, always without his wife, and let loose his boisterous irony; there Nina darkened, or shot forth her troubled and uncertain flame; there Laura brought the light, kindled, under Nina's eyes, at Owen Prothero's fire.

Arnott Nicholson hovered about these scenes, still seeking a place in Brodrick's magazine, and finding none.

It was the sensitive Nicky who first perceived and pointed out the change in Jane. She moved among them abstractedly, with mute, half-alienated eyes. She seemed to have suffered some spiritual disintegration that was pain. She gave herself to them no longer whole, but piecemeal. At times she seemed to hold out empty, supplicating hands, palms outward, showing that she could give no more. There was, she seemed to say, no more left of her.

Only Tanqueray knew how much was left—knew of her secret, imperishable resources, things that were hidden profoundly even from herself; so hidden that, even if she gave him nothing, it was always possible to him to help himself. To him she could not change. His creed had always been the unchangeableness, the indestructibility, of Jinny.

Still, he assented, smiling, when little Laura confided to him that to see Jane Brodrick in Brodrick's house, among Brodricks, was not seeing Jinny. There was too much Brodrick. It would have been

better, said Laura, if she had married Nicky.

He agreed. There would never have been too much of Nicky. But Laura shook her head.

"It is n't a question of proportion," she said. "It is n't that there 's too much Brodrick and too little Jinny. It 's simply that Jinny is n't there."

Jane knew how she struck them. There was sadness for her not in their reproaches, for they had none, but in their recognition of the things that were impossible. They had known how it would be if she married, if she surrounded herself with a family.

There was no denying that she was surrounded, and that the circle was drawing rather tight. And, planted there in the middle of it, she was more than ever under observation. She always had been; she had always known it; only, in the beginning it had not been quite so bad. In the days when she did her best, when she was seen by all of them valiantly struggling, deplorably handicapped—in the days when, as Brodrick said, she was pathetic, allowances had been made for her.

For the Brodricks as a family were chivalrous. Even Frances and Sophy were chivalrous; and it had touched them, that dismal spectacle of Jane doing her sad best. But now she was in the position of one to whom all things have been conceded. She was in for all the consequences of concession. Everything had been done for her that could be done. She was more than ever on her honor, more than ever pledged to do her part. If she now failed Brodrick at any point, she was without excuse. Every nerve in her vibrated to the touch of honor.

Around her things went with the rhythm of faultless mechanism. There was no murmur, no perceptible vibration at the heart of the machine. You could not put your finger on it and say that it was Gertrude; yet you knew it. Time itself and the awful punctuality of things were in Gertrude's hand. You would have known it even if, every morning at the same hour, you had not come upon Gertrude standing on a chair winding up the clock that Jane invariably forgot to wind. You felt that by no possibility could Gertrude forget to wind up anything. She herself was wound up every morning. She might have been

a clock. She was wound up by Brodrick; otherwise she was self-regulating, provided with a compensatory balance, and so long as Brodrick wound her, incapable of going wrong. Jane envied her her secure and secret mechanism, her automatic rhythm, the delicate precision of her ways. Compared with them, her own performance was dangerous, fantastic, a dance on a tight-rope. She marveled at her own preternatural poise.

She was steady; they could never say she was not steady. And they could never say it was not difficult. She had so many balls to keep going. There was her novel; and there was Brodrick, and the baby, and Brodrick's family, and her own friends. She could not drop one of them.

And at first there came on her an incredible, effortless dexterity. She was a fine juggler on her tight-rope, keeping in play her golden balls, which multiplied till you could have sworn that she must miss one. And she never missed. She kept her head; she held it high; she fixed her eyes on the tossing balls, and simply trusted her feet not to swerve by a hair's-breadth. And she never swerved.

But now she was beginning to feel the trembling of the perfect balance. It was as if, in that marvelous adjustment of relations, she had arrived at the pitch where perfection topples over. She moved with tense nerves on the edge of peril.

How tense they were she hardly realized till Tanqueray warned her.

It was on a Friday, that one day of the week when Brodrick was kept late at the office of the "Morning Telegraph." And it was October, three months after the coming of Gertrude Collett. Tanqueray, calling to see Jane, as he frequently did on a Friday, about five o'clock in the afternoon, found her in her study, playing with the baby.

She had the effrontery to hold the baby up, with his little naked legs kicking in Tanqueray's face. At ten months old he was a really charming baby, and very like Brodrick.

"Do you like him?" she said.

He stepped back and considered her. She had put her little son down on the floor, where, by an absurd rising and falling motion of his rosy hips, he contrived to travel across the room toward the fireplace.

Tanqueray said that he liked the effect of him.

"The general effect? It is heartrending."

"I mean his effect on you, Jinny. He makes you look like some nice, furry animal in a wood."

At that she snatched the child from his goal, the hot curb of the hearthstone, and set him on her shoulder. Her face was turned up to him, his hands were in her hair. Mother and child laughed together.

And Tanqueray looked at her, thinking how never before had he seen her just like that—never before with her body, tall for sheer slenderness, curved backward, with her face so turned, and her mouth, fawn-like, tilting upward, the lips half-mocking, half-maternal.

It was Jinny shaped by the powers of life.

"Now," he said, "he makes you look like a young manad; mad, Jinny, drunk with life, and dangerous to life. What are you going to do with him?"

At that moment Gertrude Collett appeared in the doorway.

She returned Tanqueray's greeting as if she hardly saw him. Her face was set toward Jane Brodrick and the child.

"I am going," said Jane, "to give him to any one who wants him. I am going to give him to Miss Collett. There, you may keep him as long as you like."

Gertrude advanced, impassive, scarcely smiling. But as she took the child from Jane, Tanqueray saw how the fine lines of her lips tightened, relaxed, and tightened again, as if her tenderness were pain.

She laid the little thing across her shoulder and went from them without a word.

"He goes like a lamb," said Jane. "Two months ago he'd have howled the house down."

"So that's how you've solved your problem?" said Tanqueray, as he closed the door behind Miss Collett.

"Yes. Is n't it simple?"

"Very. But you always were."

From his corner of the fireside lounge, where he seated himself beside her, his eyes regarded her with a grave and dark lucidity. The devil in them was quiet for a time.

"That's a wonderful woman, George," said she.

"Not half so wonderful as you," he murmured.

"She's been here exactly three months, and, it's incredible, but I've begun another book. I'm almost half through."

His eyes lightened.

"So it's come back, Jinny?"

"You said it would."

"Yes. But I think I told you the condition. Do you remember?"

She lowered her eyes, remembering.

"What was it you said?"

"That you'd have to pay the price."

"Not yet; not yet. And perhaps, after all, I sha'n't have to. I may n't be able to finish."

"What makes you think so?"

"Because I've been so happy over it."

Of a sudden there died out of her face the fawnlike, woodland look, the maternal wildness, the red-blooded joy. She was the harassed and unquiet Jinny whom he knew. It was so that her genius dealt with her. She had been swung high on a strong, elastic, luminous wave; and now she was swept down into its trough.

He comforted her, as he had comforted her before. It was, he assured her, what he was there for.

"We're all like that, Jinny; we're all like that. It's no worse than I feel a dozen times over one infernal book. It's no more than what you've felt about everything you've ever done—even Hambleby."

"Yes,"—she almost whispered it,—*"it is worse."*

"How?"

"Well, I don't know whether it is that there is n't enough time—yet, or whether I've really not enough strength. Don't tell anybody I said so. Above all, don't tell Henry."

"I should n't dream of telling Henry."

"You see, sometimes I feel as if I were walking on a tight-rope of time, held for me, by somebody else, over an abyss; and that if somebody else were suddenly to let go, there I should be—precipitated. And sometimes it's as if I were doing it all with one little, little brain-cell that might break any minute; or with one little tight nerve that might snap. It's the way Laura used to feel. I never knew what it was like till now. Poor little Laura! Don't you remember how frightened we always were?"

He was frightened now. He suggested that she had better rest. He tried to force from her a promise that she would rest. He pointed out the absolute necessity of rest.

"That 's it: I 'm afraid to rest. Lest—later on—there should n't be any time at all."

"Why should n't there be?"

"Things," she said wildly and vaguely, "get hold of you. And yet you 'd have thought I 'd cut myself loose from most things."

"Cut yourself looser."

"But—from what?"

"Your relatives."

"How can I? I would n't, if I could."

"Your friends, then—Nina, Laura, Prothero, Nicky—me."

"You? I can't do without you."

He smiled. "No, Jinny; I told you long ago you could n't."

He was moved, very strangely moved, by her admission. He had not had to help himself to that. She had given it to him, a gift from the unseen.

"Well," he said presently, "what are you going to do?"

"Oh, struggle along somehow."

"I should n't struggle too hard." He meditated. "Look here, our natural tendency, yours and mine, is to believe that it 's people that do all the mischief, and not that the thing itself goes. We 'll believe anything rather than that. But we 've got to recognize that it 's capricious. It comes and goes."

"Still, people do count. My brother-in-law John Brodrick makes it go. Whereas you, Tanks, I own you make it come."

"Oh, I make it come, do I?" He wondered: "What does Brodrick do?"

His smile persisted, so that she divined his wonder.

She turned from him ever so little, and he saw a sadness in her face, thus estranged and averted. He thought he knew the source of it and its secret. It also was a gift from the unseen.

When he had left her she went up-stairs and cast herself upon the bed where her little son lay, and abandoned herself to her maternal passion.

And Gertrude stood there in the nursery, and watched her; and, like Tanqueray, she thought she knew.

XXXIV

THERE were moments when she longed to be like Gertrude, a woman with one innocent, uncomplicated aim. She was no longer sorry for her, Gertrude's passion was so sweetly and serenely mortal, and it was so manifestly appeased. She bore within her no tyrannous divinity. She knew nothing of the consuming and avenging will.

Jane was at its mercy, now that she had given it its head. It went—it went, as they said; and the terror was now lest she should go with it past all bounds.

For the world of vivid and tangible things was receding. The garden, the house, Brodrick and his suits of clothes and the unchanged garment of his flesh and blood, the child's adorable, diminutive body—they had no place beside the perpetual, the ungovernable resurgence of her vision. They became insubstantial, insignificant. The people of the vision were solid; they clothed themselves in flesh; they walked the earth: the light and the darkness and the weather knew them, and the grass was green under their feet. The things they touched were saturated with their presence; there was no sign of ardent life they had not.

And not only was she surrounded by their visible bodies, but their souls possessed her; she became the soul of each one of them in turn. It was the intimacy, the spiritual warmth of the possession, that gave her her first sense of separation, of infidelity to Brodrick. The immaterial, consecrated places were invaded. It was as if she closed her heart to her husband and her child.

The mood continued as long as the vision kept its grip. She came out of it unnerved and exhausted, and terrified at herself.

Brodrick was aware that she wandered. That was how he had always put it. He had reckoned long ago with her propensity to wander. It was the way of her genius; it was part of her queerness, of the dangerous charm that had attracted him. He understood that sort of thing. It was his own comparative queerness, his perversity, that had made him fly in the face of his family's tradition. No Brodrick had ever married a woman who wandered, who conceivably would want to wander.

And Jinny wandered more than ever; more than he had ever made allowances for. And with each wandering she became increasingly difficult to find.

One night, when he came to her, he found a creature that quivered at his touch and shrunk from it, fatigued, averted; a creature pitifully supine, with arms too weary to enforce their own repulse. He took her in his arms and she gave a cry, little and low, like a child's whimper. It went to his heart, and struck cold there. It was incredible that Jinny should have given such a cry.

He lay awake a long time. He wondered if she had ceased to care for him. He hardly dared own how it terrified him, this slackening of the physical tie.

He got up early, dressed, and went out into the garden. At six o'clock he came back into her room. She was asleep, and he sat and watched her. She lay with one arm thrown up above her pillow, as if she had tossed in troubled sleep. Her head was bowed upon her breast.

His watching face was lowered as he brooded over the marvel and the mystery of her. It was Jinny who lay there, Jinny, his wife, whose face had been so tender and compassionate to him. He tried to realize the marvel and mystery of her genius. He knew it to be an immortal thing, hidden behind the veil of mortal flesh that for the moment was so supremely dear to him. He wondered once whether she still cared for Tanqueray. But the thought passed from him; it could not endure beside the memory of her tenderness.

She woke and found his eyes fixed on her. They drew her from sleep, as they had often drawn her from some dark corner where she had sat removed. She woke, as if at the urgency of a trouble that kept watch in her under her sleep. In a moment she was wider-eyed, alert; she gazed at him with a lucid comprehension of his state. She held out to him an arm drowsier than her thought.

"I'm a brute to you," she said; "but I can't help it." She sat up and gathered together the strayed masses of her hair. "Do you think," she said, "you could get me a cup of tea from the servants' breakfast?"

He brought the tea, and as they drank together, their mutual memories revived.

"I have the most awful recollection of having been a brute to you," said she.

"Never mind, Jinny," he replied, and flushed with the sting of it.

"I don't. That's the dreadful part of it. I can't feel sorry when I want to. I can't feel anything at all." She closed her eyes helplessly against his. "It is n't my fault; it is n't really me. It's it."

He smiled at this reference to the dreadful power.

"The horrible and brutal thing about it is that it stops you from feeling. It would, you know," she went on.

"Would it? I should n't have thought it would have made *that* difference."

"That's just the difference it does make."

He moved impatiently. "You don't know what you're talking about."

"I should n't talk about it, only it's much better that you should know what it is than that you should think it's something that it is n't." She looked at him. His forehead still displayed a lowering incredulity. "If you don't believe me, ask George Tanqueray."

"George Tanqueray?"

His nerves felt the shock of the thought that had come to him just now when he watched her sleep. He had not expected to meet Tanqueray again so soon and in the open.

"How much do you think he cares for poor Rose when he's in the state I'm in?"

His face darkened as he considered her question. He knew all about poor Rose's trouble. He and Henry had discussed it. Henry had his own theory of it. He offered it as one more instance of the physiological disabilities of genius. It was an extreme and curious instance, if you liked, Tanqueray himself being curious and extreme. But it had not occurred to Brodric that Henry's theory of Tanqueray might be applied to Jane.

"What on earth do you know about George Tanqueray?" he said. "How *could* you know a thing like that?"

"I know because I'm like him."

"No, Jinny; it's not the same thing. You're a woman."

She smiled, remembering sadly how that was what George, in a brutal moment, had said she was not to be. It showed, after all, how well he knew her.

"I'm more like George Tanqueray,"

she said, "than I 'm like Gertrude Collett."

He frowned, wondering what Gertrude Collett had to do with it.

"We 're all the same," she said. "It takes us that way. You see, it tires us out."

He sighed, but his face lightened.

"If nothing 's left of a big, strong man like George Tanqueray, how much do you suppose is left of me?" she went on. "It 's perfectly simple—simpler than you thought. But it has to be."

It was simpler than he had thought. He understood her to say that in its hour, by taking from her all passion, her genius was mindful of its own.

"I see," he said; "it 's simply physical exhaustion."

She closed her eyes again.

He saw and rose against it, insanely revolted by the sacrifice of Jinny's womanhood.

"It shows, Jinny, that you *can't* stand the strain. Something will have to be done," he said.

"Oh, what?" Her eyes opened on him in terror.

His expression was utterly blank, utterly helpless. He really had n't an idea.

"I don't know, Jinny."

He suggested that she should stay in bed for breakfast.

She stayed.

Down-stairs, over the breakfast-table, he presented to Gertrude Collett a face heavy with suffering.

He was soothed by Gertrude's imperishable tact. She was glad to hear that Mrs. Brodrick had stayed in bed for breakfast. It would do her good.

At dinner-time they learned that it had done her good. Gertrude was glad again. She said that Mrs. Brodrick knew she had always wanted her to stay in bed for breakfast. She saw no reason why she should not stay in bed for breakfast every morning.

Henry was consulted. He said: "By all means. Capital idea." In a week's time, staying in bed for breakfast had made such a difference to Jane that Gertrude was held once more to have solved the problem. Brodrick even said that if Jane always did what Gertrude wanted, she would not go far wrong.

The Brodricks all knew that Jane was

staying in bed for breakfast. The news went the round of the family in three days. It traveled from Henry to Frances, from Frances to Mabel, from Mabel to John, and from John to Levine and Sophy. They received it unsurprised, with melancholy comprehension, as if they had always known it. And they said it was very sad for Hugh.

Gertrude said it was very sad for everybody. She said it to Brodrick one Sunday morning, looking at him across the table, where she sat in Jane's place. At first he had not liked to see her there, but he was getting used to it. She soothed him with her stillness, her smile, and the soft deepening of her shallow eyes.

"It 's very sad, is n't it," said she, "without Mrs. Brodrick?"

"Very," he said. He wondered ironically, brutally, what Gertrude would say if she really knew how sad it was.

"May I give you some more tea?"

"No, thank you. I wonder how long it 's going to last."

"I suppose it must run its course."

"You talk like my brother, as if it were an illness."

"Well—is n't it?"

"How should I know? I have n't got it."

He rose and went to the window that looked out on the garden and the lawn and Jane's seat under the lime-tree. He remembered how one summer, three years ago, before he married her, she had lain there recovering from some illness that he knew now to be the malady of her genius. A passion of revolt surged up in him.

"I suppose, anyhow, it 's incurable," he said more to himself than to Gertrude.

She had risen from her place and followed him.

"Whatever it is," she said, "it 's the thing we 've got most to think of. It 's the thing that means most to her."

"To her?" he repeated vaguely.

"To her," she insisted. "I did n't understand it at first; I can't say I understand it now; it 's altogether beyond me. But I do say it 's the great thing."

"Yes," he assented, "it 's the great thing."

"The thing"—she pressed it—"for which sacrifices must be made." Then, lest he should think that she pressed it too hard, that she rubbed it into him, the fact

that stung, the fact that his wife's genius was his dangerous rival, standing between them, separating them, slackening the tie; lest he should know how much she knew; lest he should consider her obtuse, as if she thought that he grudged his sacrifices, she faced him with her supreme sincerity. "You know that you are glad to make them."

She smiled, clear-eyed, shining with her own inspiration.

She was the woman who was there to serve him, who knew his need. She came to him in his hour of danger, in his dark, sensual hour, and held his light for him. She held him to himself high.

He was so helpless that he turned to her as if she indeed knew.

"Do you think it does mean most to her?" he said.

"You know best what it means," she replied.

It sank into him. And, as it sank, he said to himself that of course it was so; that he might have known it. Gertrude left it sinking. He never for a moment suspected that she had rubbed it in.

XXXV

THEY were saying now that Jane left her husband too much to Gertrude Collett, and that it was hard on Hugh.

They supposed, in their unastonished acceptance of the facts, that things would have to go on like this indefinitely. It was partly Hugh's own fault. That was John Brodrick's view of it. Hugh had given her her head, and she was off. And when Jane was off, Sophy declared, nothing could stop her.

And yet she was stopped. Suddenly, in the full fury of it, she stopped dead. She had given herself six months. She had asked for six months; not a day more. But she had not allowed for friction or disturbance from the outside. And the check—it was a clutch at the heart that brought her brain up staggering—came entirely from the outside, from the uttermost rim of her circle—from Mabel Brodrick.

In January, the fourth of the six months, Mabel became ill. All autumn John Brodrick's wife had grown slenderer and redder-eyed; her little, high-nosed, distinguished face thinned and drooped, till she was more than ever like a delicate bird.

Jane heard from Frances vague rumors of the source of Mabel's malady. The powers of life had been cruel to the lady whom John Brodrick had so indiscreetly married.

It was incredible to all that Mabel should have the power to stay Jinny in her course. But it was so. Mabel had become attached to Jinny. She adhered, with terrible tenacity. It was because she felt that Jane understood, that she was the only one of them who really knew. It was, she all but intimated, because Jane was not a Brodrick. When she was with the others, Mabel was reminded perpetually of her failures, of how horribly she had made John suffer. Not that they ever said a word about it, but they made her feel it; whereas Jinny had seen from the first that she suffered, too; she recognized her perfect right to suffer. And when it all ended, as it was bound to end, in a bad illness, the only thing that did Mabel any good was seeing Jinny.

That was in January (they put it all down to the cold of January); and every day until the middle of February, when Mabel was about again, Jane tramped across the Heath to Augustus Road, always in weather that did its worst for Mabel—always in wind or frost or rain. She never missed a day.

Sometimes Henry was with her. He made John's house the last point of his round that he might sit with Mabel. He had never sat with her before; he had never paid very much attention to her. It was the change in Henry that made Jane alive to the change in Mabel; for the long, lean, unhappy man, this man of obstinate distastes and disapprovals, had an extreme tenderness for all physical suffering.

Since Mabel's illness he had dropped his disapproving attitude to Jane. She could almost have believed that Henry liked her.

One day as they turned together into the deep avenue of Augustus Road, she saw kind, gray eyes looking down at her from Henry's height.

"You're very good to poor Mabel, Jinny," he said.

"I can't do much."

"Do what you can. We sha'n't have her with us very long."

"Henry!"

"She does n't know it. John does n't know it. But I thought I 'd tell you."

"I 'm glad you 've told me."

"It 's a kindness," he went on, "to go and see her. It takes her mind off herself."

"She does n't complain."

"No; she does n't complain. But her mind turns in on itself. It preys on her; and of course it 's terrible for John."

She agreed. "Of course it 's terrible—for John." But she was thinking how terrible it was for Mabel. She wondered if they said of her and *her* malady that it was terrible for Hugh.

"This is a great interruption to your work," he said presently, with the peculiar solemnity he accorded to the obvious.

Her pace quickened. The frosty air stung her cheeks and the blood mounted there.

"It won't hurt you," he said. "You 're better when you 're not working."

"Am I?" said she in a voice that irritated Henry.

XXXVI

IN February the interruption ceased. Mabel was better. She was well enough for John to take her to the Riviera.

Jane was, as they said, "off" again. But not all at once; not without suffering, for the seventh time, the supreme agony of the creator—that going down into the void darkness to recall the offended power, to endure the tortures that propitiate the revolted will.

Her book was finished in April and appeared in May. Her terror of the published thing was softened to her by the great apathy and fatigue which now came upon her—a fatigue and an apathy in which Henry recognized the beginning of the illness he had prophesied. He reminded her that he had prophesied it long ago; and he watched her, sad and unsurprised, but like the angel he invariably was in the presence of physical suffering.

She was thus spared the ordeal of the birthday celebration. It was understood that she would give audience in her study to her friends, to Arnott Nicholson, to the Protheros, and to Tanqueray. Instead of all going in at once, they were to take it in turns.

She lay there on her couch, waiting for Tanqueray to come and tell her whether this time it was life or death.

Nicky's turn came first. Nicky was unspeakably moved at the sight of her. He bent over her hand and kissed it, and her fear misread his mood.

"Dear Nicky," she said, "are you consoling me?"

He stood solemnly before her, inspired, positively flaming with annunciation.

"Wait, wait," he said, "till you 've seen *him*. I won't say a word."

Nicky had never made himself more beautiful; he had never yet, in all his high renouncing, so sunk, so hidden himself behind the splendor that was Tanqueray.

"And Prothero"—he laid beauty upon beauty—"he 'll tell you himself. He 's on his knees."

The moments passed. Nicky, in his beauty and his pain, wandered outside in the garden, leaving her to Prothero and Laura.

And in the drawing-room, where Tanqueray waited for his turn, Jane's family appraised her triumph. Henry, to Caro Bickersteth in a corner, was not sure that he did not, on the whole, regret it. These books wrecked her nerves. She was, Henry admitted, a great genius; but great genius, what was it, after all, but a great neurosis?

Not far from them Louis Levine, for John's benefit, calculated the possible proceeds of the new book. Louis smiled his mobile smile as he caught the last words of Henry's diagnosis. Henry might say what he liked. Neurosis, to that extent, was a valuable asset. He could do, Louis said, with some of that himself.

Brodrick, as he surveyed with Tanqueray the immensity of his wife's achievement, wondered whether, for all that, she had not paid too high a price. And Sophy Levine, who overheard him, whispered to Frances that it was he, poor dear, who paid.

Tanqueray got up and left the room. He had heard, through it all, the signal that he waited for—the sound of the opening of Jane's door.

Her eyes searched his at the very doorway. "Is it all right, George?" she whispered. Her hand, her thin hand, held his until he answered.

"It 's tremendous."

"Do you remember, two years ago, when you would n't drink?"

"I drank this time. I 'm drunk, Jinny—drunk as a lord."

"I swore I'd make you drink this time—if I died for it."

She leaned back in the corner of her couch, looking at him.

"Thank Heaven! you've never lied to me; because now I know."

"I wonder if you do. It's alive, Jinny; it's organic; it's been conceived and born." He brought his chair close to the table that stood beside her couch, a barrier between them. "It's got what we're all praying for—that divine unity—"

"I did n't think it could have it. I'm torn in pieces."

"You? I knew you would be."

"It was n't the book."

"What was it?" he said fiercely.

"It was chiefly, I think, Mabel Brodrick's illness."

"Whose illness?"

"John's wife's. You don't know what it means."

"I can see. You let that woman prey on you. She sucks your life. You're white, you're thin, you're ill, too."

She shook her head. "Only tired, George."

"Why do you do it? Why do you do it, Jinny?" he pleaded.

"Ah, I must."

He rose and walked up and down the room; and each time as he turned to face her he burst out into speech:

"What's Brodrick doing?"

She did not answer. He noticed that she never answered him when he spoke of Brodrick now. He paid no heed to the warning of her face.

"Why does he let his beastly relatives worry you? You did n't undertake to marry the whole lot of them."

He turned from her with that, and she looked after him. The set of his shoulders was square with his defiance and his fury.

He faced her again.

"I suppose if *he* were ill, you'd have to look after him. I don't see that you're bound to look after his sisters-in-law. Why can't the Brodricks look after her?"

"They do. But it's me she wants." He softened, looking down at her. But she did not see his look. "You think," said she, "that it's odd of her—the last thing anybody could want?"

His face changed suddenly as the blood surged in it. He sat down, and stretched

his arms across the table that was the barrier between them. His head leaned toward her with its salient thrust, its poise of impetus and forward flight.

"If you knew," he said, "the things you say—"

His hands made a sudden movement, as if they would have taken hers, which lay nerveless and helpless almost within their grasp.

She drew her hands back.

"It's nearly ten o'clock," she said.

"Do you want me to go?"

She smiled. "No; only they'll say, if I sit up, that that's what tires me."

"And does it? Do I tire you?"

"You never tire me."

"At any rate, I don't destroy you; I don't prey on you."

"We all prey on one another. I prey on you."

"You? Oh, Jinny!"

Again there was a movement of his hands, checked, this time, by his own will.

"Five minutes past ten, George. They'll come and carry me out if I don't go."

"Who will?"

"All of them, probably. They're all in there."

"It's preposterous. They don't care what they do to you themselves; they bore you brutally; they tire you till you're sick; they hand you on to one another, to be worried and torn to pieces; and they drag you from anybody who does you good. They don't let you have five minutes' pleasure, Jinny, or five minutes' peace. Good Lord, what a family!"

"Anyhow, it's *my* family."

"It is n't. You have n't a family; you never had, and you never will have. They don't belong to you, and you don't belong to any of them, and you know it—"

She rose. "All the same, I'm going to them," she said. "And that reminds me, how's Rose?"

"Perfectly well, I believe."

"It's ages since I saw Rose. Tell her—tell her that I'm coming to see her."

"When?" he said.

"Some day next week."

"Sunday?"

He knew, and she knew that he knew, that Sunday was Brodrick's day.

"No, Monday—Monday, about four."

(To be continued)



BIBLE STUDY IN INDIA

BY CLAYTON SEDGWICK COOPER

THE PHOTOGRAPH SHOWS A BIBLE CLASS AT COLOMBO, CEYLON, OUT FOR A STUDY SESSION IN THE OPEN

MEMORABLE among the vivid impressions of a recent visit which I made to the students of the East,¹ is a scene in the large government university in the city of Lahore, in northern India. An audience of five hundred Hindu, Mohammedan, and Parsee students had gathered to debate a critical question in educational circles: "Resolved that religious education should be inaugurated in the government schools of India." Seated upon the platform were English professors and Brahman teachers, with some adherents of the reform movements of the Arya and Brahmo-Somaj. No one could have looked into the faces of those students, keenly alert and highly intelligent, without feeling that in such men resides the inherent and potential hope of the new India.

I had been asked to join with a Mohammedan student in leading the affirmative side of the debate. It was surprising to

note the lack of interest shown in the negative. In short, the high-caste Brahman who led the negative side whispered to me before rising that he believed in *our* side of the question, and was speaking only in order to make the debate possible. When my colleague, the Mohammedan student, cried out in great earnestness, "We are not satisfied to be graduated from these government schools merely as intellectual experts: we demand an education in religion," the assembly of students rose to their feet, and greeted the sentiment with applause that fairly shook the building.

I said to a Hindu professor who sat by me, "What is the reason for this unaccountable feeling which seems to be sweeping the convictions of these college men?"

In reply, he explained to me that the educated men of India, in their awakening to new responsibility for individual, social, and political reform, were grasping with

Men and the Bible," on the work of the International Committee, of which he is the secretary in special charge of the Bible work in educational institutions.—THE EDITOR.

¹ Mr. Cooper has returned recently from a special Bible mission to the Far East. In *THE CENTURY* for last month the reader will find a paper by him entitled, "College