

ELIZABETH VON ARNIM

THE PASTOR'S WIFE

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Elizabeth Von Arnim

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PART I

CHAPTER I

On that April afternoon all the wallflowers of the world seemed to her released body to have been piled up at the top of Regent Street so that she should walk in fragrance.

She was in this exalted mood, the little mouse-coloured young lady slipping along southwards from Harley Street, because she had just had a tooth out. After weeks of miserable indifference she was quivering with responsiveness again, feeling the relish of life, the tang of it, the jollity of all this bustle and hurrying past of busy people. And the beauty of it, the *beauty* of it, she thought, fighting a tendency to loiter in the middle of the traffic to have a good look—the beauty of the sky across the roofs of the houses, the delicacy of the mistiness that hung down there over the curve of the street, the loveliness of the lights beginning to shine in the shop windows. Surely the colour of London was an exquisite thing. It was like a pearl that late afternoon, something very gentle and pale, with faint blue shadows. And as for its smell, she doubted, indeed, whether heaven itself could smell better, certainly not so interesting. "And anyhow," she said to herself, lifting her head a moment in appreciation, "it can't possibly smell more *alive*."

She herself had certainly never been more alive. She felt electric. She would not have been surprised if sparks had come crackling out of the tips of her sober gloves. Not only was she suddenly and incredibly relieved from acute pain, but for the first time in her life of twenty-two years she was alone. This by itself, without the business of the tooth, was enough to make a dutiful, willing, and hardworked daughter tingle. She would have tingled if by some glorious chance a whole free day had come to her merely inside the grey walls of the garden at home; but to be free and idle in London, to have them all so far away, her family down there in the west, to have them so necessarily silent, so oddly vague already and pallid in the distance! Yet she had only left them that morning; it was only nine hours since her father, handsome as an archangel, silvery of head and gaitered of leg, had waved her off from the doorstep with offended resignation. "And do not return, Ingeborg," he had called into the fly where she sat holding her face and trying not to rock, "till you are completely set right. Even a week. Even ten days. Have them all seen to."

For the collapse of Ingeborg, daunted into just a silent feverish thing of pain, had convulsed the ordered life at home. Her family bore it for a week with perfect manners and hardly a look of reproach. Then they sent her to the Redchester dentist, a hitherto sufficient man, who tortured her with tentative stoppings and turned what had been dull and smooth into excitement and jerks. Then, unable to resist a feeling that self-control would have greatly helped, it began to find the etiquette of Christian behaviour, which insisted on its going on being silent while she more and more let herself go, irksome. The Bishop wanted things in vain. Three times he had to see himself off alone at the station and not be met when he came back. Buttons, because they were not tightened on in time, burst from his gaiters, and did it in remote places like railway carriages. Letters were unanswered, important ones. Engagements, vital ones, through lack of reminders went unkept. At last it became plain, when she seemed not even to wish to answer when spoken to or to move when called, that this apathy and creeping away to hide could not further be endured. Against all tradition, against every home principle, they let a young unmarried daughter loose. With offended reluctance they sent her

to London to a celebrity in teeth—after all it was not as if she had been going just to enjoy herself—"And your aunt will please forgive us," said the Bishop, "for taking her in this manner unawares."

The aunt, a serious strong lady, was engaged for political meetings in the north, and had gone away to them that very morning, leaving a letter and her house at Ingeborg's disposal for so long as the dentist needed her. The dentist, being the best that money could buy, hardly needed her at all. He pounced unerringly and at once on the right tooth and pulled it out. There were no stoppings, no delays, no pain, and no aunt. Never was a life more beautifully cleared. Ingeborg went away down Harley Street free, and with ten pounds in her pocket. For the rest of this one day, for an hour or two to-morrow morning before setting out for Paddington and home, she could do exactly as she liked.

"Why, there's nothing to prevent me going *anywhere* this evening," she thought, stopping dead as the full glory of the situation slowly dawned on her. "Why, I could go out somewhere really grand to dinner, just as people do I expect in all the books I'm not let read, and then I could go to the play—nobody could prevent me. Why, I could go to a music-hall if I chose, and *still* nobody could prevent me!"

Audacious imaginings that made her laugh—she had not laughed for weeks—darted in and out of her busy brain. She saw herself in her mouse-coloured dress reducing waiters in marble and gilt places to respect and slavery by showing them her ten pounds. She built up lurid fabrics of possible daring deeds, and smiled at the reflection of herself in shop windows as she passed, at the sobriety, the irreproachableness of the sheath containing these molten imaginings. Why, she might hire a car—just telephone, and there you were with it round in five minutes, and go off in the twilight to Richmond Park or Windsor. She had never been to Richmond Park or Windsor; she had never been anywhere; but she was sure there would be bats and stars out there, and water, and the soft duskiness of trees and the smell of wet earth, and she could drive about them a little, slowly, so as to *feel* it all, and then come back and have supper somewhere—have supper at the Ritz, she thought, of which she had read hastily out of the corner of an eye between two appearances of the Bishop, in the more interesting portions of the *Times*—just saunter in, you know. Or she could have dinner first; yes, dinner first—dinner at Claridge's. No, not at Claridge's; she had an aunt who stayed there, another one, her mother's sister, rich and powerful, and it was always best not to stir up rich and powerful aunts. Dinner at the Thackeray Hôtel, perhaps. That was where her father's relations stayed, fine-looking serious men who once were curates and, yet earlier, good and handsome babies. It was near the British Museum, she had heard. Its name and surroundings suggested magnificence of a nobler sort than the Ritz. Yes, she would dine at the Thackeray Hôtel and be splendid.

Here, coming to a window full of food, she became aware that, wonderfully, and for the first time for weeks, she was hungry; so hungry that she didn't want dinner or supper or anything future, but something now. She went in; and all her gilded visions of the Ritz and the Thackeray Hôtel were swamped in one huge cup (she felt how legitimate and appropriate a drink it was for a bishop's daughter without a chaperon, and ordered the biggest size costing four-pence) of Aerated Bread Shop cocoa.

It was six o'clock when she emerged, amazingly nourished, from that strange place where long-backed elderly men with tired eyes were hurriedly eating poached eggs on chilly little clothless marble tables, and continued down Regent Street.

She now felt strangely settled in her mind. She no longer wanted to go to the Ritz. Indeed the notion of dining anywhere with the cocoa clothing her internally as with a garment—a thick winter garment, almost she thought like the closer kinds of fur—was revolting. She still felt enterprising, but a little clogged. She thought now more of things like fresh air and exercise. Not now for her the heat and glitter of a music-hall. There was a taste in that pure drink that was irreconcilable with music-halls, a satisfying property in its unadulteratedness, its careful cleanliness, that reminded her she was the daughter of a bishop. Walking away from the Aerated Bread Shop rather gravely, she remembered that she had a mother on a sofa; an only sister who was so beautiful that it was touching; and a class

of boys, once unruly and now looking up to her—in fact, that she had a position to keep up. She was still happy, but happy now in a thoroughly nice way; and she would probably have gone back in this warmed and solaced condition to her aunt's house in Bedford Square and an evening with a book and an early bed if her eye had not been caught by a poster outside an office sort of place she was passing, a picture of water and mountains, with written on it in big letters:

A WEEK IN LOVELY LUCERNE SEVEN DAYS FOR SEVEN GUINEAS

THOSE WHO INTEND TO JOIN NEXT TRIP INQUIRE WITHIN

Now Ingeborg's maternal grandmother had been a Swede, a creature of toughness and skill on skis, a young woman, when caught surprisingly by the washed-out English tourist Ingeborg's grandfather, drenched in frank reading and thinking and in the smell of the abounding forests and in wood strawberries and sour cream. She had lived, up to the day when for some quite undiscoverable reason she allowed herself to be married to the narrow stranger, in the middle of big beautiful things—big stretches of water, big mountains, big winds, big lonelines; and Ingeborg, who had never been out of England and had spent years in the soft and soppy west, seeing the picture of the great lake and the great sky in the window in Regent Street, felt a quick grip on her heart.

It was the fingers of her grandmother.

She stood staring at the picture, half-remembering, trying hard to remember quite, something beautiful and elusive and remote that once she had known—oh, that once she had known—but that she kept on somehow forgetting. The urgencies of daily life in episcopal surroundings, the breathless pursuit of her duties, the effort all day long to catch them up and be even with them, the Bishop's buttons, the Bishop's speeches, the Bishop's departures by trains, his all-pervadingness when at home, his all-engulfing mass of correspondence when away—"She is my Right Hand," he would say in stately praise—the Redchester tea-parties to which her mother couldn't go because of the sofa, the county garden-parties to which Judith had to be taken, the callers, the bazaars, the cathedral services, the hurry, the noise—life at home seemed the noisiest thing—these had smothered and hidden, beaten down, put out and silenced that highly important and unrecognized part of her, her little bit of lurking grandmother. Now, however, this tough but impulsive lady rose within her in all her might. Her granddaughter was in exactly the right state for being influenced. She was standing there staring, longing, seething with Scandinavia, and presently arguing.

Why shouldn't she? The Bishop, as she had remarked with wonder earlier in the afternoon, seemed to have faded quite pallid that long way off. And arrangements had been made. He had engaged an extra secretary; his chaplain had been warned; Judith was going perhaps to do something; her mother would stay safely on the sofa. They did not expect her back for at least a week, and not for as much longer as her tooth might ache. If her tooth were still in her mouth it *would* be aching. If the dentist had decided to stop it, it would have been a fortnight before such a dreadful ache as that could be suppressed, she was sure it would. And the ten pounds her father had given her for taxis and tips and other odds and ends, spread over a fortnight what would have been left of it anyhow? Besides, he had said—and indeed the Bishop, desirous of taking no jot from his generosity in the whole annoying business, had said it, and said it with the strong flavour of Scripture which hung about even his mufti utterances—that she might keep any fragments of it that remained that nothing be lost.

"Your father is very good to you," said her mother, in whose prostrate presence the gift had been made.—"But bishops," flashed across Ingeborg's undisciplined and jerky mind, "have to be good"—(she caught the flash, however, and choked it out before it had got half-way)—"you'll be able to get yourself a spring hat."

"Yes, mother," said Ingeborg, holding her face.

"And I should think a blouse as well," said her mother thoughtfully.

"Yes, mother."

"My dear, remember I *require* Ingeborg here," said the Bishop, uneasy at this vision of an indispensable daughter delayed by blouses. "You will not, of course, forget that, Ingeborg."

"No, father."

And here she was forgetting it. Here she was in front of a common poster forgetting it. What the Ritz and the Thackeray Hôtel with all their attractions had not been able to do, that crude picture did. She forgot the Bishop—or rather he seemed at that distance such a little thing, such a little bit of a thing, a tiny little black figure with a dab of white on its top, compared to this vision of splendid earth and heaven, that she wilfully would not remember him. She forgot her accumulating work. She forgot that her movements had all first to be sanctioned. A whirl of Scandinavianism, of violent longing for freedom and adventure, seemed to catch her and lift her out of the street and fling her into a place of maps and time-tables and helpful young men framed in mahogany.

"When—when—" she stammered breathlessly, pointing to a duplicate of the same poster hanging inside, "when does the next trip start?"

"To-morrow, madam," said the young man her question had tumbled on.

A solemnity fell upon her. She felt it was Providence. She ceased to argue. She didn't even try to struggle. "I'm going," she announced.

And her ten pounds became two pounds thirteen, and she walked away conscious of nothing except that the very next day she would be off.

CHAPTER II

She was collected by the official leader of this particular Dent's Excursion at Charing Cross the next morning and swept into a second-class carriage with nine other excursionists, and next door there were more—she counted eighteen of them at one time crowding round the leader asking him questions—and besides these there was a crowd of ordinary passengers bustling about with holiday expressions, and several runaway couples, and every single person seemed like herself eager to be off.

The runaway couples, from the ravaged expressions on their faces, were being torn by doubts, perhaps already by repentances; but Ingeborg, though she was deceiving her father who, being a bishop, should have been peculiarly inviolate, and her mother who, being sofa-ridden, should have appealed to her better nature, and her sister who, being exquisite, should have been guarded from any shadow that might dim her beauty, had none. She had been frightened that morning while she was packing and getting herself out of her aunt's house. The immense conviction of the servants that she was going home cowed her. And she had had to say little things—Paddington, for instance, to the taxi driver when she knew she meant Charing Cross, and had blushed when she changed it through the window. But here she was, and there was a crowd of people doing exactly the same thing whose secure jollity, except in the case of those odd, sad couples, was contagious, and she felt both safe and as though she were the most normal creature in the world.

"What *fun*," she thought, her blood dancing as she watched the swarming, surging platform, "what *fun*."

Often had she been at the Redchester station in attendance on her departing father, but what a getting off was that compared with this hilarity. There was bustle, of course, because trains won't wait and people won't get out of the way, but the Bishop's bustlings, particularly when their end was confirmations, were conducted with a kind of frozen offendedness; there was no life in him, she thought, remembering them, he didn't let himself go. On the other hand, she reflected, careful to be fair, you couldn't snatch illicitly at things like confirmations in the way you could at a Dent's Tour and devour them in secret with a fearful hidden joy. She felt like a bulb must feel, she thought, at the supreme moment when it has nosed its little spear successfully up through the mould it has endured all the winter and gets it suddenly out into the light and splendour of the world. The freedom of it! The joy of getting *clear*!

The excursionists in the carriage struggled to reach the window across her feet and say things to their friends outside. They all talked at once, and the carriage was full of sound and gesticulations. The friends on the platform could not hear, but they nodded and smiled sympathetically and shouted at intervals that it was going to be a good crossing. Everybody was being seen off except herself and the runaway couples; indeed, you could know which those were by the gaps along the platform. She sat well back in her place, anxious to make herself as convenient as possible and to get her feet tucked out of the way, a typical daughter of provincial England and a careful home and the more expensive clergy, well-dressed, inconspicuous, and grey. Her soft mouse-colour hat, as the fashion that spring still went on decreeing in the west, came down well over her eyes and ears, and little rings of cheerful hair of a Scandinavian colouring wantoned beneath it. Her small face was swallowed up in the shadow of the hat; you saw a liberal mouth with happy corners, and the nostrils of a selective nose, and there was an impression of freckles, and of a very fair sunny sort of skin.

The square German gentleman opposite her, knowing nobody in London and therefore being, but for a different and honourable reason, in her position of not having any one to see him off, filled up the time by staring. Entirely unconscious that it might be embarrassing he sat and stared. With the utmost singleness of mind he wished to see the rest of her, when he would be able to determine whether she were pretty or not.

Ingeborg, absorbed by the wild excitement on the platform, had not noticed him; but immediately the train started and the other passengers had sorted themselves into their seats and were beginning the furtive watchfulness of one another that was presently to resolve itself into acquaintanceship, she knew there was something large and steady opposite that was concentrated upon herself.

She looked up quickly to see what it was, and for a moment her polite intelligent eyes returned his stare. He decided that she had missed being pretty, and with a faint regret wondered what God was about.

"Fattened up—yes, possibly," he thought. "Fattened up—yes, perhaps."

And he went on staring because she happened to be exactly opposite, and there was nothing else except tunnels to look at.

The other excursionists were all in pairs; they thought Ingeborg was, too, and put her down at first as the German gentleman's wife because he did not speak to her. There were two couples of young women, one of ladies of a riper age, and one of earnest young men who were mentioning Balzac to each other almost before they had got to New Cross. Indeed, a surprising atmosphere of culture pervaded the compartment. Ingeborg was astonished. Except the riper ladies, who persisted in talking about Shoolbred, they were all presently saying educated things. Balzac, Blake, Bernard Shaw, and Mrs. Florence Barclay were bandied backwards and forwards across the carriage as lightly and familiarly as though they had been balls. In the far corner Browning was being compared with Tennyson; in the middle, Dickens with Thackeray. The two elder ladies, who kept to Shoolbred, formed a sort of dam between these educated overflowings and the silent back-water in which Ingeborg and the German gentleman sat becalmed. Presently, owing to a politeness that could not allow even an outlying portion of any one else's clothing or belongings to be brushed against without "Excuse me" having been said and "Don't mention it" having been answered, acquaintanceships were made; chocolates were offered; they introduced each other to each other; for a brief space the young men's caps were hardly on their heads, and the air was murmurous with gratified noises. But the two riper ladies, passionately preoccupied by Shoolbred, continued to dam up Ingeborg and her opposite neighbour into a stagnant and unfruitful isolation.

She tried to peep round the lady next to her, who jutted out like a mountain with mighty boulders on it, so as to see the three people hidden in the valley beyond. Glimpses of their knees revealed that they were just like the ones on the seat opposite. They were neat knees, a little threadbare; not with the delicate threadbareness of her own home in the palace at Redchester, where splendours of carved stone and black oak and ancient glass were kept from flaunting their pricelessness too obviously in the faces of the local supporters of Disestablishment by a Christian leanness in the matter of carpets, but knees that were inexpensive because they had to be. Who were these girls and young men, and the two abundant ladies, and the man with the vast thick head and unalterable stare? All people who did things, she was certain. Not just anything, like herself, but regular things that began and stopped at fixed times, that were paid for. That was why they were able to do frankly and honourably what she was snatching at furtively in a corner. For a brief astonishing instant she was aware she liked the corner way *best*. Staggered at this, for she could in no way reconcile it with the Bishop, the cathedral, the home, nor with any of her thoughts down there while enfolded in these three absorbing influences, she tried to follow her father's oft-repeated advice and look into herself. But it did not help much. She saw, indeed, that she was doing an outrageous thing, but then she was very happy—happier than she had ever been in Redchester, plied with legitimate episcopal joys. There was a keenness about this joy, the salt freshness of something jolly and indefensible done in secret. She did look at penitence sideways for an instant, but almost, at once decided that it was a thing that comes afterwards. First you do your thing. You must of course do your thing, or there couldn't be any penitence.

She sat up very straight, her face lit with these thoughts that both amused and frightened her, her lips slightly parted, her eyes radiant, ready for anything life had to offer.

"A little fattened up," thought the German gentleman; "a *little* even would probably suffice."

There was to be a night in Paris—no time to see it, but you can't have everything, and Paris is Paris—and next morning into the train again, and down, down, all down the slope of the map of France to Bâle, the Gate of Beauty, surely of heavenly beauty, and then you got there, and there were five whole days of wonder, and then....

Her thoughts hesitated. Why then she supposed, making an effort, you began to come back. And then....

But here she thought it wisest not to go on thinking.

"Excuse me, but do you mind having that window up?" asked the lady on her right.

"Oh, no," said Ingeborg, darting at the strap with the readiness to help and obey she had been so carefully practised in.

It was stiff, and she fumbled at it, wondering a little why the man opposite just watched.

When she had got it up he undid the woollen scarf round his neck and unbuttoned the top button of his overcoat.

"At last," he said in a voice of relief, heaving an enormous sigh.

He looked at her and smiled.

Instantly she smiled back. Any shreds of self-consciousness she may have had clinging to her in her earlier days had been finally scraped off when Judith, that amazing piece of loveliness, came out.

"Were you cold?" she asked, with the friendly interest of a boy.

"Naturally. When windows are open one is always cold."

"Oh!" said Ingeborg, who had never thought of that.

She perceived from his speech that he was a foreigner. From the turned-down collar and white tie beneath his opened scarf she also was made aware that he was a minister of religion. "How they pursue me," she thought. Even here, even in a railway carriage reserved for Dent's excursionists only, one of them had filtered through. She also saw that he was of a drab complexion, and that his hair, drab, too, and close-cropped and thick, seemed to be made of beaver.

"But that's what windows are *for*," she said, after reflecting on it.

"No."

The two large ladies let Shoolbred pause while they looked at each other.

They considered Ingeborg's behaviour forward. She ought not to have spoken first. Impossible on a Dent's Tour not to make friends—indeed the social side of these excursions is the most important—but there are rules. The other end of the carriage had observed the rules. The two ladies hoped they had not joined anything not quite high-toned. The other end had carried out the rules with rigid *savoir-vivre*; had accidentally touched and trodden on; had apologised; had had its apologies accepted; had introduced and been introduced; and so had cleared the way to chocolates.

"No?" repeated Ingeborg inquiringly.

"The aperture was there first," said the German gentleman.

"Of course," said Ingeborg, seeing he waited for her to admit it.

"And in the fulness of the ages came man, and mechanically shut it."

"Yes," said Ingeborg. "But—"

"Consequently, the function of windows is to shut apertures."

"Yes. But—"

"And not to open that which, without them, was open already."

"Y'es. But—"

"It would be illogical," said the German gentleman patiently, "to contend that their function is to open that which, without them, was open already."

Reassured by the word illogical, which was a nice word, well known to and quite within the spirit of a Dent's Tour, the two ladies went on with Shoolbred where they had left him off.

"The first day I was in England I went about logically, and shut each single window in my boarding-house. I then discovered that this embittered the atmosphere around me."

"It would thicken it," nodded Ingeborg, interested.

"It did. And my calling after all being that of peace, and my visit so short, that whatever happened could be endured, I relinquished logic and purchased in its place a woollen scarf. This one. Then I gave myself up unrestrictedly to their air."

"And did you like it?"

"It made me recollect with pleasure that I was soon going home. In East Prussia there are, on the one hand, drawbacks; but, on the other, are double windows, stoves, and a just proportion of feathers for each man's bed. Till the draughts and blankets of the boarding-house braced me to enduring instead of enjoying I had thought my holiday too short, and when I remembered my life and work at home—my official life and work—it had been appearing to me puny."

"Puny?" said Ingeborg, her eyes on his white tie.

"Puny. The draughts and blankets of the boarding-house cured me. I am returning gladly. My life there, I say to myself, may be puny but it is warm. So," he added, smiling, "a man learns content."

"Taught by draughts and blankets?"

"Taught by going away."

"Oh?" said Ingeborg. Had Providence then only led her to that poster in order that she should learn content? Were Dent's Tours really run, educationally, by Providence?

"But—" she began, and then stopped.

"It is necessary to go away in order to come back," said the German gentleman, again with patience.

"Yes. Of course. But—"

"The chief use of a holiday is to make one hungry to have finished with it."

"Oh *no*," she protested, the joy of holiday in her voice.

"Ah. You are at the beginning."

"The very beginning."

"Yet at the end you, too, will return home reconciled."

She looked at him and shook her head.

"I don't think reconciled is quite the—" She paused, thinking. "To what?" she went on. "To puniness, too?"

The two ladies faltered in their conversation, and glanced at Ingeborg, and then at each other.

"Perhaps not to puniness. You are not a pastor."

There was a distinct holding of the breath of the two ladies. The German gentleman's slow speech fell very clearly on their sudden silence.

"No," said Ingeborg. "But what has that—"

"I am. And it is a puny life."

Ingeborg felt a slight curdling. She thought of her father—also, if you come to that, a pastor. She was sure there was nothing in anything he ever did that would strike him as puny. His life was magnificent and important, filled to bursting point with a splendid usefulness and with a tendency to fill the lives of every one who came within his reach to their several bursting points, too. But he, of course, was a prince of the Church. Still, he had gone through the Church's stages, beginning humbly; yet she doubted whether at any moment of his career he had looked at it and thought it puny. And was it not indeed the highest career of all? However breathless and hurried it made one's female relations in its upper reaches, and drudging in its lower, the very highest?

But though she was curdled she was interested.

"It might not be amiss," continued the pastor, looking out of the window at some well-farmed land they were passing, "if it were not for the Sundays."

Again she was curdled.

"But—"

"They spoil it."

She was silent; and the silence of the two ladies appeared to acquire a frost.

"It is the fatal habit of Sundays," he went on, following the disappearing land with his eyes, "to recur."

He paused, as if waiting for her to agree.

She had to, because it was a truth one could not get away from. "Yes," she said, reluctantly. "Of course. It's their nature." Then a wave of memories suddenly broke over her, and she added warmly "Oh *don't* they!"

The frost of the ladies seemed to settle down. It grew heavy.

"They interrupt one's work," he said.

"But they *are* your work," she said, puzzled.

"No."

She stared. "But," she began, "a pastor—"

"A pastor is also a man."

"Yes," said Ingeborg, "but—"

"You have no doubt observed that he is, invariably, also a man."

"Yes," said Ingeborg, "but—"

"And a man of intelligence—I am a man of intelligence—cannot fill up his life with the meagre materials offered by the practice of the tenets of the Lutheran Church."

"Oh—the *Lutheran* Church," said Ingeborg, catching at a straw.

"Any church."

She was silent. She felt how immensely her father would not have liked it. She felt it was wicked to sit there and listen. She also felt, strange and dreadful to observe, refreshed.

"Then," she began, knitting her brows, for really this at its best was bad taste, and bad taste, she had always been taught, was the very worst—oh, but how nice it was, a little bit of it, after the swamps of good taste one waded about in in cathedral cities! She knitted her brows, aghast at her thoughts. "Then what," she asked, "*do* you fill your life up with?"

"Manure," said the German gentleman.

The ladies leapt in their places.

"Ma—" began Ingeborg; then stopped.

"I am engaged in endeavouring to teach the peasants of my parish how best to farm their poor pieces of land."

"Oh, really," said Ingeborg, politely.

"I do it by example. They do not attend to words. I have bought a few acres and experiment before their eyes. Our soil is the worst in Germany. It is inconceivably thankless. And the peasants resemble it."

"Oh, really," said Ingeborg.

"The result of the combination is poverty."

"So then, I suppose," said Ingeborg, with memories of the Bishop's methods, "you preach patience."

"Patience! I preach manure."

Again at the dreadful word the ladies leapt.

"It is," he said solemnly, his eyes glistening with enthusiasm, "the foundation of a nation's greatness."

"I hadn't thought of it like that," said Ingeborg, seeing that he waited.

"But on what then does a State depend in the last resort?"

She was afraid to say, for there seemed to be so many possible answers.

"Naturally on its agriculture," said the pastor, with the slight irritation of one obliged to linger over the obvious.

"Of course," said the pliable Ingeborg, trained in acquiescence.

"And on what does agriculture depend in the last resort?"

Brilliantly she hazarded "Manure."

For the third time the ladies leapt, and the one next to her drew away her dress.

He showed his appreciation of her intelligence by nodding slowly.

"A nation must be fed," he said, "and empty fields will feed no one."

"Of course not," said Ingeborg.

"So that it is the chief element in all progress; for the root of progress flourishes only in a filled stomach."

The ladies began to fan themselves violently, nervously, one with *The Daily Mirror* the other with *Answers*.

"Of course," said Ingeborg.

"First," said the German gentleman, "you fill your stomach—"

The lady next to Ingeborg made a sudden lunge across her at the strap.

"Excuse me, but do you mind putting that window *down*?" she said in a sort of burst.

The German gentleman, stemmed in his speech, used the interval while Ingeborg opened the window in buttoning up his overcoat again with care and patience and readjusting his muffler.

When he had attended to these things he resumed his enthusiasm; he seemed to switch it on again.

"The infinite combinations of it!" he exclaimed. "Its infinite varieties! Kali, Kainit, Chilisaltpetre, Superphosphates"—he rolled out the words as though they were the verse of a psalm. "When I shut the door on myself in the little laboratory I have constructed I shut in with me all life, all science, every possibility. I analyse, I synthesize, I separate, reduce, combine. I touch the stars. I stir the depths. The daily world is forgotten. I forget, indeed, everything, except my research. And invariably at the most profound, the most exalted moments some one knocks and tells me it is Sunday again, and will I come out and preach."

He looked at her indignantly, demanding sympathy. "Preach!" he repeated.

"Then why," she asked, with the courage of curiosity, "are you a pastor?"

"Because my father made me one."

"But why are you still one?"

"Because a man must live."

"He oughtn't to want to," said Ingeborg with a faint flush, for she had been carefully trained to shyness when it came to pronouncing opinions—the Bishop called it being womanly—"he oughtn't to want to at the cost of his convictions."

"Nevertheless," said the pastor, "he does."

"Yes," said Ingeborg, obliged to admit it; even at Redchester cases were not unknown. "He does," she said, nodding. "Of course he does." And unable not to be at least as honest as the pastor she added: "And so does a woman."

"Naturally," said the pastor.

She looked at him a moment, and then said impulsively, pulling herself a little forward towards him by the window strap—

"*This* woman does. She's doing it now."

The two ladies exchanged glances and fluttered their fans faster.

"Which woman?" inquired the pastor, whose mastery of English, though ripe, was not nimble.

"This one," said Ingeborg, pointing at herself. "Me. I'm living at this very moment—I'm whirling along in this train—I'm running away for this holiday *entirely* at the cost of my convictions."

CHAPTER III

After this it was not to be expected that Dent's Tour should look favourably on either Ingeborg or the German gentleman. Running away? And something happened at Dover that clinched it in its coldness.

The train had slowed down, and the excursionists had become busy and were all standing up expectant and swaying with their bags and umbrellas ready in their hands, except Ingeborg and the pastor. The train stopped, and still the two at the door did not move. They were so much interested in what they were saying that they went on sitting there, barbarously corking up the congested queue inside the carriage while streams of properly liberated passengers poured past the window on their way to the best places on the boat.

The queue heaved and waited, holding on to its good manners till the last possible moment, quite anxious, with the exception of the two ladies who were driven to the very verge of naturalness by the things they had had to listen to, lest it should be forced to show what it was feeling (for what one is feeling, Dent's excursionists had surprisingly discovered, is always somehow something rude), and seconds passed and still it was kept there heaving.

Then the pastor, gazing with a large unhurried interest at the people pushing by the window, people disfigured by haste and the greed for the best places on the boat, said in a voice of mild but penetrating complaint—it almost seemed as if in that congested moment he saw only leisure for musing aloud—"But why does the good God make so many ugly old women?"

It was when he said this that the mountainous lady at the head of the queue flung behaviour to the winds and let herself go uncontrolledly. "*Will* you allow me to pass?" she cried. Nor did she give him another instant's grace, but pressed between his and Ingeborg's knees, followed torrentially by the released remainder.

"To keep us all waiting there just while he blasphemed!" she panted on the platform to her friend.

And during the rest of the time the party was together it retired, led by these two ladies, into an icy exclusiveness, outside which and left together all day long Ingeborg and the pastor could not but make friends.

They did. They talked and they walked, they climbed and they sight-saw. They did everything Dent had arranged, going with him but not of him, always, as it were, bringing up his rear. Equally careful, being equally poor, they avoided the extras which seemed to lurk beckoning at every corner of the day. Their frugality was flagrant, and shocked the other excursionists even more than the dreadful things they said. "Such bad *taste*," the Tour declared when, on the third day, after having provoked criticism by their negative attitude towards afternoon tea and the purchase of picture postcards, they would not lighten its several burdens by taking their share of an unincluded outing in flies along the lake. Even Mr. Ascough, Dent's distracted representative, thought them undesirable, and especially could make nothing of Ingeborg, except that somehow she was not Dent's sort. And the German gentleman, though in appearance a more familiar type, became whenever he opened his mouth grossly unfamiliar. "Foul-mouthed" was the expression the largest lady had used, bearing down on Mr. Ascough at Dover to complain, adding that as she had done all her travelling for years with and through Dent's she felt justified in demanding that this man's mouth should be immediately cleansed.

"I'm not a toothbrush, Mrs. Bawn," replied the distracted Mr. Ascough, engaged at that moment in struggling for air and light in the middle of his clinging flock.

"Then I shall write to Mr. Dent himself," said Mrs. Bawn indignantly.

And Mr. Ascough, intimidated, fought himself free and followed her down the platform, inquiring dreadfully—really he seemed to be a person of little refinement—whether, then, the German gentleman's conversation had been obscene.

"I can get rid of him if it's been obscene, you know," said Mr. Ascough. "Was it?"

So that Mrs. Bawn, incensed and baffled, was obliged for the dignity of her womanhood to say she was glad to have to inform him she did not know what that word meant.

But the pastor—his name was Dremmel, he told Ingeborg: Robert Dremmel—took everything that happened with simplicity. They might shut him out, and he would never notice it; they might turn their backs, and he would never know. Nothing that Dent's Tour could do in the way of ostracizing would have been able to pierce through to his consciousness. Having decided that the women of it were plain and the men uninteresting he thought of them no more. With his customary single-mindedness he concentrated his attention at first only on Switzerland, which was what he was paying to see, and he found it pleasant that the young lady in grey should so naturally join him in this concentration. Just for a few hours at the very beginning he had thought her naturalness, her ready friendliness, a little unwomanly. She was, he thought, a little too productive of an impression that she was a kind of boy. She had no self-consciousness, which he had been taught by his mother to confound with modesty, and no desire whatever apparently to please the opposite sex. She went to sleep, for instance, towards the end of the long journey right in front of him, letting her mouth open if it wanted to, and not bothering at all that he should probably be looking at it.

Herr Dremmel, who besides his agricultural researches prided himself on a liberal if intermittent interest in womanly charm, regretted these shortcomings, but only for a few hours at the very beginning. By the end of the first day in Lucerne he was finding it pleasant to pair off with her, womanly or unwomanly. He liked to talk to her. He discovered he could talk to her as he had been unable to talk to the few East Prussian young ladies he had met, in spite of the stiff intensity of their desire to please him. He searched about for a reason, and concluded that it was because she was interested. Whatever subject he discoursed upon she came, so it seemed, running to meet him. She listened intelligently, and with a pliability—he did not then know about the Bishop's training—rarely to be found in combination with intelligence. Intelligent persons are very apt, he remembered, to argue and object. This young lady was intelligent without argument, a most comfortable compound, and before a definite opinion had a graceful knack of doubling up. And if her doublings up were at all, as they sometimes were, delayed while she put in "But—" he only needed repeat with patience to bring out an admirable submissive sunniness. He could not of course know of her severe training in sunniness.

By the end of the second day he had told her more about his life and his home and his work and his ambitions than he had ever told anybody, and she had told him, only he was unable to find that so interesting, about her life and her home and her work. She had no ambitions, she explained, which he said was well in a woman. He was hardly aware of the Bishop, so lightly did she skim over him.

By the end of the third day he had observed what had, curiously, escaped him before, that she was pretty. Not of course in the abundant East Prussian way, the way of generous curves and of what he now began to think were after all superfluities, but with delicacy and restraint. He no longer considered she would be better fattened up. And he was noticing her clothes, and after a painstaking comparing of them with those of the other ladies applying to them the adjective elegant.

By the end of the fourth he admitted to himself that, very probably, he was soon going to be in love.

By the end of the fifth he knew without a doubt that the thing had happened; the, to him incontrovertible, proof being that on this day Switzerland sank into being just her background.

Even the Rigi, he observed with interest, was nothing to him. He walked up it, he who never walked up anything, because she wanted to. He toiled up panting, and forgot how warmly he was dissolving inside his black clothes in the pleasure of watching her on ahead glancing in and out of the sunshine that fell clear and white on her as she fluttered above him among the pine trunks. And when he got to the top, instead of looking at the view he sat down in the nearest seat and became

absorbed in the way the burning afternoon light seemed to get caught in her hair as she stood on the edge of the plateau, and made it look the colour of flames.

This was very interesting. He had never yet within his recollection preferred hair to views. A curious result, he reflected, of his harmless holiday enterprise.

He had not intended to marry. He was thirty-five, and dedicated to his work. He felt it was a noble work, this patient proving to ignorance and prejudice of what could be done with barrenness if only you mixed it with brains. He was fairly comfortable in his housekeeping, having found a woman who was a widow and had therefore learned the great lesson that only widows ever really know, that a man must be let alone. He was poor, and what he could spare by rigid economies went into the few acres of sand that were to be the Light he had to offer to lighten the Gentiles. Every man, he thought, should offer some light to the abounding Gentiles before he died, some light which, however small, might be kept so clear that they could not choose but see it. A wife, he had felt when considering the question from time to time, which was each year in the early spring, would come between him and his light. She would be a shadow; and a voluminous, all-enveloping shadow. His church and the business of preaching in it were already sufficiently interrupting, but they were weekly. A wife would be every day. He could lock her out of the laboratory, he would reflect, and perhaps also out of the sitting-room.... When he became aware that he was earnestly considering what other rooms he could lock her out of, and discovered that he would want to lock her out of nearly all, he, as a wise and honest man, decided he had best leave the much-curved virgins of the neighbourhood alone.

The question occupied him regularly every year in the first warm days of spring. For the rest of the year he mostly forgot it, absorbed in his work. And here he was on the top of the Rigi, a cool place, almost, wintry, with it suddenly become so living that compared to it his fertilizers seemed ridiculous.

He examined this change of attitude with care. He was proud of the way he had fallen in love; he, a poor man, doing it without any knowledge of whether the young lady had enough or indeed any money. He sat there and took pleasure in this proof that though he was thirty-five he could yet be reckless. He was greatly pleased at finding himself so much attracted that if it should turn out that she was penniless he would still manage to marry her, and would make it possible by a series of masterly financial skirmishings, the chief of which would be the dismissal of the widow and the replacing of her dinginess, her arrested effect of having been nipped in the bud although there was no bud, by this incorporate sunshine. The young lady's tact, of which he had seen several instances, would cause her to confine her sunshine to appropriate moments. She would not overflow it into his working hours. Besides, marriage was a great readjuster of values. After it, he had not a doubt his wife would fall quite naturally into her place, which would, though honourable, be yet a little lower than the fertilizers. If it were not so, if marriage did not readjust the upset incidental to its preliminaries, what a disastrous thing falling in love would be. No serious man would be able to let himself do it. But how interesting it was the way Nature, that old Hostility, that Ancient Enemy to man's thought, did somehow manage to trip him up sooner or later; and how still more interesting the ingenuity with which man, aware of this trick and determined to avoid the disturbance of a duration of affection, had invented marriage.

He gazed very benevolently at the little figure on the edge of the view. Why not marry her now, and frugally convert the tail-end of Dent's Excursion into a honeymoon?

With the large simplicity and obliviousness to banns and licences of a man of scientific preoccupations he saw no reason against this course. It was obvious. It was desirable. It would not only save her going back to England first, it would save the extra journey there for him. They would go straight home to East Prussia together at the end of the week; and as for doing it without her family's knowledge, if she could run away from them as she had told him she had done just for the sake of a jaunt, how much more readily, with what increase of swiftness, indeed, would she run for the sake of a husband?

"Tell me, Little One," he said when she rejoined him, "will you marry me?"

CHAPTER IV

Ingeborg was astonished.

She stared at him speechless. The gulf between even the warmest friendliness and marriage! She had, she knew, been daily increasing in warm friendliness towards him, characteristically expecting nothing back. That he, too, should grow warm had not remotely occurred to her. Nobody had ever grown warm to her in that way. There had always been Judith, that miracle of beauty, to blot her into plainness. It is true the senior curate of the Redchester parish church had said to her once in his exhausted Oxford voice, "You know, I don't mind about faces—will you marry me?" and she had refused so gingerly, with such fear of hurting his feelings, that for a week he had supposed he was engaged; but one would not call that warmth. As the sun puts out the light of a candle so did the radiance of Judith extinguish Ingeborg. They were so oddly alike; and Ingeborg was the pale, diminished shadow. Judith was Ingeborg grown tall, grown exquisite, Ingeborg wrought wonderfully in ivory and gold. No man could possibly fall in love with Ingeborg while there before his very eyes was apparently exactly the same girl, only translated into loveliness.

From the first it had been the most natural thing in the world to Ingeborg to be plain and passed over. Judith was always beside her. Whenever there was a pause in her work for her father it was filled by the chaperoning of Judith. She accepted the situation with complete philosophy, for nothing was quite so evident as Judith's beauty; and she used, in corners at parties, to keep herself awake by saying over bits of the Psalms, on which, not being allowed to read novels, her literary enthusiasms were concentrated.

It was, then, really a very astonishing thing to a person practised in this healthy and useful humility to have some one asking her to marry him. That it should be Herr Dremmel seemed to her even more astonishing. He didn't look like somebody one married. He didn't even look like somebody who wanted to marry one. He sat there, his hands folded on the knob of his stick, gazing at her with an entirely placid benevolence and asked her the surprising question as though it were a way of making conversation. It is true he had not called her Little One before, but that, she felt as she stood before him considering this thing that had happened to her, was pretty rather than impassioned.

Here was an awkward and odd result of her holiday enterprise.

"It's—very unexpected," she said, lamely.

"Yes," he agreed. "It is unexpected. It has greatly surprised me."

"I'm very sorry," she said.

"About what are you sorry, Little One?"

"I can't accept your—your offer."

"What! There is some one else?"

"Not *that* sort of some one. But there's my father."

He made a great sweep with his arm. "Fathers," he said; and pushed the whole breed out of sight.

"He's very important."

"Important! Little One, when will you marry me?"

"I can't leave him."

He became patient. "It has been laid down that a woman shall leave father and mother and any other related obstacle she may have the misfortune to be hampered with, and cleave only to her husband."

"That was about a man cleaving to his wife. There wasn't anything said about a woman. Besides—" She stopped. She couldn't tell him that she didn't want to cleave.

He gazed at her a moment in silence. He had not contemplated a necessity for persuasion.

"This," he then said with severity, "is prevarication."

She sat down on the grass and clasped her hands round her knees and looked up at him. She had taken off her hat when first she got to the top to fan herself, and had not put it on again. As she sat there with her back to the glow of the sky, the wind softly lifted the rings of her hair and the sun shone through them wonderfully. They seemed to flicker gently to and fro, little tongues of fire.

"Why," said Herr Dremmel, suddenly leaning forward and staring, "you are like a spirit."

This pleased her. For a moment her eyes danced.

"Like a spirit," he repeated. "And here am I talking heavily to you, as though you were an ordinary woman. Little One, how does one trap a spirit into marrying? Tell me. For very earnestly do I desire to be shown the way."

"One doesn't," said Ingeborg.

"Ah, do not be difficult. You have been so easy, of such a comfortable response in all things up to now."

"But this—" began Ingeborg.

"Yes. This, I well know—"

He was more stirred than he had thought possible. He was becoming almost eager.

"But," asked Ingeborg, exploring this new interesting situation, "why do you want to?"

"Want to marry you?"

"Yes."

"Because," said Herr Dremmel, immensely prompt, "I have had the extreme good fortune to fall in love with you."

Again she looked pleased.

"And I do not ask you," he went on, "to love me, or whether you do love me. It would be presumption on my part, and not, if you did, very modest on yours. That is the difference between a man and a woman. He loves before marriage, and she does not love till after."

"Oh?" said Ingeborg, interested. "And what does he—"

"The woman," continued Herr Dremmel, "feels affection and esteem before marriage, and the man feels affection and esteem after."

"Oh," said Ingeborg, reflecting. She began to tear up tufts of grass. "It seems—chilly," she said.

"Chilly?" he echoed.

He let his stick drop, and got up and came and sat down, or rather let himself down carefully, on the grass beside her.

"Chilly? Do you not know that a decent chill is a great preservative? Hot things decay. Frozen things do not live. A just measure of chill preserves the life of the affections. It is, by a very proper dispensation of Nature, provided before marriage by the woman, and afterwards by the man. The balance is, in this way, nicely held, and peace and harmony, which nourish best at a low temperature, prevail."

She looked at him and laughed. There was no one in Redchester, and Redchester was all she knew of life, in the least like Herr Dremmel. She stretched herself in the roomy difference, happy, free, at her ease.

"But I cannot believe," burst out Herr Dremmel with a passionate vigour that astonished him more than anything in his whole life as he seized the hand that kept on tearing up grass, "I cannot believe that you will not marry me. I cannot believe that you will refuse a good and loving husband, that you will prefer to remain with your father and solidify into yet one more frostbitten virgin."

"Into a what?" repeated Ingeborg, struck by this image of herself in the future.

She began to laugh, then stopped. She stared at him, her grey eyes very wide open. She forgot Herr Dremmel, and that he was still clutching her hand and all the grass in it, while her mind flashed over the years that had gone and the years that were to come. They would be alike. They had not been able to frostbite her yet because she had been too young; but they would get her presently. Their daily repeated busy emptiness, their rush of barren duties, their meagre moments of what when she was

younger used to be happiness but had lately only been relief, those rare moments when her father praised her, would settle down presently and freeze her dead.

Her face grew solemn. "It's true," she said slowly. "I shall be a frostbitten virgin. I'm doomed. My father won't ever let me marry."

"You infinitely childish one!" he cried, becoming angry. "When it is well known that all fathers wish to get rid of all daughters."

"You don't understand. It's different. My father—why," she broke out, "I used to dose myself secretly with cod liver oil so as to keep up to his level. He's wonderful. When he praised me I usedn't to sleep. And if he scolded me it seemed to send me lame."

Herr Dremmel sawed her hand up and down in his irritation.

"What is this irrelevant talk?" he said. "I offer you marriage, and you respond with information about cod liver oil. I do not believe the father obstacle. I do not recognize my honest little friend of these last days. It is waste of time, not being open. Would you, then, if it were not for your father, marry me?"

"But," Ingeborg flashed round at him, swept off her feet as she so often was by an impulse of utter truth, "it's *because* of him that I *would*."

And the instant she had said it she was shocked.

She stared at Herr Dremmel wide-eyed with contrition. The disloyalty of it. The ugliness of telling a stranger—and a stranger with hair like fur—anything at all about those closely related persons she had been taught to describe to herself as her dear ones.

"Oh," she cried, dragging her hand away, "let my hand go—let my hand go!"

She tried to get on to her feet, but with an energy he did not know he possessed he pulled her down again. He did not recognize any of the things he was feeling and doing. The Dremmel of his real nature, of those calm depths where lay happy fields of future fertilizers, gazed at this inflamed conduct going on at the top in astonishment.

"No," he said, with immense determination, "you will sit here and explain about your father."

"It's a dreadful thing," replied Ingeborg, suddenly discovering that of all things she did not like being clutched, and looking straight into his eyes, her head a little thrown back, "that one can't leave one's home even for a week without getting into a scrape."

"A scrape! You call it a scrape when a good man—"

"Here's a person who goes away for a little change—privately. And before she knows where she is she's being held down on the top of the Rigi and ordered by a strange man—"

"By her future husband!" cried Herr Dremmel, who was finding the making of offers more difficult than he had supposed.

"—by a strange man to explain her father. As though anybody could ever explain their father. As though anybody could ever explain *anything*."

"God in Heaven," cried Herr Dremmel, "do not explain him then. Just marry me."

And at this moment the snake-like procession of the rest of Dent's Tour, headed by Mr. Ascough watch in hand, emerged from the hôtel, where it had been having tea, on to the plateau, wiping its mouths in readiness for the sunset.

With the jerk of a thing that has been stung it swerved aside as it was about almost to tread on the two on the grass.

Ingeborg sat very stiff and straight and pretended to be staring intently at the view, forgetting that it was behind her. She flushed when she found there was no time to move far enough from Herr Dremmel for a gap to be visible between them.

"Look at those two now," whispered the young lady last in the procession to the young man brushing bread and butter out of his tie who walked beside her.

He looked, and seemed inclined to linger.

"She's very *pretty*, isn't she?" he said.

"Oh, do you think so?" said his companion. "I never think anybody's pretty who isn't—you know what I mean—really *nice*, you know—lady-like—"

And she hurried him on, because, she said, if he didn't hurry he'd miss the sunset.

CHAPTER V

Ingeborg spent most of the night on a hard chair at her bedroom window earnestly endeavouring to think.

It was very unfortunate, but she found an immense difficulty at all times in thinking. She could keep her father's affairs in the neatest order, but not her own thoughts. There were so many of them, and they all seemed to jump about inside her and want to get thought first. They would not go into ordered rows. They had no patience. Often she had suspected they were not thoughts at all but just feelings, and that depressed her, for it made her drop, she feared, to the level of the insect world and enter the category of things that were not going to be able to get to heaven; and to a bishop's daughter this was disquieting. Most of her thoughts she was immediately sorry for, they were so unlike anything she could, with propriety, say out loud at home. To Herr Dremmel she had been able to say them all as far as speech, a limping vehicle, could be made to go, and this was another of his refreshing qualities. She did not of course know of that absorbed man's habit of listening to her with only one ear—a benevolent ear, but only one—while with the other, turned inwards, he listened to the working out in his mind of problems in Chilisaltpetre and super-phosphates.

She sat staring out of the window at the stars and chimney-pots, her hands held tightly in her lap, and told herself that the moment had come for clear, consecutive thought—*consecutive* thought, she repeated severely, aware already of the interlaced dancing going on in her brain. What was she going to do about Herr Dremmel? About going home? About—oh, about anything?

They had come down the Rigi soberly and in the train. Nobody, as usual, spoke to them, and for the first time in their friendship neither had they spoken to each other. They had had a speechless dinner. He had looked preoccupied. And when directly after it she said good night, he had drawn her out into the passage and solemnly adjured her, while the hall-porter pretended he was out of ear-shot, to have done with prevarications. What he would suggest, he said, was a comfortable betrothal next day; it was too late for one that night, he said, pulling out his watch, but next day; and as she retreated sideways step by step up the stairs, silent through an inability immediately to find an answer that seemed tactful enough, he had eyed her very severely and inquired of her with a raised voice what, then, the ado was all about. She had turned at that, giving up the search for tact, and had run up the remaining stairs rather breathlessly, feeling that Herr Dremmel on marriage had an engulfing quality; and he, after a moment's perplexity on the mat at the bottom, had gone to the reading-room a baffled man.

Now she sat at the window considering.

Her journey home was only two days off, and the thought of what would be said to her when she got there and of what her answers would be like, ran down the back of her neck and spine as though some one were drawing a light, ice-cold finger over the shrinking skin. She had been persuading herself that her little holiday was harmless and natural; and now this business with Herr Dremmel would, she felt, do away with all that, and justify a wrath in her father that she might, else for her private solace and encouragement, have looked upon as unreasonable. It is a peculiarity of parents, reflected Ingeborg, that they are always being justified. However small and innocent what you are doing may be, if they disapprove something turns up to cause them to have been altogether right. She remembered little things, small occasions, of her younger days.... This was a big occasion, and what had turned up on it was Herr Dremmel. It was a pity—oh, it was a pity she hadn't considered before she left London so impulsively whether when she got back to Redchester she was going to be untruthful or not. She had considered nothing, except the acuteness of the joy of running away. Now she was faced by the really awful question of lying or not lying. It was ugly to lie at all. It was dreadful to lie to one's father. But to lie to a bishop raised the operation from just a private sin which God would deal with kindly on being asked, to a crime you were punished for if it was a cathedral you

did it to, a real crime, the crime of sacrilege. Impossible to profane a sacred and consecrated object like a bishop. Doubly and trebly impossible if you were that object's own daughter. Her tightly folded hands went cold as she realised she was undoubtedly going to be truthful. She was every bit as valiant as her Swedish grandmother had been, that grandmother who was aware of the dangers of the things she did with her mountains and her gusty lakes and defied them, but her grandmother knew no fear and Ingeborg knew it very well. Hers was the real courage found only in the entirely terrified, who, terrified, yet see the thing, whatever it is, doggedly through. She was faint, yet pursuing.

She saw much terror in her immediate future. She dreaded having to be courageous. She felt she was too small really for the bravely truthful answering of her magnificent father's questions. He would have the catechism and the confirmation service on his side, as well as the laws of right behaviour and filial love. It didn't seem fair. One couldn't argue with a parent, one couldn't answer back; while as for a bishop, one couldn't do anything at all with him except hastily agree. There was just a possibility—but how remote—that her father would be too busy to ask questions; she sighed as she reflected how little she could count on that, and how the most superficial inquiry about her aunt or the dentist would bring out the whole story.

And here was Herr Dremmel who thought nothing at all of him, even in regard to an enormous undertaking like his daughter's marriage. There was something sublime in such detachment. She felt the largeness of the freedom of it blowing in her face like a brisk, invigorating wind. There seemed to be no hedges round Herr Dremmel. He was as untied-up a person as she had ever met. He cared nothing for other people's opinion, that chief enslavement of her home, and he was an orphan. Sad to be an orphan, thought Ingeborg sighing. Sad, of course, not to have any dear ones. But it did seem to be a condition that avoided the dilemma whose horns were concealment by means of untruths and the screwing up of oneself to that clammily cold and forlorn condition, having courage.

Of course, Herr Dremmel didn't know her father. He hadn't faced that impressive personality. Would he be quite so detached and easily indifferent if he had? She thought with a shiver of what such a meeting, supposing, just for the sake of supposing, that she allowed herself to become engaged, would be like. Would Herr Dremmel in that setting of carefully subdued splendour, of wainscoting and oriels, seem to her as free and delightful as he seemed on a tour of frugal backgrounds? Would she, in the presence of the Bishop's horrified disapproval, be able to see him as she had been seeing him now?

She had not explored very far into her own resources yet, but she had begun lately to perceive that she was pliable. She bent easily, she felt, and deplored having to feel in the direction desired by the persons she was with and who laid hold of her with authority. It is true she sprang back again, as she had discovered so surprisingly in London, the instant the hold was relaxed, but it seemed that she sprang only to do, as she now with a headshake admitted, difficulty-bringing things. And her training in acquiescence and distrust of herself was very complete, and back in her home would she not at once bend into the old curve again? Was it possible, would it ever be possible, in her father's presence to disassociate herself from his points of view? What his view of Herr Dremmel would be she very exactly knew. Did she *want* to disassociate herself from it?

She pushed back her chair, and began to walk quickly up and down the narrow little room. If she didn't disassociate herself it meant marriage; and marriage in stark defiance of the whole of her world. Redchester would be appalled. The diocese would grieve for its Bishop. The county would discuss her antagonistically at a hundred tea-tables. Well, and while they were doing it, where would she be? Her blood began suddenly to dance. She was seized, as she had been in London, by that overwhelming desire to shake off old things and set her face towards the utterly new. While all these people were nodding and whispering in their stuffy stale world she would be safe in East Prussia, a place that seemed infinitely remote, a place Herr Dremmel had described to her as full of forests and water and immense stretches of waving rye. The lakes were fringed with rushes; the forests came down to their edges; his own garden ended in a little path through a lilac hedge that took you down

between the rye to the rushes and the water and the first great pines. Oh, she knew it as though she had seen it, she had lured him on so often to describing it to her. He thought nothing of it; talked, indeed, of it with disgust as a God-forsaken place. Well, it was these God-forsaken places that her body and spirit cried out for. Space, freedom, quiet; the wind ruffling the rye; the water splashing softly against the side of the punt (there was a punt, she had extracted); the larks singing up in the sunlight; the shining clouds passing slowly across the blue. She wanted to be alone with these things after the years of deafening hurry at Redchester with a longing that was like home-sickness. She *remembered*, somehow, that once she used to be with them—long ago, far away.... And there used to be little things when you lay face downwards on the grass, little lovely things that smelt beautiful—wild-strawberry leaves, and a tiny aromatic plant with a white flower like a star that you rubbed between your fingers....

She stood still a moment, frowning, trying to remember more; it wasn't in England.... But even as she puzzled the vision slipped away from her and was lost.

She wanted to read, and walk, and think. She was hungry to read at last what she chose, and walk at last where she chose, and think at last exactly what she chose. Was the *Christian Year* enough for one in the way of poetry? And all those mild novels her mother read, sandwiched between the biographies of more bishops and little books of comfort with crosses on them that asked rude questions as to whether you had been greedy or dainty or had used words with a double meaning during the day—were they enough for a soul that had, quite alone, with no father giving directions, presently to face its God?

Her family held strongly that for daughters to read in the daytime was to be idle. Well, if it was, thought Ingeborg lifting her head, that head that drooped so apologetically at home, with the defiance that distance encourages, then being idle was a blessed thing and the sooner one got away to where one could be it, uninterruptedly, the better. In that parsonage away in East Prussia, for instance, one would be able to read and read.... Herr Dremmel had explained a hundred times about his laboratory, and he himself locked into it and only asking to be left locked. Surely that was an admirable quality in a husband, that he kept himself locked up! And the parsonage was on the edge of the village, and the little garden at the back had nothing between it and the sunset and all God's other dear arrangements except a solitary and long-unused windmill....

It was about one o'clock in the morning that her courage, however, altogether ebbed at the prospect of going home. What would it be like, taking up her filialities again, and all of them henceforth so terribly tarnished? She would be a returning prodigal for whom no calf was killed, but who instead of the succulences of a more liberal age would be offered an awful opportunity of explaining her conduct to a father who would interrupt her the instant she began and do the explaining himself.

How was she going to face it, all alone?

If only she could have been in love with Herr Dremmel! With what courage she would have faced her family then, if she had been in love with him and come to them her hand in his. If only he looked more like the lovers you see in pictures, like the one in Leighton's "Wedded," for instance—a very beautiful picture, Ingeborg thought, but not like any of the wedded in Redchester—so that if she couldn't be in love she could at least persuade herself she was. If only he had proper hair instead of just beaver. She liked him so much. She had even at particular moments of his conversation gone so far as to delight in him. But—marriage?

What was marriage? Why did they never talk about it at home? In the Bishop's Palace it might, for all the mentioning it got, be one of the seven deadly sins. You talked there of the married, and sometimes, but with reserve, of getting married, but marriage itself and what it was and meant was never discussed. She had received the impression, owing to these silences, that though it was God's ordinance, as her father in his official capacity at weddings reiterated, it was a reluctant ordinance, established apparently because there seemed no other way of getting round what appeared to be a

difficulty. What was the difficulty? She had never in her busy life thought about it. Marriage had not concerned her. It would not be nice, she had felt, unconsciously adopting the opinion of her environment, for a girl who was not going to marry to get thinking of it. And it really had not interested her. She had quite naturally turned her eyes away.

But now this question of facing her father, this need of being backed up, this longing to get away from things, forced her to look. Besides, she would have to give Herr Dremmel some sort of answer in the morning, and the facing of Herr Dremmel required courage, too—of a different kind, but certainly courage. She was so reluctant to hurt or disappoint. It had seemed all her life the most beautiful of pleasures to give people what they wanted, to get them to smile, to see them look content. But suppose Herr Dremmel, before he could be got to smile and look content, wanted to clutch her again as he had clutched her on the top of the Rigi? She had very profoundly disliked it. She had been able to resent it there and get loose, but if she were married and he clutched could she still resent? She greatly feared not. She greatly suspected, now she came to a calm consideration of it, that that was what was the matter with marriage: it was a series of clutchings. Her father had no doubt realised this as she was realising it now, and very properly didn't like it. You couldn't expect him to. That was why he wouldn't talk about it. In this she was entirely at one with him. But perhaps Herr Dremmel didn't like it, either. Wasn't she rather jumping at conclusions in imagining that he did? Hadn't he after all clutched rather in anger up there than in anything else? And what about his earnest wish, so often explained, to be left all day locked up in his laboratory? And what about his praise, that very afternoon, of chill in human relationships?

At that moment her eye was arrested by something white appearing slowly and with difficulty beneath her door. She sat up very straight and stared at it, watching its efforts to get over and past the edge of her mat. For an instant she wondered whether it were not a kind of insect ghost; then she saw, as more of it appeared, that it was a letter.

She held her breath while it struggled in. Nobody had ever pushed a letter under her door before. She grew happy instantly. What *fun*. Her heart beat quite fast with excitement while she waited to hear footsteps going away before getting up to fetch it. Herr Dremmel, however, must have been in his goloshes, objects from which he was seldom separated, for she heard nothing; and after a few seconds of breathless listening she got up with immense caution and went on tip-toe to the letter and picked it up.

"Why," she thought, pausing for a moment with a sort of solemnity before opening it, "I suppose this is my first love-letter."

There was nothing on the envelope and no signature, and this was what it said:

"LITTLE ONE,

"I wish to tell you that before going to my room to-night I instructed the hall-porter to order a betrothal cake, properly iced and with what is customary in the matter of silver leaves, to be in the small salon adjoining the smoking-room to-morrow morning at nine o'clock. Since no man can be betrothed alone, it will be necessary that you should be there."

CHAPTER VI

It was a perturbed betrothal, there were so many people at it.

Seven ladies besides Ingeborg appeared in the small *salon* adjoining the smoking-room next morning at nine o'clock. What Herr Dremmel had done, being ignorant which was Ingeborg's room and after laborious thought deciding that to demand her number of the hall-porter later than dusk might very conceivably cast a slur on her reputation, young ladies being, as he well knew, of all living creatures the most easily slurred, was to write as many copies of the letter as there were doors on her landing and thrust them industriously one by one beneath each door, strong in the knowledge that she would in this manner inevitably get one of them.

He was greatly pleased with this plan. It seemed of a beautiful simplicity and effectiveness. "Being unaware of the context," he reasoned, "no lady except the right one will be able to guess what the letter can possibly refer to. She will therefore throw it aside as an obvious mistake and think no more about it."

But the ladies did think. And none of the inhabitants of the third floor, except Mr. Ascough who never thought anything about anything, having discovered that if once you begin to think there is no end to it, and a dried and brittle little man lately pensioned off by the firm he had been clerk to and taking his first trip on the continent in a condition of profound uninterestedness, threw it aside. These two did; but the seven ladies not only did not throw it aside, they read it many times, and instead of thinking no more about it thought of nothing else. Even Mrs. Bawn, who had been a widow for six months and was heartily tired of it, was pleased. She liked, particularly, being addressed as Little One. There was a blindness about this that suggested genuine feeling. She had not been so much pleased since her dear Bawn, now half a year in glory, had told her one day, before their marriage, that he did not care what anybody said he maintained that she was handsome.

They all thought the letter very virile, and that nothing could be more gentlemanly than its restraint. Four of them expected a different male member of the party to be waiting in the small *salon*, the remaining three expected Mr. Ascough. Mr. Ascough had a caressing way with pats of butter and the closing of the doors of filled flies that had before now led him, on these tours, into misapprehensions. He was long since married, but had omitted to mention it. The ladies, therefore, when they arrived in the small *salon* at nine o'clock did not find Mr. Ascough nor any of the other four friends they expected. They found, surprisingly, each other; and, standing thick and black near a decorated table at the window and scowling in a fresh astonishment every time the door opened and another lady came in, that very undesirable fellow-tourist, the German gentleman.

Each one immediately knew it was Ingeborg who had been written to, and that the letter had gone astray. Each one also thought she knew that Ingeborg had not got the letter and would not come. But each one, except Mrs. Bawn, was helped to cover up her shock by being sure the others did not know of it; and the custom of life lying heavy on them they were able, after one little start on first seeing Herr Dremmel, to drift into the corners of the room and pretend that what they had come for was books. Except Mrs. Bawn. Mrs. Bawn saw, stared, turned on her heel, and went out again volcanically; and the corridor shook to her departing footsteps and to the angry unintentional rhymes she was making aloud with words like hoax and jokes.

With astonishment and disgust Herr Dremmel saw the seven ladies accumulate. It was most unfortunate that on that morning of all mornings the small *salon*, so invariably empty, should be visited. His inexperienced mind did not connect their appearance with his letters; it never occurred to him that his reasoning as to what they would do on receiving them could possibly be wrong. Nor did he, as he watched the door open and shut seven times and seven times admit the wrong woman, guess that their presence, if Ingeborg came, would immensely help his betrothal.

The ladies, fingering dusty Tauchnitzes and magazines and eyeing the table in the window with heads as much averted as could be combined with the seeing of it, gradually found the shock they had had being soothed by the interest they felt in what Herr Dremmel would do when he realised that that unladylike Miss Bullivant, all unaware of what was waiting for her, was not coming. Now that they were there they might as well stay and see the end of it. It was really very interesting in its way; so German; so unlike, thank goodness, what English people ever did. Would he stand there all day, they wondered, with that really most improperly suggestive cake, so very like a christening cake? One or two of them sat down squarely on the sofas behind months-old magazines round whose edges they peeped, making it clear to the unhappy man that they, at least, intended to stay there; and they all coughed a little every now and then in the way a waiting congregation coughs in church.

Then the door was pushed open with the jerk of somebody who is either in a hurry or has come to a sudden determination, and who should appear but that Miss Bullivant.

A thrill ran through the seven ladies, and they instantly became, behind their magazines, stiff with excitement. Chance; what a chance; she had chanced to look in; it was like a play; dear me, thought each of the seven.

And Ingeborg, who believed as lately as the last moment on the doormat outside that she had only come in order to tell Herr Dremmel she was not coming, when she saw the cake, very white and bridal, on a white cloth with white flowers in pots round it, and on either side of it a bottle with a white ribbon about its neck, and on the other for the sake of symmetry two glasses, was staggered. How could she, who so much loved to please, to make happy, cruelly hurt him, spoil his little feast, wipe out the glow, the immense relief that beamed from his face when he saw her?

She turned round quickly, realising the presence of the seven ladies. Amazed she stared at them, mechanically counting them. How could she make him ridiculous, humiliate him, before all those women?

Hesitating, torn, poised on the tip of flight, she stood there. Her hand was on the door to open it again and run; but Herr Dremmel's simplicity came to his help more effectually than the cunningest plans. He forgot the ladies, and stepping forward took her hand in his and quite simply kissed her forehead, sealing her then and there, with the perfect frankness of his countrymen when engaged in legitimate courtship, as his betrothed. He then slipped a ring he wore on his little finger on to her thumb, that being the only bit of her hand he could find that it would stay on, and he being free from prejudices in the matter of fingers, and the thing—at least so he supposed—was done.

Ingeborg in her bewilderment let these things happen to her. Her thoughts as she stood being betrothed were jerking themselves into a perfect tangle of knots. She was astonished at the tricks life stoops to. A cake and the eyes of seven women. Her whole future being decided by a cake and the eyes of seven women. Oh, no, it couldn't be. It was only that she couldn't stop now. Impossible, utterly, to stop now. She had never dreamed she wouldn't find him alone. These women were all witnesses. He had kissed her before them all. His methods were really overwhelming. Suppose her father could see her. But the kiss had been administered very ceremoniously; it had been quite cooling; such a one as even a bishop might feel justified in applying to the brow of a sick person or a young child. Later, at a more convenient time, when the pathetic cake was out of sight, when these women were out of ear-shot, she would tell him she hadn't meant....

Amazingly she found herself advancing towards the cake with Herr Dremmel and standing in front of it with him hand in hand. Oh, the *mischief* people got into who came up to London to dentists! She now saw what provincial dentists were for: they kept you in pain, and pain kept you out of mischief. For the first time she understood what her spirit had till then refused to accept, the teaching so popular with the Bishop that pain was a necessary part of the scheme of things. Of course. You were safe so long as you were in pain. In that condition the very nearest you could get to the most seductive temptation was to glance at it palely, with a sick distaste. And you stayed at home, and were grateful for kindnesses. It was only when you hadn't anything the matter with you that you

ran away from your family and went to Lucerne and took up with a strange man positively to the extent of letting him promise to marry you.

Somebody coughed so close behind her that it made her jump. She turned round nervously, Herr Dremmel still holding her hand, and beheld the seven ladies flocked about her for all the world like seven bridesmaids.

They had hastily consulted together in whispers while she was being led away to the cake as to whether they ought not to congratulate her. Their hearts were touched by the respectful ceremony with which Herr Dremmel had conducted his betrothal. It had had the solemn finality of a marriage, and what woman can look on at a marriage unmoved? They had agreed in whispers that this was one of those moments in which one lets bygones be bygones. The two at the altar—they meant at the cake—had no doubt said many terrible and vulgar tilings and had behaved in a way no lady and gentleman would—the girl, for instance, openly admitting she had run away from home; but what they were doing now at least was beyond reproach, and, by uniting, two blacks were after all, in spite of what people said about its not being possible, going to make one white. At any rate it was charitable to hope so.

So they cleared their throats and wished her joy.

"Thank you," said Ingeborg a little faintly, looking from one to the other, "it's so kind of you—but—"

They then shook hands with Herr Dremmel and said they were sure they wished him joy, too, and he thanked them with propriety and bows.

"Such a thing has never happened on a Dent's Tour before—oh, no, never before at all I'm sure," said the most elderly lady nervously, with a number of nods.

"There isn't time enough, that's what I sometimes think," said the young lady who had hurried her companion away to the sunset the evening before. "What's a week?" And she stared at the cake and frowned.

"Dent's had a funeral once," said a square small lady who kept her hands plunged in the pockets of a grey jersey.

"Now Miss Jewks, really—" protested the elderly lady. "One doesn't mention—"

"Well, it wasn't their fault, Miss Andrews. They didn't *want* to have it, I'm sure. It was a gentleman from Gipsy Hill—"

"What a beautiful—er—cake," hastily interrupted the elderly lady.

"Funny thing, I sometimes think," continued Miss Jewks, "to go for a holiday and die instead."

"Those silver leaves—" said the elderly lady, raising her voice, "I call them dainty."

"It's like a wedding-cake, isn't it?" said the young lady of the sunset, peering close at it with a face of gloom.

"Will you not, Ingeborg," said Herr Dremmel, calling her for the first time by her name, "cut the cake? And perhaps these ladies will do us the honour of tasting it."

She did not recognise him in this persistent ceremoniousness. Every trace of his usual lax behaviour was gone, his ease and familiarity of speech, and he was as stiff and correct and grave as if he were laying a foundation stone or opening a museum. They were the manners, though she did not know it, which all Germans are trained to produce on public occasions.

"Oh, thank you—"

"Oh, you're really very kind—"

"Oh, thank you very much I'm sure—"

There was a murmur of awkward and reluctant thanks. The seven ladies were not at all certain that their cordiality ought to stretch as far as cake. They had been moved by an impulse that did honour to their womanliness to offer congratulations, but they did not for all that forget the dreadful things the couple had constantly been heard talking about and the many clear proofs it had provided that it was what Dent's Tours were accustomed to describe as no class; and though they all liked cake,

and were getting steadily hungrier as the Dent week drew to its close, they were doubtful as to the social wisdom of eating it. It would be very unpleasant if these people, encouraged, were later on to presume; if they were to try to use the eaten cake as a weapon for forcing their way into English society. If, in a word, when the Tour got back to England, they were to want to call.

So they took the cake reluctantly that Ingeborg, in a sort of dream, cut and offered them; and with even more reluctance they sipped the wine in which the German gentleman requested them to drink the newly betrothed couple's health.

"But—" said Ingeborg, trying to rouse herself even at this eleventh hour.

"True. There are not enough glasses. I will ring for more," was the way Herr Dremmel finished her sentence for her.

The immense official promptness of him! She felt numbed.

And when the glasses were brought there was another ceremony—a clinking of Herr Dremmel's glass with each glass in turn, his heels together as in the days of his soldiering, his body stiff and his face a miracle of solemnity; and before drinking he made a speech, the Asti held high in front of him, in which he thanked the ladies for their good wishes on behalf of his betrothed, Miss Ingeborg Bullivant, whose virtues he dwelt upon singly and at length in resounding periods, before proceeding to assure those present of his firm resolve to prove, by the devotion of the rest of his life, the extremity of his gratitude for the striking proof she had given before them all of her confidence in him; and every sentence seemed to set another and a heavier seal on her as a creature undoubtedly bound to marry him.

Dimly she began to realise something of the steely grip of a German engagement. She wondered whether there were any more room left on her forehead for further seals. She felt that it must be covered with great red things, scrawled over with the inscription:

DREMMELE'S

Well, she was after all not a parcel to be picked up and carried away by the first person who found her lying about, and the minute she was alone with him she would, she *must*, tell him that what she had really come down for, though appearances were certainly by this time rather against her, was to refuse him. She would be as gentle as possible, but she would be plain and firm. The minute these women left them alone she would tell him.

With a start she saw that the women were leaving them alone, and that the minute had come. She wanted them not to go; she wanted to keep them there at any cost. She even made a step after them as the last one, nodding to the end, went out and shut the door, but Herr Dremmel still had hold of her hand.

When the door had finally shut she turned to him quickly. Her head was thrown back, her eyes were full of a screwed-up courage.

"But you know—" she began, determined to clear things up, however much it might hurt them both.

And again he promptly finished her sentence for her, this time by enfolding her in his arms and kissing her with a largeness and abundance which no bishop, her mind flashed as her body stood stiff with surprise and horror, could possibly approve.

She felt engulfed.

She felt she must be disappearing altogether.

He seemed infinitely capacious and soft.

"Oh, but I can't—I won't—oh, stop—oh, stop—it's a mistake—" she tried to get out in gasps.

"My little wife," was all the notice Herr Dremmel took of that.

CHAPTER VII

It was raining at Redchester when Ingeborg got out at the station a week and a day after she left it—the soft persistent fine rain, hardly more than a mist, peculiar to that much-soaked corner of England. The lawns in the gardens she passed as her fly crawled up the hill were incredibly green, the leaves of the lilac bushes glistened with wet, each tulip was a cup of water, the roads were chocolate, and a thick grey blanket of cloud hung warm over the town, tucking it in all round and keeping out any draught that might bite and sting the inhabitants, she thought, into real living.

The porter told her it was fine growing weather, and she wondered stupidly why, after the years she had had of the sort of thing, she had had not grown, then, more thoroughly herself. A retired colonel she knew—she knew all the retired colonels—waved his umbrella and shouted a genial inquiry after her toothache, and she looked at him with a dead, ungrateful eye. A passing postman touched his cap, and she turned the other way. The same sensible female figures she had seen all her life draped in the same sensible mackintoshes bowed and smiled, and she pretended she hadn't seen them. Everybody, in fact, behaved as though she were still good, which was distressing, embarrassing, and productive of an overwhelming desire to shut her eyes and hide.

There were the shops, with the things in the windows unchanged since she left nine days ago, the same ancient novelties nobody ever bought, the same flies creeping over the same buns. There was the book-seller her *Christian Year* had come from, his windows full of more of them, endless supplies for endless dieted daughters, vegetarians in literature she called them to herself, forcibly vegetabled vegetarians; and there was the silversmith who provided the Bishop with the crosses after a good Florentine fifteenth-century pattern he presented to those of his confirmation candidates who were the daughters in the diocese of the great. The Duke's daughter had one. The Lord-Lieutenant's daughter had one. On this principle Ingeborg herself had been given one, and wore it continually night and day, as her father expected, under her dress, where it bruised her. It was pleasant to her father to be able to recollect, in the stress and dust of much in his work that was unrefreshing, how there was a yearly increasing though severely sifted number of gentle virgin blouses belonging to the best families beneath which lay and rhythmically heaved this silver reminder of the wearer's Bishop and of her God.

"Father," Ingeborg said, after she had worn hers for a week, "may I take my cross off at night?"

"Why, Ingeborg?" he had inquired; adding quietly, "Did our Saviour?"

"No; but—you see when one turns round in one's sleep it sticks into one."

"Sticks, Ingeborg?" the Bishop said gently, raising his eyebrows at such an expression applied to such an object.

"Yes, and I'm getting awfully bruised." She was still in the schoolroom, and still saying awfully.

"By His stripes we are healed," said the Bishop, shutting up the conversation as one shuts up a book.

In spite of the wet warmth she shivered as the silversmith's window reminded her of this. It had happened years ago, but even farther back, as far back as she could remember, every time she had asked leave of her father to do anything it had been refused; and refused with bits of Bible, which was so peculiarly silencing.

And now here she was about to face him covered with the leaves she had not asked for at all but had so tremendously taken, and going to ask the most tremendous one of all, the leave to marry Herr Dremmel.

For that was how the last two days of her Dent's Tour had been spent, in being openly engaged to Herr Dremmel. She had found her attempts to explain that she was not so really availed nothing against his conviction that she was. And public opinion, the public opinion of the whole Tour, also never doubted but that she was—had not seven of its most reliable members actually seen her in the

act of becoming it? In fact it not only did not doubt it, it was sternly determined that she should be engaged whether she liked it or not. It was the least, the Tour felt, that she could do. So that there was nothing for it now but to face the Bishop.

She felt cold. No amount of the familiar moist stuffiness could warm her. Vainly she tried to sit up, to be proud and brave, to recapture something at least of the courage that had seemed so easy just at the end in Switzerland with Herr Dremmel to laugh at her doubts. Her head would droop, and her hands and feet were like stones.

It was the place, the place, she thought, the hypnotic effect of it, of her old environment. The whole of Redchester was heavy with recollections of past obediences. Not once had she ever in Redchester even dreamt of rebellion. She had questioned latterly, in the remoter and less filial corners of her heart, but she had never so much as thought of rebellion. And the moment she got away out of sight and hearing of home, things she knew here were wicked had appeared to be quite good and extremely natural. How strange that was. And how strange that now she was back everything was beginning to seem wicked again. What was a poor wretch to do, she asked herself with sudden passion, confronted by these shuffling standards that behaved as if they were dancing a quadrille? This was the place in which for years her conscience had been cockered to size and delicacy; and though it had become temporarily tough in Herr Dremmel's company she felt it relapsing with every turn of the wheels more and more into its ancient softness.

Yet she undoubtedly, conscience-stricken and frightened or not, had to tell her father what she had done. She had got to be brave, and if needs be she had got to defy. She was bound to Herr Dremmel. He had only gone home to set his house in order, and then, he announced, she meanwhile having prepared the Bishop, he was coming to Redchester to marry her. Prepared the Bishop! She shivered. Herr Dremmel had tried to marry her in Lucerne; but the Swiss, it seemed, would not be hurried, so that here she was, and within the next few hours she was going to have to prepare the Bishop.

She shut her eyes and thought of Herr Dremmel; of Robert, as she was was learning to call him. With all her heart she liked him. And he had been so kind when he found she really disliked being engulfed in embraces, and had restricted his exhibitions of affection to the kissing of her hand, telling her he could very well wait till later on, sure that she would after marriage warm, as he had explained to her on the Rigi all women did, to a just appreciation of the value of the caresses of an honest man. He had also produced a number of German love-names from some hitherto fallow corner of his mind, and garnished his conversation with them in a way that made her who, nourished as she had been on the noble language of the Bible and the Prayer-book, was instantly responsive to the charm of words, laugh and glow with pleasure. She was his Little Heart, his Little Tiny Treasure, his Little Sugar Lamb—a dozen little sweet diminished German things translated straight away just as they were into English. The freshness of it! The freshness of being admired and petted after the economies in these directions practised in her home. And his ring at that very moment dangled beneath her dress on the same chain as her father's cross. Yes, she was bound to him. Duty, she perceived, could be a very blessed thing sometimes if it protected one from some other duty. It was Herr Dremmel now who had become her Duty.

She put up her hand to get courage by feeling the ring, for her spirit was fainting within her—she had just caught sight of the cathedral. The ring had been slung on the chain alongside the confirmation cross because it was impossible to wear it on her thumb; and out there in Switzerland, where one was simple, it had seemed a most natural and obvious place to put it. Yet now, as the fly rattled over the cobbles of the Close and the familiar cathedral rose before her like a menace, she hung her head and greatly doubted but what the juxtaposition was wicked.

Nobody was on the doorstep when she arrived beneath the great cedar that spread its shade, an intensified bit of dripping gloom where all was gloom and dripping, across from the lawn to the Palace's entrance, except the butler, whose black clothes struck her instantly as very neat and smooth,

and his underling, a youth kept carefully a little on the side of a suitable episcopal shabbiness. She had telegraphed her train from Paddington, but that, of course, was no reason why any one should be on the doorstep. It was she whose business lay with doorsteps when people arrived or left, she was the one who welcomed and who sped, and, since she could not welcome herself, there was nobody there to do it.

She stole a nervous look at Wilson as he helped her out, but his face was a blank. The boy on her other side had an expression, she thought, as though under happier conditions he might have let himself go in a smirk, and she turned her eyes away with a little sick feeling. Did they know already, all of them, that she had left her aunt's a week ago? But, indeed, that seemed a small thing now compared with the things she had done since.

"I'm a dead girl," thought Ingeborg, as she passed beneath her parents' porch.

The servants brought in her luggage, off which in her newness at deceit she had not thought to scrape the continental labels, and she crossed the hall, treading on the dim splashes of lovely blurred colour that fell from the vast stained glass windows on to the stone flags of its floor. It was the noblest hall, as bare of stuffs and carpets as the cathedral itself, and she looked more than insignificant going across it to the carved oak door that opened into the wide panelled passage leading to the drawing-room, a little figure braced to a miserable courage, the smallest thing to be going to defy powers of which this magnificence was only one of the expressions.

Her mother was as usual on her sofa near a fire whose heat, that warm day, was mitigated by the windows being wide open. Beside her was her own particular table with the usual flowers, needlework, devotional books, and biographies of good men. It was difficult to believe her mother had got off that sofa nine times to go to bed, had dressed and undressed and had meals—thirty-six of them, counted Ingeborg mechanically, while she looked about for the Bishop, if you excluded the before breakfast tea, forty-five if you didn't—since she saw her last, so immovable did she appear, so exactly in the same position and composed into the same lines as she had been nine days before. The room was full of the singing of thrushes, quite deafeningly full, as she opened the door, for the windows gave straight into the green and soppy garden and it was a day of many worms. Judith was making tea as far away from the fire as she could get, and there was no sign of the Bishop.

"Is that you, Ingeborg?" said her mother, turning her face, grown pale with years of being shut up, to the door.

Ingeborg's mother had found the sofa as other people find salvation. She was not ill. She had simply discovered in it a refuge and a very present help in all the troubles and turmoil of life, and in especial a shield and buckler when it came to dealing with the Bishop. It is not easy for the married, she had found when first casting about for one, to hit on a refuge from each other that shall be honourable to both. In a moment of insight she perceived the sofa. Here was a blameless object that would separate her entirely from duties and responsibilities of every sort. It was respectable; it was unassailably effective; it was not included in the Commandments. All she had to do was to cling to it, and nobody could make her do or be anything. She accordingly got on to it and had stayed there ever since, mysteriously frail, an object of solicitude and sympathy, a being before whose helplessness the most aggressive or aggrieved husband must needs be helpless, too. And she had gradually acquired the sofa look, and was now very definitely a slightly plaintive but persistently patient Christian lady.

"Is that you, Ingeborg?" she said, turning her head.

"Yes, mother," said Ingeborg, hesitating in spite of herself on the threshold.

She looked round anxiously, but the Bishop was not lurking anywhere in the big room.

"Come in, dear, and shut the door. You see the windows are open."

Judith glanced up at her a moment from her tea-making and did not move. Even in the midst of her terrors Ingeborg was astonished, after not having seen it for a while, at her loveliness. She seemed to have taken the sodden greys of the afternoon, the dulness and the gathering dusk, and made out of their gloom the one perfect background for her beauty.

"We thought you would have written," said Mrs. Bullivant, putting her cheek in a position convenient for the kiss that was to be applied to it.

"I—I telegraphed," said Ingeborg, applying the kiss.

"Yes, dear, but only about your train."

"I—thought that was enough."

"But, Ingeborg dear, such a great occasion. One of *the* great occasions of life. We did expect a little notice, didn't we, Judith?"

"Notice?" said Ingeborg faintly.

"Your father was wounded, dear. He thought it showed so little real love for your parents and your sister."

"But—" said Ingeborg, looking from one to the other.

"We wrote to you at once—directly we knew. Didn't we, Judith?"

"Of course," said Judith.

Ingeborg stood flushing and turning pale. Had one of the Dent's Tour people somehow found out where she lived and written about her engagement and the impossible had happened and they weren't going to mind? Was it possible? Did they know? And were taking it like this? If only she had called at her aunt's house on the way to Paddington and got the letters—what miserable hours of terror she would have been spared!

"But—" she began. Then the immense relief of it suddenly flooded her whole being with a delicious warm softness. They did know. Somehow. And a miracle had happened. Oh, how *kind* God was!

She dropped on her knees by the sofa and began to kiss her mother's hand, which surprised Mrs. Bullivant; and indeed it is a foreign trick, picked up mostly by those who go abroad. "Mother," she said, "are you really pleased about it? You don't mind then?"

"Mind?" said Mrs. Bullivant.

"Oh, how glad, how glad I am. And father? What does he say? Does he—does *he* mind?"

"Mind?" repeated Mrs. Bullivant.

"Father is very pleased, I think," said Judith, with what in one less lovely would have been a slight pursing of the lips. And she twisted a remarkable diamond ring she was wearing straight.

"Father is—pleased?" echoed Ingeborg, quite awe-struck by the amount and quality of these reliefs.

"I must say I think it is really *good* of your dear father to be pleased, when he loses—" began Mrs. Bullivant.

"Oh, yes, yes," interrupted the overcome Ingeborg, "it's a wonder—a wonder of God."

"Ingeborg dear," her mother gently rebuked, for this was excess; and Judith looked still more what would have been a little pursed in any other woman.

"When he loses," then resumed Mrs. Bullivant with the plaintive determination of one who considers it the least she may expect as a sofa-ridden mother to be allowed to finish her sentences, "so much."

"Yes, yes," assented Ingeborg eagerly, whose appreciation of her parents' attitude was so warm that she almost felt she must stay and bask in its urbanity forever and not go away after all to the bleak distance of East Prussia.

"Your father loses not *only* a daughter," continued Mrs. Bullivant, "but £500 a year of his income."

"Would one call it his income?" inquired Judith, politely but yet, if one could suspect a being with an angel's face of such a thing, with some slight annoyance. "I thought our grandmother—"

"Judith dear, the £500 a year your grandmother left to each of you was only to be yours when you married," explained Mrs. Bullivant, also with some slight annoyance beneath her patience. "Till

you married it was to be mine—your father's, I mean, of course. And if you never did marry it would have been mine—I mean his—always."

Ingeborg had heard of her Swedish grandmother's will, but had long ago forgotten it, marriage being remote and money never of any interest to her who had no occasions for spending. Now her heart bounded with yet more thankfulness. What a comfort it would be to Robert. How it would help him in his research. Extraordinary that she should have forgotten it. When he told her of his stipend of five thousand marks—£250 it was in English money, he explained, and there was the house and land free—most of which went in his experiments, but what was left being ample, he said, for the living purposes of reasonable beings if they approached it in a proper spirit, it all depending, he said, on whether they approached it in a proper spirit. "And after all," he had added triumphantly, throwing out his chest just as she was about to inquire what the proper spirit was, "no man can call me *thin*—"—to think she had forgotten the substantial help she was going to be able to bring him!

The full splendour of her father's generosity in being pleased at her engagement was now revealed to her. The relief of it. The glad, warm relief. So must one feel who is born again, all new, all clean from old mistakes and fears. She felt lifted up, extraordinarily happy, extraordinarily good, more in harmony with Providence and the Bible than she had been since childhood. She would have been willing, and indeed found it perfectly natural, to kneel down with her mother and Judith then and there and say prayers together out loud. She would have been willing on the crest of her wave of gratefulness quite readily to give up Herr Dremmel in return for the family's immense kindness in not asking her to give him up. She had felt nothing like this exaltation before in her life, this complete being in harmony with the infinite, this confidence in the inherent goodness of things, except on the afternoon her tooth was pulled out.

"Oh," she exclaimed, laying her cheek on her mother's hand, "oh, I do *hope* you'll like Robert!"

"Robert?" said Mrs. Bullivant; and at the tea-table there was a sudden silence among the cups, as though they were holding their breath.

"His name's Robert," said Ingeborg, still with her cheek on her mother's hand, her eyes shut, her face a vision of snuggest, safest contentment.

"What Robert, Ingeborg?" inquired Mrs. Bullivant, shifting her position to stare down more conveniently at her daughter.

"Herr Dremmel. It's his Christian name. He's got to *have* one, you know," said Ingeborg, still with her eyes shut in the blissfulness of perfect confidence.

"Herr who?" said Mrs. Bullivant, a sharper note of life in her voice than there had been for years. "Here's your father," she added quickly, hastily composing herself into the lines of the unassailable invalid again as the door opened and the Bishop came in.

Ingeborg jumped up. "Oh, father," she cried, running to him with the entire want of shyness one may conceive in the newly washed and forgiven soul when it first arrives in heaven and meets its Maker and knows there are going to be no more misunderstandings for ever, "how *good* you've been!"

And she kissed him so fervently in a room gone so silent that the kiss sounded quite loud.

The Bishop was nettled.

Was he then at any time not good? His daughter's excessive gratitude, really almost noisy gratitude, for what after all had been inevitable, the permission to go up to London and place herself in the hands of a dentist, suggested that humaneness on his part came to her as a surprise. He did feel he had been good to let her go, but he also felt he would have been not good if he had not let her go. Certainly Redchester opinion would have condemned him as cruel even if he himself, who knew all the circumstances, was not able to think so. What had really been cruel was the terrible muddle his papers and letters had got into owing to her prolonged absence. Grave dislocations had taken place in the joints of his engagements, several with far-reaching results; and all because, he could not help feeling, Ingeborg, in spite of precept and example, did not in her earlier years use her toothbrush with regularity and conscientiousness. Manifestly she did not, or how could she have needed nine

enormous days to be set in repair? He himself, who regarded his body as a holy temple, which was the one solution of the body question that at all approached satisfactoriness, and had accordingly brushed his teeth, from the point of view of their being pillars of a sacred edifice, after every meal for forty years, had never had a toothache in his life.

"Let us hope now, Ingeborg," he said, reflecting on the instance she had provided of the modern inversion of the Mosaic law which visited the sins of the fathers on the children, the original arrangement, the Bishop felt, being considerably healthier, and gently putting her away in order to go over to the tea-table where he stood holding out his hand for the cup Judith hastened to place in it, "let us now hope, now you have had your lesson, that in future you will remember cleanliness is next to godliness."

And this seemed to Ingeborg an answer so surprising that she could only stare at him with her mouth fallen a little open, there where he had left her in the middle of the carpet.

But the Bishop had not done. He went on to say another thing that surprised her still more; nay, smote her cold, shook her to her foundations. He said, after a pause during which the silence in the room was remarkable, his back turned to her while at the tea-table he carefully selected the particular piece of bread and butter he intended to eat, "And pray, Ingeborg, why did you not write the moment you heard from us, and congratulate your sister on her engagement?"

CHAPTER VIII

Ingeborg was dumb.

Her father's question was like a blow, shocking her back to consciousness. The warm dream that all was well, that she was understood, that there was love and kindness for her at home after all and welcome and encouragement, the warm feeling of stretching herself in her family's kind lap, confident that it would hold her up and not spill her out on to the floor, was gone in a flash. She was hit awake, hit out of her brief delicious sleep. Her family had not got a lap, but it had an entirely unprepared mind, and into that unprepared mind she had tumbled the name of Dremmel.

"Judith—engaged?" she stammered faintly, on the Bishop's wheeling round, cup in hand, to examine into the cause of her prolonged silence.

"Your incredulity is not very flattering to your sister," he said; and Judith's eyelashes as she concentrated her gaze on the teapot were alone sufficiently lovely, the curved, dusky-golden soft things, to make incredulity simply silly.

Mrs. Bullivant avoided all speech and clung to her sofa.

"It's—so sudden," faltered Ingeborg.

"Much may happen in a week," said the Bishop.

"Yes," murmured Ingeborg, who knew that terribly, too.

"We never can tell what a day may bring forth," said the Bishop; and Ingeborg, deeply convinced, drooped her head acquiescent.

"No man," began the Bishop, habit being strong within him, "knoweth the hour when the bridegroom—" But he stopped, recollecting that Ingeborg was not engaged and therefore could not with propriety be talked to of bridegrooms. Instead, he inquired again why she had not written; and eyeing her searchingly asked himself if it were possible that a child of his could be base enough to envy.

"I—didn't get the letters," said Ingeborg, her head drooping.

"You did not? That is very strange. Your mother wrote at once. Let me see. It was on Friday it happened. It *was* Friday, was it not, Judith? *You* ought to know"—Judith blushed obediently—"and to-day is Tuesday. Ample time. Ample time. My dear," he said, turning to his wife who at once twitched into a condition of yet further relaxed defencelessness, "do you think it possible your letter was not posted?"

"Quite, Herbert," murmured Mrs. Bullivant, closing her eyes and endeavouring to imagine herself unconscious.

"Ah. Then that's it. That's it. Wilson is growing careless. This last week there have been repeated negligences. You will make inquiries, Ingeborg, and tell him what I have said."

"Yes, father."

"And you will discharge him if he goes on like this."

"Yes, father."

"Unfaithful servant. Unfaithful servant. He that is unfaithful in a few things—"

The Bishop, frowning at it, took a second piece of bread and butter, and went over to the hearthrug, where he stood from force of habit, in spite of the warmth of the day, drinking his tea, and becoming vaguely and increasingly irritated by the action of the fire behind him.

"Then," he said, looking at Ingeborg, "you know nothing about it?"

She shook her head. She was the oddest figure in the middle of the splendid old room, travel-stained, untidy, her face white with fatigue, her hat crooked.

Judith glanced at her every now and then, but it was impossible at any time to tell what the delicate white rose at the tea-table was thinking; so impossible that the young men who clustered round her like bees when they first saw her gave it up and went on presently to more communicative

flowers. The local Duchess had hoped her first-born would marry him—a creature so lovely, so entirely respectable with that nice Bishop for a father, and so happily adapted in the perfection of her proportions for the successful production of further dukes; and she pointed out various aspects of the girl's exquisiteness to her son, and told him he would have the most beautiful wife in England. But the young man, after a reproachful look at his mother for supposing he could have missed noticing even the humblest approach to a pretty woman let alone Judith Bullivant, said he didn't want to marry a picture but something that was alive and, anyhow, something that talked.

"She's right enough, of course," he remarked, "and I like looking at her. I'd be blind if I didn't. But Lord, dull? The girl hasn't got a word to say for herself. I never met any woman who looked so ripping and then somehow wasn't. She won't talk. She won't *talk*," he almost wailed. "She ain't got the remotest resemblance to anything approaching *kick* in her."

"You might end by being thankful for that," said his mother.

He would not, however, be persuaded, and went his way and married, as the Duchess had feared, a young lady from the halls—a young lady nimble not only of toes but of wits, nimble, that is to say, as he proudly pointed out to his mother, at both ends, with whom he lived in great contentment, for she amused him, which is much.

"I have not observed you offer any congratulations, Ingeborg," said the Bishop, becoming more and more displeased by her strange behaviour, and not at all liking her crumpled and forlorn appearance. He again thought of envy, but that alone could not crumple clothes. "And yet your sister," he said, getting a little further away from the fire which had begun to scorch him unpleasantly, "is to be the wife of the Master."

"The Master?" repeated Ingeborg, stupidly. For a moment her tormented brain supposed Judith must be going to be a nun.

"There is only one Master," said the Bishop, in his stateliest manner. "Everybody knows that. The Master of Ananias."

Ingeborg knew this was a great thing. The Master of Ananias, the most celebrated of Oxford colleges, was in every way, except perhaps that of age, desirable; but what was age when it came to all the other desirabilities? Her father had rebuked her once for speaking of him as old Dr. Abbot, and had informed her the Master was only sixty, and that everybody was sixty—that is, said the Bishop, everybody of any sense. He was not a widower, he was pleasant to look at in a shaven iron-grey way, he was brilliantly erudite, and extremely well off apart from his handsome salary, one of the handsomest salaries in the gift of the Crown. Several years before, when Judith was still invisible in a pinafore, he had stayed at the Palace—it was then Ingeborg spoke of him as old—and had been treated by her father with every attention and respect: He had on that occasion seemed glad to go. Now it appeared he had been again, and must have fallen immediately—and overwhelmingly in love with Judith for his short visit to bridge the distance between a first acquaintance and an engagement. Who, however, knew better than herself how quickly such distances can be bridged?

She wanted to go and kiss Judith and say sweet things to her, but her feet seemed unable to move. She wanted to congratulate everybody with all her heart if only they would be kind and congratulate her a little, too. For Judith had heard what she said before her father came in, and her mother had heard it, and the room was heavy with the uttered name of Dremmel.

She looked round at them—her father waiting for her to show at least ordinary decency and feeling, Judith so safe in the family's approval, so entirely clear from hidden things, her mother lying with closed eyes and expressionless face, and she suddenly felt intolerably alone.

"Oh, oh—" she cried, holding out her hands, "doesn't anybody love me?"

This was worse than her toothache.

Her family had endured much during those days, but at least there was a reason then for the odder parts of her behaviour. Now they were called upon to endure the distressing spectacle of a hitherto reserved relative letting herself go to unbridledness. Ingeborg was going to make a scene;

and a scene was a thing that had never yet, anyhow not during the entire Bullivant period, been made in that house.

Mrs. Bullivant shut her eyes tighter and tried to think she was not there at all.

Judith turned red and again became absorbed in the teapot.

The Bishop, after the first cold shock natural to a person called upon to contemplate nakedness where up to then there had been clothes, put down his cup on the nearest table and, with an exaggerated calm, stared.

They all felt intensely uncomfortable; as uncomfortable as though she had begun, in the middle of the drawing-room, to remove her garments one by one and cast them from her.

"This is very sad, Ingeborg," said the Bishop.

"Isn't it—oh, *isn't* it—" was her unexpected answer, tears in her eyes. She was so tired, so frightened. She had been travelling hard since the morning of the day before. She had had nothing to eat for a time that seemed infinite. And yet this was the moment, just because she had betrayed herself to her mother and Judith, in which she was going to have to tell her father what she had done.

"It is the most distressing example," said the Bishop, "I have ever seen of that basest of sins, envy."

"Envy?" said Ingeborg. "Oh, no—that's not what it is. Oh, if it were only that! And I do congratulate Judith. Judith, I do, I do, my dear. But—father, I've been doing it too."

It was out now, and she looked at him with miserable eyes, prepared for the worst.

"Doing what, Ingeborg?"

"I'm engaged, too."

"Engaged? My dear Ingeborg."

The Bishop was alarmed for her sanity. She really looked very strange. Had they been giving her too much gas?

His tone became careful and humouring. "How can you," he said quietly, "have become engaged in these few days?"

"Much may happen in a week," said Ingeborg. It jumped out. She did try not to say it. She was unnerved. And always when she was unnerved she said the first thing that came into her head, and always it was either unfortunate or devastating.

The Bishop became encased in ice. This was not hysteria, it was something immeasurably worse.

"Be so good as to explain," he said sharply, and waves of icy air seemed to issue from where he stood and heave through the room.

"I'm engaged to—to somebody called Dremmel," said Ingeborg.

"I do not know the name. Do you, Marion?"

"No, oh, no," breathed Mrs. Bullivant, her eyes shut.

"Robert Dremmel," said Ingeborg.

"Who are the Dremmels, Ingeborg?"

"There aren't any."

"There aren't any?"

"I—never *heard* of any," she said, twisting her fingers together. "We usedn't to talk about—about things like *more* Dremmels."

"What is this man?"

"A clergyman."

"Oh. Where is he living?"

"In East Prussia."

"In where, Ingeborg?"

"East Prussia. It—it's a place abroad."

"Thank you. I am aware of that. My education reaches as far as and includes East Prussia."

Mrs. Bullivant began to cry. Not loud, but tears that stole quietly down her face from beneath her closed eyelids. She did not do anything to them, but lay with her hands clasped on her breast and let them steal. What was the use of being a Christian if one were exposed to these scenes?

"Pray, why is he in East Prussia?" asked the Bishop.

"He belongs there."

Again the room seemed for an instant to hold its breath.

"Am I to understand that he is a German?"

"Please, father."

"A German pastor?"

"Yes, father."

"Not by any chance attached in some ecclesiastical capacity to the Kaiser?"

"No, father."

There was a pause.

"Your aunt—what did she say to this?"

"She didn't say anything. She wasn't there."

"I beg your pardon?"

"I haven't been at my aunt's."

"Judith, my dear, will you kindly leave the room?"

Judith got up and went. While she was crossing to the door and until she had shut it behind her there was silence.

"Now," said the Bishop, Judith being safely out of harm's way, "you will have the goodness to explain exactly what you have been doing."

"I think I wish to go to bed," murmured Mrs. Bullivant, without changing her attitude or opening her eyes. "Will some one please ring for Richards to come and take me to bed?"

But neither the Bishop nor Ingeborg heeded her.

"I didn't *mean* to do anything, father—" began Ingeborg. Then she broke off and said, "I—can explain better if I sit down—" and dropped into the chair nearest to her, for her knees felt very odd.

She saw her father now only through a mist. She was going to have to oppose him for the first time in her life, and her nature was one which acquiesced and did not oppose. In her wretchedness a doubt stole across her mind as to whether Herr Dremmel was worth this; was anything, in fact, worth fighting about? And with one's father. And against one's whole bringing-up. Was she going to be strong enough? Was it a thing one ought to be strong about? Would not true strength rather lie in a calm continuation of life at home? What, when one came to think of it, was East Prussia really to her, and those rye-fields and all that water? She wished she had had at least a piece of bread and butter. She thought perhaps bread and butter would have helped her not to doubt. She looked round vaguely so as not to have to meet her father's eye for a moment and her glance fell on the tea-table.

"I think," she said faintly, getting up again, "I'll have some tea."

To the Bishop this seemed outrageous.

He watched her in a condition of icy indignation such as he had not yet in his life experienced. His daughter. His daughter for whom he had done so much. The daughter he had trained for years, sparing no pains, to be a helpful, efficient, Christian woman. The daughter he had honoured with his trust, letting her share in the most private portions of his daily business. Not a letter had he received that she had not seen and been allowed to answer. Not a step in any direction had he taken without permitting her to make the necessary arrangements. Seldom, he supposed bitterly, had a child received so much of a father's confidence. His daughter. That crumpled and disreputable—yes, now he knew what was the matter with her appearance—disreputable-looking figure cynically pouring itself out tea while he, her father whom she had been deceiving, was left to wait for her explanations until such time as she should have sated her appetite. Positively she had succeeded, he said to himself,

bitterly enraged that he should be forced to be bitterly enraged, in making him feel less like a bishop should feel than he had done since he was a boy.

"It's because I've had nothing to eat since Paris," Ingeborg explained apologetically, holding the teapot in both hands because one by itself shook too much, and feeling, too, that the moment was not exactly one for tea.

The Bishop started. "Since where?" he said.

"Paris," said Ingeborg; adding tremulously, having quite lost her nerve and only desiring to fill up the silence, "it—it's a place abroad."

Mrs. Bullivant murmured a more definitely earnest request that Richards might be rung for to take her to bed.

"Ingeborg," said the Bishop in a voice she did not know. "Paris?"

"Yes, father—last night."

"Ingeborg, come here."

He was pointing to a chair a yard or two from the hearthrug on which he stood, and his voice was very strange.

She put down the cup with a shaking hand and went to him. Her heart was in her mouth.

"What have you been doing?" he said.

"I told you, father. I'm engaged to Herr—"

"How did you get to Paris?"

"By train."

"Will you answer me? What were you doing in Paris?"

"Having dinner."

She was terrified. Her father was talking quite loud. She had never in her life seen him like this. She answered his questions quickly, her heart leaping as he rapped them out, but her answers seemed to make him still angrier. If only he would let her explain, hear her out; but he hurled questions at her, giving her no time at all.

"Father," she said hurriedly, seeing that after that last answer of hers he did for a moment say nothing, but stood looking at her very extraordinarily, "please let me tell you how it all happened. It won't take a minute—it won't really. And then, you see, you'll *know*. I didn't mean to do anything, I really didn't; but the dentist pulled my tooth out so quickly, that very first day, and so instead of coming home I went to Lucerne—"

"To—"

"Yes," she nodded, in a frenzy of haste to get it all said, "to Lucerne—I couldn't tell you why, but I did—I seemed pushed there, and after a little while I got engaged, and I didn't in the least mean to do that, either, really I didn't—but somehow—" Was there any use trying to tell him about the white and silver cake and the seven witnesses and the undoubting kind Herr Dremmel and all the endless small links in the chain? Would he ever, ever understand?—"somehow I *did*. You see," she added helplessly, looking up at him with eyes full of an appeal for comprehension, for mercy, "one thing leads to another." And as he still said nothing she added, even more helplessly, "Herr Dremmel sat opposite me in the train."

"You picked him up casually, like any servant girl, in a train?"

"He was one of the party. He was there from the beginning. Oh, yes, I forgot to tell you—it was one of Dent's Tours."

"You went on a Dent's Tour?"

"Yes, and he was one of it, too, and we all, of course, always went about together, rather like a school, two and two—I suppose because of the pavement," she said, now saying in her terror anything that came into her head, "and as he was the other one of my two—the half of the couple I was the other one of, you know, father—we—we got engaged."

"Do you take me for a fool?" was the Bishop's comment.

Ingeborg's heart stood still. How could her father even *think*—

"Oh, father," was all she could say to that; and she hung her head in the entire hopelessness, the uselessness of trying to tell him anything.

She knew she had been saying it ridiculously, tumbling out a confusion of what must sound sad nonsense, but could he not see she was panic-stricken? Could he not be patient, and help her to make her clean breast?

"I'm stupid," she said, looking up at him through tears, and suddenly dropping into a kind of nakedness of speech, a speech entirely simple and entirely true, "stupid with fright."

"Do you suggest I terrorize you?" inquired the incensed Bishop.

"Yes," she said.

This was terrible. And it was peculiarly terrible because it made the Bishop actually wish he were not a gentleman. Then, indeed, it would be an easy matter to deal with that small defying creature in the chair. When it comes to women the quickest method is, after all, to be by profession a navvy....

He shuddered, and hastily drew his thoughts back from this abyss. To what dread depths of naturalness was she not by her conduct dragging him?

"Father," said Ingeborg, who had now got down to the very bottom of the very worst, a place where once one has reached it an awful sincerity takes possession of one's tongue, "do you see this? Look at them."

And she held up her hands and showed him, while she herself watched them as though they were somebody else's, how they were shaking.

"Isn't that being afraid? Look at them. It's fear. It's fear of you. It's you making them do that. And think of it—I'm twenty-two. A woman. Oh, I—I'm *ashamed*—"

But whether it was a proper shame for what she had done or a shocking shame for her compunctions in sinning, the Bishop was not permitted that afternoon to discover; because when she had got as far as that she was interrupted by being obliged to faint.

There was a moment's confusion while she tumbled out of the chair and lay, a creased, strange object, on the floor, owing to Mrs. Bullivant's having produced an exclamation; and this to the Bishop, after years of not having heard her more than murmur, was almost as disconcerting as if, flinging self-restraint to the winds, she had suddenly produced fresh offspring. He quickly, however, recovered the necessary presence of mind and the bell was rung for Richards; who, when she came, knelt down and undid Ingeborg's travel-worn blouse, and something on a long chain fell out jingling.

It was her father's cross and Herr Dremmel's ring metallically hitting each other.

The Bishop left the room without a word.

CHAPTER IX

A pall descended on the Palace and enveloped it blackly for four awful days, during which Mrs. Bullivant and her daughters and the chaplain and the secretary and all the servants did not so much live as feel their way about with a careful solicitude for inconspicuousness.

This pall was the pall of the Bishop's wrath; and there was so much of it that it actually reached over into the dwellings of the Dean and Chapter and blackened those white spots, and it got into the hitherto calm home of the Mayor, who had the misfortune to have business with the Bishop the very day after Ingeborg's return, and an edge of it—but quite enough to choke an old man—even invaded the cathedral, where it extinguished the head verger, a sunny octogenarian privileged to have his little joke with the Bishop, and who had it unfortunately as usual, and was instantly muffled in murkiness and never joked again.

That the Bishop should have allowed his private angers to overflow beyond his garden walls, he who had never been anything in public but a pattern in his personal beauty, his lofty calm, and his biblically flavoured eloquence of what the perfect bishop should be, shows the extreme disturbance of his mind. But it was not that he allowed it: it was that he could not help it. He had, thanks to his daughter, lost his self-control, and for that alone, without anything else she had done, he felt he could never forgive her.

Self-control gone, and with it self-respect. He ached, he positively ached during those first four black days in which his natural man was uppermost, a creature he had forgotten so long was it since he had heard of him, thoroughly to shake his daughter. And the terribleness of that in a bishop. The terribleness of being aware that his hands were twitching to shake—hands which he acutely knew should be laid on no one except in blessing, consecrated hands, divinely appointed to bless and then dismiss in peace. That small unimportant thing, that small weak thing, the thing he had generously endowed with the great gift of life and along with that gift the chance it would never have had except for him of re-entering eternal blessedness, the thing he had fed and clothed, that had eaten out of his hand and been all bright tameness—to bring disgrace on him! Disgrace outside before the world, and inside before his abased and humiliated self. And she had brought it not only on a father, but on the best-known bishop on the bench; the best known also and most frequently mentioned, he had sometimes surmised with a kind of high humility, in the—how could one put it with sufficient reverence?—holy gossip of the angels. For in his highest moods he had humbly dared to believe he was not altogether untalked about in heaven. And here at the moment of much thankfulness and legitimate pride when his other daughter was so beautifully betrothed came this one, and with impish sacrilegiousness dragged him, her father, into the dust of base and furious instincts, the awful dust in which those sad animal men sit who wish to and do beat their women-folk.

He could not bring himself to speak to her. He would not allow her near him. Whatever her repentance might be it could never wipe out the memory of these hours of being forced by her to recognise what, after all the years of careful climbing upwards to goodness, he was still really like inside. Terrible to be stirred not only to unchristianity but to vulgarity. Terrible to be made to wish not only that you were not a Christian but not a gentleman. He, a prince of the Church, was desiring to be a navvy for a space during which he could be unconditionally active. He, a prince of the Church, was rent and distorted by feelings that would have disgraced a curate. He could never forgive her.

But the darkest hours pass, and just as the concerned diocese was beginning to fear appendicitis for him, unable in any other way to account for the way he remained invisible, he emerged from his first indignation into a chillier region in which, still much locked in his chamber, he sought an outlet in prayer.

A bishop, and indeed any truly good and public man, is restricted in his outlets. He can with propriety have only two—prayer and his wife; and in this case the wife was unavailable because of

her sofa. For the first time the Bishop definitely resented the sofa. He told himself that the wife of a prelate, however ailing—and he believed with a man's simplicity on such points that she did ail—had no business to be inaccessible to real conversation. With no one else on earth except his wife can a prelate or any other truly good and public man have real conversation without losing dignity, or, if the conversation should become very real, without losing office. That is why most prelates are married. The best men wish to be real at times.

When Ingeborg stripped off her deferences, and, after having most scandalously run away and most scandalously entangled herself with an alien clerical rogue, had the face to hold up her hands at him and accuse him, accuse *him*, her father, of being the cause of their shaking, the Bishop had been as much horrified as if his own garden path on which he had trodden pleasantly for years had rent itself asunder at his feet and gaped at him. He had made the path; he had paid to have it tidied and adorned; and he required of it in return that it should keep quiet and be useful. To have it convulsed into an earthquake and its usefulness interrupted must be somebody's fault, and his instinct very properly was to go to his wife and tell her it was hers.

But there was the sofa.

He desired to converse with his wife. He had an intolerable desire for even as few as five minutes' real conversation with her. He wanted to talk about the manner in which Ingeborg must have been brought up, about the amount of punishment she had received in childhood; he wished to be informed as to the exact nature of the participation her mother had taken in her moral education; he wished to discuss the responsibility of mothers, and to explain his views on the consequences of maternal neglect; and he wanted, too, to draw his wife's attention to the fact she easily apparently overlooked, that he had bestowed a name grown celebrated on her, and a roof that through his gifts and God's mercy was not an ordinary but a palace roof, and that in return the least he might expect.... In short, he wanted to talk.

But when driven by his urgencies he went to her room to break down the barricade of the sofa, he found not only Richards hovering there tactfully, but the doctor; for Mrs. Bullivant had foreseen her husband's probable desire for conversation, and the doctor, a well-trained man, was in the act of prescribing complete silence.

It was then that, thwarted and debarred from the outlet a man prefers, he sought his other outlet, and laid all these distressful matters in prayer at the feet of heaven. On his knees in his chamber he earnestly begged forgiveness for his descent to naturalness, and a restoration of his self-respect. Without his self-respect what would become of him? He had lived with it so intimately and long. Fervently he desired the molten moments in which his hands had twitched, wiped out, and forgotten. He asked for help to conduct himself henceforth with calm. He implored to be given patience. He implored to be given self-control. And presently, after two days of his spare moments spent in this manner, he was sitting upon a chair and telling himself that the main objection to praying, if one might say so with all due reverence, is that it is one-sided. It is a monologue, said the Bishop—also with all due reverence—and in troubles of the kind he was in one needs to be sure one is being attended to. He did not think he could possibly be being attended to, because, pray as he might, withdraw and wrestle as he might, he continued to want to shake his daughter.

For there was the constant irritation going on of the affairs of the diocese getting into a more hopeless disorder. All that time she was away guiltily gadding, and now all this time she was not away but unavailable till she should have utterly repented, his letters were piling themselves up into confused heaps, and his engagements were a wilderness in which he wandered alone in the dark. The chaplain and the typist did what they could, but they had not been with him so long as his daughter and were not possessed of the mechanical brainlessness that makes a woman so satisfactory as a secretary. His daughter, not having what might be called actual brains, was not troubled by thought. The distresses of possible alternatives did not disturb her. She did not, therefore, disturb him by suggesting them. She was mechanically meticulous. She respected detail. She remembered. She knew not only what had to

be done, which was easy, but what had to be done exactly first. And both the chaplain and the typist were men with ideas, and instead of assisting him along one straight and narrow path which is the only way of really getting anywhere, including, remembered the Bishop, to heaven, they were constantly looking to the right and the left, doubting, weighing, hesitating. The chaplain had as many eyes for a question as a fly, and saw it from as many angles. Fairness, desirability, the probable views of the other side, their equal Tightness, these things faltered interminably round each letter to be answered, were hesitated over interminably in the mellow intonations of that large-minded, well-educated young man's voice, and he was echoed and supported by the typist, who was also from Oxford, and had been given this chance of nearness to the most distinguished of bishops at such a youthful age that the undergraduate milk had not yet dried on the corners of his eloquent and hesitating mouth, and gave a peculiarly sickly flavour, thought the irritated Bishop, to whatever came out of it.

The Bishop felt that if this went on much longer the work of the diocese would come to a standstill. In ten days the Easter recess would be over, and he was due in the House of Lords, where he had been put down for a speech on the Home Rule Bill from the point of view of simple faith, and how was he to leave things in this muddle at home, and how was he to have the peace of mind, the empty clarity, appropriate to a proper approach of the measure if his inward eye went roving away to Redchester all the time and to the increasing confusion on his study table?

The trail of Ingeborg was over all his day. When, warm and ruffled from prayer, he plunged down into his work again, he could not do a thing without being reminded she was not there. He was forced to think of her every moment of his time. It was ignoble, but without her he was like an actor who has learned not his part but to lean on the prompter, and who finds himself on the stage with the prompter gone dead in his box. She was dead to him, dead in obstinate sin; and dignity demanded she should continue dead until she came of her own accord and told him she had done with that terrible affair of the East Prussian pastor. He did not know whether he would then forgive her—he would probably defer forgiveness as a disciplinary measure, after having implored heaven's guidance—but he would allow a certain amount of resurrection, sufficient to enable her to sit up at her desk every day and disentangle the confusion her wickedness alone had caused. In the evenings she would, he thought, at any rate for a time, be best put back in her grave.

At this point he began to be able to say "Poor girl," and to feel that he pitied her.

But it was not till the end of the week, as Sunday drew near, that his prayers did after all begin to be answered, and he regained enough control of his words if not of his thoughts to be able to reappear among his family and show nothing less becoming than reserve. He even succeeded, though without speaking to her, in kissing Ingeborg's forehead night and morning and making the sign of the Cross over her when she went to bed as he had done from her earliest years. She seemed smaller than ever, hardly there at all, and made him think of an empty dress walking about with a head on it. Contemplating her when she was not looking his desire to shake her became finally quenched by the perception that really there would be nothing to shake. It would be like shaking out mere clothes, garments with the body gone out of them; there would be dust, but little satisfaction. She had evidently been feeling, he was slightly soothed to observe, for not only was her dress empty but her face seemed diminished, and she certainly was remarkably pale. She struck him as very unattractive, entirely designed by Providence for a happy home life. And to think that this nothing, this amazing littleness—well, well; poor girl.

On the Sunday afternoon he determined to help her by getting into touch with her from the pulpit. On that day he several times assured himself before preaching that his only feeling in the sad affair was one of concern for her and grief. The pulpit, he knew from experience, was a calm and comfort-bringing place when he was in it; it was, indeed, his way with a pulpit that had brought the Bishop to the pinnacle of the Church on which he found himself. He was at his best in it, knowing it for a blessed spot, free from controversy, pure from contradiction, a place where personal emotions could find no footing owing to the wise custom that prevented congregations from answering back.

Put into common terms, the terms of his undergraduate days, he could let himself rip in the pulpit; and the Bishop was in a ripped condition altogether at his greatest.

He spoke that Sunday specially to Ingeborg, and he told himself that what had come straight from his heart must needs go straight to hers. The Bible was very plain. It did not mince matters as to the dangers she was running. The punishment for her class of sin right through it was various and severe. Not that the ravens of another age and the eagles of a different climate—he had taken as his text that passage, or rather portion of a passage—he described it as remarkable—in the Proverbs: "The ravens of the valley shall pick it out and the young eagles shall eat it"—were likely ever miraculously to appear in Redchester, though even on that point the Bishop held that nothing was certain; but there were, he explained, spiritual ravens and eagles provided by an all-merciful Providence for latter-day requirements whose work was even more thorough and destructive. He earnestly implored those members of his flock who knew themselves guilty of the particular sin the passage referred to, to seek forgiveness of their parents before Heaven interfered. He pointed out that what is most needed, if people are to live with any zest and fine result at all, is encouragement, and what encouragement could equal full and free forgiveness? The Bible, he said, understood this very well, and the Prodigal Son's father never hesitated in his encouragement. It seemed difficult to suppose one could equal the lavishness of the best robe, the ring, the shoes, and the fatted calf, yet he felt certain—he *knew* there were fathers at that very moment, there in that town, nay, in that cathedral, ready with all and more than that. Who would wish to punish his dear child, the soul given into his hands to be whitened for heaven? One knew from one's own experience—all who had once been children must know—how sorry one was for having done wrong, how *bleeding* one felt about it; and just then, just at that moment of sorrow, of heart's blood, was not what one needed so that one might get on one's feet again quickly and do better than ever, not punishment but forgiveness? A frequent and free forgiveness, said the Bishop, and his voice was beautiful as he said it, was one of the chief necessities of life. What poor children want, poor frail children, so infinitely apt to fall, so infinitely clumsy at getting up, is a continual wiping out and never thinking again of the yesterdays, a daily presentation by authority to yesterday's stumblers of that most bracing object, the cleaned and empty slate. Why, it was as necessary, he declared, his fine face aglow, if one was to work well and add one's cheerful contribution to the world's happiness, as a nourishing and sufficient breakfast—the congregation thrilled at this homely touch—and to numb a human being's powers of cheerful contribution by punishment was *waste*. How cruel, then, to force a father by one's stubbornness to punish; how cruel and how sinful to hinder him, by not seeking out at once what he so freely offered, to hinder him from bringing forth his best robe, his ring, his fatted calf. What a heavy responsibility towards their fathers did children bear, said the Bishop, who had ceased himself being anybody's child many years before. This, he said, is a sermon to children; to erring children; to those sad children who have gone astray. We are all children here, he explained, and if life has been with us so long that we can no longer find any one we may still with any certainty call father, we are yet to the end Children of the Kingdom. But, he continued, though every single soul in this cathedral is necessarily some one's child, not every single soul in it is inevitably some one's father, and he would say a few words to the fathers and remind them of the infinite effect of love. To punish your child is to make its repentance go sour within it. Do not punish it. Love it. Love it continuously, generously, if needs be obstinately; smite its hardness, as once a rock was smitten, with the rod of generosity. Give it a chance of gushing forth into living repentance. Generosity begets generosity. Love begets love. Show your love. Show your generosity. Forgive freely, magnificently. Oh, my brothers, oh, my children, my little sorry children, what could not one, what would not one do in return for love?

The Bishop's face was lifted up as he finished to the light of the west window. His voice was charged with feeling. He had forgotten the ravens and eagles of the beginning, for he never allowed his beginnings to disturb his endings, well knowing his congregation forgot them, too. He was an

artist at reaching into the hearts of the uneducated. Everything helped him—his beauty, his voice, and the manifest way in which his own words moved him.

And the typist, as he walked back to the Palace with the chaplain across the daisies of the Close, was unable to agree with the chaplain that a course at Oxford even now in close reasoning might help the Bishop. The typist thought it would spoil him; and offered to lay the chaplain twenty to one that Redchester that afternoon would be full of erring children upsetting their fathers' Sunday by wanting to be forgiven.

It was; and Ingeborg was one of them.

CHAPTER X

She waylaid him after tea on the stairs.

"Father," she said timidly, as he was passing on in silence.

"Well, Ingeborg?" said the Bishop, pausing and gravely attentive.

"I—want to tell you how sorry I am."

"Yes, Ingeborg?"

"So sorry, so ashamed that I—I went away like that on that tour. It was very wrong of me. And I went with your money. Oh, it was ugly. I—hope you'll forgive me, father?"

"Freely, Ingeborg. It would be sad indeed if I lagged behind our Great Exemplar in the matter of forgiveness."

"Then—I may come back to work?"

"When you tell me you have broken off your clandestine engagement."

"But father—"

"There are no buts, Ingeborg."

"But you said in your sermon—"

The Bishop passed on.

In her eagerness Ingeborg put her hand detainingly on his sleeve, a familiarity hitherto unheard of in that ordered and temperate household.

"But your sermon—you said in your sermon, father—why, how can free forgiveness have conditions? They didn't do it that way in the Bible"—(this to him who was by the very nature of his high office a specialist in forgiveness; poor girl, poor girl)—"You said yourself about the Prodigal Son—his father forgave *everything*, and perhaps he'd done worse things even than going to Lucerne—"

"We are not told, Ingeborg, of any clandestine engagement," said the Bishop, pursuing his way hampered but, as he was glad to remember afterwards, calm.

"But you know about it—how can it be clandestine when you know about it?"

"Once more, Ingeborg, there are no buts."

"But why shouldn't I marry a good man?"

She was actually following him up quite a number of the stairs, still with her hand on his arm, and her face, so unattractive in its unwomanly eagerness, quite close to his.

"Why should I have to be forgiven for wanting to marry a good man? Everybody marries good men. Mother did, and you never told her she wasn't to. Oh, oh—" she went on, as his dressing-room door was quietly closed upon her, "that isn't free forgiveness at all—it isn't what you *said*—it isn't what you *said*—it's *conditions*."...

And her voice from the doormat became quite a cry, regardless of possible listening Wilsons.

How glad he was that he had been able to put her aside quietly and get himself, still controlled, into his dressing-room. How strange and new were these reckless outbreaks of unreserve. And her reasoning, how wholly deplorable. She wished, unhappy girl, to enjoy the advantages and privileges of the forgiven state while continuing in the sin that had procured the forgiveness. She wished, he reflected, though in educated language, to eat her cake and have it, too. Yet was it not clear that a free forgiveness could only be bestowed on an unlimited penitence? There could be no reservations of particular branches of sin. All must be lopped. And the East Prussian pastor was a branch that must be lopped with the cleanest final cut before real submission could be said to have set in.

But the Bishop in his dressing-room, though he retained his apparent calm, was sore within him. His sermon had failed. The girl must be a stone. It wasn't, he thought profoundly worried, as if he hadn't given her nearly a week for undisturbed thought and hadn't approached her that day with all the helpfulness in his power from the pulpit. Both these things he had done; and she was no nearer recovery than before. Was training then nothing? Was environment nothing? Was blood nothing?

Was the blood of bishops, that blood which of all bloods must surely be most potent in preventing its inheritors in all their doings, nothing?

On the following afternoon there was a party at the Palace, arranged by Mrs. Bullivant in the confident days before she knew what Ingeborg was really like. It was a congratulatory party for Judith, and all Redchester and all the county had been invited. Nothing could stop this party but a death in the household—any death, even Richards' might do, but nothing short of death, thought the afflicted lady, wondering how she was to get through the afternoon; and as she crept on to her sofa at a quarter to four to be put by Richards into the final folds and knew that as four struck a great surge of friends would pour in over her and that for three hours she would have to be bright and happy about Judith, and sympathetically explanatory about Ingeborg—who looked altogether too odd to be explained only by a long past dentist—she felt so very low that she was unable to stop herself from thinking it was a pity people didn't die a little oftener. Especially maids. Especially maids who were being so clumsy with the cushions....

And the Master of Ananias had been there since before luncheon, and how exhausting that was. She had had to do most of the entertaining of him, the Bishop being unavoidably absent from the meal, and Ingeborg, who did the conversation in that family, not being able to now because she was in disgrace, and Judith, dear child, never saying much at any time. And the Master had been very exuberant; and his vitality, delightful of course but just a little overwhelming at his age, had reminded her that she needed care. How difficult it had been to get him out into the garden, to somewhere where she wasn't. She hadn't got him there till half-past two, by which time he had been vital without stopping since twelve, and even then she had had to invent a pear-tree in full blossom that she wasn't at all sure about, and tell him she had heard it was a wonderful sight and ought not to be missed. But how difficult it had been. Judith had not seemed to want to show him the pear-tree, and he would not go and look at it unless she went, too. Judith had gone at last, but with an expression on her face as though she thought she was going to have to bear things, and no girl should show a thought like that before marriage. And then there had been an immense number of small matters to see to because of the party, matters Ingeborg had always seen to but couldn't now because she was in disgrace, and how difficult all that was. Still, Mrs. Bullivant felt deeply if vaguely that nobody temporarily evil should be allowed to minister to anybody permanently good. Such persons, she felt, should be put aside into a place made roomy for repentance by the clearing out of all claims. During the whole of the week since her daughter's return she had not let her even pour out tea, either when the riven family was by itself or when congratulatory callers came. "Poor Ingeborg isn't very well," she had murmured, quenching the inquisitiveness natural to callers. She had made up her mind that first evening, when the full horror of what her daughter had done became clear to her, that she would ask nothing of her, not even tea.

But it did make difficulties. She felt entirely low, quite damp with the exertion of meeting them, when she crept into position on the sofa at a quarter to four and waited with closed eyes for the next wave of life that would wash over her. And it all happened as she had feared—she was perpetually having to explain Ingeborg. Guest after guest came up with the expressions of rejoicing proper to guests invited to rejoice over Judith, and the smiling laudations of what was indeed a vision of beauty each ended with a question about Ingeborg. What had she been doing?—(the awful innocence of the question)—how perfectly miserably seedy she looked; poor little Ingeborg; was it really just that tiresome tooth?

Mrs. Bullivant, as she murmured what she could in reply to this ceaseless flow of sympathy from the retired officers and their wives and daughters, and the cathedral dignitaries and their wives and daughters, and the wives and daughters of the county who came without their men because their men wouldn't come, felt vaguely but deeply that it was somehow wrong that Ingeborg should both sin and be sympathised with. She had no right, her injured mother felt, to look so small and stricken. Her family had quite properly removed her outside the pale of their affection till she should announce her

broken-off engagement to that dreadful German and ask to be forgiven for ever having been engaged at all, but she ought not to look like somebody who is outside a pale. She seemed positively to be advertising the pale. It was bad taste. It was really the worst of taste when you were the sinner to look like the sinned against; to look ill-used; to droop openly. Yet never could a girl who had done such horrible, such detestably deceitful and vulgar things, have been treated so gently by her family. It had been, Mrs. Bullivant felt, the only good thing in a wretched affair, the perfect breeding with which the Bullivants had met the situation. Not one of them had even remotely alluded to the scene she had made the first afternoon. No one had questioned her, no one had troubled her in any way. She had been left quite free, and no one had exacted the smallest sacrifice of her time to any of their needs. Her father had given her a complete holiday, not allowing her at all in his study, and whenever she had attempted to do anything for her mother or in the house Richards had been rung for. Judith, dear child, seemed instinctively to do the right thing, and without a word from her mother avoided Ingeborg; she was so delicate about it, so fine in her feeling that here was something not quite nice, that she turned red each time Ingeborg during the first day or two tried to talk to her, and quietly went into another room. All the last part of the week Ingeborg had spent in the garden, quite free, quite undisturbed, not a claim on her. And yet here she was, standing about at the party or sitting alone in foolish corners, thin, and pale, and unsmiling, like a reproach.

Through a gap in the crowd Mrs. Bullivant presently saw her being talked to by one who had once been a general but now in retirement wreaked his disciplines on bees. She just had time to notice how her daughter started and flushed when this man suddenly addressed her—such bad manners to start and flush—before the crowd closed again. She shut her eyes for a moment and felt very helpless. Who knew to what lengths Ingeborg's bad manners might not go, and what she might not be saying to the man?

What the general was telling her, with the hearty kindness fathers of other daughters use to daughters of other fathers—will use, indeed, commented the Bishop observing the incident from afar and allowing himself the solace of an instant's bitterness, to any created female thing if only she will oblige them by not being their own—was that he couldn't have her looking like this.

"Oh, like what?" asked Ingeborg quickly, starting and flushing; for her week as an outcast had lowered her vitality to such an extent that she was morbidly afraid her face might somehow have become a sort of awful crystal in which everybody would be able to see the Rigi, and herself being proposed to on its top.

"Shocking white about the gills," said the hearty man standing over her, cup in hand and see-sawing on his toes and heels because his boots creaked and it gave him a vague pleasure to make them go on doing it. "You must come round and have a good game of tennis with Dorothy some afternoon. You've been shut up working too hard at that letter-writing business, that's what you've been doing, young lady."

"I wish I had—oh, I wish I had," said Ingeborg, pressing her hands together and looking up at this stray bit of kindness with a quick gratefulness.

"We always think of you as sitting there writing, writing," the hearty man went on, more intent on what he was saying than on what she was saying. "Father's right hand, mother's indispensable, you know. I tell Dorothy—"

Ingeborg twisted on her chair. "Oh," she said, "don't tell Dorothy—don't tell her—"

"Tell her what? You don't know what I was going to say."

"Yes, I do—about that's how daughters ought to be—like *me*. And Dorothy's so good and dear, and wouldn't ever in this world have gone off to—"

She stopped, but only just in time, and looked at him frightened.

She had all but said it. The general, however, was staring at her with kindly incomprehension. Her head drooped a little, and she gazed vaguely at his toes as they rhythmically touched and were

lifted up from the carpet. "Nobody knows what anybody else is really like inside," she finished forlornly.

"You come up and have some tennis," he said, patting her on the shoulder. And later on to the Bishop he remarked, in his hearty desire to have everything trim and in its proper place, the young in the fresh air, older persons at desks in studies, white faces reserved for invalids, roses blooming in the cheeks of girls, that he mustn't overwork that little daughter of his.

"Overwork!" exclaimed the Bishop, full of bitter memories of an empty week.

"Turn her out into the sun, Bully, my boy," said the general whose fag the Bishop had been at Eton.

"Into the sun!" exclaimed the Bishop, having for six mortal days observed her from windows horribly idling in it.

"If you keep 'em shut up you can't expect girls any more than you can expect a decent bee to provide you with honey."

"Honey!" exclaimed the Bishop.

That Duchess who had wanted her eldest son to marry Judith tapped Ingeborg on the arm with her umbrella as she passed her followed by her daughter and said: "Little pale child, little pale child," and shook her head at her and frowned and smiled, and whispered to Pamela that it looked very like jealousy; and Pamela said Nonsense to that, and tried to linger and talk to Ingeborg, but her mother, filled with the passion for refreshment that seizes all persons who go to parties, dragged her along with her to where it could be found, and on the way she was seen by the Bishop, who at once left the old lady who was talking to him to enfold Lady Pamela in his care and compass her about with a cloud of little attentions—chairs, ices, fruit; for not only had he confirmed her but he felt a peculiar interest in her particular kind of clean-limbed intelligent beauty. Of all the confirmation crosses he had given away he liked best to think of Lady Pamela's. Certainly in that soft cradle, beneath the muslin and lace of propriety, he could be sure it would not jangle against an illicit and alien ring.

"You still wear it?" he said, his beautiful voice, lowered to suit the subject, charged with feeling as with his own hands he brought her tea; and he felt a little checked, a little disappointed, when she said, smiling at him, her grey eyes level with his so well grown was she, "Wear what?"

And another thing this young woman did that afternoon that checked and disappointed him—she showed a disposition to take care of him; and no bishop of sixty, or indeed any other honest man of sixty, likes that. "She thinks me *old*," he thought with acute and pained surprise as she charmingly made him sit down lest he might be tired standing, and charmingly shut a window behind them lest he should be in a draught, and charmingly later on when he took her down the garden to show her the pear-tree turned her pretty head and asked him over her shoulder whether she were walking too fast. "She thinks me *old*," he thought; and it was an amazement to him, for only last year he was still fifty-nine, still in the fifties, and the fifties, once one was used to them, were nothing at all.

He became very grave with Lady Pamela. He felt that the showing of the pear-tree had lost a good deal of its savour. He felt it still more when, turning the bend in the path that led to the secluded corner that made the pear-tree popular as a resort, he perceived Ingeborg sitting beneath it.

She was alone.

"Why is she always by herself?" asked Lady Pamela, who was, the Bishop could not help thinking, being rather steadily tactless.

He made no answer. He was too seriously nettled. Apart from everything else, to have one's daughter cropping up....

"Ingeborg—!" called Lady Pamela, waving her sunshade to attract her attention as they walked on towards her, for Ingeborg, under the tree, was sitting with her chin on her hand looking at nothing and once more advertising by her attitude, Mrs. Bullivant would have considered, that she was outside the pale.

"I think," said the Bishop pausing, "we ought perhaps to go back."

"Ought we? Oh, why? It's lovely here. Ingeborg!"

"I think," said the Bishop, now altogether annoyed at this persistent determination to include his daughter—as though one could ever satisfactorily include daughters—in what might have been a poetic conversation between beauty and youth on the one side and prestige and more than common gifts on the other, beauty, too, if you come to that, and as great in its male ripe way as hers in its girlishness—"I think that I at any rate must go back. My wife—"

"Ingeborg! Wake up! What are you dreaming about?"

Positively Lady Pamela was not listening to him.

He turned on his heel and left her to go on waving her sunshade at his daughter if that was what she liked, and went back towards the house reflecting that women really are quite sadly deficient in imagination and that it is a great pity. Even this one, this well-bred, well-taught bright being, was so unimaginative that she actually saw no reason why a man's grown-up daughter.... Really a deficiency of imagination amounted to stupidity. He hardly liked to have to admit that Lady Pamela was stupid, but anyhow women ought not to have the vote.

He went away back into the main garden along the path by the great herbaceous border then in a special splendour of tulips and all the clean magnificence of May, thinking with his eyes on the ground how different things would have been if when he was a curate he had been sane enough not to marry. The clearness now in his life if only he had not done that! Nobody sofa-ridden in it, no grown-up thwarting daughters, and himself vigorous, distinguished, entirely desirable as a husband, choosing with the mellow, yet not too mellow, wisdom of middle life exactly who was best fitted to share the advantages he had to offer. Even Lady Pamela would not then have been able to think of him as old. It was his family that dated him: his grey-haired wife, his grown-up daughters. The folly of curates! The black incurable folly of curates. And he forgot for a gloomy instant what he as a rule with a sigh acknowledged, that it had all been Providence, even then restlessly at work guiding him, and that Mrs. Bullivant and the girls merely constituted one of its many inscrutable ends.

The baser portion of the Bishop's brain was about to substitute another word for guiding when he was saved—providentially, the nobler portion of his brain instantly pointed out—by encountering the Duchess.

She was coming slowly along examining the plants in the border with the interest of a garden-lover, and pointing out by means of her umbrella the various successes to a man the Bishop took to be one of her party. He was a big man in ill-fitting shiny black with something of the air of one of the less reputable Cabinet Ministers and was, in fact, Herr Dremmel; but no one except Herr Dremmel knew it. He had arrived that afternoon, a man animated by a single purpose, which was to marry Ingeborg as soon as possible and get back quickly to his work; and he had come straight from the station to the Palace and walked in unquestioned with all the others, and after a period of peering about in the drawing-room for Ingeborg had drifted out into the garden, where he had at once stumbled upon the Duchess, who was being embittered by a prebendary of servile habits who insisted on agreeing with her as to the Latin name of a patch of Prophet-flower when she knew all the time she was wrong.

"You tell me," she said, turning on Herr Dremmel who was peering at them.

"What shall I tell you, madam?" he inquired, politely sweeping off his felt hat and bowing beautifully.

"This. What is its name? I've forgotten."

Herr Dremmel, who took a large interest in botany, immediately told her.

"Of course," said the Duchess. "I knew it was *Arnebia* even when I said it was something else. It's a borage."

"*Arnebia echinoides*, madam," said Herr Dremmel peering closer. "A native of Armenia."

"Of course they'll conquer us," remarked the Duchess to the prebendary.

"Oh, of course," he agreed, though he did not take her meaning, for he had been a prebendary some time and was a little slow, intellectually, at getting under way.

Then the Duchess dropped him and turned entirely to Herr Dremmel, who though he had never seen a herbaceous border in his life by sheer reasoning was able to tell her very intimately what the Bishop, who he supposed did the digging, had been doing to it the previous autumn, and the exact amount and nature of the fertilizers he had put in.

She was suggesting he should come back with her that afternoon to Coops and stay there indefinitely, so profound and attractive did his knowledge seem of what her own garden and her farm needed in the way of a treatment he alluded to as cross-dressing, when he interrupted her—a thing that had never happened to her before while inviting somebody to Coops—to inquire why there were so very many people in the drawing-room and on the lawn.

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