

# FAVERSHAM

# JULIE OPP

THE SQUAW MAN

Julie Faversham  
**The Squaw Man**

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# Julie Opp Faversham

## The Squaw Man

### HOME

#### CHAPTER I

It was Jim's last day at home. He stood in the centre of the fragrant garden and watched the glory of color suffusing the Surrey hills towards the west. With a sigh he turned away and walked to the house.

"Where's Diana?" he called, as he came from the garden through the casement-window of the library.

"Diana – why, she's in bed an hour ago, I should hope," replied his aunt, Lady Elizabeth Kerhill. "She and Mabel went with Bates to see the decorations and then said good-night. Surely you didn't expect me to allow the children to stay up for the ball?"

Mabel was her daughter; Diana Marjoribanks was a young girl of thirteen, who had come to visit her.

"Poor imps! they were so excited all day, and followed me about the gun-room where I was doing some packing. They wanted me to coax you to allow them to see the ball, and the tenantry welcome Henry to-night."

Lady Kerhill elevated her eyebrows in questioning amazement at Jim, as she nervously twisted the lace of her gown, and with an impatient gesture motioned the subject aside. She was a tall, angular woman, with a profile like the head on a bronze coin; there was a suggestion of the eagle in her personality, and by her friends she was likened to the famous Sarah Churchill, the first Duchess of Marlborough.

To-night her face showed that anxious thoughts were crowding in on her as she apprehensively watched the big, carved oak door leading into the hall. Jim knew his aunt's firmness of character, and as silence followed his words, he feared further discussion was useless; but the wistful faces of the children at tea-time in the nursery, as they coaxed him to plead for them to see the fun, made him venture a final appeal.

"You know, Aunt, Sir Charles brought Di over to stay with Mabel so that she might see the festivities and incidentally say good-bye to me, so you might turn angel and let Diana dance once with me at the very beginning of the ball. I sha'n't see my little playfellow for ages, you know."

A sound from outside held Lady Elizabeth's attention more intently than Jim's pleading words. He crossed to her in the window-enclosure and laid his hand caressingly on her shoulder.

"The Colonel wired me that we were leaving Paddington at nine to-morrow morning, and India is a long way off, Auntie mine."

"Nonsense," answered Lady Elizabeth, as she rose from the deep window-seat. "You are almost twenty, and Diana is only a babe – isn't she, Henry?" She glanced up and appealed to the young man who rather noisily entered the library.

"Who's a babe? Diana? Why, mater, she's a little witch, and I promised her I'd let her see the illuminations at ten and then old Burrow should carry her off to bed."

Henry Wynnegate, seventh Earl of Kerhill, dropped into a great settle close to the fire. The ball was for the tenantry in celebration of his return, after five years' absence with his regiment. He was a tall, heavy-set young soldier of seven-and-twenty, with the famous Wynnegate beauty, but it was

marred by the shifting expression of his rather deep-set eyes and the heavy lines about his mouth. Self was his god: it showed in every expression of his face and in every action of his life.

Jim Wynnegate, his cousin, the son of the younger brother of the late Earl, Henry's father, turned from the window as Henry entered. In the young boy's face – for he seemed younger than his years – one could easily trace the family resemblance; but Jim, with his great, clean spirit shining in his honest gray eyes, invited confidence and won it, from a mongrel dog to a superior officer. He was taller than Henry, and as slim as a young sapling. The delicate, sensitive mouth was balanced by a strong chin.

In the oak-lined room, grown almost black with age, the candle-lights flickering in the heavy brass sconces, stood these three last descendants of a great family. The Earl's brother, Dick Wynnegate, had run away with the daughter of an impecunious colonel. A few years later, while on service in India, he was shot, and the young wife lived only to bring the tiny boy Jim home and to leave him with her husband's brother. Even then the fortunes of the Wynnegates were somewhat impaired, but the old Earl had taken the boy to his heart, and on his death had confided him to his wife to share their fortune with his son Henry. His last words were, "Be good to poor Dick's boy." The estates were entailed, so no provision could be made by him for Jim, but Lady Kerhill, in her cold, just fashion, had tried to make Dick's boy happy.

Deep in his heart, Jim remembered the years that followed; remembered the selfish domination of the elder boy; remembered the blind adoration of his aunt for her son, the bearer of the torch, who was to carry on the golden light of the house of Kerhill. In the Anglo-Saxon idolatry of the Countess of Kerhill for the male of the family, all the old traditions and beliefs were justified. Her boy – the man-child who was to be the head of the house – was her obsession. The tiny, flower-like girl who came shortly before her husband's death, learned soon to turn to Cousin Jim for comfort when her brother carelessly crushed her little joys, as he selfishly planned and fought for his own gratification.

Instinctively Jim watched his aunt, who, at Henry's word, had started to move towards him.

"Of course, if you care to go and fetch Diana, I shall be happy," Lady Kerhill said.

Henry lounged back in his chair. "Well, if I forget, Jim can remember for me – eh, Jim?"

Lady Kerhill's face became grave as she leaned over Henry's chair and closely studied the flushed face. She found there confirmation of the fear that had preyed on her mind for the past half-hour.

"Oh, Henry, you've broken your word," she whispered.

The reckless challenge of Henry's dark eyes as he moved impatiently in his chair was his only answer. Then in a burst of ill-concealed resentment he rose: "Don't nag, mother."

He swayed slightly as he crossed to the open casement. As Jim turned to him, he sullenly pushed him aside.

"And don't you preach," he muttered, as he started for the garden.

Jim quickly caught him by the shoulder, "Pull yourself together, Henry. It's eight o'clock and the people are gathering in the park."

Henry's only reply was a snarl as he disappeared in the shadow of the trees.

The broad window opened level on an Old World garden that led into the great park beyond. The late twilight of the July night was bathing park and garden in a curious, unearthly light which made strange spectres of the slowly waving yew-trees. The scent of the rose-bushes, the call of the late nightingale to his mate, and the ghostly sundial, sentinel-like, guarding the old place, made a fitting environment for Maudsley Towers.

On a slight hill beyond the park, Jim could see the ruins of the famous Norman church. To the right, at the farther end of the garden, was the Fairies' Corner. There among the trees the fairies of the field were supposed to sleep, and to listen to and grant the requests of the children, who had the courage to venture to them at even-tide. Jim's thoughts were busy to-night; all the old memories seemed to tug at his heartstrings.

He had carried Diana Marjoribanks there on her first visit to the Towers. She was six then and he was twelve. She had clung to him and hid her head on his shoulder – the tiny body had stiffened with fear – as they made their way to the dark enclosure of the trees. He could still hear her prayer.

"Dear Fairy, please make Henry kinder to poor Jim, poor Mabel, and poor me!"

Even then, Henry had been the little tyrant of the Towers.

And yet to-night Henry's wish, as of old, was law to his mother. She conceded Diana to him at his first careless request, although in all probability he would forget the longing child in the nursery – forget his promise to give her pleasure, as he had forgotten so often when he was a boy.

Jim roused himself; as he turned to Lady Elizabeth he caught a glimpse of her with the mask off, the bitter disappointment of the mother's heart showing in every line of her proud face. He crossed to her, but the sound of carriage-wheels turning into the driveway heralded the approach of the first arrivals, and before Jim could speak the doors were thrown open to the guests.

Lady Elizabeth gave one look of appeal to Jim. It said: "Help Henry and me!"

Up-stairs in the right wing of the old house, a tall, slender child crouched close to the nursery window. She had crept from her cot, and, wrapped in a coverlet, waited, and clung to the belief that Henry would come for her. Jim had said he would try, but Henry had promised. She was old enough to know that what Henry desired he obtained. Her little face was pressed closer and closer to the window as she listened to the swelling music and saw the guests thronging towards the park. Carriage after carriage brought its load of finery, until the child fancied that the entire county must be gathered below. She could see through the climbing roses down into the library, which jutted out at a sharp angle almost opposite to the nursery window. But of Jim or Henry she could catch no glimpse.

The stars began to creep out and blink at the tiny figure in the window-seat. Gradually the entire house grew quiet. All – even the servants – had joined the revelry in the park.

The music crashed louder. Fiery showers of illumination could be seen shooting and flaming into the sky. It grew cold. Tighter she drew the coverlet and held closer the small puppy that nestled warm in her arms and slept. In the adjoining room Mabel, Lady Kerhill's little daughter, lay fast asleep.

"It's Jim's last night. I must say good-bye," the child whispered to the fleecy white bundle in her arms. "I must keep awake and say good-bye."

Fainter grew the music, darker the sky, and heavier the curved eyelids. Slowly, with a sigh the child slipped to the floor, and the brown head pillowed itself on the cushioned window-seat. Diana slept.

In the park, the tenantry, eager to meet their young master, were shouting themselves hoarse. A speech of welcome followed the dazzling illuminations. Over it all, Lady Elizabeth, with Sir Charles Marjoribanks, presided.

Diana and her father lived on a neighboring estate, and Sir Charles had come to-night to rejoice with his old friend on the return of her son. Sir Charles was a man of slender physique, with a gentle, winning manner; extremely delicate in health, he led for the most part a secluded life, and since the death of his wife, at Diana's birth, went little into the social world. Diana's childhood had been almost as lonely as Jim's had been in his aunt's home. To-night Sir Charles delighted in seeing the house of Wynnegate honored. He scarcely noted the reckless demeanor and wild spirits of Henry as unusual; only for Jim and Lady Elizabeth was it a night of anxiety. Never for a moment did Henry escape Jim's watchful eyes; slip after slip made by Henry was covered by Jim's tact and thoughtfulness, and with simple dignity he carried the night to success. Only when he stood aside and saw Henry receive the demonstrations of the county and tenantry did the bitterness of his position force itself upon him. Not once did Henry remember his promise to the child waiting for him. Jim remembered; but the look of appeal from his aunt, and the sullen defiance of Henry, kept him close to his cousin's side.

The final bars of the last dance were dying away and the ball was drawing to its brilliant end. In the east, a pale streak of light was beginning to show over the horizon. Sir Charles, half an hour before, had gone to his room. Exhausted by the long evening's anxiety and late festivities, Lady Kerhill

forgot that Jim was to leave early in the morning and that she would not see him again, and had retired to her own apartment. In the great hall, tired and excited groups of guests were saying good-night.

"It's good-bye for Jim," Sir John Applegate, Diana's cousin, called as the last carriage drove away.

A half-whimsical smile played over Jim's face. Then some one remembered that he was leaving England. As he turned from the door, he met the eyes of his cousin fastened on him, all the latent rebellion rising to the surface. Henry Kerhill was sober enough to know that Jim had watched and guarded him through the entire night, and had stood between him and disgrace. As he leaned against the tall mantel, the bitter consciousness that the young boy had proved himself of fine mettle, ate like acid into his feverish brain. He dug his hands deep into his pockets, then with a lurch he pulled himself together. Without a word he turned, crossed to the twisted staircase, and grasping the oak rails, slowly ascended. From the landing came the slam of a heavy door, and Jim knew that he was alone.

So this was the end. The striking of the bell in the church-tower reminded him that it was now four o'clock and that he was to leave at six. His luggage had been sent on ahead the previous day. He changed quickly, without disturbing the tired servants, and in half an hour was ready to walk to the station. As he came down the broad staircase, lined with portraits of the ancestors of the house of Wynnegate, a slight noise in the corridor leading off from the broad landing attracted him. Before he could turn, a low voice called:

"Jim – Jim!"

It was Diana. Standing there in the dim light of the corridor, she made an entrancing picture. With the parted hair falling away from the low brow, around the oval face, and the far-apart blue-black eyes, she looked like the child Madonna of Rosetti's "Annunciation." The coverlet was drawn close about her, the puppy still hidden under its folds.

"It's Di, Jim," she whispered as she hurried to him. "I waited and waited for you – I knew you were going away and I wanted to say good-bye. Burrow promised that she would let me see you, but she's fast asleep, and so is Mabel. I tried to wake them but I couldn't." The little figure cuddled into his arms.

Jim's heart was very full as he looked at the frail child in the early dawn, the shadows of a restless night showing on her delicately modelled face. He drew her into a window-enclosure, and wrapping the heavy curtains about her, held her fast.

"Say something," the sweet voice coaxed. "I shall miss you so and wait for you to come back. You will come back, won't you?"

Jim's only answer was to press the little head close to his heart. In all the great house, she alone had cared to say good-bye – to wish him in her child's way godspeed.

"See," Diana continued as she opened her arms, "here is something for you to take away with you, so that you sha'n't be lonely any more." She opened her arms and held up the soft roll of fur with its blinking eyes and pink-tipped nose.

"Di, dear Di," Jim whispered, as he patted the towsted hair.

Quite seriously her big eyes searched Jim's face to be sure that her gift truly won approval.

The church clock boomed the hour of five. Jim hurriedly rose and slipped the dog into his coat-pocket.

"Good-bye, Di, and God bless you!"

She clung quietly to him with her arms tight around his neck for a long time; then the little face quivered, and in a burst of tears she sank back among the cushions of the window-seat. Jim hesitated a moment, then with a final pat on the dear head, hurriedly reached the doorway and was out on the high-road. From a turn at the top of the common he caught a last glimpse of the great house, and in the big window of the hall could see the faint outline of the white figure still huddled among the cushions.

All the suppression of the past days gave way. With a cry, Jim threw himself down on the damp ground and convulsive sobs shook his body. It had all been his – his home, his country – and he was leaving it without a friend, without a loving hand or voice to cheer him.

He suddenly felt a damp nose thrust into his hand, and a soft tongue began to lap his face as though in sympathy. The tiny puppy had fallen from his pocket and crawled on to his shoulder. He rose to his feet and picked up the fluffy ball; something in the round, pulpy mass made him laugh.

"So I've found a friend, have I? Is that what you're trying to tell me?"

The dog gave a faint yelp in reply and began to lick his hand. Holding the dog close to him, Jim walked on, all the boy in him welling up to meet the promise of the new day. Suddenly he stopped as he neared the station platform, and stroking gently the soft fur, he whispered:

"I'll call you Di."

## CHAPTER II

It was London in full swing. A wild April shower had sprung up and was quickly driving people into the shelter of passing hansoms. There was a sudden exodus from the park of gayly gowned women, hurrying to their waiting carriages. Bewildered nurses gathered their young charges into protecting corners. Only a few minutes before it had been radiant sunshine. Open high-swung see-victorias, with their powdered, liveried men on the boxes, and unprotected occupants driving from a royal house to a ducal assemblage, were caught in the congested mass of hansoms, top-heavy 'busses, and passing carts. Stalwart, blue-coated giants were trying to stem the rush and scramble.

Diana crossed from the couch where she had been sitting to the open window. In a week's time she was to be married. She held a note in her hand, which had just come by messenger. It was from Henry. He could not take her to Ranelagh as he had planned, he wrote. Unexpected business had arisen, but he would see her later in the evening.

The room in which Diana stood faced Hyde Park. The house was one of those built a century ago by the mad Duke of Delford, and was famous for the purity of its architecture. On this spring day the front looked like a hanging garden, so abundant and exquisite were the large boxes of trailing flowers. The room with its Adam ceiling and mantel, its crimson brocade curtains against the pale-cream walls, its rare specimens of Sheraton and Chippendale and precious bits of china, made a harmonious setting for Diana in her dove-colored gown. Bowls of yellow jonquils and daffodils gleamed like golden bits of imprisoned sunlight on slender-legged tables.

Diana was alone. Lady Dillingham, her aunt, and the mistress of the Park Lane House was confined to her room with a sharp attack of gout. From the window looking out across the park, the rain glinted like a fine sheet of steel. It beat down the great beds of flaming hyacinths and daffodils that lined the park walk with their glory of purple and yellow. The blue-and-white fleecy sky of a past half-hour now hung over the town like a dirty ship's sail, with puffing, dun-colored clouds sweeping past.

Diana half consciously watched the amusing scurry of the passers-by. Through the long, open windows protected by a projecting balcony she could hear the splashing of the rain against the pavement. The confusion of carriages began to straighten itself out. The hurrying crowds disappeared as though swallowed up in the drenched ground. What had been a fantastic, brilliantly colored panorama was now a desolate space.

As Diana stood there, a rising resentment at the broken promise filled her mind. It was not because of the disappointment. So often, at the last moment, her plans had been changed by Henry's failure to keep his engagements with her. A sharp gust of wind blew its damp air into the room and made her shiver. She closed the window and walked to the open log fire. The spring days of an English climate still permitted this luxury within doors. As she sat before the hearth, the letter still in her hand hanging listlessly by her side, the door quietly opened and her father entered. On the previous day he had come up from the country to join Diana, who was visiting his sister while the necessary wedding preparations were being completed. The passing years had greatly aged Sir Charles. The delicate, high-bred face had grown more spiritual, and he seemed further aloof from material influences.

With a pang Diana noticed the change. She rose and crossed to him, her tall figure hovering protectingly over the old man. The maternal instinct was deeply embedded in Diana's nature. Quite tenderly he took the young face in his withered but exquisitely modelled hands and kissed her.

"Alone, dear?" he said. "I thought Henry was to take you to join some people at Ranelagh."

"Henry has just sent me word that he is unexpectedly detained in the city."

Something in her tone made Sir Charles wince.

She was very beautiful, in a curious, contradictory way. Her tender, serious eyes suggested the Madonna, but her arched, full mouth made her a half Venus. More than tall, there was in the lithe,

girlish figure an embodiment of latent reliance and vitality. Her usually calm face was disturbed at the moment by a look of intense perplexity. It seemed as though she were vainly trying to combat her doubts.

She stood for a moment irresolute, then in a burst of tears she slipped down beside the big chair in which her father sat.

"I can't marry Henry – I can't," she sobbed, as she hid her face in her hands.

For a moment Sir Charles was startled; then, smiling at what he divined to be a lover's quarrel, he patiently patted the bent head as though humoring a wayward child. Absorbed in his own narrow life, he had no knowledge of men, and to him Henry Wynnegate was an ideal match for his motherless girl.

He had known the late Earl well, and in the reflected glory of the parents he saw the son. His heart was set on seeing Diana safely moored in the house of Wynnegate and the brilliant position hers, which she could assume as the Countess of Kerhill. These tears, of course, were the foolish outcome of the afternoon's disappointment. He let her have her cry out; then gradually drew the slender hands from her face.

"You are unreasonable, my child," he began. "Surely you can hope for no better husband than the son of my late friend. Why, I have known him from childhood. Think," he went on, "of his career as a soldier; of the respect of his tenantry; of his position in the world." He forgot the dominance of Lady Elizabeth, who, by her plans and generalship had commanded all these attributes for her son. "With his knowledge of life and the future assured him," he continued, "he can give you all that so far has been denied to you. What more can you desire, my dear?"

Diana raised her tear-stained face and listened.

He drew her close to him, his feeble body vibrating with sudden emotion as he said, "I am very feeble – far older than my years, and I long to see you safely placed." He waited a moment as though expecting a reply, but there was no answer to his appeal. "We are poor, Diana – very poor. I have carried a heavy burden for years. This marriage will make me supremely happy; it will make my remaining days peaceful." He paused. "You can trust me, dear, in this matter. Say that you can."

Something in the tense, pathetic face forced back Diana's words of opposition. Perhaps she was wrong. There was no tangible reason for this rebellion that her perplexed mind could grasp. Her father, so gentle, so wise, so loving, could not be doubted. Sir Charles watched her eagerly. He loved her, but in his short-sighted desire for her happiness he failed to see the depths of her troubled heart. Almost convinced that her frightened instinct was wrong, Diana rose, and, with a gentle pressure of her father's hand, yielded to his importunities. Tactfully, and in silence, Sir Charles accepted her consent.

A strained pause followed. Sir Charles reflectively sank into the cushions of his high-backed chair. He was sure that Diana's outburst was mere nervousness; it was often so with young, inexperienced girls before marriage. The excitement of the London life was a great fatigue to him. Even the muffled, vibrating roar that half penetrated into the dwellings of Mayfair, told on his sensitive nature. He closed his eyes.

Diana's girlhood had been singularly isolated from the world. Shortly after Jim's departure for India, she had been sent abroad to a school on the Continent. She had usually spent the summers with her father at some peaceful, out of the way corner. Her education completed, she had returned during the April previous, to the quiet life of her father's home.

There followed the lonely weeks with her awakening womanhood crying out for comprehension. Then one day Henry Wynnegate returned to the Towers. She had only a vague memory of the subsequent days of amusement that passed so quickly. All that her youth and gayety had so long desired was given her. She was unconsciously swept on by the passion of Henry's love and could hardly recall when she promised to be his wife. That was in the autumn.

At the beginning of the season she was presented at court. Her youth and beauty made a sensation, and her marriage was arranged to take place within a month.

Eager to grasp the bloom of the fresh flower he had plucked, Henry would tolerate no delay. Backed by the dominant influence of his mother, who in Diana saw not only the gratification of Henry's desires, but a gracious bearer of his name, and, with the persuasion of Sir Charles, Diana acquiesced to an early marriage. She was in love with love, not with the man, and her loveliness and the purity of her fresh young soul made her idealize the best of Henry's shifting, many-sided nature.

Sir Charles dozed peacefully. Diana, with feverish cheeks and burning eyes, longed to escape from the warm room. Through the closed windows she could see that the rain had ceased. She wanted to be alone, to calm the battling emotions of the past hour. As she tiptoed to the door, it was thrown open, and the Countess of Kerhill and Lady Mabel Wynnegate were announced.

Sir Charles aroused, rose quickly from his chair to greet the visitors.

"My dear," Lady Kerhill began, as she entered the room and embraced Diana, "we are going to ask you for our tea at once if you will take pity on us. Such an afternoon! We were obliged to turn back from Ranelagh because of the storm. Fortunately we had a closed carriage, but Mabel and I were so anxious to know whether you and Henry had started before the shower sprang up" – with a quick look of surprise about the room, she exclaimed, "Why, where is Henry?"

Diana rang the bell for tea.

"I had a note from Henry, dear Lady Elizabeth, saying he was detained by some unexpected business."

Sir Charles noticed with great satisfaction Diana's superb control. Her rebellious mood, as he surmised, had been a mere whim.

For a moment a half-frightened look came into Lady Elizabeth's eyes. She was never quite sure of Henry, but even to herself she never admitted it. She had cast him for a role that he neither suggested nor attempted to play, but she never flinched before the duty of wilfully blinding herself to these truths. Her love and her belief would win, and out of it all would be created the son she so desired Henry to be – that was her unconscious prayer. She threw off the moment's anxiety.

"No doubt it is a busy week for Henry," she said. She crossed to a chair near the fire, and with the announcement of tea began to gossip with Sir Charles. Mabel moved close to Diana's side at the tea-table. She had grown into a fairy-like creature, with exquisite, youthful coloring. Very shy and utterly subordinate to her mother and brother, she lavished upon Diana a great affection in return for her sympathy. She stole shy glances at Diana's unusual color, as the latter poured the tea mechanically, but joined little in the conversation. Diana caught Mabel's eyes wonderingly fastened upon her. She could no longer endure the close room.

"I must get a breath of air. Can Mabel go with me?" she said, as she rose from her untouched tea.

Sir Charles was explaining to Lady Elizabeth some details of the previous night's rowdy conduct at the House. They both paused for a moment.

"Do take a turn with Mabel in the park," said Sir Charles. "It will refresh you."

"Remember we are due at the opera to-night," Lady Elizabeth said, as she rose. Sir Charles protested. "But it's just why I'm going myself," Lady Elizabeth confessed. "I'll send the carriage back for Mabel."

A few minutes later Diana and Mabel entered the park. The pungent smell of the damp earth filled the air. Great crimson and yellow pools of color dotted the ground; they were the battered-down blossoms of the afternoon. Some stronger plants than the others were lifting their swaying stems. The paths were covered with bruised leaves, and from the branches came the drip-drip of the gleaming rain-drops. At times under interlaced branches it seemed as though the storm still continued, so heavy was the splashing of the drenched trees. The usually crowded meeting-ground of fashion was practically deserted; even the guards had not left their corners of refuge. Here and there a stray gardener in a by-path was pityingly regarding his damaged beds.

The fresh, wet air blew against Diana's face and calmed her troubled spirit. Mabel linked her arm through Diana's: neither spoke. On and on they walked, in and out of deserted side-paths, until a turn in the road brought them opposite to the Serpentine Bridge, and they faced the public driveway of the park. A gust of wind blew across the ground a deluge of broken boughs; it caused them to hesitate on the edge of the crossing. Mabel started forward as a cab dashed towards them at a tremendous speed.

"Why, Di, there's Henry in that hansom," Mabel gasped, as she blew a tangle of loosened hair out of her eyes.

But Diana could only see the occupant nearest to her in the cab – it was a woman with a strangely interesting foreign face.

"Nonsense," she answered, as she held firm the wind-blown hat. "Henry is in the city. You are mistaken, dear."

As she spoke the storm began afresh. The wind blew the sodden blossom leaves and broken branches into a hurricane cloud around them. Grasping Mabel by the hand, Diana made her way against the violence of the wind and finally reached the entrance to the park. In the rush of keen air and the fight against it, everything else was forgotten. They quickly reached the house, and Diana saw Mabel drive away in the shelter of the waiting carriage. A few minutes later she was in her own room.

She loosened her long, brown hair, and kneeling before the glowing fire held the wet coils to its warmth. On her bed lay a gown to be worn that night, and the light from the fire cast a delicate sheen over its folds. It flickered and blazed with merry bursts of flame, lighting up the old-fashioned chintz draperies of the quaintly furnished room. Through the closed window she could hear the faint splutter of the rain on the casement. As she leaned against the tall chair close to the fireplace, a soft, warm languor stole over her and the tension of her mind relaxed. The beauty of her present life stretched out innumerable magic wands that lulled into insensibility the frightened thoughts of the afternoon. Soothed by the warmth and comfort of the room after the fatigue of her walk against the gale in the park, she abandoned herself to pleasant, intangible dreams. A knock at the door aroused her.

It was her aunt's maid, who carried a large box of flowers. Diana opened them; they were from Henry. Again they reiterated his apologies for the afternoon's disappointment. The perfume of the gardenias filled the room as she sank into a chair before her dressing-table and buried her face in the masses of delicate blossoms. The quiet servant gathered up the tangled hair.

"Her ladyship would like you to come to her room before you leave for the opera," she said, as she drew the brush across the soft brown locks.

Diana did not reply.

Yes, she was admitting to herself she had been unreasonable, as her father said. Life was beautiful and wonderful, and she meant to gather all its sweetness and bloom.

## CHAPTER III

The rain that battered down the glory of color into the soaked earth of the park had slashed and beaten black, struggling lines against the gray stone-wall of the buildings in Lincoln's Inn. The radiance of the sun never wholly penetrated the court, but to-day the old place seemed like a tomb. In one of the forbidding-looking dwellings, in his solicitor's chambers, sat Lord Kerhill. He glanced around the silent room, and aimlessly took in the array of large tin boxes, with their painted family names, piled high on the shelves encircling the walls. Conspicuous among them was his own. With the exception of a few unattractive pieces of solid mahogany and some large leather chairs, the room was almost empty. Its ugliness jarred him. As he sat there, his face in repose showed that the years had given an added touch of bitterness to his expression. He still retained his well-cut features, and their beauty of line was only a little marred by a certain heaviness that had recently developed. His dark mustache hid the weak mouth with its suggestion of sensuality; indeed, the whole man showed a strong tendency towards grossness as yet only noticeable to the careful observer.

He still had the ineffable quality of charm, when he willed to exert it, which made his selfishness seem to many only the outcome of impulsive youthfulness. In a shamefaced way he admitted to himself now that he was in the wrong and that he had stupidly involved his affairs, but he comforted himself in the same moment, with the fatuousness of self-indulgence, that everything would work out all right. To tide over this difficulty or adjust and evade for a time the demand of the hour had been his policy for so long that he could not realize that an end was possible to the long tether he so often abused.

He had come in response to an urgent summons. Opposite him, deeply absorbed in some papers, sat Johnston Petrie, the trusted solicitor of the Kerhill family since Henry's father came into the title. He was a large, powerfully built man of fifty-five, with a massive head, piercing black eyes under shaggy eyebrows, and close-cropped iron-gray curls above the shrewd face. Henry rose impatiently to go.

As he did so, Petrie lifted his glasses on their black ribbon to his eyes, and said, "I'm exceedingly sorry, your Lordship, but you must give me time to look more closely into that affair before I can venture a final opinion as to the condition of the estate. Besides, I have several other matters of the gravest importance to question you about; they pertain to some business transactions you made recently without my knowledge, while you were abroad."

He motioned his lordship to a chair as though to pursue deeper the conversation, and drew several documents from a drawer. Henry Kerhill fidgeted.

"It's impossible, Petrie. Next week, after the wedding, or after we return from Scotland, I'll have leisure then to discuss these things with you, and I really mean this time to have you adjust everything and set me quite straight."

Johnston Petrie shook his head.

"Oh, I know," Henry continued, "I've been careless, but I mean to pull up. I'll start fair from next week."

Johnston Petrie looked up sharply. He knew more of his client's career than Henry cared to remember. He had known him from boyhood, and his shrewd summing up of human nature could see only pitfalls ahead for Lady Elizabeth's son. He had tried in every way to stop the reckless living of his client. From the incessant demands made on the estate for large sums of ready money he knew that Henry Wynnegate, irritated by the conservative principles of his firm, had used outside help to prevent his family adviser from obtaining knowledge of some recent speculations.

Long ago Johnston Petrie would have asked to be released from the responsibilities of the Kerhill affairs, out for a loyal devotion to his dead client, the late Earl, and a desire to protect Lady Elizabeth's fast diminishing rights. He was not in the least deceived by Henry's machinations, but

wilfully allowed himself to seem blind to certain matters. He wished to be able to keep his hand at the lever, and argued with his brother that the end justified the means.

Lady Elizabeth in a recent interview had assured him that the coming marriage would be the turning-point in Henry's career. Nevertheless, he feared her judgment. Something in Henry's attitude to-day had made him more apprehensive; it had been impossible to pin him down to a serious consideration of his affairs. Petrie determined to venture a final effort, by enrolling his brother's services to strengthen his admonitions.

"Lord Kerhill," he said. "My brother is also most anxious to see you regarding some stocks you asked his advice about." He touched a bell; a clerk answered from an adjoining room.

"Ask Mr. Malcolm Petrie to come to us. Say that the Earl of Kerhill is here."

Henry chafed under the calm firmness of his solicitor. He had come in answer to an imperative note, and the discussion of his complicated affairs was extremely disagreeable. He was in no mood to continue it further. He moved to the door as Malcolm Petrie entered; a smaller counterpart of his brother, and a silent member of the firm, he took the same personal interest in the Kerhill affairs that his brother did. As he started to speak he was stopped by Henry.

"It's no use. I can wait no longer. A most important engagement demands my leaving at once. Advise me by letter – it will reach me to-morrow." And before either of the men could urge upon him the necessity of being allowed to advise him on certain negotiations, he had reached the outer door of the chambers, mounted the few steps leading to the court, and was in the square where his cab was waiting. He cursed the dreariness of the day as the rain splashed him. For a moment he hesitated. They had detained him far too long, these croaking fogies in their stuffy office. His hand fumbled in his pocket where lay a letter with a message not to be disregarded. On its arrival at his club early in the afternoon the note to Diana had been despatched.

The fury of haste that had made him so eager to escape from his business interview now deserted him. The rain drenched him in warm torrents. The driver on the box was a running stream, and from the horse came clouds of heavy steam.

Then the momentary irresolution passed as he gave his orders to the impassive cabman. He leaned back in his cab, tearing into shreds the mauve letter with its gold monogram as he muttered, "It's for the last time, by God." The hansom started with a jerk. It rattled down an alley. To Henry the damp, dismal court looked more than ever like a graveyard. He was glad when they turned into the vortex of the Strand.

That night at the opera, a new singer was to make her *début* in "Carmen." In Paris and America this sloe-eyed Italian had made the sensation of the half-century in her creation of the gypsy wanton. The brilliant throng in Covent Garden was alive with anticipation. The royalties were expected; indeed, the queen herself had especially commanded this reception for the gifted woman whom she had honored as her guest on the Riviera, where this singing Rachel had entranced her with the folk-songs and lullabies of her beloved country.

All that the London season could assemble of wit, beauty, and distinction was gathered in the Opera-House. The tiers of boxes were filling unusually early. Near the stage sat the Prime-Minister, a man of strong artistic perceptions and a writer of extraordinary talent. His face, with the marked cleft in the square chin, looked less dreamy than usual to-night, and the large, pale-blue eyes, amusedly surveyed the house. He seemed to have slipped off the yoke of tangled politics as he turned to his secretary, who was pointing out to him the celebrities in the stalls.

"There is the delightful American whom I met last week at Lord Blight's." As he spoke, he bowed to the new American favorite, Mrs. Hobart Chichester Chichester Jones, a radiant figure in scarlet, who found many glasses levelled at her.

"Only an American would dress so originally," the minister replied.

The American wore a gown of clinging scarlet fabric, the decidedly low-cut corsage showing the perfection of the white shoulders and arms. Around her throat she had twisted one long rope of

uncut pearls and diamonds that reached below her waist, and in the soft, waving, red-gold hair she had arranged some daring scarlet geraniums. With her pale skin and great green eyes she enchanted London by her unusual type. Near her was the famous story-book Duchess, as the most popular of the younger beauties was called. "Too good to be true," *Truth* declared her, and indeed she seemed to have been especially created to confirm the mode of the old-fashioned romances extolling the grace and loveliness of an English Duchess. The crowd noticed the famous rubies that shone like tiny flames against the white gown.

Here and there a Dowager gleamed like a shelf in a Bond Street jeweller's shop, so promiscuous was her array of gems. The younger school of beauties with more wisdom employed their jewels differently, using them as an added tone of color or a touch of brilliance to a costume. In the stalls the art world was well represented. Painters and writers with a sprinkling of actors and actresses, who were not playing, were on hand to-night to greet the new-comer. From the gallery rail a crowd of eager, swarthy faces peered, impatiently gesticulating to one another, because of the failure of the curtain to ascend at the given time. It was known that the prima-donna was a capricious creature, often swayed by a mere whim from making her appearance. Once the death of a mocking-bird had postponed her *début* as Marguerite. Would she really appear?

As the royalties entered the box, the excitement was at fever-heat. Henry with his mother impatiently awaited Diana's arrival.

The overture began its sensuous, stirring appeal, and before the cigarette-girl crossed the bridge in the street scene, every seat and box was occupied.

The singer made the ill-starred Carmen a bewitching and compelling wanton. Who that saw her will ever forget her delicious cajolery as she urged the bewitched Don José to loosen the ropes that bound her? With her Habanera she eclipsed all predecessors and made the role irrevocably hers. The first act ended with a storm of bravas from the gallery and vociferous applause from the rest of the house.

It was not until the tumultuous ovation over the first act had ceased that Diana's presence was noticed by the audience. Accompanied by her father, she had arrived at the close of the overture, and had only time to slip into her place before the curtain arose. The walk in the rain had given her delicate skin a touch of color and heightened the beauty of her tender eyes, "so deeply blue that they were black," as Lord Patrick Illington described them on his first meeting at her presentation at Court. Her bands of straight hair were wound around her head; pale-green draperies encircled her lithesome body, and the gardenia blossoms in her hair gave her a fleeting likeness to the water-sprite Undine. In the horseshoe of fashionable *mondaines* the fragrance of her beauty was like that of a dew-sprayed rose.

Mrs. Hobart Chichester Chichester Jones, with her usual common-sense of seeing things as they were, leaned towards the man beside her.

"That is a beauty – the real thing; no chic, no gowning, no Paris wisdom of make-up, but a beauty. I'm glad I've seen it." She sank back as though philosophically preparing for a Waterloo.

From his box the Prince noticed the daughter of Sir Charles Marjoribanks whose services in diplomacy in his youth were not forgotten. Forthwith an equerry was sent to Sir Charles and Diana inviting them to visit the royal presence.

Diana was the social novelty of the season. The Prime-Minister remembered his classics as he dreamily gazed at her and murmured, "Is this the face that launched a thousand ships?"

From the back of the box, Henry watched Diana's impression on the house. His eyebrows were drawn into horns of suppressed temper and there was an air of brutal determination in his bearing. Gradually his expression cleared. Diana's beauty that night stirred the best in him. He tried to dismiss the events of the afternoon; he would be worthy of this child-woman. He set his shoulders square as though preparing to fight unseen forces.

"Lucky fellow, Kerhill," one man confided to another as they watched the crowd's sweeping glasses pause constantly at Diana Marjoribanks's box and saw the triumphant look on Henry's face.

The sinuous, commanding Carmen had reached her triumphant entry with the toreador when the mad Don José's dagger drew the purple stain on the gold-embroidered gown. Over the house a spell-bound silence reigned. As from an animal wounded to the death, low sounds of agonized pain came from the great actress – she forgot to sing, and the house forgot that she was a singer in an opera comique. For the moment it faced the realistic truth of a grim tragedy.

Excited and intoxicated by the sensuous music, Diana was hardly conscious that the opera was over. She was like a child with the world for a great, colored balloon. As she came down the winding staircase she was almost happy, and turned to smile at Henry, who was by her side. As she did so she saw him frown. They reached the foot of the staircase, and found their way half-barred by a dark, foreign-looking woman robed in a spun-gold gown. Diana noticed the insolent, amused expression on her handsome face, but at that moment her attention was diverted by some one who spoke to her, and she only vaguely noticed Henry's constrained bow, and the sudden brutal flame in his eyes.

Only later, as she sleepily looked over at the park in the dim light, did she remember that the woman in cloth of gold at the bottom of the staircase was strangely like the vivid, foreign-looking woman who had flashed past her in the park as the storm broke.

The wedding took place at St. George's, Hanover Square. It was the first brilliant wedding of the season and royalty honored it, not by sending a deputy, but by its personal presence. Diana passed through the gay pageant and heard the conventional words of well-wishers like one in a dream. She remembered being changed into a going-away frock – the curious street crowd gathering around her as she left the reception at the Park Lane house. Then as she entered the brougham she was conscious of Henry's face drawn close to hers, and the old frightened instincts that her father only a week ago had soothed and quelled again took possession of her. A great wall of fear closed in about her.

At last the carriage reached the station.

Diana leaned back in their compartment in the train northbound for Scotland. The bustle of the outgoing crowds was holding Henry's attention as she glanced over the afternoon paper, which gave a prominent position to the brilliant wedding that had taken place at St. George's only a few hours ago.

Suddenly she espied a name that made her heart leap. A brief paragraph told of the reward to be conferred on Captain James Wynnegate, but a longer account followed, giving details of his gallant work in the Northwestern Hills.

A great longing to see the friend of her childhood came over her. She was ashamed that she had forgotten him so long.

Henry entered the compartment, the guard closed the door, and the train started on its journey. Her husband spoke to her and she answered him in an absent manner. The sudden remembrance of her old playmate grew vividly and seemed to blot out all else, as, following on her self-reproach for forgetting him, came the thought, growing more poignant; "Did Jim remember her?"

## CHAPTER IV

Jim lay in the hospital ward convalescing. Of the march back to the nearest hospital post, after the fight which has taken place three months before in the Northwestern Hills, when his name had been flashed over Europe in praise of his magnificent service to his flag, his mind held no memory.

Night after night in his delirium he lived again through the scenes of the fight that had brought glory to his name. Now it was the evening before the battle, when, acting upon information brought by the spy Rham-shi, he and his men kept their long vigil, sitting silently in their saddles the entire night awaiting the onslaught of the fanatical natives across the hill. Again it was early dawn, and in his fever-tossed dreams he heard the roar of the voices as the assault began; again he climbed to the summit of the hill and saw the dreaded gun of the enemy that was riddling his men. On – on he mounted. He felt the warm blood ooze down his body, the mists swim before his eyes, and the stinging pain pierce his side. In despair that he might not reach the monster in time to prevent it from completing its deadly work, his cry of agony often rang out in the silent room.

"Oh, God, God, my men – my splendid men – give me courage!"

Then his thoughts would wander to the hours when he lay on the ground with the blood dripping from his wound, and with the loaded carbine snatched from a fallen trooper he brought down a tribesman at the enemy's gun. As he fell, another sprang forward – there was another shot and still another as the tribesmen went down before his sure aim. There was but one thought in his brain – to prevent the firing of the gun, the devastation of his men. Difficult and more difficult it grew to lift the weakening arm. He could feel as he tossed on his couch the gurgle of the blood that glued him to the ground. He made an effort to rise to his knees. Another devil was about to load the gun. He must catch this one again – he must. It was his last cartridge. He stretched out his stiffening arm feebly; he tried to pull the trigger, but his strength failed him. Then – one supreme effort, and a report flashed through the air. The rest was a blank, but he had carried the day.

These delirious hours passed and there followed a vague mid-air suspension of existence. Of tangible things he was no part. The years of fighting were forgotten. He was back in the Fairies' Corner with Diana, he saw the giant trees bending and whispering in the starlight. The smell of the damp earth from the sun-hidden enclosure filled the sick-room, and the vibrant, strong, compelling cry of the night-jar echoed in his dreams. Again, he and Diana listened for the flutter of the fairies' wings in the tree-tops. Gradually, even these mists cleared from his brain, and to-day he waited with impatience the surgeon, who was to decide whether he might obtain his leave.

The doctor found him sitting up in bed, his lean hands idly resting on the coverlet.

"Well, doctor," he asked, "what is the verdict? Am I to be allowed to join my regiment?"

The surgeon looked into the brave eyes. Jim was a wraith of the man who had gone into battle. The drawn cheek-bones were like high lights in the sunken face, the gauntness of the body could be discerned under the bedclothes, but the unflinching eyes held the same expression of everlasting courage. The doctor took Jim's long, meagre hand.

"We are done with you, Wynnegate. You fought a bigger battle here on this cot than you did yon day on the Hills, but you've won."

Jim only smiled.

"Your regiment is ordered home within a month, and you must go to your station to join it. Fighting will be a little out of your line for a while. I think you'll find you need England – a summer of sunshine in the open fields. Then come back later to us again." A suspicious moisture clouded his glasses. He was a man many years older than Jim, and he had seen his own boy go down at the head of his troops. Still, with the instinctive loyalty of the Englishman to his country, he concluded, "We need such men as you, my son."

The surgeon moved away. Jim closed his eyes. Presently he looked up.

He saw the long line of wounded men with here and there a wasted, propped-up figure – the quiet nurses passing and repassing. He began to feel the pulsating call of life again. For him the sick-room existence was ended; soon he would be back in the Fairies' Corner; he could hear the flutter of their wings.

The men were in the mess. Dunlap and Singleton were stretched out in long, wicker-basket chairs. Tomlinson was talking in an excited voice with several officers of the Tenth Hussars. "It means that Jim will receive a mention and a damn fine one," Tomlinson was saying, as he leaned back in his chair and gulped down his gin-and-seltzer. Singleton called to the orderly to bring a whiskey-and-soda. Dunlap leaned forward to Tomlinson as he asked:

"Is that absolutely sure? We all know that Jim has done fine work in his seven years here, but are the powers above really going to commend his last bit of pluck?"

"The powers above," thundered Tomlinson, who loathed being doubted, "not only mean to commend him, but they mean to decorate him with the bronze cross itself. I had it from Watkins."

A long whistle greeted this bit of news. Watkins was not apt to talk without positive information.

Tomlinson was fairly bursting with enthusiasm and importance. For him station life in India meant gossip – good or bad news – so long as it was news. He could work himself into a fever of enthusiasm, get all the glory out of another man's receiving a decoration, and rejoice as though it had been given to himself. He only asked that it should occur in his station. "Tommy," as he was called, had been known to incite blackballing from his club against a man whom he had never seen, because no opposition was made. It meant news, and the passing of the word from one mess to another. When the man was blackballed, Tomlinson, in a high fever of indignation, sought the downed man and became so incensed with sympathy that he threatened to resign from a club that could offer such indignities: by that time he had forgotten that he had caused it. At the moment he was basking in the glory of Jim's coming honors. He took another gin-and-seltzer.

"By George! he was down and done for when he came here from the hospital," Dunlap said. "Never saw such a goner. But he's picked up tremendously during the past month."

Singleton took his whiskey-and-potash from the orderly.

"Strange," he continued, as he sat up, glass in hand. "Wynnegate is so eager to go back: never saw anything like it. Seems as though this illness had knocked soldiering out of him, and he was such a keen one before."

"Mighty fortunate the regiment's time was up and we're ordered home. Talk about Jim's being glad – Gad! it means something to see those kiddies of mine. Wonder if the little beggars will remember me," Dunlap mused.

After three gins-and-seltzers, it was time for Tomlinson to listen to Dunlap about his children. He had heard it all before. He had come from his own mess with the news about Jim. That was all that interested him, so he got up to go.

"Who'll play polo this evening?" he asked.

Singleton promised he would.

"I'll walk back with you," Tomlinson said.

They started to leave, but catching sight of an orderly with a mail-bag, Singleton let Tomlinson go on alone.

"See you at six for polo, Tommy; and I say, send any of our fellows in that you see. Tell them the post is in," he called as he saw Jim's long, loose-jointed stride across the road.

A blazing sun beat down on Jim as he crossed to the mess. The April weather was anticipating India's most wearing heat. But only vaguely he noted the ominous lead-colored sky, with its promise of dust storms. The green of England filled his vision. Since the days in the hospital, his thoughts had recurred incessantly to Diana. A picture in an illustrated paper, picked up in his ward, showed him Miss Diana Marjoribanks as a beautiful young girl – little Diana no longer. There was the same

Madonna face, but more exquisitely fair than the child he had left had promised to be. He hardly cared to admit to himself how much the picture had stirred him.

When he entered the mess he found the men in groups, absorbed in their letters. Singleton and Dunlap both called to him.

"There are two for you, Jim."

Letters did not often come his way. When he first left England, several child's letters had come from Diana – these he had answered. He never heard from Henry, and his aunt wrote seldom.

"Dinningfold." He saw the familiar old postmark. It was from Lady Elizabeth, then. Boyishly, he fingered its ample thickness. It was good of her to write such a budget, he thought, as he tore it open. The chatter of voices about him fell unheeding on his ears as the men read their letters.

"God! Breese is dead – dropped down quite suddenly at the club," Singleton remarked as he turned a page of the letter he was reading.

His words were almost drowned by an eager, exulting cry. Half the fellows turned toward Dick Farninsby. He was usually so quiet. To-night his young, fair face was the color of a puppy.

"I've come into the money," he stammered.

Every one knew that Farninsby's uncle had been an old reprobate and that Dick had had a close pinch on his meagre allowance. They also knew that a pretty girl was waiting for him at home. A buzz of congratulations followed. But Tim took no part in them. He was reading his aunt's letter.

"... We are so sorry that you won't be home in time for the wedding. Diana and Henry are to be married. It will be a London wedding. Diana has grown into a beautiful girl and will make a worthy wife for Henry and a charming mistress of Maudsley Towers..."

As he read, the page became a dancing mass of hieroglyphics. The men were beginning to light their cigarettes and pipes as they called bits of news to one another from the English papers. He tried hard to make the strange letters shape themselves and form words. He reread them. "Diana and Henry are to be married." He turned the page. "On the 30th of April," it said. To-day was the 2d of May.

Several of the men started for the polo-fields. Some one called, "What's your news, Wynnegate?" He forgot to answer. He crushed the letter in his hand and left the mess. Mechanically he put the unopened letter from headquarters, with the news of his brilliant reward, in his pocket. Across the polo-fields he could see the heavy atmosphere gathering in great clouds. A dust-storm was nursing its imminent wrath.

It all seemed far away from the Fairies' Corner.

## CHAPTER V

Since the day in his mess when Jim read the news of Diana's approaching marriage to Henry, he had been immersed in a strange dreariness of feeling and a curious indifference to the homeward-bound journey. Night after night he stood alone on the forward-deck of the *Crocodile* bound from Bombay for England, and heard the soldiers singing their camp-songs, their strong, rough voices growing tender as they sang their cockney ballads of home. But they roused no responsive echo in Jim; watching the Southern Cross in the sky, his thoughts often drifted back to the seven years of fighting with their sun-scorched days of fatigue and danger, full of work that drained body and brain. He almost wished that he were returning to them.

One night at Ismailia the pendulum of his emotions swung back from this indifference to the first hours of joy that he had experienced when he received the news that his regiment was ordered back. The ship had anchored there for a few hours to obtain supplies. With Dunlap and Singleton he went ashore to the little hotel with its Continental atmosphere of cheap table-d'hôte dinners and slipshod Italian waiters. It was a shaky wooden building, built around an inside court, with balconies over which clambered in exuberance pale, waxy tea-roses, while the front of the building hung over a cypress-tree garden.

The indifferently good but pretentious meal was served in the tiny court. Dunlap's and Singleton's boisterous mood jarred Jim. He found himself watching the other guests of Monsieur Carlos' hostelry. At adjacent tables parties of tourists were making merry while waiting for the P.&O. steamer to carry them from Cleopatra's land to golden Italy, and from a dance-hall came the fantastic music of the nautch women's instruments. In half an hour the hotel was empty of all the diners save Jim, who lingered until the shabby proprietor, Monsieur Carlos, informed Monsieur le Capitaine that after ten the court was closed, but the verandas were at Monsieur's disposal for his kummel and cigarettes. Jim ascended the creaking staircase to the broad veranda partly hidden from the road by its screen of blooming roses gleaming like stars against the shadowed foliage. Here and there a tight, pink-tipped bud shone like a tiny flame.

The moon had risen and illumined the entire place with an uncanny brilliance, turning the night into an unreal day. Jim sank into a chair. The air was heavy with the perfume of the rose-trees. In the distance he could hear the barbarous clash of the dancing women's cymbals. It was their trade-night with two ships in the harbor. Jim took from his pocket a leather portmonnaie and drew from it the picture of Diana that he had cut from the paper in the hospital.

He had never willingly thought of her since the day he received his aunt's letter. As he sat on the deserted veranda, with the torn page lying on his knee, he was conscious of a sudden, intangible feeling of apprehension. Diana was the tenderest memory of his boyhood. Why did he fear this marriage with Henry? Vainly he studied the picture, trying to gain from the cheap illustration some knowledge of the woman into which Diana had grown. He tried honestly to face the truth of his great anxiety concerning the marriage. He knew that through his convalescence when the longing to go home had overmastered the soldier in him, the thought of renewing his friendship with Diana had been his happiest anticipation. He sought to reassure himself that his disappointment was selfishness – that he feared to find Diana absorbed in new interests, with his place completely crowded out of her life. Then a vision of Henry, sullen and defiant as he had last seen him, flashed before him... Yet might not Henry's character have been redeemed by his love for Diana? Jim knew that the meagre fortune of Sir Charles Marjoribanks could not be a material factor in the marriage. This proved his most reassuring thought. Then his memory reverted to Diana, and he recalled the child Di, who had clung to him on the morning of his departure and begged him to return. He remembered how as a boy he had often played that he was her knight, and fought the unseen foes that were supposed to lurk in the alleyways of the giant trees. Was it a prophetic vision of the future?

He rose from his chair. Sweeping clouds were rolling over the pale moon. The desolation of the place grew more terrible.

Far out at sea he could see the black phantom ship now appearing, now disappearing. It seemed at the mercy of the heavy vapors that at times touched its topmasts. The desire to reach England again grew strong in him. He felt he had a purpose to fulfil.

A half-hour passed. Suddenly the moon swept from under a heavy cloud, shaped like the wing of a monster bird. Across the road he could see the straggling groups of travellers returning from the festivities. Their tired, excited voices reached him, and he was glad to escape from the hotel and make his way to the waiting dinghy. Dunlap and Singleton joined him, and as he leaned back in the skiff, strong and incessant as the incoming tide that beat against the boat grew the strength of his resolve. Diana should obtain happiness if he could serve her to that end.

Three weeks later the *Crocodile* swung into the harbor at Portsmouth. A symphony in blues and greens greeted Jim's eyes as they anchored within sight of the Victory. An English June sky with riotous blues – from the palest flaky azure to the deepest turquoise – hung in the heavens over a vivid green sea. The very atmosphere seemed floating about in nebulous clouds of pearly tinted indigo. To Jim it was like the beauty of no other land.

Towards evening Jim reached London. The town was alive with the roar and rush of hansoms and crowded 'buses carrying the day's workers to their homes. His cab turned from St. James's Park into the Mall towards his club. How he loved the gray, majestic beauty of the place!

The expected arrival of the *Crocodile* had been duly noticed by the papers, and his part in the brilliant work of his regiment warmly commended. At the club he found letters of welcome awaiting him. Among them was one from Diana, urging him to come to them at once. It seemed the letter of a woman calm in her established womanhood. "Henry and I," it said, "will be so happy to see you to-morrow at luncheon at two o'clock. Do come." The letter further told him that Lady Elizabeth and Mabel were staying at the Towers. "Henry wanted a town-house, so we are settled at Pont Street for the season."

Late that night Jim sat alone in his club, and wrote an answer to Diana's letter. He spoke of his pleasure in being able to go to them on the morrow, but its phrases gave no sign of his intense feeling and his great desire for her happiness. He left the club and walked to the pillar-box opposite. He slipped the letter into the slit of the box, and slowly retraced his steps. A slight haze was beginning to creep over the city, and in the distance it looked as though a gauze theatre-drop was shutting off the scene from the spectators.

Jim was loath to leave the streets. There was an enchantment for him in the smoky atmosphere that intoxicated him. The call of London was in his blood. As he crossed the quiet Square near the Mall, he stretched out his arms, and youth and the joy of life rang out in one great cry – Oh, it was good to be home!

## CHAPTER VI

Jim slept but little that night. In the morning his first thought was to reach the War Office, which he did almost before that dignified machine was prepared to receive him. A rumor was afloat that the Tenth Hussars might have to start shortly for South Africa, but he found that the gossip had been greatly exaggerated. Even if troops were sent out, he was assured that the Tenth Hussars were immune from active service for a long period. He rejoiced at the news, for he was tired of foreign service. His long illness had left him shaken and requiring a much-needed rest for recuperation.

At the War Office he learned that Henry had resigned his regiment and was at the head of the Surrey Yeomanry, with headquarters near the Towers. This argued well, he told himself; it meant work and responsibility for Henry that would engage his interest and surely win him away from his old, reckless way of living.

The morning slipped away with its many demands on his first day in town. His hansom turned into Sloane Street only as a clock near by struck two. In a few minutes the door of the Pont Street house was opened to him, and he was ushered into the library.

He dropped lightly into an arm-chair near a table heaped with books. Suddenly a door opened as though at the end of a corridor. He distinctly heard voices raised in strong argument behind the hangings; one sounded like Henry's; a half-suppressed oath followed.

"It's no use," the voice went on. "You must do as I say. Don't preach." He could not hear the words that followed. Jim wished it were possible to make known his presence in the room. He crossed to the farther window to avoid hearing the remainder of the conversation, but the clear and incisive words of the first speaker – this time Jim knew it was Henry – again struck his ears sharply.

"I must have the money, Petrie; make what explanation you like, but send it to me within a week. It's useless arguing. I've lost heavily in speculation. Here are the papers." The opening and slamming of several drawers followed. To Jim the words that he had just heard were like a knell to his hopes of the past week for Diana's happiness. So this was the truth! Another mortgage! He knew enough of the involved condition of the estate to dread the possibilities of that word.

As Jim sat in the window-seat facing the street, he was so absorbed in his reflections that he did not hear the door open. With a start he felt a pair of hands clasped over his eyes.

"Guess!" the low voice said.

He answered, quickly, "Di!"

"Yes, it's Di, Jim; and such a happy Di to see you again."

As he turned he half expected to see the tiny child as he had last seen her, with the puppy in her arms calling, "It's Di, Jim." For a moment they stood holding each other's hands and only the eyes of the two spoke. The thoughts of both involuntarily went back to their last meeting. They realized that unconsciously they had taken up their childhood manner. Slowly their hands unclasped and Diana was the first to speak.

"Oh, Jim, I should hardly know you. You are so big, so strong, and yet – you look as though you had been very ill; have you?"

She studied Jim's face closely, gaunt and drawn, but with the eyes still like gray pools of suppressed fire. Jim forgot the troubled thoughts that Henry's words had aroused. He only knew that Diana stood before him, young and beautiful. He threw back his head and laughed; it was the ringing, joyous laugh of a boy.

"And I almost thought, as I turned, that I could see my little Di," he said.

The memory of the delicate child faded into the tall, strong figure before him. Quickly he noted the complexities of her face; its newly acquired look of womanhood seemed curiously incongruous with the rest of her personality. He saw in her eyes a haunting expression of marked patience. The new acquaintance of the grown man and woman had adjusted itself.

"Oh, Jim, I'm so proud of you," Diana said, gravely. "You have really done something with your life that is worth while."

"Which means, I suppose, that the rest of us have not," a voice said.

Jim and Diana turned as Henry spoke. He was standing in the doorway. Jim noticed with satisfaction that his eyes rested on Diana in unquestionable gratification. Perhaps, after all, Henry's love for Diana was real. He remembered that his aunt, in her letter, had written of her great faith in this marriage for Henry's happiness – indeed, he well remembered that the letter seemed to insist upon the benefits Henry would derive from the marriage. He wondered what it had meant for Diana.

"Welcome to the hero," Henry chaffingly said, as he crossed to Jim's side.

An underlying nervous excitement, at once apparent to Jim, clung to Henry's manner. Otherwise his greeting was more than reassuring.

"Did you finish your business interview?" Diana questioned. A shade of displeasure showed on Henry's face as he answered:

"Yes, yes, I had more than enough of it."

"We postponed luncheon," Diana explained to Jim, "because Henry found his solicitor wished to see him about some repairs needed on the estate. The request was urgent, Henry said, and I knew you would not mind the delay."

For a moment Jim felt as if Henry must read the thoughts that blazed so fiercely in his mind. So this was Henry's way of deceiving Diana. He tried to control his face so that it might give no sign of the disgust he felt. Henry had turned away; Jim could see him nervously twisting his mustache; Diana was smiling tenderly on Henry as though in approval of his morning's benevolent work. Jim, reading between the lines, saw Henry wince at the dishonestly gained approbation; and decided that Henry was vulnerable where his desire to gain her respect was concerned. This was so much in his favor, at all events.

An hour later, as they sat over their coffee, Henry began explaining to Jim his work with the Yeomanry. If Jim stayed at home he wanted him to join in this splendid service to England.

"We shall need these men later, mark me. The situation in Africa is threatening." Then followed a discussion of their plans.

Henry's career as a soldier, Jim remembered, had promised well, but he also remembered certain periods of riotous living that had brought him for a time under the ban of the authorities.

As Henry elaborated his scheme to perfect the Yeomanry in their county, Jim acknowledged that there was no question of his undoubted ability to be in command. He succumbed to the strong personal charm of his cousin. Surely Henry would control himself and make a worthy showing of his life yet. In Jim's heart was the silent prayer that it might be so, and that perhaps he could help him to attain this result.

Diana, listening, was happy in the apparent new bond between the cousins. She had been so eager for this: that Jim should be with them as he had been when he was a boy. Since her marriage, her life had been full of pleasant days, with only here and there the pin-prick of the old, frightened instincts. It usually occurred when Henry was in one of his black moods. Up to the present he had tried to avoid her on these occasions. She strangely rebelled when she came to realize that it was her beauty which gave him his greatest pleasure. That it was primarily her youth and loveliness that delighted him, he made no effort to conceal. At times she admitted to herself that she wished it were not so flagrant – this frank, pagan joy of the senses which she invoked in him. But, she reasoned, if she allowed these thoughts to frighten her, she was catching at shadows. Of tangible facts there was none; indeed, she found it impossible to explain satisfactorily these doubts and regrets.

Jim was promising Henry that he would think seriously of the Yeomanry work, when Diana suddenly remembered that Henry and she were due at a studio to see a portrait of hers that was soon to be exhibited. At that moment a note was brought to Henry. Jim observed the quick contraction of Henry's brows and the sharp biting of his lips as he read it. Henry crumpled the letter. "Jim can

take you," he brusquely said. "This note is of importance and requires my immediate attention. It's concerning my interview of this morning."

Diana's face showed her disappointment.

"But this is the third time that you've broken your appointment with me, and you promised Mr. Bond that you would surely give your decision on the picture to-day," Diana protested. "Besides, it is difficult for me to take all the responsibility in the matter, and the picture must be sent to-day to the exhibition. Do meet me there later, Henry."

Henry had been fighting the Furies for days; his financial worries were now vital to his honor. Into his eyes came the brutal flash that Jim knew so well, and he hurriedly intervened, "I'll go with you, Di, with pleasure, if I can be of the slightest service to you."

Instead of helping the situation, Jim found that his quick acquiescence, although suggested by Henry, had the effect of further irritating him. Henry turned from the door, to which he had crossed, with the crumpled note in his hand; all the old, domineering, rebellious temper struck flame.

"There! You have Jim. What more can you wish? Your hero's opinion will no doubt interest you far more than mine, so don't talk rot about your disappointment."

Diana stood silent, amazed at her husband's uncalled-for fury. Jim found it impossible to speak. The servant returned to see if the answer to the note was ready.

Henry contended for a few seconds with a tempestuous remorse as strong as the flare of his nervous outbreak; he bitterly regretted his lack of control. He had tried to conceal the strain he had been under all the day; to be thwarted as he apparently was by the news from Petrie, was to arouse the demons of destruction in him – destruction to himself as well as to those near him. He cursed himself as the victim of his own folly; but to see Jim master of the situation roused the old rebellion of his boyhood. A movement from the waiting servant recalled him, and with a few words of half-muttered apology he hurriedly left the room. A moment later they heard him drive away.

From so small a matter so great a consequence had arisen. This insight into Henry's nature again showed Jim the quicksands on which Diana's happiness was built.

To Diana the incident was embarrassing, but with infinite tact she made no allusion to it. Jim marvelled at the quiet control with which she deftly turned it aside.

The carriage was announced.

"Will you come, Jim?" Diana asked.

He hesitated.

"Do," she coaxingly said, "it would help me."

Under the calm, serious face he could see the tremulous expression that showed her quivering, hurt feelings. The tender eyes held him fast. Still he hesitated. As in a moment of prevision he was urged to say no; it seemed as though he were starting on a way that led him into darkness. The absurd compelling force fastened around him in a tight grip; he tried to stammer a few words; he was irritated by his apparent stupidity, then he heard Diana say: "Let me decide for you."

As she spoke, a shaft of golden light penetrated the room. Why should he not go? He quickly threw off the intangible feeling of fear. He told her he was only too happy to be of service. It was a warm, mellow, summer day, and the soft, alluring air quickly lulled Jim into a tranquil mood.

As they stood before the portrait, Jim knew that it was one of the painter's true inspirations. The simple brown gown in which Diana had been painted brought out the gold in the bands of her straight hair. It faded away into a dull background, leaving only her luminous face in high relief. The painted oval contour and the curved lips were there in all their beauty; but the shadowy eyes unconsciously showed the troubled soul. It was a portrait of Diana older in years and experience. The painter seemed to have passed by her obvious youth and divined her in her maturity. Curiously enough, the portrait stirred Jim more than his meeting with Diana had done.

When they descended to the carriage, Diana said, "Come and drive – not in the park, but let us go along the Embankment, across the bridge towards Richmond. I long for a breath of the country." This time he made no effort to resist her appeal.

As they drove, Jim learned from Diana the news about Sir Charles. His ill health had greatly increased, and a London specialist's opinion had been far from sanguine. He gathered that Diana felt it was the beginning of the end; as she spoke, Jim could read the anguish of her thoughts. Once she turned to him and said:

"I have so few to love."

Soon they found themselves talking merrily over gay reminiscences of their childhood days. The hours slipped by, and it was only the deepening of the shadows that reminded Diana that she was entertaining the Prime-Minister that night at a large dinner-party. The return home was quickly made.

"Won't you dine with us, Jim?" Diana asked, as they reached Pont Street. "We can easily lay an extra cover."

But Jim, feeling that it would be better not to see Henry that night, pleaded an engagement at his club. He left Diana with a promise to see her soon.

That night he forgot her unusual beauty; he remembered only the fragrance of her personality. During the following week he obtained a leave of absence, and with Singleton planned to go abroad. Why he did this he could not quite explain. He saw Diana and Henry only once before leaving for his holiday. That was in June.

## CHAPTER VII

Upon the expiration of his sick leave, Jim returned to his regiment, stationed at Dorden, a few miles from Dinningfold. He found the situation but little changed at the Towers. Henry's uncertain moods made Jim's visits a doubtful pleasure, but since his first day at Pont Street there had been no decided outbreak on his cousin's part.

The autumn brought with it the calamitous war in South Africa, and all thoughts were concentrated on preparing the Yeomanry of the country to be ready to join the Regulars in the field. Jim's services were readily enlisted by Henry, and in the organization of the county's Yeomanry he became an active force. His work often required him to spend days at the Towers.

With the passing of the last days of the old year, Henry's moodiness increased; even Lady Elizabeth seemed hopeless and unable to avert them, and Jim could see the bitter disillusionment that Diana daily encountered. During the winter Henry's attitude towards Diana changed; her presence was an irritation to him. At times he made every effort to regain his lost footing, but again and again he forfeited the newly acquired grace which her clemency granted. Days of absence from the Towers were now not uncommon. The light gradually faded from Lady Elizabeth's face, leaving it a haunting gray mask. But no word was spoken by either of the women to Jim. Both were indefatigable in their efforts to relieve the condition of the soldiers freezing on the African veldt. A fund was started in the county to be used for the widows and orphans of the fighting men, and Henry was placed at the head of it.

In London the innumerable bazaars and fêtes given to swell the various funds of relief were the principal functions of the fashionable world. Jim, who had just returned from a visit to Scotland over the holiday season, was standing near a stall in Albert Hall, presided over by Mrs. Hobart Chichester Chichester Jones. As she eagerly turned towards him there was no doubt of the American woman's desire to gain his approbation. A friendship had sprung up between them since Jim's return from India, and her frankness amused him. It was Sadie Jones's second year in London, and the half of the great houses that had been denied her the previous year were now open to her and she was a much sought personage at their festivities.

Whether this was due to her insouciant face with its tip-tilted nose, or the slight lisp that made her American accent seem so fetching, her friends could not decide. Her enemies – and Sadie Jones had them at Battle Creek – declared it was her charming characteristic of never remembering a social slight; of generously forgiving the offender and in true Christian spirit offering the other cheek. They forgot what Jim and her sponsors in London could plainly see – it was her frankness that razed to the ground her social barrier. When she spoke quite frankly of a boarding-house her mother had kept in a mining-town where Hobart Jones had been a paying guest, and told in picturesque exaggeration of her starved youth and pitiful hatred of her environment – of the longing to escape to the great life of Europe with its men and women of tradition – she disarmed the gossips. She frankly acknowledged what was her detractors' store of tittle-tattle. It was a unique game and it won.

Jim watched her with tolerant interest as she inveigled a young guardsman into giving a substantial donation to the cause. As he idly surveyed the scene he wondered at Diana's failure to attend the fête. The tired women who had been in attendance were disposing of the remains of their stock. The eager crowd that had thronged the hall and paid a half-crown to be served tea by a duchess, or to see a peeress act as barmaid in rivalry to a popular Rosalind of the stage, was gradually thinning out.

Jim started to leave the flag-bedecked hall with its litter of packages and debris-strewn floor as proofs of the day's profitable traffic. Sadie Jones, who had been skilfully effecting her sales and keeping him in sight, turned to him.

"Wait and drive home with me to dinner. The brougham's at the door. I have news for you of Lady Kerhill. I have just returned from a visit."

Mrs. Jones lived in a box of a house in Curzon Street. It was a setting especially designed to suit her small, birdlike personality. But Jim's stalwart frame seemed grotesquely out of proportion in the small French salon. The dinner was an amusing *tête-à-tête* with Sadie at her most vivacious best, telling anecdotes of the plains she loved.

"Sometimes I long for the smell of the alkali. It chokes one, but I find the fogs far harder to swallow. I was bred to it."

Hitherto her descriptions of the prairie had often made Jim long to see the country she painted so vividly. Suddenly she turned to Jim and with quick decision said:

"I can't understand your Englishman's point of view. Why, in America, if Hoby Jones had treated me as Lord Kerhill is treating his wife, there would be ructions. Yes, ructions," she calmly went on, in answer to Jim's look of amazement. "Lord Kerhill is your cousin, I know, but Lady Kerhill is an angel. Why don't you do something?"

For a moment Jim could not quite grasp her irrelevant outburst. Then he learned that Diana's failure to appear at the bazaar was due to days of accumulated anxiety at the Towers. Henry had been away for a week without a word of explanation to those at home.

"Of course," Sadie Jones continued as she leaned back and puffed her cigarette, "I know the truth. We all do here in town. He's drinking inordinately and leading a most flagrant life. An earl may be a stable-boy, I find, and Kerhill is certainly behaving like one. Lady Elizabeth is trying to cover up the situation, and Lady Kerhill seems dazed by recent events."

Of the sincerity of her interest in Diana, Jim could have no doubt. Under her frivolities she had an appreciation of what was fine in men and women. As she talked she was carefully watching the effect of her words on Jim; her instinct had long ago told her that Jim's interest in Diana was no usual one – how unusual she did not care to probe. She knew that he was the one person who might have an influence over Henry; she also knew that by this conversation she might be stirring up a situation that would far from benefit her, but she played the game fair. She was rich – Jim was almost poor. Often she wondered and hoped – but so far her dreams, she knew, were built alone upon her desires.

They talked for another hour, and when Jim left the Curzon Street house he promised Sadie Jones he would see Henry. From her window Sadie watched him swinging down the street. She had tried to serve Diana, but, she asked, what had she accomplished for herself? She lighted another cigarette and settled her foot against the fender. She was thinking of Jim's face as he had listened to her talk about Diana.

The fire burned gray. A line of "dead soldiers," as the boys at Battle Creek had called the half-burned cigarettes, lay on the hearthstone – a tribute to the length of her reverie. Another expression of the boys at home came back forcibly to her as she left the room and crossed to her bedchamber. After all, she had been "dead game." Gain or loss, she did not regret her evening's work.

As Jim walked along Piccadilly, he knew that Henry's *liaisons* were now town-talk. It was useless to close his eyes to the suspicions of the past month. Sadie Jones represented the world's opinion, and what she tried to warn him about would soon be brutally brought to Diana's knowledge. At the club he could find no news of Henry. All night he thought out the question of the wisdom of his approaching Henry, but the strength of his determination only grew as the gray of the dawn increased.

The following morning he called at Pont Street. He found Henry lingering over some breakfast. A brandy-glass and empty soda-bottle aroused Jim's suspicions, while the bloated circles under Henry's eyes, and his yellow, discolored skin, were unmistakable proofs of a recent debauch. As Jim entered, Henry looked up with surprise.

"Didn't expect you back so soon," he said, after their strained greetings. Henry seemed ill at ease. "Anything up?" he went on, as Jim didn't speak.

There was a moment's portentous silence.

"Henry," Jim began, very calmly, "I've got to speak to you about certain matters."

Henry, who had been shifting about in his chair, became motionless. His clinched hands strained purple as he grasped the chair rail.

"About the – Yeomanry – work?" he half stammered while his eyes furtively sought Jim's face.

But Jim, who was thinking only of Diana and the difficulty of alluding to Henry's recent conduct, failed to notice his faltering words and frightened expression.

"Oh no – no," he answered. "That's going on all right, I hear." He hesitated. Then with a quick breath he said, "It's no use. I've got to blurt out what's troubling me. All the town is talking about your life; its fragrance, its indecencies. Do you realize that it will soon reach Diana, and that Lady Elizabeth is quivering under the strain of a certain amount of knowledge which she is hiding, and is dreading further disclosures?"

As Jim spoke he seemed to gain courage. "Don't speak. Let me have my say," he quietly commanded as Henry rose and attempted a blustering manner. "I am the only man close to Lady Elizabeth and Diana. For Sir Charles to become aware of this scandalous condition of affairs would be disastrous. You know that perfectly. Now tell me, in God's name, why you married Di if you wished to lead this life?" He paused. "Can't you pull yourself together? It's not too late. So far nothing definite is known to either Di or Lady Elizabeth, and you may trust me." He rose and crossed to Henry. "It's all true, I suppose – what I'm accusing you of – isn't it?" There was no answer. He laid his hand on Henry's shoulder. "Tell me that it's over and that you mean to go straight."

Henry turned. All his rebellion seemed to have slipped from him. Suddenly he dropped into a chair and buried his head in his hands.

"I'm not fit – not fit, do you hear? – for Di. I married her because I loved her. Yes, I did. But you don't know what it is to fight daily the devil's desire. God! what do you know about it? I am in the meshes. I have sunk lower and lower. You want to know about this woman the world links with my disgrace. Well, I tried to break with her when I married Di – I swear I did – but I can't. She is like a dog that one has grown attached to – you can't fling it out of your life completely. There has always been a wall between Diana and me. I tried in the beginning to reach her, but she's afraid of me – I know it."

As the torrent of words choked him, he stopped with a quick passion of agony. He was sincere in this confession of his weakness; Jim could not doubt him, though he was astonished at the admission. He had expected Henry to assail him with hard words and insolent denials. The acknowledged truth was sickening. Henry mechanically took some brandy; he seemed a vibrating bundle of torments.

Jim watched him closely. "I don't want to preach, Henry," he said, "but when you stop that," – he pointed to the half-empty flask – "you'll have half conquered yourself, and the rest will be far easier. This drinking will pull you into days of horror, days that would mean desolation to us all."

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