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*Sheba Blake Publishing Corp.*

*2288 Crossrail Dr*

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*support@shebablake.com*

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# Contents

*About the Author*

# Chapter I

She had not meant to stay for the service. The door had stood invitingly open, and a glimpse of the interior had suggested to her the idea that it would make good copy. "Old London Churches: Their Social and Historical Associations." It would be easy to collect anecdotes of the famous people who had attended them. She might fix up a series for one of the religious papers. It promised quite exceptional material, this particular specimen, rich in tombs and monuments. There was character about it, a scent of bygone days. She pictured the vanished congregations in their powdered wigs and stiff brocades. How picturesque must have been the marriages that had taken place there, say in the reign of Queen Anne or of the early Georges. The church would have been ancient even then. With its air of faded grandeur, its sculptured recesses and dark niches, the tattered banners hanging from its roof, it must have made an admirable background. Perhaps an historical novel in the Thackeray vein? She could see her heroine walking up the aisle on the arm of her proud old soldier father. Later on, when her journalistic position was more established, she might think of it. It was still quite early. There would be nearly half an hour before the first worshippers would be likely to arrive: just time enough to jot down a few notes. If she did ever take to literature it would be the realistic school, she felt, that would appeal to her. The rest, too, would be pleasant after

her long walk from Westminster. She would find a secluded seat in one of the high, stiff pews, and let the atmosphere of the place sink into her.

And then the pew-opener had stolen up unobserved, and had taken it so for granted that she would like to be shown round, and had seemed so pleased and eager, that she had not the heart to repel her. A curious little old party with a smooth, peach-like complexion and white soft hair that the fading twilight, stealing through the yellow glass, turned to gold. So that at first sight Joan took her for a child. The voice, too, was so absurdly childish—appealing, and yet confident. Not until they were crossing the aisle, where the clearer light streamed in through the open doors, did Joan see that she was very old and feeble, with about her figure that curious patient droop that comes to the work-worn. She proved to be most interesting and full of helpful information. Mary Stopperton was her name. She had lived in the neighbourhood all her life; had as a girl worked for the Leigh Hunts and had "assisted" Mrs. Carlyle. She had been very frightened of the great man himself, and had always hidden herself behind doors or squeezed herself into corners and stopped breathing whenever there had been any fear of meeting him upon the stairs. Until one day having darted into a cupboard to escape from him and drawn the door to after her, it turned out to be the cupboard in which Carlyle was used to keep his boots. So that there was quite a struggle between them; she holding grimly on to the door inside and Carlyle equally determined to open it and get his boots. It had ended in her exposure, with trembling knees and scarlet face, and Carlyle had addressed her as "woman," and had insisted on knowing what she was doing there. And after that she had lost all terror of him. And he had even allowed her with a grim smile to enter occasionally the sacred study with her broom and pan. It had evidently made a lasting impression upon her, that privilege.

"They didn't get on very well together, Mr. and Mrs. Carlyle?" Joan queried, scenting the opportunity of obtaining first-class evidence.

"There wasn't much difference, so far as I could see, between them and most of us," answered the little old lady. "You're not married, dear," she continued, glancing at Joan's ungloved hand, "but people must have a deal of patience when they have to live with us for twenty-four hours a day. You see, little things we do and say without thinking, and little ways we have that we do not notice ourselves, may all the time be irritating to other people."

"What about the other people irritating us?" suggested Joan.

"Yes, dear, and of course that can happen too," agreed the little old lady.

"Did he, Carlyle, ever come to this church?" asked Joan.

Mary Stopperton was afraid he never had, in spite of its being so near. "And yet he was a dear good Christian—in his way," Mary Stopperton felt sure.

"How do you mean 'in his way'?" demanded Joan. It certainly, if Froude was to be trusted, could not have been the orthodox way.

"Well, you see, dear," explained the little old lady, "he gave up things. He could have ridden in his carriage"—she was quoting, it seemed, the words of the Carlyles' old servant—"if he'd written the sort of lies that people pay for being told, instead of throwing the truth at their head."

"But even that would not make him a Christian," argued Joan.

"It is part of it, dear, isn't it?" insisted Mary Stopperton. "To suffer for one's faith. I think Jesus must have liked him for that."

They had commenced with the narrow strip of burial ground lying between the south side of the church and Cheyne Walk. And there the little pew- opener had showed her the grave of Anna, afterwards Mrs. Spragg. "Who long declining wedlock and aspiring above her sex fought under her brother with arms and manly attire in a flagship against the French." As also of Mary

Astell, her contemporary, who had written a spirited "Essay in Defence of the Fair Sex." So there had been a Suffrage Movement as far back as in the days of Pope and Swift.

Returning to the interior, Joan had duly admired the Cheyne monument, but had been unable to disguise her amusement before the tomb of Mrs. Colvile, whom the sculptor had represented as a somewhat impatient lady, refusing to await the day of resurrection, but pushing through her coffin and starting for Heaven in her grave-clothes. Pausing in front of the Dacre monument, Joan wondered if the actor of that name, who had committed suicide in Australia, and whose London address she remembered had been Dacre House just round the corner, was descended from the family; thinking that, if so, it would give an up-to-date touch to the article. She had fully decided now to write it. But Mary Stopperton could not inform her. They had ended up in the chapel of Sir Thomas More. He, too, had "given up things," including his head. Though Mary Stopperton, siding with Father Morris, was convinced he had now got it back, and that with the remainder of his bones it rested in the tomb before them.

There, the little pew-opener had left her, having to show the early-comers to their seats; and Joan had found an out-of-the-way pew from where she could command a view of the whole church. They were chiefly poor folk, the congregation; with here and there a sprinkling of faded gentility. They seemed in keeping with the place. The twilight faded and a snuffy old man shuffled round and lit the gas.

It was all so sweet and restful. Religion had never appealed to her before. The business-like service in the bare cold chapel where she had sat swinging her feet and yawning as a child had only repelled her. She could recall her father, aloof and awe-inspiring in his Sunday black, passing round the bag. Her

mother, always veiled, sitting beside her, a thin, tall woman with passionate eyes and ever restless hands; the women mostly overdressed, and the sleek, prosperous men trying to look meek. At school and at Girton, chapel, which she had attended no oftener than she was obliged, had had about it the same atmosphere of chill compulsion. But here was poetry. She wondered if, after all, religion might not have its place in the world—in company with the other arts. It would be a pity for it to die out. There seemed nothing to take its place. All these lovely cathedrals, these dear little old churches, that for centuries had been the focus of men's thoughts and aspirations. The harbour lights, illumining the troubled waters of their lives. What could be done with them? They could hardly be maintained out of the public funds as mere mementoes of the past. Besides, there were too many of them. The tax-payer would naturally grumble. As Town Halls, Assembly Rooms? The idea was unthinkable. It would be like a performance of Barnum's Circus in the Coliseum at Rome. Yes, they would disappear. Though not, she was glad to think, in her time. In towns, the space would be required for other buildings. Here and there some gradually decaying specimen would be allowed to survive, taking its place with the feudal castles and walled cities of the Continent: the joy of the American tourist, the text-book of the antiquary. A pity! Yes, but then from the aesthetic point of view it was a pity that the groves of ancient Greece had ever been cut down and replanted with currant bushes, their altars scattered; that the stones of the temples of Isis should have come to be the shelter of the fisher of the Nile; and the corn wave in the wind above the buried shrines of Mexico. All these dead truths that from time to time had encumbered the living world. Each in its turn had had to be cleared away.

And yet was it altogether a dead truth: this passionate belief in a personal God who had ordered all things for the best: who could be appealed to for

comfort, for help? Might it not be as good an explanation as any other of the mystery surrounding us? It had been so universal. She was not sure where, but somewhere she had come across an analogy that had strongly impressed her. "The fact that a man feels thirsty—though at the time he may be wandering through the Desert of Sahara—proves that somewhere in the world there is water." Might not the success of Christianity in responding to human needs be evidence in its favour? The Love of God, the Fellowship of the Holy Ghost, the Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Were not all human needs provided for in that one comprehensive promise: the desperate need of man to be convinced that behind all the seeming muddle was a loving hand guiding towards good; the need of the soul in its loneliness for fellowship, for strengthening; the need of man in his weakness for the kindly grace of human sympathy, of human example.

And then, as fate would have it, the first lesson happened to be the story of Jonah and the whale. Half a dozen shocked faces turned suddenly towards her told Joan that at some point in the thrilling history she must unconsciously have laughed. Fortunately she was alone in the pew, and feeling herself scarlet, squeezed herself into its farthest corner and drew down her veil.

No, it would have to go. A religion that solemnly demanded of grown men and women in the twentieth century that they should sit and listen with reverential awe to a prehistoric edition of "Grimm's Fairy Stories," including Noah and his ark, the adventures of Samson and Delilah, the conversations between Balaam and his ass, and culminating in what if it were not so appallingly wicked an idea would be the most comical of them all: the conception of an elaborately organized Hell, into which the God of the Christians plunged his creatures for all eternity! Of what use was such a religion as that going to be to the world of the future?

She must have knelt and stood mechanically, for the service was ended. The pulpit was occupied by an elderly uninteresting-looking man with a troublesome cough. But one sentence he had let fall had gripped her attention. For a moment she could not remember it, and then it came to her: "All Roads lead to Calvary." It struck her as rather good. Perhaps he was going to be worth listening to. "To all of us, sooner or later," he was saying, "comes a choosing of two ways: either the road leading to success, the gratification of desires, the honour and approval of our fellow-men—or the path to Calvary."

And then he had wandered off into a maze of detail. The tradesman, dreaming perhaps of becoming a Whiteley, having to choose whether to go forward or remain for all time in the little shop. The statesman—should he abide by the faith that is in him and suffer loss of popularity, or renounce his God and enter the Cabinet? The artist, the writer, the mere labourer—there were too many of them. A few well-chosen examples would have sufficed. And then that irritating cough!

And yet every now and then he would be arresting. In his prime, Joan felt, he must have been a great preacher. Even now, decrepit and wheezy, he was capable of flashes of magnetism, of eloquence. The passage where he pictured the Garden of Gethsemane. The fair Jerusalem, only hidden from us by the shadows. So easy to return to. Its soft lights shining through the trees, beckoning to us; its mingled voices stealing to us through the silence, whispering to us of its well-remembered ways, its pleasant places, its open doorways, friends and loved ones waiting for us. And above, the rock-strewn Calvary: and crowning its summit, clear against the starlit sky, the cold, dark cross. "Not perhaps to us the bleeding hands and feet, but to all the bitter tears. Our Calvary may be a very little hill compared with the mountains where Prometheus suffered, but to us it is steep and lonely."

There he should have stopped. It would have been a good note on which to finish. But it seemed there was another point he wished to make. Even to the sinner Calvary calls. To Judas—even to him the gates of the life- giving Garden of Gethsemane had not been closed. "With his thirty pieces of silver he could have stolen away. In some distant crowded city of the Roman Empire have lived unknown, forgotten. Life still had its pleasures, its rewards. To him also had been given the choice. The thirty pieces of silver that had meant so much to him! He flings them at the feet of his tempters. They would not take them back. He rushes out and hangs himself. Shame and death. With his own hands he will build his own cross, none to help him. He, too—even Judas, climbs his Calvary. Enters into the fellowship of those who through all ages have trod its stony pathway."

Joan waited till the last of the congregation had disappeared, and then joined the little pew-opener who was waiting to close the doors. Joan asked her what she had thought of the sermon, but Mary Stopperton, being a little deaf, had not heard it.

"It was quite good—the matter of it," Joan told her. "All Roads lead to Calvary. The idea is that there comes a time to all of us when we have to choose. Whether, like your friend Carlyle, we will 'give up things' for our faith's sake. Or go for the carriage and pair."

Mary Stopperton laughed. "He is quite right, dear," she said. "It does seem to come, and it is so hard. You have to pray and pray and pray. And even then we cannot always do it." She touched with her little withered fingers Joan's fine white hand. "But you are so strong and brave," she continued, with another little laugh. "It won't be so difficult for you."

It was not until well on her way home that Joan, recalling the conversation, found herself smiling at Mary Stopperton's literal acceptation of the argument.

At the time, she remembered, the shadow of a fear had passed over her.

Mary Stopperton did not know the name of the preacher. It was quite common for chance substitutes to officiate there, especially in the evening. Joan had insisted on her acceptance of a shilling, and had made a note of her address, feeling instinctively that the little old woman would “come in useful” from a journalistic point of view.

Shaking hands with her, she had turned eastward, intending to walk to Sloane Square and there take the bus. At the corner of Oakley Street she overtook him. He was evidently a stranger to the neighbourhood, and was peering up through his glasses to see the name of the street; and Joan caught sight of his face beneath a gas lamp.

And suddenly it came to her that it was a face she knew. In the dim-lit church she had not seen him clearly. He was still peering upward. Joan stole another glance. Yes, she had met him somewhere. He was very changed, quite different, but she was sure of it. It was a long time ago. She must have been quite a child.

# Chapter II

One of Joan's earliest recollections was the picture of herself standing before the high cheval glass in her mother's dressing-room. Her clothes lay scattered far and wide, falling where she had flung them; not a shred of any kind of covering was left to her. She must have been very small, for she could remember looking up and seeing high above her head the two brass knobs by which the glass was fastened to its frame. Suddenly, out of the upper portion of the glass, there looked a scared red face. It hovered there a moment, and over it in swift succession there passed the expressions, first of petrified amazement, secondly of shocked indignation, and thirdly of righteous wrath. And then it swooped down upon her, and the image in the glass became a confusion of small naked arms and legs mingled with green cotton gloves and purple bonnet strings.

"You young imp of Satan!" demanded Mrs. Munday—her feelings of outraged virtue exaggerating perhaps her real sentiments. "What are you doing?"

"Go away. I'se looking at myself," had explained Joan, struggling furiously to regain the glass.

"But where are your clothes?" was Mrs. Munday's wonder.

"I'se tooked them off," explained Joan. A piece of information that really, all things considered, seemed unnecessary.

"But can't you see yourself, you wicked child, without stripping yourself as naked as you were born?"

"No," maintained Joan stoutly. "I hate clothes." As a matter of fact she didn't, even in those early days. On the contrary, one of her favourite amusements was "dressing up." This sudden overmastering desire to arrive at the truth about herself had been a new conceit.

"I wanted to see myself. Clothes ain't me," was all she would or could vouchsafe; and Mrs. Munday had shook her head, and had freely confessed that there were things beyond her and that Joan was one of them; and had succeeded, partly by force, partly by persuasion, in restoring to Joan once more the semblance of a Christian child.

It was Mrs. Munday, poor soul, who all unconsciously had planted the seeds of disbelief in Joan's mind. Mrs. Munday's God, from Joan's point of view, was a most objectionable personage. He talked a lot—or rather Mrs. Munday talked for Him—about His love for little children. But it seemed He only loved them when they were good. Joan was under no delusions about herself. If those were His terms, well, then, so far as she could see, He wasn't going to be of much use to her. Besides, if He hated naughty children, why did He make them naughty? At a moderate estimate quite half Joan's wickedness, so it seemed to Joan, came to her unbidden. Take for example that self-examination before the cheval glass. The idea had come into her mind. It had never occurred to her that it was wicked. If, as Mrs. Munday explained, it was the Devil that had whispered it to her, then what did God mean by allowing the Devil to go about persuading little girls to do indecent things? God could do everything. Why didn't He smash the Devil? It seemed to Joan a mean trick, look at it how you would. Fancy leaving a little girl to fight the Devil all by

herself. And then get angry because the Devil won! Joan came to cordially dislike Mrs. Munday's God.

Looking back it was easy enough to smile, but the agony of many nights when she had lain awake for hours battling with her childish terrors had left a burning sense of anger in Joan's heart. Poor mazed, bewildered Mrs. Munday, preaching the eternal damnation of the wicked—who had loved her, who had only thought to do her duty, the blame was not hers. But that a religion capable of inflicting such suffering upon the innocent should still be preached; maintained by the State! That its educated followers no longer believed in a physical Hell, that its more advanced clergy had entered into a conspiracy of silence on the subject was no answer. The great mass of the people were not educated. Official Christendom in every country still preached the everlasting torture of the majority of the human race as a well thought out part of the Creator's scheme. No leader had been bold enough to come forward and denounce it as an insult to his God. As one grew older, kindly mother Nature, ever seeking to ease the self-inflicted burdens of her foolish brood, gave one forgetfulness, insensibility. The condemned criminal puts the thought of the gallows away from him as long as may be: eats, and sleeps and even jokes. Man's soul grows pachydermoid. But the children! Their sensitive brains exposed to every cruel breath. No philosophic doubt permitted to them. No learned disputation on the relationship between the literal and the allegorical for the easing of their frenzied fears. How many million tiny white-faced figures scattered over Christian Europe and America, stared out each night into a vision of black horror; how many million tiny hands clutched wildly at the bedclothes. The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, if they had done their duty, would have prosecuted before now the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Of course she would go to Hell. As a special kindness some generous relative had, on Joan's seventh birthday, given her an edition of Dante's "Inferno," with illustrations by Dore. From it she was able to form some notion of what her eternity was likely to be. And God all the while up in His Heaven, surrounded by that glorious band of praise-trumpeting angels, watching her out of the corner of His eye. Her courage saved her from despair. Defiance came to her aid. Let Him send her to Hell! She was not going to pray to Him and make up to Him. He was a wicked God. Yes, He was: a cruel, wicked God. And one night she told Him so to His face.

It had been a pretty crowded day, even for so busy a sinner as little Joan. It was springtime, and they had gone into the country for her mother's health. Maybe it was the season: a stirring of the human sap, conducing to that feeling of being "too big for one's boots," as the saying is. A dangerous period of the year. Indeed, on the principle that prevention is better than cure, Mrs. Munday had made it a custom during April and May to administer to Joan a cooling mixture; but on this occasion had unfortunately come away without it. Joan, dressed for use rather than show, and without either shoes or stockings, had stolen stealthily downstairs: something seemed to be calling to her. Silently —"like a thief in the night," to adopt Mrs. Munday's metaphor—had slipped the heavy bolts; had joined the thousand creatures of the wood—had danced and leapt and shouted; had behaved, in short, more as if she had been a Pagan nymph than a happy English child. She had regained the house unnoticed, as she thought, the Devil, no doubt, assisting her; and had hidden her wet clothes in the bottom of a mighty chest. Deceitfulness in her heart, she had greeted Mrs. Munday in sleepy tones from beneath the sheets; and before breakfast, assailed by suspicious questions, had told a deliberate lie. Later in the morning, during an argument with an active young pig who was willing enough to play

at Red Riding Hood so far as eating things out of a basket was concerned, but who would not wear a night-cap, she had used a wicked word. In the afternoon she "might have killed" the farmer's only son and heir. They had had a row. In one of those sad lapses from the higher Christian standards into which Satan was always egging her, she had pushed him; and he had tumbled head over heels into the horse-pond. The reason, that instead of lying there and drowning he had got up and walked back to the house howling fit to wake the Seven Sleepers, was that God, watching over little children, had arranged for the incident taking place on that side of the pond where it was shallow. Had the scrimmage occurred on the opposite bank, beneath which the water was much deeper, Joan in all probability would have had murder on her soul. It seemed to Joan that if God, all-powerful and all-foreseeing, had been so careful in selecting the site, He might with equal ease have prevented the row from ever taking place. Why couldn't the little beast have been guided back from school through the orchard, much the shorter way, instead of being brought round by the yard, so as to come upon her at a moment when she was feeling a bit short-tempered, to put it mildly? And why had God allowed him to call her "Carrots"? That Joan should have "put it" this way, instead of going down on her knees and thanking the Lord for having saved her from a crime, was proof of her inborn evil disposition. In the evening was reached the culminating point. Just before going to bed she had murdered old George the cowman. For all practical purposes she might just as well have been successful in drowning William Augustus earlier in the day. It seemed to be one of those things that had to be. Mr. Hornflower still lived, it was true, but that was not Joan's fault. Joan, standing in white night-gown beside her bed, everything around her breathing of innocence and virtue: the spotless bedclothes, the chintz curtains, the white hyacinths upon the window-ledge, Joan's Bible, a present from Aunt

Susan; her prayer-book, handsomely bound in calf, a present from Grandpapa, upon their little table; Mrs. Munday in evening black and cameo brooch (pale red with tomb and weeping willow in white relief) sacred to the memory of the departed Mr. Munday—Joan standing there erect, with pale, passionate face, defying all these aids to righteousness, had deliberately wished Mr. Hornflower dead. Old George Hornflower it was who, unseen by her, had passed her that morning in the wood. Grumpy old George it was who had overheard the wicked word with which she had cursed the pig; who had met William Augustus on his emergence from the pond. To Mr. George Hornflower, the humble instrument in the hands of Providence, helping her towards possible salvation, she ought to have been grateful. And instead of that she had flung into the agonized face of Mrs. Munday these awful words:

"I wish he was dead!"

"He who in his heart—" there was verse and chapter for it. Joan was a murderess. Just as well, so far as Joan was concerned, might she have taken a carving-knife and stabbed Deacon Hornflower to the heart.

Joan's prayers that night, to the accompaniment of Mrs. Munday's sobs, had a hopeless air of unreality about them. Mrs. Munday's kiss was cold.

How long Joan lay and tossed upon her little bed she could not tell. Somewhere about the middle of the night, or so it seemed to her, the frenzy seized her. Flinging the bedclothes away she rose to her feet. It is difficult to stand upon a spring mattress, but Joan kept her balance. Of course He was there in the room with her. God was everywhere, spying upon her. She could distinctly hear His measured breathing. Face to face with Him, she told Him what she thought of Him. She told Him He was a cruel, wicked God.

There are no Victoria Crosses for sinners, or surely little Joan that night would have earned it. It was not lack of imagination that helped her courage.

God and she alone, in the darkness. He with all the forces of the Universe behind Him. He armed with His eternal pains and penalties, and eight-year-old Joan: the creature that He had made in His Own Image that He could torture and destroy. Hell yawned beneath her, but it had to be said. Somebody ought to tell Him.

"You are a wicked God," Joan told Him. "Yes, You are. A cruel, wicked God."

And then that she might not see the walls of the room open before her, hear the wild laughter of the thousand devils that were coming to bear her off, she threw herself down, her face hidden in the pillow, and clenched her hands and waited.

And suddenly there burst a song. It was like nothing Joan had ever heard before. So clear and loud and near that all the night seemed filled with harmony. It sank into a tender yearning cry throbbing with passionate desire, and then it rose again in thrilling ecstasy: a song of hope, of victory.

Joan, trembling, stole from her bed and drew aside the blind. There was nothing to be seen but the stars and the dim shape of the hills. But still that song, filling the air with its wild, triumphant melody.

Years afterwards, listening to the overture to *Tannhauser*, there came back to her the memory of that night. Ever through the mad Satanic discords she could hear, now faint, now conquering, the Pilgrims' onward march. So through the jangled discords of the world one heard the Song of Life. Through the dim aeons of man's savage infancy; through the centuries of bloodshed and of horror; through the dark ages of tyranny and superstition; through wrong, through cruelty, through hate; heedless of doom, heedless of death, still the nightingale's song: "I love you. I love you. I love you. We will build a nest. We will rear our brood. I love you. I love you. Life shall not die."

Joan crept back into bed. A new wonder had come to her. And from that night Joan's belief in Mrs. Munday's God began to fade, circumstances helping.

Firstly there was the great event of going to school. She was glad to get away from home, a massive, stiffly furnished house in a wealthy suburb of Liverpool. Her mother, since she could remember, had been an invalid, rarely leaving her bedroom till the afternoon. Her father, the owner of large engineering works, she only saw, as a rule, at dinner-time, when she would come down to dessert. It had been different when she was very young, before her mother had been taken ill. Then she had been more with them both. She had dim recollections of her father playing with her, pretending to be a bear and growling at her from behind the sofa. And then he would seize and hug her and they would both laugh, while he tossed her into the air and caught her. He had looked so big and handsome. All through her childhood there had been the desire to recreate those days, to spring into the air and catch her arms about his neck. She could have loved him dearly if he had only let her. Once, seeking explanation, she had opened her heart a little to Mrs. Munday. It was disappointment, Mrs. Munday thought, that she had not been a boy; and with that Joan had to content herself. Maybe also her mother's illness had helped to sadden him. Or perhaps it was mere temperament, as she argued to herself later, for which they were both responsible. Those little tricks of coaxing, of tenderness, of wilfulness, by means of which other girls wriggled their way so successfully into a warm nest of cosy affection: she had never been able to employ them. Beneath her self-confidence was a shyness, an immovable reserve that had always prevented her from expressing her emotions. She had inherited it, doubtless enough, from him. Perhaps one day, between them, they would break down the barrier, the strength of which seemed to lie in its very flimsiness, its impalpability.

And then during college vacations, returning home with growing notions and views of her own, she had found herself so often in antagonism with him. His fierce puritanism, so opposed to all her enthusiasms. Arguing with him, she might almost have been listening to one of his Cromwellian ancestors risen from the dead. There had been disputes between him and his work-people, and Joan had taken the side of the men. He had not been angry with her, but coldly contemptuous. And yet, in spite of it all, if he had only made a sign! She wanted to fling herself crying into his arms and shake him—make him listen to her wisdom, sitting on his knee with her hands clasped round his neck. He was not really intolerant and stupid. That had been proved by his letting her go to a Church of England school. Her mother had expressed no wish. It was he who had selected it.

Of her mother she had always stood somewhat in fear, never knowing when the mood of passionate affection would give place to a chill aversion that seemed almost like hate. Perhaps it had been good for her, so she told herself in after years, her lonely, unguided childhood. It had forced her to think and act for herself. At school she reaped the benefit. Self-reliant, confident, original, leadership was granted to her as a natural prerogative. Nature had helped her. Nowhere does a young girl rule more supremely by reason of her beauty than among her fellows. Joan soon grew accustomed to having her boots put on and taken off for her; all her needs of service anticipated by eager slaves, contending with one another for the privilege. By giving a command, by bestowing a few moments of her conversation, it was within her power to make some small adoring girl absurdly happy for the rest of the day; while her displeasure would result in tears, in fawning pleadings for forgiveness. The homage did not spoil her. Rather it helped to develop her. She accepted it from the beginning as in the order of things. Power had been given to her. It was her

duty to see to it that she did not use it capriciously, for her own gratification. No conscientious youthful queen could have been more careful in the distribution of her favours—that they should be for the encouragement of the deserving, the reward of virtue; more sparing of her frowns, reserving them for the rectification of error.

At Girton it was more by force of will, of brain, that she had to make her position. There was more competition. Joan welcomed it, as giving more zest to life. But even there her beauty was by no means a negligible quantity. Clever, brilliant young women, accustomed to sweep aside all opposition with a blaze of rhetoric, found themselves to their irritation sitting in front of her silent, not so much listening to her as looking at her. It puzzled them for a time. Because a girl's features are classical and her colouring attractive, surely that has nothing to do with the value of her political views? Until one of them discovered by chance that it has.

"Well, what does Beauty think about it?" this one had asked, laughing. She had arrived at the end of a discussion just as Joan was leaving the room. And then she gave a long low whistle, feeling that she had stumbled upon the explanation. Beauty, that mysterious force that from the date of creation has ruled the world, what does It think? Dumb, passive, as a rule, exercising its influence unconsciously. But if it should become intelligent, active! A Philosopher has dreamed of the vast influence that could be exercised by a dozen sincere men acting in unity. Suppose a dozen of the most beautiful women in the world could form themselves into a league! Joan found them late in the evening still discussing it.

Her mother died suddenly during her last term, and Joan hurried back to attend the funeral. Her father was out when she reached home. Joan changed her travel-dusty clothes, and then went into the room where her mother lay,

and closed the door. She must have been a beautiful woman. Now that the fret and the restlessness had left her it had come back to her. The passionate eyes were closed. Joan kissed the marble lids, and drawing a chair to the bedside, sat down. It grieved her that she had never loved her mother—not as one ought to love one's mother, unquestioningly, unreasoningly, as a natural instinct. For a moment a strange thought came to her, and swiftly, almost guiltily, she stole across, and drawing back a corner of the blind, examined closely her own features in the glass, comparing them with the face of the dead woman, thus called upon to be a silent witness for or against the living. Joan drew a sigh of relief and let fall the blind. There could be no misreading the evidence. Death had smoothed away the lines, given back youth. It was almost uncanny, the likeness between them. It might have been her drowned sister lying there. And they had never known one another. Had this also been temperament again, keeping them apart? Why did it imprison us each one as in a moving cell, so that we never could stretch out our arms to one another, except when at rare intervals Love or Death would unlock for a while the key? Impossible that two beings should have been so alike in feature without being more or less alike in thought and feeling. Whose fault had it been? Surely her own; she was so hideously calculating. Even Mrs. Munday, because the old lady had been fond of her and had shown it, had been of more service to her, more a companion, had been nearer to her than her own mother. In self-excuse she recalled the two or three occasions when she had tried to win her mother. But fate seemed to have decreed that their moods should never correspond. Her mother's sudden fierce outbursts of love, when she would be jealous, exacting, almost cruel, had frightened her when she was a child, and later on had bored her. Other daughters would have shown patience, unselfishness, but she had always been so self-centred. Why had she never fallen in love like other girls? There

had been a boy at Brighton when she was at school there—quite a nice boy, who had written her wildly extravagant love-letters. It must have cost him half his pocket-money to get them smuggled in to her. Why had she only been amused at them? They might have been beautiful if only one had read them with sympathy. One day he had caught her alone on the Downs. Evidently he had made it his business to hang about every day waiting for some such chance. He had gone down on his knees and kissed her feet, and had been so abject, so pitiful that she had given him some flowers she was wearing. And he had sworn to dedicate the rest of his life to being worthy of her condescension. Poor lad! She wondered—for the first time since that afternoon—what had become of him. There had been others; a third cousin who still wrote to her from Egypt, sending her presents that perhaps he could ill afford, and whom she answered about once a year. And promising young men she had met at Cambridge, ready, the felt instinctively, to fall down and worship her. And all the use she had had for them was to convert them to her views—a task so easy as to be quite uninteresting—with a vague idea that they might come in handy in the future, when she might need help in shaping that world of the future.

Only once had she ever thought of marriage. And that was in favour of a middle-aged, rheumatic widower with three children, a professor of chemistry, very learned and justly famous. For about a month she had thought herself in love. She pictured herself devoting her life to him, rubbing his poor left shoulder where it seemed he suffered most, and brushing his picturesque hair, inclined to grey. Fortunately his eldest daughter was a young woman of resource, or the poor gentleman, naturally carried off his feet by this adoration of youth and beauty, might have made an ass of himself. But apart from this one episode she had reached the age of twenty-three heart-whole.

She rose and replaced the chair. And suddenly a wave of pity passed over her for the dead woman, who had always seemed so lonely in the great stiffly-furnished house, and the tears came.

She was glad she had been able to cry. She had always hated herself for her lack of tears; it was so unwomanly. Even as a child she had rarely cried.

Her father had always been very tender, very patient towards her mother, but she had not expected to find him so changed. He had aged and his shoulders drooped. She had been afraid that he would want her to stay with him and take charge of the house. It had worried her considerably. It would be so difficult to refuse, and yet she would have to. But when he never broached the subject she was hurt. He had questioned her about her plans the day after the funeral, and had seemed only anxious to assist them. She proposed continuing at Cambridge till the end of the term. She had taken her degree the year before. After that, she would go to London and commence her work.

"Let me know what allowance you would like me to make you, when you have thought it out. Things are not what they were at the works, but there will always be enough to keep you in comfort," he had told her. She had fixed it there and then at two hundred a year. She would not take more, and that only until she was in a position to keep herself.

"I want to prove to myself," she explained, "that I am capable of earning my own living. I am going down into the market-place. If I'm no good, if I can't take care of even one poor woman, I'll come back and ask you to keep me." She was sitting on the arm of his chair, and laughing, she drew his head towards her and pressed it against her. "If I succeed, if I am strong enough to fight the world for myself and win, that will mean I am strong enough and clever enough to help others."