RANDOM HOUSE eBOOKS

To The Lighthouse

Virginia Woolf

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About the Book

The serene and maternal Mrs Ramsay, the tragic yet absurd Mr Ramsay, together with their children and assorted guests, are holidaying on the Isle of Skye. From the seemingly trivial postponement of a visit to a nearby lighthouse Virginia Woolf constructs a remarkable and moving examination of the complex tensions and allegiances of family life, and the conflict between male and female principles.

About the Author

Virginia Woolf was born in London in 1882. In 1904 Virginia and her sister, the painter Vanessa Bell, moved to Bloomsbury and became the centre of 'The Bloomsbury Group'. This informal collective of artists and writers, which included Lytton Strachey and Roger Fry, exerted a powerful influence over early twentieth-century British culture. In 1912 Virginia married Leonard Woolf. Her first novel, *The Voyage Out*, was published in 1915, followed by *Night and Day* (1919) and *Jacob's Room* (1922). It was during this time that she and Leonard Woolf founded The Hogarth Press. The majority of Virginia Woolf's work was first published by The Hogarth Press, and these original texts are now available, together with her selected letters and diaries, from Vintage Classics, which belongs to the publishing group that Hogarth became part of in 1987. Between 1925 and 1931 Virginia Woolf produced what are now regarded as her finest masterpieces, from *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) to the poetic and highly experimental novel *The Waves* (1931). She also maintained an astonishing output of literary criticism, short fiction, journalism and biography, including the playfully subversive *Orlando* (1928) and *A Room of One's Own* (1929), a passionate feminist essay. On 28 March 1941, a few months before the publication of her final novel, *Between the Acts*, Virginia Woolf committed suicide.

ALSO BY VIRGINIA WOOLF

Novels

The Voyage Out

Night and Day

Jacob's Room

Mrs Dalloway

Orlando

The Waves

The Years

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The Haunted House: The Complete Shorter Fiction

Non-Fiction and Other Works

Flush

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A Room of One's Own and *Three Guineas*

The Common Reader Vols 1 and 2

Selected Diaries (edited by Anne Olivier Bell)

Selected Letters (edited by Joanne Trautmann Banks)

VIRGINIA WOOLF

To the Lighthouse

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
Helen Dunmore

VINTAGE BOOKS
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Introduction

There are novels which have an almost uncanny power to renew themselves in the reader's imagination. Each time I return to *To the Lighthouse* I'm struck by something that I haven't noticed before: a flash of description, a moment of double-edged intimacy between two characters, a touch of sensory experience so immediate that it brings a shiver. More and more, as we grow older, these great novels declare their authority. They will certainly outlive us, like sea or rock or sand. We can inhabit their world for a while, and be changed by it, but they are forever moving beyond us to the next generation. It's like visiting the same beach every summer, first as a child, then as a teenager, then as a parent surrounded by shivering children just out of the sea. Time passes. Those children are teenagers in wetsuits or bikinis, then suddenly adults lugging the paraphernalia of parenthood themselves. The present does not obliterate the past, but cohabits with it so that sometimes one is visible and sometimes the other. Any number of lifetimes on the beaches of St Ives may be no longer than a summer's day.

Porthminster Beach still holds the memory of the steam trains that came in round Hawke's Point to the old St Ives station, in the glory years of the railways. In 1882, one of those trains brought the Stephen family from London. Virginia Stephen, then a few months old, was about to spend her first summer in St Ives. Her father, the alpinist, philosopher and man of letters Leslie Stephen, had bought

the lease of Talland House in order to provide a summer home in Cornwall for his growing family of stepchildren and children. Until Virginia Stephen was thirteen, she spent every summer at Talland House, but the lease was given up soon after her mother's sudden death in 1895. Leslie Stephen could not endure revisiting the scene of past happiness, and seems not to have considered that a more gentle weaning might have been easier for his children than a sudden rupture of their passionate attachment to the place.

These long summers sent deep roots into Virginia Woolf's imagination, and became the *temps perdu* from which she was estranged and with which she would engage all her life long. Talland House sums up both the privilege and the losses of Woolf's life. She was born into a family which had the money to maintain a large house in a fishing town hundreds of miles from its London home. The Stephen family was clear that it did not merely holiday in St Ives; it settled there for months at a time, and the annual shift from Kensington to Talland House was a substantial, laborious affair. Books, servants, children, cricket bats, photography equipment, bedding and clothes were all brought down by train. Despite its 'crazy ghosts of chairs' and rent of 'precisely twopence halfpenny', the house was (and is) one of the largest in the town, and the Stephens took their leading place in the local hierarchies. Leslie Stephen was an important figure in the Arts Club, while Julia Stephen put into practice her deep interest in nursing and public hygiene. Her work in St Ives was commemorated after her death by the founding of the Julia Prinsep Stephen Nursing Association of St Ives.

The Stephens entertained local friends and invited endless visitors, who stayed in the house or were boarded out in the town when the bedrooms overflowed. But while the adults talked with Julia in the garden, or accompanied Leslie Stephen on heroic Victorian tramps which took them

fifteen or twenty miles over the landscape of West Penwith, the children went everywhere, as quick and subtle as a school of little fish. St Ives gave them a freedom they could not experience in Kensington, where stiff social conventions extended to the youngest members of the upper-middle classes. They fished, swam, hunted for moths at night, collected crabs, gazed for hours into rockpools, scrambled and splashed to shore as the tide came in, slung sandy towels over railings and hung up seaweed to forecast the weather. As dusk fell they watched the beam from Godrevy Lighthouse sweep the sea, darken, and sweep again.

These things were never forgotten by Virginia Woolf. They were planted in the deepest texture of her experience and woven into the most primitive as well as the most complex fabric of her imagination. In *To the Lighthouse* she draws deeply on that sensory knowledge of place which can perhaps only be acquired by a child who lies for hours listening to the tap of a blind-cord, or the swash and backwash of waves; who is thrown naked into the sea on Porthminster Beach as an infant, or plays cricket each evening until the light is gone, or vanishes upstairs to the attics with brothers and sisters to escape the adults' dinner conversations; or longs with furious passion, as James Ramsay longs, to reach the lighthouse.

The loss of Talland House was a permanent bereavement to Woolf. It became entwined with the loss of her mother and elder half-sister Stella, and with her father's oppressive grief. But these losses also sealed away her first thirteen summers. If they were inaccessible they were also, in a sense, inviolable. They were not idyllic years, and *To the Lighthouse* is not an idyllic novel. Seeds of destruction were sown in the sexual abuse by her half-brother Gerald, which Woolf describes in her memoir *A Sketch of the Past*: 'I can remember the feel of his hands going under my clothes; going firmly and steadily lower and lower, I

remember how I hoped that he would stop; how I stiffened and wriggled as his hand approached my private parts. But he did not stop.' This happened at Talland House, but it was not until after her mother's death that Woolf first suffered a breakdown and the beginning of a lifelong battle with depression and the fear of mental disintegration.

In some part of her, Woolf was always in pursuit of the lost light of early summers and the lost rhythms of the sea, but she was far too great an artist to seek their recapture through any form of nostalgia. As a young adult Woolf may have returned with her siblings to peep longingly through the escallonia hedge at the house which now belonged to the Millie Dow family, but as a mature writer she gained the power to reclaim what was her own. Like her character Lily Briscoe, Woolf 'saw it clear for a second, she drew a line there, in the centre. It was done; it was finished. Yes, she thought, laying down her brush in extreme fatigue, I have had my vision.'

In this audacious ending to her novel, Woolf makes it clear that she recognises the power of what she has done, and yet emphasises the constant flux of the artist's material, and its vanishing from her grasp at the very moment of definition. Woolf's sister Vanessa Bell, herself a painter, was overwhelmed by emotion on reading *To the Lighthouse*. It seemed to her that their parents lived again in its pages, as if raised from the dead. But portraiture, as Woolf makes clear through the character of Lily Briscoe, is not all that this novel is after. Lily's painting is suggestive rather than descriptive. When she shows her painting of Mrs Ramsay and James to Mr Bankes, he is interested because 'Mother and child then – objects of universal veneration, and in this case the mother was famous for her beauty – might be reduced, he pondered, to a purple shadow without irreverence.' Lily, however, refuses his interpretation, open-minded as William Bankes may be for

his time in accepting the authenticity of abstraction. ‘But the picture was not of them, she said. Or, not in his sense.’

Everyone who opens *To the Lighthouse* is confronted by the same dilemma as Mr Bankes. How is the reader to interpret the forms of the novel? It is both true and untrue to say that Mrs Ramsay is, or represents, Julia Stephen. Leslie Stephen is present everywhere in the novel, comic, touching, absurd and often fearsome in his egotism and clumsy demands for the emotional attention of his entire world. But whatever Mr Ramsay represents, he is not purely and simply Virginia Woolf’s father, brought to uncanny second life. Everything in *To the Lighthouse* has the power to be intensely itself, but also to suggest a wealth of symbol and image. The lighthouse has been endlessly discussed and argued over. What does it mean? It may be a phallic symbol, cousin to the ‘beak of brass, barren and bare’ that Mr Ramsay plunges into his wife’s ‘delicious fecundity, this fountain and spray of life’. But if it is, that takes a reader in only one of a hundred possible directions. The power of the lighthouse is that it is at once the heart’s desire of little James Ramsay, the cause of a seismic difference between his parents, the guardian of ships and symbol of man’s control over the dangers of his world, the source of steady, issuing light and the familiar home of men who live there cut off by storms, struggling to grow a few green things in salty earth. The lighthouse, in being all these things and more, comes to its equilibrium within the novel, and offers its illuminations to the reader just as it offers them to the ship scudding for safety in St Ives Bay. (And I turn to look out of my window as I write this, and there it is, Godrevy Light, still keeping ships from the Stones reef, still opening and closing its eye of light.)

I love the way that the family life described in *To the Lighthouse* has a raw, even primitive quality which protects the sophistication of Woolf’s analysis from any touch of coldness. Every member of the family is a physical, even

animal presence, often seen in movement or flight. The child Cam rushes across a lawn, ‘like a bird, bullet, or arrow’, grazing the adult world but wanting no part of it. The eight Ramsay children disappear ‘as stealthily as stags from the dinner table directly the meal was over’. Mr Ramsay is not even a mammal, but a bird: ‘It was his fate, his peculiarity, whether he wished it or not, to come out thus on a spit of land which the sea is slowly eating away, and there to stand, like a desolate sea-bird, alone.’

Each of these descriptions is shaded with comedy so that it becomes vivid, close, endearing. Mr Ramsay, with his self-pity and his histrionic gestures, Mr Ramsay, forever striding, barging, grimacing and breaking into the peace of others, is the same childlike and suddenly lovable man who will hold up his boots, ‘made of the finest leather in the world’, for Lily Briscoe’s admiration. But not for nothing are the Ramsay children compared to stags, which know how to melt into concealment, but must also learn to fight for territory and possession.

James, at six years old, hates his father as much as he loves his mother. Only a gash from a poker or a thrust from a knife into Mr Ramsay’s heart will ease James’s furious humiliation. James sustains his hatred for a decade, and, when the voyage to the lighthouse does at last take place, it seems that he will get his chance to lock antlers with his father. But it does not happen. James sees the lighthouse clear as it comes close – or so he thinks. It is not a place of magic, or a golden destination, but ‘a stark tower on a bare rock’. Meanwhile his sister Cam, perhaps more observant, is discovering the sea-bird in her father:

> ‘Still her father read, and James looked at him and she looked at him, and they vowed that they would fight tyranny to the death, and he went on reading quite unconscious of what they thought. It was thus that he escaped, she thought. Yes, with his great

> forehead and his great nose, holding his little mottled book firmly in front of him, he escaped. You might try to lay hands on him, but then like a bird, he spread his wings, he floated off to settle out of your reach somewhere on a desolate stump.'

Cam also recognises a fundamental compromise in her brother, who hates their father, but also longs to become him. She, however, cannot follow that model. Instead, her imagination fills with the litany bequeathed to her by her mother ten years earlier, when Mrs Ramsay soothed her children to sleep: 'It was a hanging garden; it was a valley, full of birds, and flowers, and antelopes . . . She was falling asleep.' In the face of parents so fascinating, beguiling and, at times, loathsome, what else can she do?

Despite the deep love and understanding Woolf shows towards the Ramsays, *To the Lighthouse* remains a violent novel, and an uncompromising one. The magical radiance of its language, like the blue haze around the lighthouse, is cast over a rock. The engagement between Minta Doyle and Paul Rayley is no romance but an exposure to the 'fangs' of sexual passion. Lily Briscoe, trying to become part of the lovers' adventure, is 'scorched' by 'the heat of love, its horror, its cruelty, its unscrupulosity'. Mrs Ramsay, who brings Paul and Minta together, may be a hostess trying to bring about a match between two young people of similar age and background, but she is also a ruthless, imperturbable goddess, a Demeter who will sacrifice everything to sexual union and fertility. The Rayley marriage will turn out unhappily. Mrs Ramsay's daughter Prue, like Persephone, will go down into the darkness, and die soon after marriage in 'some illness connected with childbirth'. Woolf's own early intimacy with death saturates the central section of the novel, and her mastery in blending autobiographical material with fiction and myth is breathtaking. Mrs Ramsay vanishes like Eurydice, leaving

her husband to ‘stretch out his arms in vain’. Andrew Ramsay is blown up in the trenches, his death allowing no hope except a faint one that he might have died instantly.

These tragedies happen offstage, reported in parentheses, and at the end of them the lighthouse is still there, with Mr Ramsay advancing towards it, accompanied only by his two youngest children. The creativity of the feminine, embodied in Mrs Ramsay, appears to have vanished, while Mr Ramsay remains, as spare and upright as ever. But of course things are much more complicated than this. At the moment when Mr Ramsay ‘sprang, lightly like a young man, holding his parcel, on to the rock’, Lily Briscoe finishes her painting. ‘She looked at the steps; they were empty; she looked at her canvas; it was blurred. With a sudden intensity, as if she saw it clear for a second, she drew a line there, in the centre’. The line may be the tree that Lily Briscoe has been waiting for ten years to place on her canvas; or it may be the lighthouse itself. If it is, then Lily’s triumph is even greater than it seems at first. She has had her vision, and she has also drawn into her landscape the upright line that has so tormented the novel and all its characters. At the same moment that Lily does this, the mysterious figure of the poet Mr Carmichael takes on something of Mrs Ramsay. He becomes a ‘an old pagan God, shaggy, with weeds in his hair’ and lets fall ‘a wreath of violets and asphodel.’

Violets and asphodel have been Mrs Ramsay’s flowers. Mr Bankes, contemplating her beauty, considers that ‘The Graces assembling seemed to have joined hands in fields of asphodel to compose that face.’ To see these flowers become a wreath in Mr Carmichael’s hands is not only a shock but a revelation. Virginia Woolf knew her Greek mythology, and she associates Mrs Ramsay not with the Elysian Fields and the great, heroic men who go there after death, but with the Asphodel Meadows where Homer tells us that the souls of those whose work is done will find their

rest. Mrs Ramsay has not only done her work, but has been exhausted by her life on Earth; worn out, she dies suddenly at fifty.

In *To the Lighthouse* Woolf has returned again and again to the destructive power of the male upon the creativity of the female. ‘Women can’t paint, women can’t write,’ says Charles Tansley, and Lily Briscoe burns with the same rage and humiliation that James feels when told that he cannot go to the lighthouse. But Woolf seems to argue, at the end of the novel, that there is something beyond this agonising fact of destruction, which is the saving androgyny of creation itself. By token of this androgyny, Lily may possess the lighthouse, and Mr Carmichael may make his wreath from Mrs Ramsay’s flowers. And Virginia Woolf will make one of the finest novels in the English language out of a ‘great plateful of blue water,’ a ‘hoary lighthouse, distant, austere’ and a little group of people who quarrel, love, joke, suffer and triumph in the summer light before time and death dissolve them.

Helen Dunmore, 2011

I
THE WINDOW

1

"YES, OF COURSE, if it's fine to-morrow," said Mrs. Ramsay. "But you'll have to be up with the lark," she added.

To her son these words conveyed an extraordinary joy, as if it were settled the expedition were bound to take place, and the wonder to which he had looked forward, for years and years it seemed, was, after a night's darkness and a day's sail, within touch. Since he belonged, even at the age of six, to that great clan which cannot keep this feeling separate from that, but must let future prospects, with their joys and sorrows, cloud what is actually at hand, since to such people even in earliest childhood any turn in the wheel of sensation has the power to crystallise and transfix the moment upon which its gloom or radiance rests, James Ramsay, sitting on the floor cutting out pictures from the illustrated catalogue of the Army and Navy Stores, endowed the picture of a refrigerator as his mother spoke with heavenly bliss. It was fringed with joy. The wheelbarrow, the lawn-mower, the sound of poplar trees, leaves whitening before rain, rooks cawing, brooms knocking, dresses rustling—all these were so coloured and distinguished in his mind that he had already his private code, his secret language, though he appeared the image of stark and uncompromising severity, with his high forehead and his fierce blue eyes, impeccably candid and pure, frowning slightly at the sight of human frailty, so that his mother, watching him guide his scissors neatly round the refrigerator, imagined him all red and ermine on the Bench or directing a stern and momentous enterprise in some crisis of public affairs.

"But," said his father, stopping in front of the drawing-room window, "it won't be fine."

Had there been an axe handy, a poker, or any weapon that would have gashed a hole in his father's breast and killed him, there and then, James would have seized it. Such were the extremes of emotion that Mr. Ramsay excited in his children's breasts by his mere presence; standing, as now, lean as a knife, narrow as the blade of one, grinning sarcastically, not only with the pleasure of disillusioning his son and casting ridicule upon his wife, who was ten thousand times better in every way than he was (James thought), but also with some secret conceit at his own accuracy of judgement. What he said was true. It was always true. He was incapable of untruth; never tampered with fact; never altered a disagreeable word to suit the pleasure or convenience of any mortal being, least of all of his own children, who, sprung from his loins, should be aware from childhood that life is difficult; facts uncompromising; and the passage to that fabled land where our brightest hopes are extinguished, our frail barks founder in darkness (here Mr. Ramsay would straighten his back and narrow his little blue eyes upon the horizon), one that needs, above all, courage, truth, and the power to endure.

"But it may be fine—I expect it will be fine," said Mrs. Ramsay, making some little twist of the reddish-brown stocking she was knitting, impatiently. If she finished it to-night, if they did go to the Lighthouse after all, it was to be given to the Lighthouse keeper for his little boy, who was threatened with a tuberculous hip; together with a pile of old magazines, and some tobacco, indeed whatever she could find lying about, not really wanted, but only littering the room, to give those poor fellows who must be bored to death sitting all day with nothing to do but polish the lamp and trim the wick and rake about on their scrap of garden, something to amuse them. For how would you like to be shut up for a whole month at a time, and possibly more in stormy weather, upon a rock the size of a tennis lawn? she

would ask; and to have no letters or newspapers, and to see nobody; if you were married, not to see your wife, not to know how your children were,—if they were ill, if they had fallen down and broken their legs or arms; to see the same dreary waves breaking week after week, and then a dreadful storm coming, and the windows covered with spray, and birds dashed against the lamp, and the whole place rocking, and not be able to put your nose out of doors for fear of being swept into the sea? How would you like that? she asked, addressing herself particularly to her daughters. So she added, rather differently, one must take them whatever comforts one can.

“It’s due west,” said the atheist Tansley, holding his bony fingers spread so that the wind blew through them, for he was sharing Mr. Ramsay’s evening walk up and down, up and down the terrace. That is to say, the wind blew from the worst possible direction for landing at the Lighthouse. Yes, he did say disagreeable things, Mrs. Ramsay admitted; it was odious of him to rub this in, and make James still more disappointed; but at the same time, she would not let them laugh at him. “The atheist”, they called him; “the little atheist”. Rose mocked him; Prue mocked him; Andrew, Jasper, Roger mocked him; even old Badger without a tooth in his head had bit him, for being (as Nancy put it) the hundred and tenth young man to chase them all the way up to the Hebrides when it was ever so much nicer to be alone.

“Nonsense,” said Mrs. Ramsay, with great severity. Apart from the habit of exaggeration which they had from her, and from the implication (which was true) that she asked too many people to stay, and had to lodge some in the town, she could not bear incivility to her guests, to young men in particular, who were poor as church mice, “exceptionally able”, her husband said, his great admirers, and come there for a holiday. Indeed, she had the whole of the other sex under her protection; for reasons she could

not explain, for their chivalry and valour, for the fact that they negotiated treaties, ruled India, controlled finance; finally for an attitude towards herself which no woman could fail to feel or to find agreeable, something trustful, child-like, reverential; which an old woman could take from a young man without loss of dignity, and woe betide the girl—pray Heaven it was none of her daughters!—who did not feel the worth of it, and all that it implied, to the marrow of her bones.

She turned with severity upon Nancy. He had not chased them, she said. He had been asked.

They must find a way out of it all. There might be some simpler way, some less laborious way, she sighed. When she looked in the glass and saw her hair grey, her cheek sunk, at fifty, she thought, possibly she might have managed things better—her husband; money; his books. But for her own part she would never for a single second regret her decision, evade difficulties, or slur over duties. She was now formidable to behold, and it was only in silence, looking up from their plates, after she had spoken so severely about Charles Tansley, that her daughters—Prue, Nancy, Rose—could sport with infidel ideas which they had brewed for themselves of a life different from hers; in Paris, perhaps; a wilder life; not always taking care of some man or other; for there was in all their minds a mute questioning of deference and chivalry, of the Bank of England and the Indian Empire, of ringed fingers and lace, though to them all there was something in this of the essence of beauty, which called out the manliness in their girlish hearts, and made them, as they sat at table beneath their mother’s eyes, honour her strange severity, her extreme courtesy, like a Queen’s raising from the mud a beggar’s dirty foot and washing, when she thus admonished them so very severely about that wretched atheist who had chased them—or, speaking accurately, been invited to stay with them—in the Isle of Skye.

“There’ll be no landing at the Lighthouse to-morrow,” said Charles Tansley, clapping his hands together as he stood at the window with her husband. Surely, he had said enough. She wished they would both leave her and James alone and go on talking. She looked at him. He was such a miserable specimen, the children said, all humps and hollows. He couldn’t play cricket; he poked; he shuffled. He was a sarcastic brute, Andrew said. They knew what he liked best—to be for ever walking up and down, up and down, with Mr. Ramsay, and saying who had won this, who had won that, who was a “first-rate man” at Latin verses, who was “brilliant but I think fundamentally unsound”, who was undoubtedly the “ablest fellow in Balliol”, who had buried his light temporarily at Bristol or Bedford, but was bound to be heard of later when his Prolegomena, of which Mr. Tansley had the first pages in proof with him if Mr. Ramsay would like to see them, to some branch of mathematics or philosophy saw the light of day. That was what they talked about.

She could not help laughing herself sometimes. She said, the other day, something about “waves mountains high”. Yes, said Charles Tansley, it was a little rough. “Aren’t you drenched to the skin?” she had said. “Damp, not wet through,” said Mr. Tansley, pinching his sleeve, feeling his socks.

But it was not that they minded, the children said. It was not his face; it was not his manners. It was him—his point of view. When they talked about something interesting, people, music, history, anything, even said it was a fine evening so why not sit out of doors, then what they complained of about Charles Tansley was that until he had turned the whole thing round and made it somehow reflect himself and disparage them, put them all on edge somehow with his acid way of peeling the flesh and blood off everything, he was not satisfied. And he would go to picture

galleries, they said, and he would ask one, did one like his tie? God knows, said Rose, one did not.

Disappearing as stealthily as stags from the dinner-table directly the meal was over, the eight sons and daughters of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay sought their bedrooms, their fastnesses in a house where there was no other privacy to debate anything, everything; Tansley's tie; the passing of the Reform Bill; sea-birds and butterflies; people; while the sun poured into those attics, which a plank alone separated from each other so that every footstep could be plainly heard and the Swiss girl sobbing for her father who was dying of cancer in a valley of the Grisons, and lit up bats, flannels, straw hats, ink-pots, paint-pots, beetles, and the skulls of small birds, while it drew from the long frilled strips of seaweed pinned to the wall a smell of salt and weeds, which was in the towels too, gritty with sand from bathing.

Strife, divisions, difference of opinion, prejudices twisted into the very fibre of being, oh that they should begin so early, Mrs. Ramsay deplored. They were so critical, her children. They talked such nonsense. She went from the dining-room, holding James by the hand, since he would not go with the others. It seemed to her such nonsense—inventing differences, when people, heaven knows, were different enough without that. The real differences, she thought, standing by the drawing-room window, are enough, quite enough. She had in mind at the moment, rich and poor, high and low; the great in birth receiving from her, half grudging, some respect, for had she not in her veins the blood of that very noble, if slightly mythical, Italian house, whose daughters, scattered about English drawing-rooms in the nineteenth century, had lisped so charmingly, had stormed so wildly, and all her wit and her bearing and her temper came from them, and not from the sluggish English, or the cold Scotch; but more profoundly she ruminated the other problem, of rich and poor, and the

things she saw with her own eyes, weekly, daily, here or in London, when she visited this widow, or that struggling wife in person with a bag on her arm, and a note-book and pencil with which she wrote down in columns carefully ruled for the purpose wages and spendings, employment and unemployment, in the hope that thus she would cease to be a private woman whose charity was half a sop to her own indignation, half a relief to her own curiosity, and become, what with her untrained mind she greatly admired, an investigator, elucidating the social problem.

Insoluble questions they were, it seemed to her, standing there, holding James by the hand. He had followed her into the drawing-room, that young man they laughed at; he was standing by the table, fidgeting with something, awkwardly, feeling himself out of things, as she knew without looking round. They had all gone—the children; Minta Doyle and Paul Rayley; Augustus Carmichael; her husband—they had all gone. So she turned with a sigh and said, “Would it bore you to come with me, Mr. Tansley?”

She had a dull errand in the town; she had a letter or two to write; she would be ten minutes perhaps; she would put on her hat. And, with her basket and her parasol, there she was again, ten minutes later, giving out a sense of being ready, of being equipped for a jaunt, which, however, she must interrupt for a moment, as they passed the tennis lawn, to ask Mr. Carmichael, who was basking with his yellow cat’s eyes ajar, so that like a cat’s they seemed to reflect the branches moving or the clouds passing, but to give no inkling of any inner thoughts or emotion whatsoever, if he wanted anything.

For they were making the great expedition, she said, laughing. They were going to the town. “Stamps, writing-paper, tobacco?” she suggested, stopping by his side. But no, he wanted nothing. His hands clasped themselves over his capacious paunch, his eyes blinked, as if he would have liked to reply kindly to these blandishments (she was