
MARIE BELLOC LOWNDES
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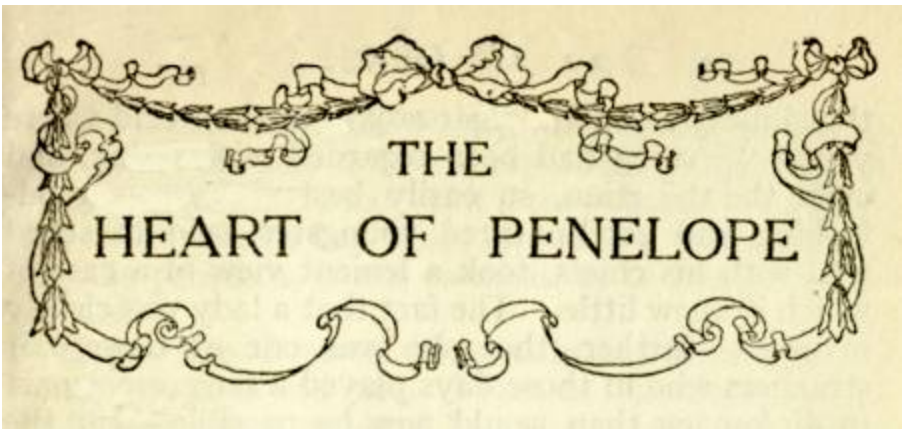

THE HEART OF PENELOPE

CHAPTER I

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'London my home is; though by hard fate sent
Into a long and irksome banishment;
Yet since call'd back, henceforward let me be,
O native country, repossess'd by thee!'

HERRICK.

I

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Sir George Downing was back in London after an absence of twenty years from England. The circumstances which had led to his leaving his native country had been such that he could not refer to them, even in his own mind, and even after so long an interval, without an inward wincing more poignant than that which could have been brought about by the touching of any material wound.

Born to the good fortune which usually attends the young Englishman of old lineage, a fair competence and a traditional career—in his case the pleasant one of diplomacy—Downing had himself brought all his chances to utter shipwreck. Even now, looking back with the dispassionate judgment automatically produced by the long lapse of time, and greater—ah, how much greater!—knowledge of the world, he decided that fate had used him hardly.

What had really occurred was known to very few people, and these few had kept their own and his counsel to an unusual degree. The world, or rather that kindly and

indulgent section of the world where young Downing had been regarded with liking, and even the affection, so easily bestowed on a good-looking and good-natured youngster, said to stand well with his chiefs, took a lenient view of a case of which it knew little. The fact that a lady was closely involved—further, that she was one of those fair strangers who in those days played a far greater part in diplomacy than would now be possible—lent the required touch of romance to the story. 'A Delilah brought to judgment' had been the comment of one grim old woman, mindful that she had been compelled to meet, if not to receive, the stormy petrel whose departure from London had been too hurried to admit of the leaving of P.P.C. cards on the large circle which had entertained, and, in a less material sense, been entertained by, her. As to her victim—only the very unkind ventured to use the word 'tool'—his obliteration had been almost as sudden, almost as complete.

Other men, more blamed, if not more stricken, than he had been, had elected to spend their lives amid the ruins of their broken careers. More than one of his contemporaries had triumphantly lived down the memory of a more shameful record. Perhaps owing to his youth, he had followed his instinct—the natural instinct of a wounded creature which crawls away out of sight of its fellows—and now he had come back, having achieved, not only rehabilitation, but something more—the gratitude, the substantially expressed gratitude, of the most important section of his countrymen, those to whom are confided the destinies of an ever-increasing Empire.

Even in these prosaic days an Englishman living in forced or voluntary exile sometimes achieves greater things for his country than can be so much as contemplated by the men who, though backed by the power and prestige of the Foreign Office, are also tied by its official limitations. His efforts thus being unofficial, the failure of them can be so regarded, and diplomacy can shrug its shoulders. But if they should be successful, as Downing's had been, diplomacy, while pocketing the proceeds, is not so mean as to grudge a due reward.

Happy are those to whom substantial recognition comes ere it is too late. 'Persian' Downing, as he had, *pour cause*, come to be called, could now count himself among these fortunate few. Fate had offered him a great opportunity, which he had had the power and the intelligence to seize.

Those at home who still remembered him kindly had been eager to point out that, far from adopting American nationality, as had once been rumoured, he had known how to prove himself an Englishman of the old powerful stock, jealous of his country's honour and capable of making it respected. What was more to the purpose, from a practical point of view, was the fact that he had known how to win the confidence of a potentate little apt to be on confidential terms with the half-feared, half-despised Western.

That Downing had succeeded in maintaining his supremacy at a semi-barbaric Court, where he had first appeared in the not altogether dignified rôle of representative of an Anglo-American financial house, was chiefly due to a side of his nature, unsuspected by those who most benefited by it, which responded to the strange

practical idealism of the Oriental. The terrible ordeal through which he had passed had long loosened his hold on life, bestowing upon him that calm fatalism and indifference to merely physical consequence which is ordinarily the most valuable asset of Orientals in their dealings with Western minds.

When he had accepted, or rather suggested, a Persian mission to his partner, an American banker, to whose firm an influential English friend had introduced him when he first turned his thoughts towards an American haven of refuge, he had done so in order to escape, if only for a few months, from a state of things brought about by what he was wont to consider the second great misfortune of his life. Downing was one of those men who seemed fated to make mistakes, and then to amaze those about them by the fashion in which they face and overcome the consequences.

Owing, perhaps, to sheer good luck, after having endured a kind of disgrace only comparable to that which may be felt by a soldier who has been proved a traitor to his cause and country, Downing had so acted that in twenty years—a few moments in a nation's diplomatic life—he had received, not only the formal rehabilitation and recognition implied by his G.C.B., but what, to tell truth, he had valued at the moment far more highly: a touching letter from the venerable statesman who had rejected his boyish appeal for mercy.

The old man had asked that he might himself convey to Downing the news of the honour bestowed on him, and he had done so in a letter full of honourable amend, of which one passage ran: 'As I grow older I have become aware of having done many things which I should have left undone;

the principal of these, the one I have long most regretted, was my action concerning your case.'

Only one human being, and that a woman whose sympathy was none the less valued because she had scarcely understood all it had meant to her friend, was ever shown the letter which had so moved and softened him. But from the day he received it the thought of going home, back to England, never left him, and he would have accomplished his purpose long before, had it not been that the consequence of his second great mistake still pursued him.

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Attracted by a prim modesty of demeanour and apparent lack of emotion, new to him in women of his own class, and doubtless feeling acutely the terrible loneliness and strangeness attendant on his new life in such a city as was the New York of that time, George Downing had married, within a year of his arrival in America, a girl of good Puritan-Dutch stock and considerable fortune. Prudence Merryquick—her very name had first attracted him—had offered him that agreeable emotional pastime, a platonic friendship. Soon the strange relationship between them piqued and irritated him, and, manlike, he longed to stir, if not to plumb, the seemingly untroubled depths of her still nature. At first she resisted with apparent ease, and this incited him to serious skilful pursuit. Poor Prudence had no chance against a man who, in despite and in a measure because of his youth, had often played a conquering part in the mimic love warfare of an older and more subtle civilization. She

surrendered, not ungracefully, and for a while it seemed as if the ex-Foreign Office clerk was like to make a successful American banker.

Their honeymoon lasted a year; then an accident, or, rather, some exigencies of business, caused them to spend a winter in Washington. There Downing's story was of course known; indeed, the newly-appointed British Minister had been a friend of his father, and one of those who had tried ineffectually to save him. This renewal of old ties brought on a terrible nostalgia. To Prudence a longing for England was incomprehensible—England had cast her husband out—indeed, she desired, with a fierceness of feeling which surprised Downing, to see him become a naturalized American, but to this he steadily refused to consent.

As winter gave way to spring they moved even further apart from one another, and, as might have been expected, the first serious difference of opinion, too grave to call a quarrel, concerned their future home.

Downing, on the best terms with his partners, had arranged to return permanently to Washington. To his wife, a world composed of European diplomatists and cosmopolitan Americans was utterly odious and incomprehensible. She showed herself passionately intolerant of her husband's friends, especially of those who were his own countrymen and countrywomen, and she looked back with increasing longing to her early married life in New York, and to the days when George Downing had apparently desired no companionship but her own.

Both husband and wife were equally determined, equally convinced as to what was the right course to pursue, and no compromise seemed possible. But one day, quite early in the winter following that which had seen them first installed in Washington, Downing received an urgent recall to New York. With the easy philosophy which had been one of his early charms, he went unsuspectingly, but a few days after he and Prudence had once more settled down in the Dutch homestead inherited by her from Knickerbocker forebears, he came back rather sooner than had been his wont. Prudence met him at the door, for she had returned to this early habit of their married life.

'Tell me,' he said quietly and while in the act of putting down his hat, 'did you ask Mr. Fetter to arrange for my return here?'

She answered unflinchingly: 'Yes; I knew it would be best.'

He made no comment, but within a month he had gone, leaving her alone in the old house where she had spent her dreary childhood, and where she had experienced the one passionate episode of her life.

Twice he came back—the first time with the honest intention of asking Prudence to return with him to the distant land where he had at last found a life that seemed to promise in time rehabilitation, and in any case a closer tie with his own country. Prudence hesitated, then communed with herself and with one or two trusted friends, and finally refused to accompany her husband back to Teheran. Already in her loneliness she had become interested in one of the

great religious movements which swept over America at that period of its social history.

The second time that Downing returned to New York it was to make final arrangements for something tantamount to a separation. Of divorce his wife would not hear; her religious principles and theories made such a solution impossible. To his surprise and relief, she accepted the allowance he eagerly offered. 'Not in the spirit it is meant,' he said, half smiling, as they stood opposite to one another in the office of their old and much-distressed friend, Mr. Fetter; 'rather, eh, Prudence, as an offering to the Almighty on my behalf?' And she had answered quite seriously, but with the flicker of an answering smile: 'Yes, George, that is so;' and for years the two had not been so near to one another as at that moment. The arrangement was duly carried out, and in time Downing learnt that the offering foreseen by him had taken the very sensible shape of a young immigrants' home, the upkeep of which absorbed that portion of Mrs. Downing's income contributed by her husband.

Years wore themselves away, communications between the two became more and more rare, and his brief married life grew fainter and fainter in Downing's memory. Indeed, he far more often thought of and remembered trifling episodes which had taken place much earlier, even in his childhood. But the time came when this far-distant, half-forgotten woman hurt him unconsciously in his only vulnerable part. He learnt with a feeling of indescribable anger and annoyance that, having become closely connected with a number of English Dissenters, whose

tenets she shared, she had made for some time past a yearly sojourn among them. To him the idea that his American wife should live, even for a short space of time each year, among his own countrymen and countrywomen, while he himself lingered on in outer banishment appeared monstrous, and it was one of the reasons why, even after he had already done much to effect his rehabilitation, he preferred to remain away from his own country.

At last he was urgently pressed to return home, and it was pointed out to him that his further absence was injurious to those financial interests which concerned others as well as himself. This is how it came to pass that he found himself once more in London, after an absence of twenty years. At first Downing had planned to be in England early in June, and those of his friends whose congratulations on the honour bestowed on him had been most sincere and most welcome had urged him to make a triumphal reappearance at the moment when they would all be in town. Moreover, they had promised him—and some of them were in a position to make their promises come true—such a welcome home from old and new friends as is rarely awarded to those whose victories are won on bloodless fields.

Accordingly, he had started early in May from the distant country where his exile had proved of such signal service to England. Then, to the astonishment and concern of those who considered his early return desirable, he lingered through June and half July on the Continent, ever writing, 'I am coming, I am coming,' to the few to whom he owed a real apology for thus disappointing them. To the larger number of business connections who felt aggrieved he

vouchsafed no word, and left them to suppose that their great man, frightened by some Parisian specialist, had retired to a French spa for a cure.

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In one minor, as in so many a major, matter Downing had been exceptionally fortunate. For many returning to their native country after long years there are none to welcome them. Those among their old friends who have not gone where no living man can hope to reach them are scattered here and there, and only affection, faithful in a sense rarely found, troubles to think of how the actual arrival of the wanderer can be made, if not pleasant, at least tolerable. But Downing found a sincere and, what was more precious, a familiar welcome, from the friend, Mr. Julius Gumberg, who had twenty years before sped him on his way with those valuable business introductions with which he had been able to build up a new career, first in America, and later in Persia.

There had been no regular correspondence between them, but now and again, sometimes after an interval of years, a short note, pregnant with shrewd counsel, and written in the tiny and only apparently clear hand which was the epistolary mode of fifty years since, would form the most welcome portion of Downing's home mail. It was characteristic of Mr. Gumberg that he sent no word of congratulation, when the man whom he still regarded as a youthful protégé received his G.C.B., the great outward mark of rehabilitation. But when he learnt that Downing had actually started for England he wrote him a line, adding by

way of postscript, 'Of course you will come to me,' and of course Downing had come to him.

Mr. Julius Gumberg was one of those happy Londoners whose dwellings lie between the Green Park and that group of tranquil short streets which still remain, havens of stately peace, within a moment's walk of St. James's and Piccadilly. The portion of the house which looked on St. James's Place had that peculiar air of solid respectability which, in houses belonging to a certain period, seems to apologize for the rakish air of their garden-front. By its bow-windows Mr. Gumberg's house was distinguished on the park side from its more stately neighbours, and his pink blinds were so far historic that they had been noted in a guide-book some forty years before.

Small wonder that, as Mr. Gumberg's guest passed through the door into the broad low corridor which led into his old friend's library, he felt for a moment as if he were walking from the present into the past, an impression heightened by his finding everything, and almost everybody, in the house unchanged, from his host, sitting in a pleasant book-lined room where they had last parted, to the man-servant who had met him with a decorous word of welcome at the door. To be sure, both master and man looked older, but Downing felt that, while in their case the interval of time had left scarce any perceptible mark of its passage, he himself had in the same period lived, and showed that he had lived, a time incalculable.

And how did the traveller returning strike Mr. Julius Gumberg? Alas! as being in every sense quite other than the man, young, impulsive, and with a sufficient, not

excessive, measure of originality, whom he had sped on his way to fairer fortunes twenty years before. Now, looking at the tall figure, the broad, slightly-bent shoulders, he saw that youth had wholly gone, that impulse had been so long curbed as to leave no trace on the rugged secretive face, to which had come, indeed, lines of concentration and purpose which had been lacking in that of the young George Downing. Originality now veered perilously near that eccentricity of outward appearance which is apt to overtake those to whom the cut of clothes, the shearing of the hair, have become of no moment. Mr. Gumberg's shrewd eyes had at once perceived that this no longer familiar friend looked Somebody, indeed, many would say a very great and puissant body; but the old man would have been better pleased to have welcomed home a more commonplace hero.

Mr. Gumberg's sharp ears had heard, just outside his door, quick, low interchange of words between his own faithful man-servant and the newly-arrived guest. 'Valet? No, Jackson, I have brought no man. I gave up such pleasant luxuries twenty years ago!' And Jackson had retreated, disappointed of the company of the travelled gentleman's gentleman with whom he had hoped to spend many pleasant moments.

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Partly in deference to his old friend's advice, Downing gave up his first morning in London to seeing those, almost to a man unknown to him, to whom he surely owed some

apology for his delay. His own old world, including those faithful few friends of his youth who had wished him to return in time to add to the triumphs of the season, were already scattered, and though he had been warmly asked, even after his defection, to follow them to the downs, the moors, and the sea, he was as yet uncertain what to do. 'Waiting orders,' he had said to himself with a curious thrill of exultation as he sat in his bedroom, table and chair drawn close to the windows from which could be seen the twinkling lights of Piccadilly, and where he had been answering briefly the pile of letters he had found waiting for him.

The next morning he devoted himself to the work he had in hand, and early drove to the City in his host's old-fashioned roomy brougham. As he drove he leant back, his hat jammed down over his eyes, unwilling to see the changes which the town's aspect had undergone during his long absence. But there was one pang which was not spared him.

He had been among the last of those Londoners to whom the lion upon the gateway of Northumberland House had been as a Familiar, and in the long low rooms and spacious galleries to which that gateway had given access he had spent many happy hours, a youth on whom all smiled. Of course, he knew the stately palace had gone, but the sight of all that now stood in its place made him realize as nothing else had yet done how long he had been away.

But when once he found himself in the City office whither he was bound, he pushed all thoughts and recollections of the past far back into his mind, and set himself to exercise all his powers of conciliation on the men, for the most part

unknown to him personally, who had the right to be annoyed with him for delaying his arrival in London so long. Long, lean, and brown, he stood before them, grimly smiling, and after the first words, 'I fear my delay has caused some of you inconvenience, gentlemen,' he plunged into the multiple complex details of the great financial interests in which he and they were bound, answering questions dealing with delicate points, and impressing them, as even the most optimistic among them had not hoped to be impressed, by his remarkable personality.

In the afternoon of the same day he made his way slowly, almost furtively, into what had once been his familiar haunts. They lay close about the house where he was now staying and at first he felt relieved, so few were the changes noted by him; but after a while he realized that this first impression was not a true one. Even in St. James's Street there was much that struck him as strange. Where he had left low houses he found huge buildings. His very boot-maker, though still flaunting the proud device, 'Established in 1767,' across his plate-glass window, was, though at the same number as of old, now merged in a row of shops forming the ground-floor of a red-brick edifice which seemed to dwarf the low long mass of St. James's Palace opposite.

In that square quarter-mile, bounded on the one side by Jermyn Street and on the other by Pall Mall, he missed, if not whole streets, at least many houses through whose hospitable doors he had often made his way. Then a chance turn brought him opposite the place where he had spent the last three years of his London life, and, by a curious irony, here alone time seemed to have stood still. He looked

consideringly at the old house, up at the narrow windows of the first-floor at which a young and happy George Downing had so often stood full of confidence in a kind world and in himself; then, following a sudden impulse, he walked across the street and rang the bell.

A buxom, powerful-looking woman opened the door; Downing recognised her at once as a certain Mary Crisp, the niece of his old landlord, and as she stood waiting for him to speak he remembered that as a girl she had not been allowed to do much of the waiting on her uncle's 'gentlemen.' There was no glimmer of recognition in her placid face, and, in answer to the request that he might see the rooms where he had once lived 'for a short time,' she invited him civilly enough to come in, and to follow her upstairs.

'I expect it's the same paper, sir,' she said, as she opened the door of what had been his sitting-room. 'It was put up when uncle first took on the house, and, as it cost half a crown a foot, we always cleans it once every three years with breadcrumbs, and it comes out as new.'

How well Downing remembered the paper, with its dark-blue ground thickly sprinkled with gold stars! indeed, before she spoke again, he knew what her next words would be. 'It's the same pattern that the Queen and Prince Albert chose for putting up at Windsor Castle; you don't see such a good paper, nor such a good pattern, nowadays; but there, I'll just leave you a minute while you take a look round.'

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For some moments Downing remained standing just inside the door, as much that he had forgotten, and more that he had tried vainly to forget, came back to him in a turgid flood of recollection. Suddenly something in the walls creaked, and he clenched his hands, half expecting to see figures form themselves out of the shadows. One memory was spared him; the sombre walls, the plain, heavy old furniture, placed much as it had been in his time, evoked no vision of the foreign woman who had brought him to disgrace, for, with a certain boyish chivalry, he had never allowed her to come to his rooms; instead, poor fool that he had been, he had occasionally entertained her in his official quarters, and the fact had been one of those which had most weighed against him with his informal judges.

Instead, the place where he now stood brought to his mind another woman, who had during those same years and months played a nobler, but alas! a far minor part in his life.

Mrs. Henry Delacour had been one of those beings who, though themselves exquisitely feminine, seem destined to go through life playing the part of confidential and platonic friend, for, in spite of all that is said to the contrary, platonic friendships, sometimes disguised under another name, count for much in our over-civilized world. The second wife of a permanent Government official much older than herself, her thoughts, if not her heart, enjoyed a painful and a dangerous freedom. At a time when sentiment had gone for the moment out of fashion, she lavished much innocent sentiment on those of her husband's younger colleagues who seemed worthy of her interest, and, for she was a kind

woman, in need of it. She had first met George Downing after she had attained the age when every charming woman feels herself privileged to behave as though she were no longer on the active list, while yet quite ready, should the occasion offer, to lead a forlorn hope. What that time of life is should surely be left to each conscience, and almost to each nationality. In the case of this lady the age had been thirty-eight, Downing being fifteen years younger—a fact which he forgot, and which she conscientiously strove to remember, whenever he found himself in her soothing, kindly presence.

Their relationship had been for a time full of subtle charm, and had George Downing been as cosmopolitan as his profession should have made him, had he even been an older man, he might have been content with all that she felt able to offer him—all, indeed, that was possible. But there came a time when he found himself absorbed in a more ardent, a more responsive friendship, and when his feet learnt to shun the quiet street where Mrs. Delacour dispensed her gracious hospitality; indeed, the moment came when he almost forgot how innocently near they had once been to one another.

Yet now, as he stood inside the door of his old room, Mrs. Delacour triumphantly reasserted herself, for she had come to him on the last evening of his life in London. He advanced further into the room, and slowly the scene reconstituted itself in his mind. It had been one which no man was likely ever wholly to forget, and it came back to Downing, in spite of the lapse of twenty years, with extraordinary vividness.

Having arranged to leave early the next morning, he had given strict orders that none of his friends were to be again admitted. Sick at heart, he had been engaged in sorting the last batch of letters and bills, when the door, opening, had revealed Mrs. Delacour, dressed in the soft, rather shadowy colouring which, though at the time wholly out of fashion, had always seemed to him, the young George Downing, an essential part of her personality. For a moment, as she had hesitated in the doorway, he had noticed that she carried a basket.

With the egotism of youth, as he had taken the kind trembling little hand and led his visitor into the room, he had uttered the words, 'Now I know without doubt that I am dead!' As he stood there now, in this very room which had witnessed the pitiful scene, he felt a rush of shame, remembering how he had behaved during the hours that followed, for he had sat, sullenly looking on, while she had packed the portmanteaux lying on the floor, tied up packets of letters, and sorted bills. At intervals he had asked her to leave him, begged her to go home, but she had worked on, saying very little, looking at him not at all, and showing none of the dreadful tenderness which had been lavished on him by so many of his friends.

Then had come the moment when he had roused himself sufficiently to mutter a few words of thanks, reminding her, not ungently, that her husband would be expecting her back to dinner. 'Is any one coming?' she had asked, with a tremor in her voice; and on his quick disclaimer the basket had been unpacked, and food and wine put upon the table.

'Henry,' she had said, in the precise, rather anxious voice he recalled so well—'Henry remembered how well you thought of this claret;' and she had sat down, and by her example gradually compelled him to eat the first real meal he had had for days.

When at last the moment came when she had said, sadly enough, 'Now I suppose I must go home,' he was glad to remember that he had tried to bear himself like a man, tried to thank her for her coming. As he had stood, saying good-bye, she had suddenly lifted the hand which grasped hers, and had laid it against her cheek with the words, said bravely, and with a smile, 'You will come back, George—I am *sure* you will come back.'

As Downing stood once more in the street, now grey with twilight, after he had slipped a sovereign in Mary Crisp's hand, she asked him with natural curiosity, 'And what name shall I say, sir, when uncle asks who called? He always likes to hear of his gentlemen coming back.' Downing hesitated, and then gave the name of the man who he knew had had the rooms before him. The woman said nothing, but a look of fear came into her face as she shut the door quickly. As she did so Downing remembered that the man was dead.

CHAPTER II

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'If you enter his house, his drawing-room, his library, you of yourself say, This is not the dwelling of a common mind. There is not a gem, a coin, a book thrown aside on his chimney-piece, his sofa, his table, that does not bespeak an almost fastidious elegance in the possessor.'—*Lord Byron's Journal.*

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Mr. Julius Gumberg was the last survivor of a type familiar in the English, or rather in the London, society of the middle period of the nineteenth century. In those days reticence, concerning one's own affairs be it understood, was still the rule rather than the exception, but there were a certain number of men, and a few women, to whom everything seems to have been told, and whose advice on the more delicate and difficult affairs of life, if not invariably followed —for that would have been asking too much of human nature—was invariably asked.

It has always been the case that to those, who know much shall more be revealed, and Mr. Gumberg had forgotten more scandals than even the most trusted of his contemporaries had ever told or been told. His assistance was even invoked, it was whispered, by the counsellors of very great people, and it was further added that he had

been instrumental in averting more than one morganatic alliance. That, like most of those who enjoy power, he had sometimes chosen to exercise his prerogative by upholding and shielding those to whom the rest of the world cried 'Haro!' was felt to be to his credit. He had not only never married, but, so far as his acquaintances knew, never even set sail for 'le pays du tendre' with any woman belonging to a circle which had been widening as the years slipped by, and this added to his prestige and gave him authority among those whose paths had diverged so widely from his own.

To all women, especially to those who sought his help when the difficulty in which they found themselves had been caused rather by the softness of their hearts than as the outcome of mere arid indiscretion, he showed an indulgent, and, what was more to the point, a helpful tenderness, which led to repeated confidences. 'The woman who has Mr. Gumberg on her side can afford to postpone repentance,' a dowager who was more feared than trusted was said to have exclaimed; but, like so many bodily as well as moral physicians, he often felt that confidence, when it was reposed in him, had been too long delayed. An intricate problem, a situation to which there seemed no possible issue, was not, he admitted to himself, without its special charm; but as he grew older—indeed, into quite old age—he preferred exercising more subtle arts in connection with the comparatively simpler stories of human life. Unlike the poor French lady whose idle phrase has branded her throughout the ages, Mr. Gumberg delighted in innocent pleasures, while he was willing, notwithstanding, to make any effort

and to exhume any skeleton, however grim, from a friend's closet, if by so doing he could prevent a scandal from crystallizing into a 'case.'

Still, it may be repeated that what he really enjoyed when he could do so conscientiously, and even, indeed, when he found his conscience to be in no sense on the side of the more worldly angels of his acquaintance, was to place all his knowledge of the world at the disposal of two youthful and good-looking lovers. No man, so it was said, knew more ways of melting the heart of an obdurate father, or, what is of course far more difficult, of changing the mind of a sensible mother. Of the several sayings of which he was fond of making use, and which he found applicable to almost every case, especially those of purely sentimental interest, submitted to him, his favourite came to be, 'Heaven helps those who help themselves'; but as he preferred to be the sole auxiliary of Heaven, he seldom quoted the phrase to those who might really have profited by it.

As young people sometimes found to their chagrin, Mr. Gumberg could not always be trusted to see what he was fond of calling the syllabub side of life; he occasionally took a parent's part, this especially when the parent happened to be the mother of a young man. Thus, he was impatient of the modern habit of *mésalliance*, and was old enough to remember the days when divorce was the last resort of the wealthy, while yet deploring the time when marriage was in truth an indissoluble bond. Perhaps the only action which caused him ever-recurring astonishment was the frivolity his

young friends showed in entering a state of life which, according to his old-fashioned views, should spell finality.

'Heaven,' he would murmur to the afflicted mother of a misguided youth who only asked to be allowed to contract honourable matrimony with the humble object of his choice —'Heaven helps those who help themselves: therefore beware of the virtuous ballet-girl and of the industrious barmaid; rather persuade your Augustus to cultivate more closely the acquaintance of his cousin, a really agreeable widow, for jointures should be induced to remain in the family when this can be done without any serious sacrifice of feeling.'

Mr. Gumberg's enemies—and, of course, like most people who live the life that suits them best, and who are surrounded by a phalanx of attached and powerful friends, he had enemies—were able to point to one very serious blemish on his otherwise almost perfect advisory character. With the approach of age he had become garrulous; he talked not only freely, but with extraordinary, amazing freedom to those—and they were many—who cheered him with their constant visits, and on whom he could depend to give him news of the world he loved so well, but which for many years past he had only been able to see poised against the limited background of his fine library, of his cheerful breakfast-room, of his delightful garden.

Perhaps the fact that he was acquainted with so many of their own secrets made him the more trust the discretion of his friends, and even of his acquaintances. They on their side were always ready to urge in exculpation of their valued mentor that the old man never discussed a scandal,