LUCAS MALET

THE HISTORY OF SIR RICHARD CALMADY

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THE CLOWN

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CHAPTER I
ACQUAINTING THE READER WITH A FAIR DOMAIN AND THE MAKER THEREOF

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In that fortunate hour of English history, when the cruel sights and haunting insecurities of the Middle Ages had passed away, and while, as yet, the fanatic zeal of Puritanism had not cast its blighting shadow over all merry and pleasant things, it seemed good to one Denzil Calmady, esquire, to build himself a stately red-brick and freestone house upon the southern verge of the great plateau of moorland which ranges northward to the confines of Windsor Forest and eastward to the Surrey Hills. And this he did in no vainglorious spirit, with purpose of exalting himself above the county gentlemen, his neighbours, and showing how far better lined his pockets were than theirs. Rather did he do it from an honest love of all that is ingenious and comely, and as the natural outgrowth of an inquiring and philosophic mind. For Denzil Calmady, like so many another son of that happy age, was something more than a mere wealthy country squire, breeder of beef and brewer of ale. He was a courtier and traveler; and, if tradition speaks truly, a poet who could praise his mistress's many charms, or wittily resent her caprices, in well-turned verse. He was a patron of art, having brought back ivories and bronzes from Italy, pictures and china from the Low Countries, and enamels from France. He was a student, and collected the many rare and handsome leather-bound volumes telling of

curious arts, obscure speculations, half-fabulous histories, voyages, and adventures, which still constitute the almost unique value of the Brockhurst library. He might claim to be a man of science, moreover—of that delectable old-world science which has no narrow-minded quarrel with miracle or prodigy, wherein angel and demon mingle freely, lending a hand unchallenged to complicate the operations both of nature and of grace—a science which, even yet, in perfect good faith, busied itself with the mysteries of the Rosy Cross, mixed strange ingredients into a possible Elixir of Life, ran far afield in search for the Philosopher's Stone, gathered herbs for the confection of simples during auspicious phases of the moon, and beheld in comet and meteor awful forewarnings of public calamity or of Divine Wrath.

From all of which it may be premised that when, like the wise king, of old, in Jerusalem, Denzil Calmady "builded him houses, made him gardens and orchards, and planted trees in them of all kind of fruits"; when he "made him pools of water to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees"; when he "gathered silver and gold and the treasure of provinces," and got him singers, and players of musical instruments, and "the delights of the sons of men,"—he did so that, having tried and sifted all these things, he might, by the exercise of a ripe and untrammeled judgment, decide what amongst them is illusory and but as a passing show, and what—be it never so small a remnant—has in it the promise of eternal subsistence, and therefore of vital worth; and that, having so decided and thus gained an even mind, he might prepare serenely to take leave of the life he had dared so largely to live.

Commencing his labours at Brockhurst during the closing years of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, Denzil Calmady

completed them in 1611 with a royal house-warming. For the space of a week, during the autumn of that year,—the last autumn, as it unhappily proved, that graceful and scholarly prince was fated to see,—Henry, Prince of Wales, condescended to be his guest. He was entertained at Brockhurst—as contemporary records inform the curious—with "much feastinge and many joyous masques and gallant pastimes," including "a great slayinge of deer and divers beastes and fowl in the woods and coverts thereunto adjacent." It is added, with unconscious irony, that his host, being a "true lover of all wild creatures, had caused a fine bear-pit to be digged beyond the outer garden wall to the west." And that, on the Sunday afternoon of the Prince's visit, there "was held a most mighty baitinge," to witness which "many noble gentlemen of the neighbourhood did visit Brockhurst and lay there two nights."

Later it is reported of Denzil Calmady, who was an excellent churchman,—suspected even, notwithstanding his little turn for philosophy, of a greater leaning towards the old Mass-Book than towards the modern Book of Common Prayer,—that he notably assisted Laud, then Bishop of St. David's, in respect of certain delicate diplomacies. Laud proved not ungrateful to his friend; who, in due time, was honoured with one of King James's newly instituted baronetcies, not to mention some few score seedling Scotchfirs, which, taking kindly to the light moorland soil, increased and multiplied exceedingly and sowed themselves broadcast over the face of the surrounding country.

And, save for the vigorous upgrowth of those same fir trees, and for the fact that bears and bear-pit had long given place to race-horses and to a great square of stable buildings in the hollow lying back from the main road across the park, Brockhurst was substantially the same in the year

of grace 1842, when this truthful history actually opens, as it had been when Sir Denzil's workmen set the last tier of bricks of the last twisted chimney-stack in its place. The grand, simple masses of the house—Gothic in its main lines, but with much of Renaissance work in its details—still lent themselves to the same broad effects of light and shadow, as it crowned the southern and western sloping hillside amid its red-walled gardens and pepper-pot summer-houses, its gleaming ponds and watercourses, its hawthorn dotted paddocks; its ancient avenues of elm, of lime, and oak. The same panelings and tapestries clothed the walls of its spacious rooms and passages; the same quaint treasures adorned its fine Italian cabinets; the same air of large and generous comfort pervaded it. As the child of true lovers is said to bear through life, in a certain glad beauty of person and of nature, witness to the glad hour of its conception, so Brockhurst, on through the accumulating years, still bore witness to the fortunate historic hour in which it was planned.

Yet, since in all things material and mortal there is always a little spot of darkness, a germ of canker, at least the echo of a cry of fear—lest life being too sweet, man should grow proud to the point of forgetting he is, after all, but a pawn upon the board, but the sport and plaything of destiny and the vast purposes of God—all was not quite well with Brockhurst. At a given moment of time, the diabolic element had of necessity obtruded itself. And, in the chronicles of this delightful dwelling-place, even as in those of Eden itself, the angels are proven not to have had things altogether their own gracious way.

The pierced stone parapet, which runs round three sides of the house, and constitutes, architecturally, one of its most noteworthy features, is broken in the centre of the

north front by a tall, stepped and sharply pointed gable, flanked on either hand by slender, four-sided pinnacles. From the niche in the said gable, arrayed in sugar-loaf hat, full doublet and trunk hose, his head a trifle bent so that the tip of his pointed beard rests on the pleatings of his marble ruff, a carpenter's rule in his right hand, Sir Denzil Calmady gazes meditatively down. Delicate, coral-like tendrils of the Virginian creeper, which covers the house walls, and strays over the bay windows of the Long Gallery below, twine themselves yearly about his ankles and his square-toed shoes. The swallows yearly attempt to fix their gray, mud nests against the flutings of the scallop-shell canopy sheltering his bowed head; and are yearly ejected by cautious gardeners armed with imposing array of ladders and conscious of no little inward reluctance to face the dangers of so aerial a height.

And here, it may not be unfitting to make further mention of that same little spot of darkness, germ of canker, echo of the cry of fear, that had come to mar the fair records of Brockhurst For very certain it was that among the varying scenes, moving merry or majestic, upon which Sir Denzil had looked down during the two and a quarter centuries of his sojourn in the lofty niche of the northern gable, there was one his eyes had never yet rested upon—one matter, and that a very vital one, to which had he applied his carpenter's rule the measure of it must have proved persistently and grievously short.

Along the straight walks, across the smooth lawns, and beside the brilliant flower-borders of the formal gardens, he had seen generations of babies toddle and stagger, with gurglings of delight, as they clutched at glancing bird or butterfly far out of reach. He had seen healthy, clean-limbed, boisterous lads and dainty, little maidens laugh and

play, quarrel, kiss, and be friends again. He had seen ardent lovers—in glowing June twilights, while the nightingales shouted from the laurels, or from the coppices in the park below—driven to the most desperate straits, to visions of cold poison, of horse-pistols, of immediate enlistment, or the consoling arms of Betty the housemaid, by the coquetries of some young lady captivating in powder and patches, or arrayed in the high-waisted, agreeably-revealing costume which our grandmothers judged it not improper to wear in their youth. He had seen husband and wife, too, wandering hand in hand at first, tenderly hopeful and elate. And then, sometimes, as the years lengthened,—they growing somewhat sated with the ease of their high estate,—he had seen them hand in hand no longer, waxing cold and indifferent, debating even, at moments, reproachfully whether they might not have invested the capital of their affections to better advantage elsewhere.

All this and much more Sir Denzil had seen, and doubtless measured, for all that he appears so immovably calm and apart. But that which he had never yet seen was a man of his name and race, full of years and honours, come slowly forth from the stately house to sun himself, morning or evening, in the comfortable shelter of the high, red-brick, rose-grown garden walls. Looking the while, with the pensive resignation of old age, at the goodly, wide-spreading prospect. Smiling again over old jokes, warming again over old stories of prowess with horse and hound, or rod and gun. Feeling the eyes moisten again at the memory of old loves, and of those far-away first embraces which seemed to open the gates of paradise and create the world anew; at remembrances of old hopes too, which proved still-born, and of old distresses, which often enough proved still-born likewise,—the whole of these simplified now, sanctified,

the tumult of them stilled, along with the hot, young blood which went to make them, by the kindly torpor of increasing age and the approaching footsteps of greatly reconciling Death.

For Sir Denzil's male descendants, one and all,—so says tradition, so say too the written and printed family records, the fine monuments in the chancel of Sandyfield Church, and more than one tombstone in the yew-shaded churchyard,—have displayed a disquieting incapacity for living to the permitted "threescore years and ten," let alone fourscore, and dying decently, in ordinary, commonplace fashion, in their beds. Mention is made of casualties surprising in number and variety; and not always, it must be owned, to the moral credit of those who suffered them. It is told how Sir Thomas, grandson of Sir Denzil, died miserably of gangrene, caused by a tear in the arm from the antler of a wounded buck. How his nephew Zachary—who succeeded him—was stabbed during a drunken brawl in an eating-house in the Strand. How the brother of the said Zachary, a gallant young soldier, was killed at the battle of Ramillies in 1706. Dueling, lightning during a summer storm, even the blue-brown waters of the Brockhurst Lake in turn claim a victim. Later it is told how a second Sir Denzil, after hard fighting to save his purse, was shot by highwaymen on Bagshot Heath, when riding with a couple of servants—not notably distinguished, as it would appear, for personal valour—from Brockhurst up to town.

Lastly comes Courtney Calmady, who, living in excellent repute until close upon sixty, seemed destined by Providence to break the evil chain of the family fate. But he too goes the way of all flesh, suddenly enough, after a long run with the hounds, owing to the opening of a wound, received when he was little more than a lad, at the taking of

Frenchtown under General Proctor, during the second American war. So he too died, and they buried him with much honest mourning, as befitted so kindly and honourable a gentleman; and his son Richard—of whom more hereafter—reigned in his stead.

CHAPTER II
GIVING THE VERY EARLIEST INFORMATION OBTAINABLE OF THE HERO OF THIS BOOK

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It happened in this way, towards the end of August, 1842.

In the gray of the summer evening, as the sunset faded and the twilight gathered, spreading itself tenderly over the pastures and corn-fields,—over the purple-green glooms of the fir forest—over the open moors, whose surface is scored for miles by the turf-slane of the cottager and squatter—over the clear brown streams that trickle out of the pink and emerald mosses of the peat-bogs, and gain volume and vigour as they sparkle away by woodside, and green-lane, and village street—and over those secret, bosky places, in the heart of the great common-lands, where the smooth, white stems and glossy foliage of the self-sown hollies spring up between the roots of the beech trees, where plovers cry, and stoat and weazel lurk and scamper, while the old poacher's lean, ill-favoured, rusty-coloured lurcher picks up a shrieking hare, and where wandering bands of gypsies—those lithe, onyx-eyed children of the magic East—still pitch their dirty, little, fungus-like tents around the camp-fire,—as the sunset died and the twilight thus softly widened and deepened, Lady Calmady found herself, for the first time during all the long summer day, alone.

For though no royal personage had graced the occasion with his presence, nor had bears suffered martyrdom to promote questionably amiable mirth, Brockhurst, during the

past week, had witnessed a series of festivities hardly inferior to those which marked Sir Denzil's historic house-warming. Young Sir Richard Calmady had brought home his bride, and it was but fitting the whole countryside should see her. So all and sundry received generous entertainment according to their degree.—Labourers, tenants, school-children. Weary old-age from Pennygreen poorhouse taking its pleasure of cakes and ale half suspiciously in the broad sunshine. The leading shopkeepers of Westchurch and their humbler brethren from Farley Row. All the country gentry too. Lord and Lady Fallowfeild and a goodly company from Whitney Park, Lord Denier and a large contingent from Grimshott Place, the Cathcarts of Newlands, and many more persons of undoubted consequence—specially perhaps in their own eyes.

Not to mention a small army of local clergy—who ever display a touching alacrity in attending festivals, even those of a secular character—with camp-followers, in the form of wives and families, galore.

And now, at last, all was over,—balls, sports, theatricals, dinners,—the last in the case of the labourers, with the unlovely adjunct of an ox roasted whole. Even the final garden-party, designed to include such persons as it was, socially speaking, a trifle difficult to place—Image, owner of the big Shotover brewery, for instance, who was shouldering his way so vigorously towards fortune and a seat on the bench of magistrates; the younger members of the firm of Goteway & Fox, Solicitors of Westchurch; Goodall, the Methodist miller from Parson's Holt, and certain sporting yeoman farmers with their comely womankind—even this final entertainment, with all its small triumphs and heart-burnings, flutterings of youthful inexperience, aspirations, condescensions, had gone, like the rest of the week's

junketings, to swell the sum of things accomplished, of all that which is past and done with, and will never come again.

Fully an hour ago, Dr. Knott, "under plea of waiting cases, had hitched his ungainly, thick-set figure into his high gig.

"Plenty of fine folks, eh, Timothy?" he said to the ferret-faced groom beside him, as he gathered up the reins; and the brown mare, knowing the hand on her mouth, laid herself out to her work. "Handsome young couple as anybody need wish to see. Not much business doing there for me, I fancy, unless it lies in the nursery line."

"Say those Brockhurst folks mostly dies airly, though," remarked Timothy, with praiseworthy effort at professional encouragement.

"Eh! so you've heard that story too, have you?"—and John Knott drew the lash gently across the hollow of the mare's back.

"This 'ere Sir Richard's the third baronet I've a-seen, and I bean't so very old neither."

The doctor looked down at the spare little man with a certain snarling affection, as he said:—"Oh no! I'm not kept awake o' nights by the fear of losing you, Timothy. Your serviceable old carcass'll hang together for a good while yet."—Then his rough eyebrows drew into a line and he stared thoughtfully down the long space of the clean gravel road under the meeting branches of the lime trees.

The Whitney *char à bancs* had driven off but a few minutes later, to the admiration of all beholders; yet not, it must be admitted, without a measure of inward perturbation on the part of that noble charioteer, Lord Fallowfeild. Her Ladyship was constitutionally timid, and he was none too sure of the behaviour of his leaders in face of the string of very miscellaneous vehicles waiting to take up. However, the illustrious party happily got off without any occasion for

Lady Fallowfeild's screaming. Then the ardour of departure became universal, and in broken procession the many carriages, phaetons, gigs, traps, pony-chaises streamed away from Brockhurst House, north, south, east and west.

Lady Calmady had bidden her guests farewell at the side-door opening on to the terrace, before they passed through the house to the main entrance in the south front. Last to go, as he had been first to come, was that worthy person, Thomas Caryll, the rector of Sandyfield. Mild, white-haired, deficient in chin, he had a natural leaning towards women in general, and towards those of the upper classes in particular. Katherine Calmady's radiant youth, her courtesy, her undeniable air of distinction, and a certain gracious gaiety which belonged to her, had, combined with unaccustomed indulgence in claret cup, gone far to turn the good man's head during the afternoon. Regardless of the slightly flustered remonstrances of his wife and daughters, he lingered, expending himself in innocently confused compliment, supplemented by prophecies regarding the blessings destined to descend upon Brockhurst and the mother parish of Sandyfield in virtue of Lady Calmady's advent.

But at length he also was gone. Katherine waited, her eyes full of laughter, until Mr. Caryll's footsteps died away on the stone quarries of the great hall within. Then she gently drew the heavy door to, and stepped out on to the centre of the terrace. The grass slopes of the park—dotted with thorn trees and beds of bracken,—the lime avenue running along the ridge of the hill, the ragged edge of the fir forest to the east, and the mass of the house, all these were softened to a vagueness—as the landscape in a dream—by the deepening twilight. An immense repose pervaded the whole scene. It affected Katherine to a certain seriousness.

Her social excitements and responsibilities, the undoubted success that had attended her maiden essay as hostess during the past week, shrank to trivial proportions. Another order of emotion arose in her. She became sensible of a necessity to take counsel with herself.

She moved slowly along the terrace; paused in the arcaded garden-hall at the end of it—the carven stone benches and tables of which showed somewhat ghostly in the dimness—to put off her bonnet and push back the lace scarf from her shoulders. An increasing solemnity was upon her. There were things to think of, things deep and strange. She must needs place them, make an effort, anyhow, to do so. And, in face of this necessity, came an instinct to rid herself of all small impeding conventionalities, even in the matter of dress. For there was in Katherine that inherent desire of harmony with her surroundings, that natural sense of fitness, which—given certain technical aptitudes—goes to make a great dramatic artist. But, since in her case, such technical aptitudes were either non-existent, or wholly in abeyance, it followed that, save in nice questions of private honour, she was quite the least self-conscious and self-critical of human beings. Now, as she passed out under the archway on to the square lawn of the troco-ground, bare-headed, in her pale dress, a sweet seriousness filling all her mind, even as the sweet summer twilight filled all the valley and veiled the gleaming surface of the Long Water far below, she felt wholly in sympathy with the aspect and sentiment of the place. Indeed it appeared to her, just then, that the four months of her marriage, the five months of her engagement, even the twenty-two years which made up all the sum of her earthly living, were a prelude merely to the present hour and to that which lay immediately ahead.

Yet the prelude had, in truth, been a pretty enough piece of music. Katharine's experience had but few black patches in it as yet. Furnished with a fair and healthy body, with fine breeding, with a character in which the pride and grit of her North Country ancestry was tempered by the poetic instincts and quick wit which came to her with her mother's Irish blood, Katherine Ormiston started as well furnished as most to play the great game that all are bound to play, whether they will or no, with fate. Mrs. Ormiston, still young and beloved, had died in bringing this, her only daughter, into the world; and her husband had looked somewhat coldly upon the poor baby in consequence. There was an almost misanthropic vein in the autocratic land-owner and iron-master. He had three sons already, and therefore found but little use for this woman-child. So, while pluming himself on his clear judgment and unswerving reason, he resented, most unreasonably, her birth, since it took his wife from him. Such is the irony of things, forever touching man on the raw, proving his weakness in that he holds his strongest point! In point of fact, however, Katherine suffered but slightly from the poor welcome that greeted her advent in the gray, many-towered house upon the Yorkshire coast. For her great-aunt, Mrs. St. Quentin, speedily gathered the small creature into her still beautiful arms, and lavished upon it both tenderness and wealth, along—as it grew to a companionable age—with the wisdom of a mind ripened by wide acquaintance with men and with public affairs. Mrs. St. Quentin—famous in Dublin, London, Paris, as a beauty and a wit—had passed her early womanhood amid the tumult of great events. She had witnessed the horrors of the Terror, the splendid amazements of the First Empire; and could still count among her friends and correspondents, politicians and literary men of no mean standing. A legend obtains that

Lord Byron sighed for her—and in vain. For, as Katherine came to know later, this woman had loved once, daringly, finally, yet without scandal—though the name of him whom she loved (and who loved her) was not, it must be owned, St. Quentin. And perhaps it was just this, this hidden and somewhat tragic romance, which kept her so young, so fresh; kept her unworldly, though moving so freely in the world; had given her that exquisite sense of relative values and that knowledge of the heart, which leads, as the divine Plato has testified, to the highest and most reconciling philosophy.

Thus, the delicately brilliant old lady and the radiant young lady lived together delightfully enough, spending their winters in Paris in a pretty apartment in the rue de Rennes—shared with one Mademoiselle de Mirancourt, whose friendship with Mrs. St. Quentin dated from their schooldays at the convent of the Sacré Cœur. Spring and autumn found Katherine and her great-aunt in London. While, in summer, there was always a long visit to Ormiston Castle, looking out from the cliff edge upon the restless North Sea. Lovers came in due course. For over and above its own shapeliness—which surely was reason enough—Katherine's hand was well worth winning from the worldly point of view. She would have money; and Mrs. St. Quentin's influence would count for much in the case of a great-nephew-by-marriage who aspired to a parliamentary or diplomatic career. But the lovers also went, for Katherine asked a great deal—not so much of them, perhaps, as of herself. She had taken an idea, somehow, that marriage, to be in the least satisfactory, must be based on love; and that love worth the name is an essentially two-sided business. Indirectly the girl had learnt much on this difficult subject from her great-aunt; and with characteristic directness had

agreed with herself to wait till her heart was touched, if she waited a lifetime—though of exactly in what either her heart, or the touching of it, consisted she was deliciously innocent as yet.

And then, in the summer of 1841, Sir Richard Calmady came to Ormiston. He and her brother Roger had been at Eton together. Katherine remembered him, years ago, as a well-bred and courteously contemptuous schoolboy, upon whose superior mind, small female creatures—busy about dolls, and victims of the athletic restrictions imposed by petticoats—made but slight impression. Latterly Sir Richard's name had come to be one to conjure with in racing circles, thanks to the performances of certain horses bred and trained at the Brockhurst stables; though some critics, it is true, deplored his tendency to neglect the older and more legitimate sport of flat-racing in favour of steeple-chasing. It was said he aspired to rival the long list of victories achieved by Mr. Elmore's Gaylad and Lottery, and the successes of Peter Simple the famous gray. This much Katherine had heard of him from her brother. And having her haughty turns—as what charming woman has not?—set him down as probably a rough sort of person, notwithstanding his wealth and good connections, a kind of gentleman jockey, upon whom it would be easy to take a measure of pretty revenge for his boyish indifference to her existence. But the meeting, and the young man, alike, turned out quite other than she had anticipated. For she found a person as well furnished in all polite and social arts as herself, with no flavour of the stable about him. She had reckoned on one whose scholarship would carry him no further than a few stock quotations from Horace, and whose knowledge of art would begin and end with a portrait of himself presented by the members of a local hunt. And it was a little surprising—

possibly a little mortifying to her—to hear him talking over obscure passages in Spencer's *Færie Queene* with Mrs. St. Quentin, before the end of the dinner, and nicely apprising the relative merits of the water-colour sketches by Turner, that hung on either side the drawing-room fireplace.

Nor did Katherine's surprises end here. An unaccountable something was taking place within her, that opened up a whole new range of emotion. She, the least moody of young women, had strange fluctuations of temper, finding herself buoyantly happy one hour, the next pensive, filled with timidity and self-distrust—not to mention the little fits of gusty anger, and purposeless jealousy which took her, hurting her pride shrewdly. She grew anxiously solicitous as to her personal appearance. This dress would not please her nor that. The image of her charming oval face and well-set head ceased to satisfy her. Surely a woman's hair should be either positively blond or black, not this indeterminate brown, with warm lights in it? She feared her mouth was not small enough, the lips too full and curved for prettiness. She wished her eyes less given to change, under their dark lashes, from clear gray-blue to a nameless colour like the gloom of the pools of a woodland stream, as her feelings changed from gladness to distress. She feared her complexion was too bright, and then not bright enough. And, all the while, a certain shame possessed her that she should care at all about such trivial matters; for life had grown suddenly larger and more august. Books she had read, faces she had watched a hundred times, the vast horizon looking eastward over the unquiet sea, all these gained a new value and meaning which at once enthralled and agitated her thought.

Sir Richard Calmady stayed a fortnight at Ormiston. And the two ladies crossed to Paris earlier, that autumn, than

was their custom. Katherine was not in her usual good health, and Mrs. St. Quentin desired change of air and scene on her account. She took Mademoiselle de Mirancourt into her confidence, hinting at causes for her restlessness and wayward little humours unacknowledged by the girl herself. Then the two elder women wrapped Katherine about with an atmosphere of—if possible—deeper tenderness than before; mingling sentiment with their gaiety, and gaiety with their sentiment, and the delicate respect which refrains from question with both.

One keenly bright October afternoon Richard Calmady called in the rue de Rennes. It appeared he had come to Paris with the intention of remaining there for an indefinite period. He called again and yet again, making himself charming—a touch of deference tempering his natural suavity—alike to his hostesses and to such of their guests as he happened to meet. It was the fashion of fifty years ago to conduct affairs, even those of the heart, with a dignified absence of precipitation. The weeks passed, while Sir Richard became increasingly welcome in some of the very best houses in Paris.—And Katherine? It must be owned Katherine was not without some heartaches, which she proudly tried to deny to herself and conceal from others. But eventually—it was on the morning after the ball at the British Embassy—the man spoke and the maid answered, and the old order changed, giving place to new in the daily life of the pretty apartment of the rue de Rennes.

About five months later the marriage took place in London; and Sir Richard and Lady Calmady started forth on a wedding journey of the old-fashioned type. They traveled up the Rhine, and posted, all in the delicious, early summer weather, through Northern Italy, as far as Florence. They returned by Paris. And there, Mrs. St. Quentin watching—in

almost painful anxiety—to see how it fared with her recovered darling, was wholly satisfied, and gave thanks. For she perceived that, in this case, at least, marriage was no legal, conventional connection leaving the heart emptier than it found it—the bartering of precious freedom for a joyless bondage, an obligation, weary in the present, and hopeless of alleviation in the future, save by the reaching of that far-distant, heavenly country, concerning which it is comfortably assured us "that there they neither marry nor are given in marriage." For the Katherine who came back to her was at once the same, and yet another, Katherine—one who carried her head more proudly and stepped as though she was mistress of the whole fair earth, but whose merry wit had lost its little edge of sarcasm, whose sympathy was quicker and more instinctive, whose voice had taken fuller and more caressing tones, and in whose sweet eyes sat a steady content good to see. And then, suddenly, Mrs. St. Quentin began to feel her age as she had never, consciously, felt it before; and to be very willing to fold her hands and recite her *Nunc Dimittis*. For, in looking on the faces of the bride and bridegroom, she had looked once again on the face of Love itself, and had stood within the court of the temple of that Uranian Venus whose unsullied glory is secure here and hereafter, since to her it is given to discover to her worshippers the innermost secret of existence, thereby fencing them forever against the plagues of change, delusion, and decay. Love began gently to loosen the cords of life, and to draw Lucia St. Quentin home—home to that dear dwelling-place which, as we fondly trust—since God Himself is Love—is reserved for all true lovers beyond the grave and Gates of Death. Thus one flower falls as another opens; and to-day, however sweet, is only won across the corpse of yesterday.

And it was some perception of just this—the ceaseless push of event following on event, the ceaseless push of the yet unborn struggling to force the doors of life—which moved Katherine to seriousness, as she stood alone on the smooth expanse of the troco-ground, in the soft, all-covering twilight, at the close of the day's hospitality.

On her right the house, and its delicate twisted chimneys, showed dark against the fading rose of the western sky. The air, rich with the fragrance of the red-walled gardens behind her,—with the scent of jasmine, heliotrope and clove carnations, ladies-lilies and mignonette,—was stirred, now and again, by wandering winds, cool from the spaces of the open moors. While, as the last roll of departing wheels died out along the avenues, the voices of the woodland began to reassert themselves. Wild-fowl called from the alder-fringed Long Water. Night-hawks churred as they beat on noiseless wings above the beds of bramble and bracken. A cock pheasant made a most admired stir and keckling in seeing his wife and brood to roost on the branches of one of King James's age-old Scotch firs.

And this sense of nature coming back to claim her own, to make known her eternal supremacy, now that the fret of man's little pleasuring had past, was very grateful to Katherine Calmady. Her soul cried out to be free, for a time, to contemplate, to fully apprehend and measure its own happiness. It needed to stand aside, so that the love given, and all given with that love—even these matters of house and gardens, of men-servants and maid-servants, of broad acres, all the poetry, in short, of great possessions—might be seen in perspective. For Katherine had that necessity—in part intellectual, in part practical, and common to all who possess a gift for rule—to resist the confusing importunity of

detail, and to grasp intelligently the whole, which alone gives to detail coherence and purpose. Her mind was not one—perhaps unhappily—which is contented to merely play with bricks, but demands the plan of the building into which those bricks should grow. And she wanted, just now, to lay hold of the plan of the fair building of her own life. And to this end the solitude, the evening quiet, the restful unrest of the forest and its wild creatures should surely have ministered? She moved forward and sat on the broad stone balustrade which, topping the buttressed masonry that supports it above the long downward grass slope of the park, encloses the troco-ground on the south.

The landscape lay drowned in the mystery of the summer night. And Katherine, looking out into it, tried to think clearly, tried to range the many new experiences of the last months and to reckon with them. But her brain refused to work obediently to her will. She felt strangely hurried for all the surrounding quiet.

One train of thought, which she had been busy enough by day and honestly sleepy enough at night, to keep at arm's length during this time of home-coming and entertaining, now invaded and possessed her mind—filling it at once with a new and overwhelming movement of tenderness, yet for all her high courage with a certain fear. She cried out for a little space of waiting, a little space in which to take breath. She wanted to pause, here in the fulness of her content. But no pause was granted her. She was so happy, she asked nothing more. But something more was forced upon her. And so it happened that, in realising the ceaseless push of event on event, the ceaseless dying of dear to-day in the service of unborn to-morrow, her gentle seriousness touched on regret.

How long she remained lost in such pensive reflections Lady Calmady could not have said. Suddenly the terrace door slammed. A moment later a man's footsteps echoed across the flags of the garden-hall.

"Katherine," Richard Calmady called, somewhat imperatively, "Katherine, are you there?"

She turned and stood watching him as he came rapidly across the turf.

"Yes, I am here," she cried. "Do you want me?"

"Do I want you?" he answered curtly. "Don't I always want you?"

A little sob rose in her throat—she knew not why—for, hearing the tone of his voice, her sadness was strangely assuaged.

"I could not find you," he went on. "And I got into an absurd state of panic—sent Roger in one direction, and Julius in another, to look for you."

"Whereupon Roger, probably, posted down to the stables, and Julius up to the chapel to search. Where the heart dwells there the feet follow. Meanwhile, you came straight here and found me yourself."

"I might have known I should do that."

The importunate thought returned upon Katherine and with it a touch of her late melancholy.

"Ah! one knows nothing for certain when one is frightened," she said. She moved closer to him, holding out her hand. "Here," she continued, "you are a little too shadowy, too unsubstantial, in this light, Dick. I would rather make more sure of your presence."

Richard Calmady laughed very gently. Then the two stood silent, looking out over the dim valley, hand in hand. The scent of the gardens was about them. Moving lights showed through the many windows of the great house. The

waterfowl called sleepily. The churring of the night-hawks was continuous, soothing as the hum of a spinning-wheel. Somewhere, away in the Warren, a fox barked. In the eastern sky, the young moon began to climb above the ragged edge of the firs. When they spoke again it was very simply, in broken sentences, as children speak. The poetry of their relation to one another and the scene about them were too full of meaning, too lovely, to call for polish of rhetoric, or pointing by epigram.

"Tell me," Katherine said, "were you satisfied? Did I entertain your people prettily?"

"Prettily? You entertained them as they had never been entertained before—like a queen—and they knew it. But why did you stay out here alone?"

"To think—and to look at Brockhurst."

"Yes, it's worth looking at now," he said. "It was like a body wanting a soul till you came."

"But you loved it?" Katherine reasoned.

"Oh yes! because I believed the soul would come some day. Brockhurst, and the horses, and the books, all helped to make the time pass while I was waiting."

"Waiting for what?"

"Why for you, of course, you dear, silly sweet. Haven't I always been waiting for you—just precisely and wholly you, nothing more or less—all through my life, all through all conceivable and inconceivable lives, since before the world began?"

Katharine's breath came with a fluttering sigh. She let her head fall back against his shoulder. Her eyes closed involuntarily. She loved these fond exaggerations—as what woman does not who has had the good fortune to hear them? They pierced her with a delicious pain; and—perhaps therefore, perhaps not unwisely—she believed them true.