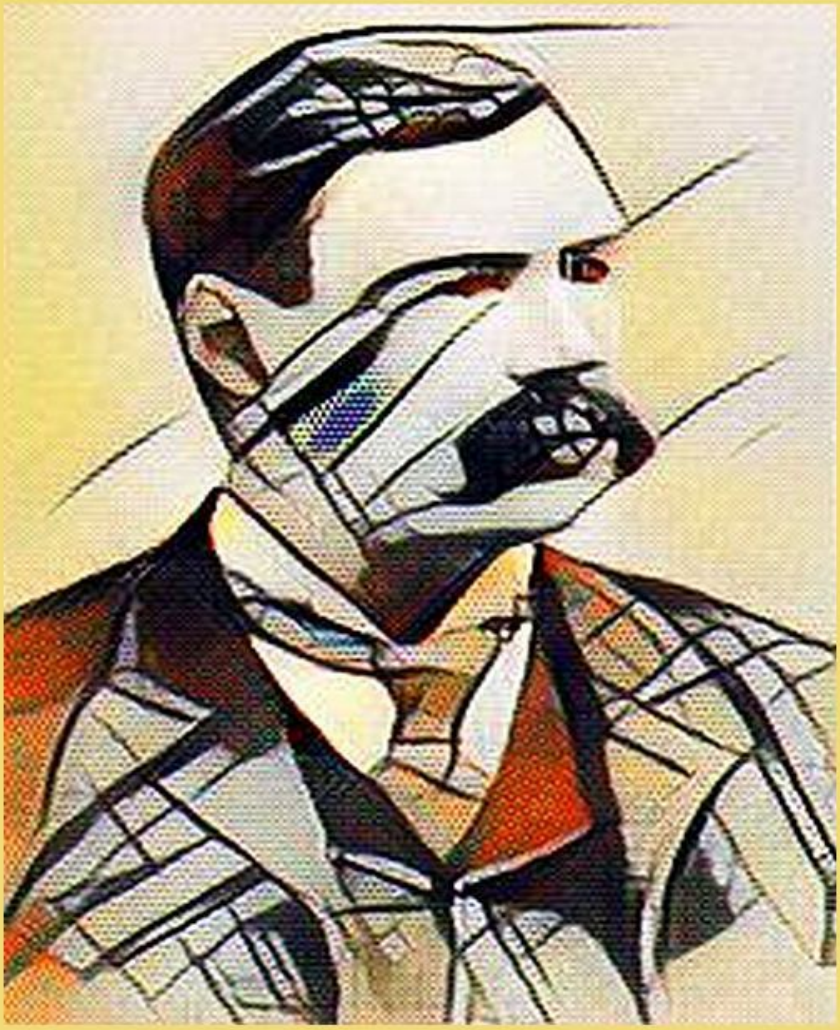
HAROLD FREDERIC



GLORIA MUNDI

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Gloria Mundi, H. Frederic
Jazzybee Verlag Jürgen Beck
86450 Altenmünster, Loschberg 9
Deutschland

ISBN: 9783849649395

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PART I

Chapter I

The meeting of the man and the woman — it is to this that every story in the world goes back for its beginning.

At noon on a day late in September the express train from Paris rested, panting and impatient, on its brief halt in the station at Rouen. The platform was covered with groups of passengers, pushing their way into or out of the throng about the victualer's table. Through the press passed waiters, bearing above their heads trays with cups of tea and plates of food. People were climbing the high steps to the carriages, or beckoning to others from the open windows of compartments. Four minutes of the allotted five had passed. The warning cries of the guards had begun, and there was even to be heard the ominous preliminary tooting of a horn.

At the front of the section of first-class carriages a young woman leaned through the broad window-frame of a coupé, and held a difficult conversation with one of the waiters. She had sandwiches in one hand, some loose coin in the other. Her task was to get at the meaning of a man who spoke of sous while she was thinking in centimes, and she smiled a little in amused vexation with herself at the embarrassment.

"Deux sandwich: combien si vous plait, monsieur?" she repeated, with an appealing stress of courtesy. More slowly she constructed a second sentence: "Est un franc assez?" She proffered the silver coin to help out her inquiry, and the waiter, nodding, put up his hand for it.

On the instant, as the noise of slamming doors and the chorus of "Au coupé, s'il-v'plait!" grew peremptory, one in authority pushed the waiter aside and pulled open the

coupé door upon which she had been leaning. "Permettez moi, madame!" he said curtly.

Close at his back was a young man, with wraps upon his arm and a traveling bag in his hand, who was flushed and breathing hard with the excitement of hurry, and who drew a long sigh of relief as he put his foot on the bottom step of the coupé.

The young woman had grasped the door and was striving stoutly to drag it to her. "Mais non, monsieur!" she shouted, her voice quivering with vehemence. "Cette compartement est tout reserveé — engaged! J'ai donné cinq franc soisante, en Paris, pour moi seulement! Je proteste! "

Sharp blasts from a horn at the rear of the train broke in upon her earnest if uncertain remarks. The official held up one warning hand, while with the other he wrenched the door wide open. He said something of which the girl comprehended only its arbitrary harshness of spirit. Brusquely thrusting a ticket into the young man's hand, he pushed him up the steps into the compartment, and closed the door upon him with a clang. Arms were waving outside; the tin horn screamed; a throb of reawakened energy thrilled backward through the train.

"I assure you — I am so sorry," the young man began, still standing by the door. His voice was gentle and deprecatory. His words were English, but the tone was of some other language.

"But I have taken the whole compartment — I paid for it all! " she burst out at him, her voice shaking with indignation. " It is an outrage! "

"I am afraid you are mistaken," he started to speak again; "you obtained only one seat — I have a ticket for another. If there had been time, I beg you to believe — "

The train was moving, and a swift plunge into utter darkness abruptly broke off his speech. After a few moments it became possible to discern vague outlines in the black compartment. The girl had huddled herself on the

end cushion at the right. The young man took his seat in the corner to the left, and for three incredibly protracted minutes the tunnel reared its uncanny barrier of bogus night between them. The dim suggestion of light which remained to them revealed constrained and motionless figures drawn rigidly away from each other, and pale averted countenances staring fixedly into the gloom.

All at once they were blinking in a flood of sunshine, and drawing welcome breaths of the new, sweet air which swept through from window to window. The young man's gaze, decorously turned to his left, was of a sudden struck with the panorama as by a blow. He uttered a little cry of delight to himself, and bent forward with eagerness to grasp as much as he might of what was offered. The broad, hill-rimmed basin of the Seine; the gray towers and shining spires of the ancient town; the blue films of smoke drifting through the autumn haze; the tall black chimneys, the narrow, high poplars, the splashes of vivid color with which the mighty moving picture painted itself — all held him, rapt and trembling, with his face out of the window.

Summarily the darkness descended upon them again. He drew back, settled himself in his seat and recalled the circumstance that he was not alone. It occurred to him to pull up the window, and then instinctively he turned to see if she had taken the same precaution on her side. Thus when the short second tunnel unexpectedly ended, he found himself regarding his companion with wide-eyed and surprised intentness.

There were two vacant seats between them, and across this space she returned his scrutiny for a moment; then with a fine show of calm she looked away, out through the broad, rounded panes which constituted the front of the compartment.

To the eye of the young man, she was above all things English. Her garments, her figure, the pose of her head, the consciously competent repose of her profile, the very angle

at which the correct gray hat, with its fawn-colored ribbon, crossed the line of the brow above — these spoke loudly to him of the islander. From this fact alone would be inferred a towering personal pride, and an implacable resentment toward those who, no matter how innocently and accidentally, offered injury to that pride. He knew the English well, and it hardly needed this partial view of her face to tell him that she was very angry.

Another young man, under these conditions, might have more frankly asked himself whether the face was a beautiful one. He was conscious that the query had taken shape in his mind, but he gave it no attention. It was the character of the face, instead, which had powerfully impressed him. He recalled with curious minuteness the details of his first glimpse of it — the commanding light in the gray eyes, the tightened curves of the lip, the mantling red on the high, smooth cheek. Was it a pretty face? No — the question would not propound itself. Prettiness had nothing to do with the matter. The personality which looked through the face — that was what affected him.

The compartment seemed filled in some subtle way with the effect of this personality. He looked out of his window again. A beautiful deep valley lay below him now, with densely wooded hills beyond. The delicate tints of the waning season enriched the tracery of foliage close at hand; still the tall chimneys, mixed with poplars, marked the course of the enslaved river, but the factories themselves were kindly hidden here by dark growths of thicket in the shadowed depths.

It was surpassingly beautiful, but its contemplation left him restless. He moved about on his seat, partially lowered the window, put it up again and at last turned his head.

"I am afraid that all the charming landscape is on this side, " he made bold to say. " I will change places with pleasure, if — if you would be so kind. "

"No, thank you," was her spontaneous and decisive reply. Upon reflection she added in a more deliberate tone: "I should be obliged if you would take the view that conversation is not necessary. "

Some latent strain of temerity amazed the young man by rising to the surface of his mind, under the provocation of this rebuff, and shaping his purpose for him.

"It is only fair to myself, first, however," he with surprise heard himself declaring, "that I should finish my explanation. You can satisfy yourself readily at Dieppe that your ticket is for only one seat. It is very easy to make errors of that kind when one does not — that is to say, is not— well, entirely familiar with the language of the country. As to my own part, you will remember that I came only at the last moment. I took my coupé seat a half hour before, because I also wished to be alone, and then I went out to see Jeanne d'Arc's tower again, and I was nearly too late. If there had been time, I would have found a seat elsewhere — but you yourself saw — "

"Really, I think no more need be said," broke in his companion. She looked him frankly, coldly in the face as she spoke, and her words seemed in his ears to have metallic edges. "It is plain enough that there was a mistake. As you have suggested, my French is very faulty indeed, and no doubt the misunderstanding is entirely my own. So, since it is unavoidable, there surely need be no more words about it. "

She opened a book at this, put her feet out to the stool in front and ostentatiously disposed herself for deep abstraction in literature.

The young man in turn got out some pamphlets and papers from the pockets of his great-coat, and pretended to divide his attention between these and the scenery outside. In truth, he did not for a moment get the face of this girl out of his thoughts, More than ever now, since she had looked him fully in the eye, it was not a face to be pictured

in the brain as other faces of women had been. The luminous substance of the individuality behind the face shone out at him from the pages he stared at, and from the passing vistas of lowland meadows, streams and mill-towns that met his gaze through the window.

He knew so little of women that his mind was quite devoid of materials for any comparative analysis of the effect she produced upon him. He evolved for himself, indeed, the conviction that really this was the first woman, in the genuine and higher meaning of the word, that he had ever met. The recognition of this brought with it an excitement as novel to him as the fact itself. Before ever he had seen her, clinging to the coupé door with her gloved hands and so bravely doing hopeless and tongue-tied battle with the guard, there had been things which had made this the greatest day of his life. He was in truth finishing the last stage of a journey into the unknown, the strange possibilities of which had for a week kept his nerves on the rack. The curtain of only one more night hung now between him and the revealed lineaments of destiny. To be alone with his perturbed thoughts, on this culminating day of anxious hopes and dreads, had been his controlling idea at Rouen. It was for this that he had bought the coupé seat, upon the rumor of the station that solitude was thus to be commanded. And now, how extraordinary was the chance!

There had stepped into this eventful day, as from the clouds, a stranger whose mysterious appeal to his imagination seemed more remarkable than all else combined.

He worked this out, painstakingly, with little sidelong glances from time to time toward where she sat buried in her book, to check the progression of his reasoning. When he reached the conclusion that she was really playing this predominant part in the drama of the day, its suggestion of hysterical folly rather frightened him. He looked with earnestness out of the window, and even began to count the

chimneys of the landscape as an overture to returning sanity. Then he looked less furtively at her and said to himself with labored plausibility that she was but an ordinary traveling Englishwoman, scarcely to be differentiated from the Cook's-tourist type that he knew so well; she had not even a governess' knowledge of French, and there had been nothing in her words and tone with him to indicate either mental distinction or kindliness of temper. Why should he bestow so much as another thought upon her? He squared his slender shoulders, and turned with resolution to his book.

A minute later the impossibility of the situation had mastered every fiber of his brain. He put down the volume, feeling himself to be a fool for doing so, yet suffering himself with an unheard-of gladness.

"If I anger you, I shall be much pained, " he said, with a set face turned not quite toward her, and a voice that he kept from breaking by constant effort, "but I am going to England for the first time, and there are some things that I am very anxious to ask about."

She seemed to reflect a little before she lifted her head. Now again he was privileged to look squarely into her face, and he added swiftly to his store a new impression of her. The ruling characteristic of the countenance was a certain calm and serious reasonableness. The forehead was broad and comely; the glance of the eyes was at once alert and steady. The other features were content to support this controlling upper part of the face; they made a graceful and fitting frame for the mind which revealed itself in the eyes and brow — and sought to do no more. Studying her afresh in this moment of her silence, he recalled the face of a young Piedmontese bishop who had come once to his school. It had the same episcopal serenity, the same wistful pride in youth's conquest of the things immortal, the same suggestion of intellectuality in' its clear pallor.

"I should dislike to seem rude," she said, slowly. "What is it that you want to ask?"

What was it indeed? He searched confusedly about in his mind for someone question entitled to precedence among the thousand to which answers would come in good time. He found nothing better than a query as to the connection between New Haven and Brighton.

"In this little book, " he explained, "there is a time for New Haven and for London, but I cannot find a mention of Brighton, yet I am expected there this evening, or perhaps, early to-morrow morning."

"I am sure I cannot tell you," she answered. "However, the places are not far apart. I should say there would certainly be trains."

She lifted the book again as she spoke, and adjusted her shoulders to the cushions. He made haste to prevent the interview from lapsing.

"I have never seen England," he urged dolefully, "and yet I am all English in my blood — and in my feelings, too."

A flicker of ironical perception played for an instant in her eye and at the comer of her lip. "I have heard that a certain class of Americans adopt that pose, " she remarked. "I dare say it is all right."

He did not' grasp her meaning all at once, though the willingness to give umbrage conveyed in her tone was clear enough. He looked doubtfully at her, before he spoke again. "Oh," he began, with hesitation— "yes, I see — you thought I was American. I am not in the least — I am all English. And it affects me very much — this thought that in a few hours now I am to see the real England. I am so excited about it, in fact, " he added with a deprecatory little laugh, "that I couldn't bear it not to talk."

She nodded comprehendingly. " I thought that your accent must be American — since it certainly isn't English."

"Oh, I have too facile an ear," he answered readily, as if the subject were by no means new to him. "I pick up every

accent that I hear. I have been much with English people, but even more with Americans and Australians. I always talk like the last family I have been in — until I enter another. I am by profession a private tutor — principally in languages — and so I know my failings in this matter very well."

She smiled at some passing retrospect. "You must have had an especially complete sense of my shortcomings as a linguist, too, I have often wondered what effect my French would produce upon an actual professor, but I should never have had the courage to experiment, if I had known. "

He waved his hand — a pale hand with veined, thin, nervous fingers, which she looked at in its foreign gesture. " Too much importance is attached to languages," he declared. "It is the cheapest and most trivial of acquirements, if it stands alone, or if it is not put to high uses. Parents have so often angered me over this: they do not care what is in their children's minds and hearts, but only for the polish and form of what is on their tongues. I have a different feeling about education. "

She nodded again, and laid the book aside. "You are coming to a country where everything will shock you, then," she said. "I would rather do scullery work, or break stones by the roadside, than be a schoolteacher in England."

"Oh, it's the same everywhere," he urged. "I would not think that the English were worse than the others. They are different, that is all. Besides, I do not think I shall be a teacher in England. Of course, I speak in the dark; for a few hours yet everything is uncertain. But as the old American senator at Monte Carlo used to say, 'I feel it in my bones' that I will not have to teach any more. "

The expression of her face seemed somehow not to invite autobiography at the moment. "The prospect of not having to work anymore for one's living, " she mused at him — "how curiously fascinating it always is! We know perfectly

well that it is good for us to work, and that we should be woefully unhappy if we did not work, and. yet we are forever charming our imagination with a vision of complete idleness. "

"I would not be idle!" the young man broke forth, enthusiastically. He leaned forward in his seat, and spoke with eager hands as well as words against the noise that filled the swaying carriage. "I have that same feeling — the longing to escape from the dull and foolish tasks I have to do — but I never say to myself that I would be idle. There are such a host of things to do in the world that are worth doing! But the men who have the time and the money, who are in the position to do these things — how is it, I ask myself, that they never think of doing them? It is the greatest of marvels to me. Then sometimes I wonder, if the chance and the power came to me, whether I also would sit down, and fold my hands, and do nothing. It is hard to say; who can be sure what is in him till he has been tested? Yet I like to think that I would prove the exception. It is only natural," he concluded, smilingly, "that one should try to think as well as possible of oneself."

The young lady surveyed his nervous, mobile face with thoughtful impassivity. "You seem to think, one way or another, a good deal about yourself," she remarked.

He bowed to her, with a certain exaggeration in his show of quite sincere humility which, she said to herself, had not been learned from his English-speaking connections.

"What you say is very true," he admitted with candor. "It is my fault — my failing. I know it only too well. "

"*My* fault is bad manners," she replied, disarmed by his self-abasement. "I had no business to say it at all. "

"Oh, no," he urged. "It is delightful to me that you did say it. I could not begin to tell you how good your words sounded in my ears. Honest and wise criticism is what I have not heard before in years. You do not get it in the South; there is flattery for you, and sneering, and praise as

much too high as blame is too cruel — but no candid, quiet judgments. Oh, I loved to hear you say that! It was like my brother — my older brother Salvator. He is in America now.

He is the only one who always said the truth to me. And I am glad, too, because — because it makes you seem like a friend to me, and I have been so agitated this whole week, so anxious and upset, and all without a soul to talk to, or advise with — and the pressure on me has been so great — "

He let the wandering sentence lose itself in the clamor of the train, and put the rest of his meaning into the glance with which he clung to hers. The appeal for sympathetic kindliness of treatment glowed in his eyes and shone upon his eager face.

She took time for her answer, and when she spoke it was hardly in direct reply. "Your business in England," she said, as unconcernedly as might be — "it is that, I take it, which causes so much anxiety. Fortunately it is soon to be settled — to-morrow, I think you said."

"I wish I might tell you about it," he responded with frank fervency. "I wish it — you cannot imagine how much!"

The look with which she received his words recalled to him her earlier manner. "I'm afraid — " she began, in a measured voice, and then stopped. Intuition helped him to read in her face the coming of a softer mood. Finally she smiled a little. " Really, this is all very quaint," she said, and the smile crept into her voice. "But the train is slowing down — there is no time now."

They were indeed moving through the street of a town, at a pace which had been insensibly lowered while they talked. The irregular outlines of docks and boat-slips, overhanging greenish water, revealed themselves between dingy houses covered with signs and posters. At the barriers crossing the streets were clustered groups of philosophic observers, headed by the inevitable young soldier with his hands in the pockets of his red trousers,

and flanked by those brown old women in white caps who seem always to be unoccupied, yet mysteriously do everything that is done.

"This is Dieppe, then?" he asked, with a collecting hand put out for his wraps.

The train had halted, and doors were being opened for tickets.

"We sit still, here, and go on to the wharf," she explained.

"And then to the boat!" he cried. "How long is it?— the voyage on the boat, I mean. Three hours and over! Excellent!"

She laughed outright as she rose, and got together her books and papers.

"I thought you were a Frenchman when I first saw you," she confided to him over her shoulder. "But no Frenchman at Dieppe ever yet shouted 'Excellent!' with his face turned toward the New Haven steamers."

The mirth in her tone was so welcome to him that he laughed in turn, without any clear idea of her words. He gathered her handbag up along with his own, and when she demurred he offered her gay defiance.

"It is the terrible boldness of a timid person," he prattled, as he helped her down the steps, "but you must perceive that in the face of it you are quite helpless. Since I was born, I have never really had my own way before. But now I begin to believe in my star. After all, one is not an Englishman for nothing."

"Oh, it is comparatively easy to be an Englishman in Dieppe," she made answer.

Chapter II

The sky was dappled azure overhead, the water calm and fresh-hued below. When the ship's company had disposed itself, and the vessel was making way outside, there were numerous long gaps of unpeopled space on the windy side, and to one of these the young couple tacitly bent their steps. They leaned against the rail, standing close together, with their faces lifted to the strong sweet breeze.

Viewed thus side by side, it could be seen that of the two the young man was just perceptibly the taller, but his extreme fragility excused his companion's conception of him as a small man. On his head he had pulled tight for the voyage a little turban of a cap, which accentuated the foreign note of his features and expression. He was dark of skin and hair, with deep-brown eyes both larger and softer than is common with his sex, even in the South. The face, high and regular in shape, had in repose the careworn effect of maturer years than the boyish figure indicated. In the animation of discussion this face took on, for the most part, the rather somber brilliancy of a strenuous earnestness. Now, as it confronted the stiff Channel wind, it was illumined by the unaccustomed light of a frivolous mood. The ends of his slight mustache were lifted in a continuous smile.

"It is my gayest day for many, many years," he told her, after a little pause in the talk. They had become great friends in this last half -hour. In the reaction from the questionable restraint of the coupé to the broad, sunlit freedom of the steamer's deck, the girl had revealed in generous measure a side of her temperament for which he had been unprepared. She had a humorous talent, and,

once she had gained a clew to his perceptive capacities in this direction, it had pleased her to make him laugh by droll accounts of her experiences and observations in Paris. She had been there for a fortnight's holiday, quite by herself, she told him, and there was something in her tone which rendered it impossible for him to ask himself if this was at all unusual among English young ladies. His knowledge of Paris was also that of a stranger, and he followed her whimsical narrative of blunders and odd mistakes with a zest heightened by a recollection of his own.

"When have I laughed so much before?" he cried now. A long sigh, as of surprised relief, followed his words. "Well — I had looked forward to coming in a different spirit to England. With some hopes and a good courage — yes. But with a merry heart — how could I have foretold that.? It was my good angel who put that coupé ticket into my head, and so brought me to you. Ah, how angry you were! I see you now, pulling at that door."

"Ah, well," she said in extenuation, "how could I know? I never dreamed that the whole coupé was not mine— and when I saw that odious guard opening the door, to force in some wretched little Continental creature — I mean, that was my momentary thought — and naturally I — "

An involuntary sidelong glance of his eyes upward toward the crown of her hat, passed mute comment on her unfinished remark. She bit her lip in self -reproof at sight of the dusky flush on his cheek.

"It is the only un-English thing about me," he said, with a pathetically proud attempt at a smile. "My father was a tall, big man, and so is my brother Salvator."

A new consciousness of the susceptibility of this young man to slights and wounds spread in the girl's mind. It was so cruelly easy to prick his thin skin! But it was correspondingly easy to soothe and charm him — and that was the better part. His character and temperament mapped themselves out before her mind's eye. She read

him as at once innocent and complicated. He could be full of confidence in a stranger, like herself, but his doubts about his own values were distressing. The uncased antennae of his self-consciousness were extended in all directions, as if to solicit injury. She had caught in his brown eyes the suggestion of an analogy to a friendless spaniel — the capacity for infinite gratitude united with conviction that only kicks were to be expected. It was more helpful to liken him to a woman. In the gentle and timid soul of a convent-bred maiden he nourished the stormy ambitions of a leader of men. It was a nun who boldly dreamed of commanding on the field of battle.

"I had a feeling," she said to him, so softly that the tone was almost tender, "that you must be like your mother."

She rightly judged him to be her elder, but for the moment her mood was absorbingly maternal. "Let us sit down here," she added, moving toward the bench facing the rail. "You were going to tell me — about her, was it?"

He spread his rugs over their knees as they sat together in the fresh wind.

"No, it was not so much of her," he said. "I have much to think about her — not much to put into words. She died five years ago — nearly six now — and I was so much at school that I saw very little of her in the latter years. Salvator was with her always, though, to the end, although he was not her own son. We are half-brothers, but no one could have been fonder than he was of my mother, or a better son to her. After she died, he still kept me in school, and this was curious too, because he hated all my teachers bitterly. Salvator is fierce against the church, yet he kept me where I had been put years before, with the Christian Brothers at the Bon Rencontre, in Toulon. When at last I left them, Salvator took me with him for a period — he is an expert and a dealer in gems — and then I became a private tutor. Four years or so of that — and now I am here." He added, as upon an afterthought: "You must not think that I failed to

love my mother. She was sweet and good, and very tender to me, and I used to weep a great deal after I left her, but it was not my fortune to be so much with her as Salvator was. I think of her, but there is not much to say."

The repetition of this formula suggested no comment to his companion, and he went on.

"The real memory of my childhood is my father, although I saw him only once. Salvator says I saw him oftener, but if so all the recollections jumble themselves together in my mind, to make a single impression. I was five years old; it was in the early summer, in 1875. My father had been fighting against the Prussians when I was born. By the time I was old enough to know people, he was away in Spain with Don Carlos. He died there, of wounds and fever, at Seo de Urgel, in August of that same year, 1875. But first he came to see us — it would have been in June, I think — and we were living at Cannes. He had some secret Carlist business, Salvator says. I knew nothing of that. I know only that I saw him, and understood very well who he was, and fixed him in my mind so that I should never, never forget him. How strange a thing it is about children! I have only the dimmest general idea of how my mother looked when I was that age; I cannot remember her at all in the odd clothes which her pictures show she wore then, though I saw them constantly. Yet my father comes once and I carry his image till Judgment Day."

"Poor mothers!" sighed the girl, under her breath. "No, it was nothing. Goon."

"I knew that he was a soldier, and that wherever there were wars he went to have his share of fighting. I suppose it was this which gripped my imagination, even as a baby. I could read when I was five, and Salvator had told me about our father's battles. He had been in the Mutiny in India, and he was in Sicily against Garibaldi, and he was with the Austrians four years before I was born, and in the French Foreign Legion afterward. I think I knew all this when I saw

him — and if I did not, then I feel that I could have learned it from just looking at him. He was like a statue of War. Ah, how I remember him — the tall, strong, straight, dark, hard-faced, silent man!"

"And you loved him!'' commented his companion, with significance.

He shook his head smilingly. The analysis in retrospect of his own childish emotions had a pleasant interest for him. " No; there was no question of love, at all. For example, he liked Salvator — who was then a big boy of fifteen — and he took him off to Spain with him when he left. I cannot remember that he so much as put his hand on my head, or paid the slightest attention to me. He looked at me in a grave way if I put myself in front of his eyes, just as he looked at other things, but he would not turn his eyes to follow me if I moved aside. Do you know that to my fancy that was superb? I was not in the least jealous of Salvator. I only said to myself that when I was his age, I also would march to fight in my father's battles. And I was proud that he did not bend to me, or put himself out to please me, this huge, cold-eyed, lion-like father of mine. If he had ever kissed me I should have been ashamed — for us both. But nothing was farther from his thoughts. He went away, and at the door he spoke for the first time in my hearing of me. He twisted his thumb toward me, where I stood in the shelter of my mother's skirts. Mind, he's an Englishman! he said — and turned on his heel. I have the words in my ears still. 'Mind, he's an Englishman!' "

"There is England!" she cried.

They stood up, and his eager eye, following the guidance of her finger, found the faint, broken, thin line of white on the distant water's edge. Above it, as if they were a part of it, hung in a figured curtain soft clouds which were taking on a rosy tint from the declining sun. He gazed at the remote prospect in silence, but with a quickened breath.

"It is the first time that *I* have seen it like this — coming toward it, I mean, from somewhere else," she remarked at last. "I had never been outside England before."

He did not seem to hear her. With another lingering, clinging gaze at the white speck, he shook himself a little, and turned. "And now I want to tell you about this new, wonderful thing — about why I am this minute within sight of England. You will say it is very strange."

They moved to their bench again, and he spread the wraps once more, but this time they did not sit quite so close together. It was as if the mere sight of that pale, respectable slip of land on the horizon had in some subtle way affected their relation to each other.

"A week ago," he began afresh, "at Nice, a messenger from the Credit Lyonnais brought me a note saying they wished to see me at the bank. They had, it seems, searched for me in several towns along the Riviera, because I had been moving about. It was demanded that I should prove my identity by witnesses, and when that was done I was given a sum of money, and a sealed letter addressed to me, bearing simply my name, Mr. Christian Tower — nothing more. I hurried outside and read its contents. I was requested to get together all my papers — "

He stopped short, arrested by a sharp, half-stifled exclamation from her lips. She had continued looking at him after his mention of his name — at first absent-mindedly, as if something in his talk had sent her thoughts unconsciously astray; then with lifted head, and brows bent together in evident concentration upon some new phase of what he had been saying. Now she interrupted him with visible excitement.

"You say Christian Tower!" She pushed the words at him hurriedly. "What was your father's name?"

"He was always known as Captain Tower, but I have read it in my papers — his first name was Ambrose."

She had risen to her feet, in evident agitation, and now strode across to the rail. As he essayed to follow her, she turned, and forced the shadow of a smile into her lips; her eyes remained frightened. "It is all right," she said with a gasping attempt at reassurance. " I was queer for just an instant; it's all right. Go on, please. You were to get together your papers — "

"And bring them to Brighton," he said, much disconcerted. "That is all. But won't you sit down?"

"I think I would rather stand," she answered. Her composure was returning, and with it the power to view altogether, and in their proper relation to one another, the several elements of the situation his words had revealed to her. Upon examination, it was curiosity that she felt rather than personal concern — an astonished and most exigent curiosity. But even before this, it grew apparent to her as she thought, came her honorable duty to this young man who had confided in her.

"I think I ought to tell you," she began, beckoning him nearer where she stood; "yes, you should be told that in all human probability I know the story. It is impossible that I should be mistaken — two such names never got together by accident. And I can assure you that the whole thing is even more extraordinary and astounding than you can possibly imagine. There are people in England who will curl up like leaves thrown on the fire when they see you. But for the moment" — she paused, with a perplexed face and hesitating voice — "go on; tell me a little more. It isn't clear to me — how much you know. Don't be afraid; I will be entirely frank with you, when you have finished."

He patted the rail nervously with his hand, and stared at her in pained bewilderment and impatience. "How much do I know?" he faltered vaguely. "Very little; almost nothing. There was no explanation in the letter. The bankers said nothing, save that they were to give me a thousand francs. But one does not get a thousand francs merely because the

wind has changed. There must be a reason for it; and what reason is possible except that there is some inheritance for me? So I argued it out — to myself. I have thought of nothing else, awake or asleep, for the whole week."

He halted, with anxious appeal in his eyes, and his hands outspread to beseech enlightenment from her. She nodded to show that she understood. " In a minute or two, when I have got it into shape in my mind, " she said soothingly. "But meantime go on. I want you to talk. What have you done during the week? "

Christian threw his hands outward. "Done?" he asked plaintively. "Murdered time some way or the other. I was free to move an hour after I had read the letter. The money was more than I had ever had before. It was intolerable to me — the thought of not being in motion. In the 'Indicateur' I got the times of trains, and I formed my plan, Avignon I had never seen, and then Le Puy — there was a wonderful description of it in a magazine I had read — and then to Paris, and next to Rouen. It was at Rouen that I slept last night. It was my first night's good sleep — I had tired myself out so completely. Always walking with the map in my mind, going from one church to another, talking to the Suisse, bending back my head to examine capitals and arches,' forcing myself to take an interest in what I saw every little minute — so I have come somehow through the week. But now here is rich England within plain sight, and here are you, my new friend — and all my life I have been so poor and without friends!"

He tightened his hand upon the rail, and abruptly turned his face away. She saw the shine of tears in his eyes.

"Come and sit down again," she said, with a sisterly hand on his arm. "I know how to tell it to you now. "

"But you truly know nothing about the Towers — or Torrs — your father's family?" she continued, when they were once again seated. " It sounds incredible! I can hardly

realize how you could have lived all these years and not — but how old are you? "

"Twenty-six."

" — And not got some inkling of who — of who your father was?"

"My mother never told me. Perhaps she did not know altogether, herself. I cannot say as to that. And if Salvator knew — that I cannot tell, either. He is a curious man, my brother Salvator. He talks so you would think you saw him inside out — but he keeps many things to himself none the less. "

"Yes — that brother of yours," she said abstractedly. "I have been thinking about him. But it can't be that he has any importance in the game, else the Jews would have sent for him instead of you. They waste no time — they make no errors."

"The Jews!" he murmured at her, with no comprehension in his eyes.

She smiled. "I have been arranging it in my mind. The thing was like a black fog to me when you first spoke. I had to search about for a light before I could make a start. But when I stumbled across the thought, 'It is the Jews' work,' then it was not very hard to make out the rest. I could almost tell you who it is that is to meet you at Brighton. It is Mr. Soman. Is it not?"

He assented with an impulsive movement of head and hands The gaze that he fixed upon her sparkled with excitement.

"He is Lord Julius' man of business, " she explained to his further mystification. "No doubt he has had one of those green eyes of his on you ever since you were a fortnight old. It frightens one to think of it — the merciless and unerring precision of their system. 'Is there anything they don't know?"

" I am afraid of Jews myself, " he faltered, striving to connect himself with what he dimly perceived of her mood.

"But what have they against me? What can they do to me? I owe nothing; they can't make me responsible for what other people, strangers to me, have done, can they? And why should they give me a thousand francs? It is I," he finished hopelessly, "I who am in the black fog. Tell me, I beg you, what is it that they want with me?"

She put a reassuring hand upon his arm, and the steady, genial light in her calm eyes brought him instantaneous solace. "You have not the slightest cause for fear, " she told him, gently. "Quite the contrary. They are not going to hurt you. So far from it, they have taken you up; they will wrap you in cotton wool and nurse you as if you were the Koh-i-noor diamond. You may rest easy, my dear sir; you may close your eyes, and fold your hands, and lean back against Israel as heavily as you like. It is all right so far as you are concerned. But the others" — she paused, and looked seaward with lifted brows and a mouth twisted to express sardonic comment upon some amazing new outlook — "eye-ee! the others!"

"Still you do not tell me!" For the first time she caught in his voice the hint of a virile, and even an imperious note. Behind the half -petulant entreaty of the tired boy, there was a man's spirit of dictation. She deferred to it unconsciously.

" The Lord Julius that I spoke of is — let me see — he is your great-uncle — your grandfather's younger brother."

"But if he is a Jew — " began Christian, in an awed whisper.

"No — no; he is nothing of the sort. That is to say, he is not Jewish in blood. But he married a great heiress of the race — whole millions sterling came to him from the huge fortune of the Aronsons in Holland — and he likes Jewish people — of the right sort. He is an old man now, and his son, Emanuel, has immense influence over him. You should see them sitting together like two love-birds on a perch. They idolize each other, and they both worship Emanuel's

wife. If they weren't the two best men in the world, and if she weren't the most remarkable woman anywhere, they would utterly spoil her. "

"He — this lord — is my greatuncle, " Christian recalled her to his subject. "He and his son are good men. "

"They are the ones I referred to as the Jews. That is how they are spoken of in the family — to distinguish them from the senior branch — the sons and grandsons of your grandfather. Fix that distinction in you mind. There is the elder group, who have titles and miles of mortgaged estates, no money to speak of and still less brains — "

"That is the group that I belong to?" He offered the interruption with a little twinkle in his eyes. It was patent that his self-possession had returned. Even this limited and tentative measure of identification with the most desirable and deep-rooted realities in that wonderful island that he could see coming nearer to meet him, had sufficed to quell the restless flutter of his nerves.

She nodded with a responsive gleam of sportiveness on her face. "Yes, your place in it is a very curious one. But first get this clear in your mind — that the younger group, whom they speak of as the Jews, have money beyond counting, and have morals and intelligence moreover. Between these two groups no love is lost. In fact, they hate each other. The difference is the Christians go about cursing the Jews, whereas the Jews wisely shrug their shoulders and say nothing. No one suspected that they would do anything, either — but — oh, this is going to be an awful business!"

He held himself down to a fine semblance of dignified calm. "Tell me more, " he bade her, with an effect of temperate curiosity.

"Now comes tragedy, " she went on, and the hint of sprightliness disappeared from her face and tone. "It is really one of the most terrible stories that could be told. There is a very aged man — he must be nearly ninety —

lying at death's door in his great seat in Shropshire. He is at death's door, I said, but he has the strength and will of a giant, and though he is half paralyzed, half blind, half everything, still he has his weight against the door, and no one knows how long he can hold it closed. It is your grandfather that I am speaking of. His name also is Christian."

The young man nodded gravely. "My father would have fought death that way too, if they had not shot him to pieces, and heaped fever on top of that," he commented.

The girl bit her lip and flushed awkwardly for an instant "Let me go on," she said then, and hurried forward. "This old man had three sons — not counting the priest, Lord David, who doesn't come into the thing. The first of these sons, also Christian, had three sons, and he and they were all alive six months ago. They are all dead now, two drowned in their yacht, one lost in the 'Castle Drummond,' one killed in Matabeleland. Lord David, the priest, the next brother, died last year — childless of course. There remained in England two sons of another brother who died some years ago. Lord Edward, and this horrible mowing down of human lives left them apparently nearest to the very aged man, your grandfather. Do you follow all that?"

"I think I do," said Christian. "If I don't I will pick it up afterward. In mercy's name, do not stop!"

"The Jews, saying nothing, had lost sight of nothing. There was still another brother who had lived abroad for many years, who died abroad twenty years ago. You are getting to the climax now. The Jews must have kept an eye on this wandering cousin of theirs; it is evident they knew he left a son capable of inheriting, and that they did not let this son escape from view. Because Lord Ambrose Torr was older than Lord Edward, his brother, it happens now that the son of that Ambrose — "

The young man abruptly rose, and moved along to the rail. He had signified by a rapid backward gesture of the

hand his momentary craving for solitude; he stretched this hand now slowly, as if unconsciously, toward the sunset glow on sky and sea, in the heart of which lay imbedded a thick line of cream-colored cliffs, escalloped under a close covering of soft olive-hued verdure. The profile of his uplifted face, as he gazed thus before him into the light, seemed to the eyes of the girl transfigured,

He stood thus, rapt and motionless, for minutes, until her mind had time to formulate the suspicion that this was all intolerable play-acting, and to dismiss it again as unworthy. Then he returned all at once to her side, apparently with a shamefaced kind of perception of her thoughts. He was flushed and uneasy, and shuffled his hands in and out of the pockets of his great-coat. He did not seat himself, but stood looking down at her.

"What is my grandfather?" he asked, with a husky, difficult voice.

"The Duke of Glastonbury."

"I do not understand," he began, hesitatingly; "it is not clear to me about my father. Why should he — "

She rose in turn, with swift decision, as if she had been alertly watching for the question. "That is what you must not ask me," she said, hurriedly. "I think I will move about a little. The wind is colder here. I am getting chilled. "

They strolled about together, conducting a fitful conversation, but as often gazing in silence at the bulk of the headlands they were approaching, gray and massive now in the evening light. She answered freely enough the queries he put, but between these he lapsed into an abstraction which she respected. More than once he spoke of the extraordinary confusion into which her story had thrown his thoughts, and she philosophically replied that she could well understand it.

An hour later they had passed the fatuous inspection of the customs people, and confronted the imminence of leave-taking. Constraint enveloped them as in a mantle.