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CHAPTER I.
THE COMING OF TINY.

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Swift of Wallandoon was visibly distraught. He had driven over to the township in the heat of the afternoon to meet the coach. The coach was just in sight, which meant that it could not arrive for at least half an hour. Yet nothing would induce Swift to wait quietly in the hotel veranda; he paid no sort of attention to the publican who pressed him to do so. The iron roofs of the little township crackled in the sun with a sound as of distant musketry; their sharp-edged shadows lay on the sand like sheets of zinc that might be lifted up in one piece; and a hot wind in full blast played steadily upon Swift's neck and ears. He had pulled up in the shade, and was leaning forward, with his wide-awake tilted over his nose, and his eyes on a cloud of dust between the bellying sand-hills and the dark blue sky. The cloud advanced, revealing from time to time a growing speck. That speck was the coach which Swift had come to meet.

He was a young man with broad shoulders and good arms, and a general air of smartness and alacrity about which there could be no mistake. He had dark hair and a fair mustache; his eye was brown and alert; and much wind and sun had reddened a face that commonly gave the impression of complete capability with a sufficiency of force. This afternoon, however, Swift lacked the confident look of the thoroughly capable young man. And he was even younger than he looked; he was young enough to fancy that the owner of Wallandoon, who was a passenger by the

approaching coach, had traveled five hundred miles expressly to deprive John Swift of the fine position to which recent good luck had promoted him.

He could think of nothing else to bring Mr. Luttrell all the way from Melbourne at the time of year when a sheep station causes least anxiety. The month was April, there had been a fair rainfall since Christmas, and only in his last letter Mr. Luttrell had told Swift that all he need do for the present was to take care of the fences and let the sheep take care of themselves. The next news was a telegram to the effect that Mr. Luttrell was coming up country to see for himself how things were going at Wallandoon. Having stepped into the managership by an accident, and even so merely as a trial man, young Swift at once made sure that his trial was at an end. It did not strike him that in spite of his youth he was the ideal person for the post. Yet this was obvious. He had five years' experience of the station he was to manage. The like merit is not often in the market. Swift seemed to forget that. Neither did he take comfort from the fact that Mr. Luttrell was an old friend of his family in Victoria, and hitherto his own highly satisfied employer. Hitherto, or until the last three months, he had not tried to manage Mr. Luttrell's station. If he had failed in that time to satisfy its owner, then he would at once go elsewhere; but for many things he wished most keenly to stay at Wallandoon; and he was thinking of these things now, while the coach grew before his eyes.

Of his five years on Wallandoon the last two had been infinitely less enjoyable than the three that had gone before. There was a simple reason for the difference. Until two years

ago Mr. Luttrell had himself managed the station, and had lived there with his wife and family. That had answered fairly well while the family were young, thanks to a competent governess for the girls. But when the girls grew up it became time to make a change. The squatter was a wealthy man, and he could perfectly well afford the substantial house which he had already built for himself in a Melbourne suburb. The social splashing of his wife and daughters after their long seclusion in the wilderness was also easily within his means, if not entirely to his liking; but he was a mild man married to a weak woman; and he happened to be bent on a little splash on his own account in politics. Choosing out of many applicants the best possible manager for Wallandoon, the squatter presently entered the Victorian legislature, and embraced the new interests so heartily that he was nearly two years in discovering his best possible manager to be both a failure and a fraud.

It was this discovery that had given Swift an opening whose very splendor accounted for his present doubts and fears. Had his chance been spoilt by Herbert Luttrell, who had lately been on Wallandoon as Swift's overseer, for some ten days only, when the two young fellows had failed to pull together? This was not likely, for Herbert at his worst was an honest ruffian, who had taken the whole blame (indeed it was no more than his share) of that fiasco. Swift, however, could think of nothing else; nor was there time; for now the coach was so close that the crack of the driver's whip was plainly heard, and above the cluster of heads on the box a white handkerchief fluttered against the sky.

The publican whom Swift had snubbed addressed another remark to him from the veranda:

"There's a petticoat on board."

"So I see."

The coach came nearer.

"She's your boss's daughter," affirmed the publican—"the best of 'em."

"So you're cracking!"

"Well, wait a minute. What now?"

Swift prolonged the minute. "You're right," he said, hastily tying his reins to the brake.

"I am so."

"Heaven help me!" muttered Swift as he jumped to the ground. "There's nothing ready for her. They might have told one!"

A moment later five heaving horses stood sweating in the sun, and Swift, reaching up his hand, received from a gray-bearded gentleman on the box seat a grip from which his doubts and fears should have died on the spot. If they did, however, it was only to make way for a new and unlooked-for anxiety, for little Miss Luttrell was smiling down at him through a brown gauze veil, as she poked away the handkerchief she had waved, leaving a corner showing against her dark brown jacket; and how she was to be made comfortable at the homestead, all in a minute, Swift did not know.

"She insisted on coming," said Mr. Luttrell, with a smile. "Is it any good her getting down?"

"Can you take me in?" asked the girl.

"We'll do our best," said Swift, holding the ladder for her descent.

Her shoes made a daintier imprint in the sand than it had known for two whole years. She smiled as she gave her hand to Swift; it was small, too, and Swift had not touched a lady's hand for many months. There was very little of her altogether, but the little was entirely pleasing. Embarrassed though he was, Swift was more than pleased to see the young girl again, and her smiles that struggled through the brown gauze like sunshine through a mist. She had not worn gauze veils two years ago; and two years ago she had been content with fare that would scarcely please her to-day, while naturally the living at the station was rougher now than in the days of the ladies. It was all very well for her to smile. She ought never to have come without a word of warning. Swift felt responsible and aggrieved.

He helped Mr. Luttrell to carry their baggage from the coach to the buggy drawn up in the shade. Miss Luttrell went to the horses' heads and stroked their noses; they were Bushman and Brownlock, the old safe pair she had many a time driven herself. In a moment she was bidden to jump up. There had been very little luggage to transfer. The most cumbrous piece was a hamper, of which Swift formed expectations that were speedily confirmed. For Miss Luttrell remarked, pointing to the hamper as she took her seat:

"At least we have brought our own rations; but I am afraid they will make you horribly uncomfortable behind there?"

Swift was on the back seat. "Not a bit," he answered; "I was much more uncomfortable until I saw the hamper."

"Don't you worry about us, Jack," said Mr. Luttrell as they drove off. "Whatever you do, don't worry about Tiny. Give her travelers' rations and send her to the travelers' hut. That's all she deserves, when she wasn't on the way-bill. She insisted on coming at the last moment; I told her it wasn't fair."

"But it's very jolly," said Swift gallantly.

"It was just like her," Mr. Luttrell chuckled; "she's as unreliable as ever."

The girl had been looking radiantly about her as they drove along the single broad, straggling street of the township. She now turned her head to Swift, and her eyes shot through her veil in a smile. That abominable veil went right over her broad-brimmed hat, and was gathered in and made fast at the neck. Swift could have torn it from her head; he had not seen a lady smile for months. Also, he was beginning to make the astonishing discovery that somehow she was altered, and he was curious to see how much, which was impossible through the gauze.

"Is that true?" he asked her. He had known her for five years.

"I suppose so," she returned carelessly; and immediately her sparkling eyes wandered. "There's old Mackenzie in the post office veranda. He was a detestable old man, but I must wave to him; it's so good to be back!"

"But you own to being unreliable?" persisted Swift.

"I don't know," Miss Luttrell said, tossing the words to him over her shoulder, because her attention was not for the manager. "Is it so very dreadful if I am? What's the good of being reliable? It's much more amusing to take people by

surprise. Your face was worth the journey when you saw me on the coach! But you see I haven't surprised Mackenzie; he doesn't look the least impressed; I dare say he thinks it was last week we all went away. I hate him!"

"Here are the police barracks," said Swift, seeing that all her interest was in the old landmarks; "we have a new sergeant since you left."

"If *he's* in *his* veranda I shall shout out to him who I am, and how long I have been away, and how good it is to get back."

"She's quite capable of doing it," Mr. Luttrell chimed in, chuckling afresh; "there's never any knowing what she'll do next."

But the barracks veranda was empty, and it was the last of the township buildings. There was now nothing ahead but the rim of scrub, beyond which, among the sand-hills, sweltered the homestead of Wallandoon.

"I've come back with a nice character, have I not?" the girl now remarked, turning to Swift with another smile.

"You must have earned it; I can quite believe that you have," laughed Swift. He had known her in short dresses.

"Ha! ha! You see he remembers all about you, my dear."

"Do you, Jack?" the girl said.

"Do I not!" said Jack.

And he said no more. He was grateful to her for addressing him, though only once, by his Christian name. He had been intimate with the whole family, and it seemed both sensible and pleasant to resume a friendly footing from the first. He would have called the girl by her Christian name too, only this was so seldom heard among her own

people. Tiny she was by nature, and Tiny she had been by name also, from her cradle. Certainly she had been Tiny to Swift two years ago, and already she had called him Jack; but he saw in neither circumstance any reason why she should be Tiny to him still. It was different from a proper name. Her proper name was Christina, but unreliable though she confessedly was, she might perhaps be relied upon to jeer if he came out with that. And he would not call her "Miss Luttrell." He thought about it and grew silent; but this was because his thoughts had glided from the girl's name to the girl herself.

She had surprised him in more ways than one—in so many ways that already he stood almost in awe of the little person whom formerly he had known so well. Christina had changed, as it was only natural that she should have changed; but because we are prone to picture our friends as last we saw them, no matter how long ago, not less natural was Swift's surprise. It was unreasoning, however, and not the kind of surprise to last. In a few minutes his wonder was that Christina had changed so little. To look at her she had scarcely changed at all. A certain finality of line was perceptible in the figure, but if anything she was thinner than of old. As for her face, what he could see of it through the maddening gauze was the face of Swift's memory. Her voice was a little different; in it was a ring of curiously deliberate irony, charming at first as a mere affectation. A more noteworthy alteration had taken place in her manner: she had acquired the manner of a finished young woman of the world and of society. Already she had shown that she could become considerably excited without forfeiting any of

the grace and graciousness and self-possession that were now conspicuously hers; and before the homestead was reached she exhibited such a saintly sweetness in repose as only enhanced the lambent deviltry playing about most of her looks and tones. If Swift was touched with awe in her presence, that can hardly be wondered at in one who went for months together without setting eyes upon a lady.

The drive was a long one—so long that when they sighted the homestead it came between them and the setting sun. The main building with its long, regular roof lay against the red sky like some monstrous ingot. The hot wind had fallen, and the station pines stood motionless, drawn in ink. As they drove through the last gate they could hear the dogs barking; and Christina distinguished the voice of her own old short-haired collie, which she had bequeathed to Swift, who was repaid for the sound with a final smile. He hardly knew why, but this look made the girl's old self live to him as neither look nor word had done yet, though her face was turned away from the light, and the stupid veil still fell before it.

But the less fascinating side of her arrival was presently engaging his attention. He hastily interviewed Mrs. Duncan, an elderly godsend new to the place since the Luttrells had left it, and never so invaluable as now. Into Mrs. Duncan's hands Christina willingly submitted herself, for she was really tired out. Swift did not see her again until supper, which afforded further proofs of Mrs. Duncan's merits in a time of need. Meanwhile, Mr. Luttrell had finally disabused him of the foolish fears he had entertained while waiting for the coach. Swift's youth, which has shown itself in these

fears, comes out also in the ease with which he now forgot them. They had made him unhappy for three whole days; yet he dared to feel indignant because his owner, who had confirmed his command instead of dismissing him from it, chose to talk sheep at the supper table. Swift seemed burning to hear of the eldest Miss Luttrell, who was Miss Luttrell no longer, having married a globe-trotting Londoner during her first season and gone home. He asked Christina several questions about Ruth (whose other name he kept forgetting) and her husband. But Mr. Luttrell lost no chance of rounding up the conversation and yarding it in the sheep pens; and Swift had the ingratitude to resent this. Still more did he resent the hour he was forced to spend in the store after supper, examining the books and discussing recent results and future plans with Mr. Luttrell, while his subordinate, the storekeeper, enjoyed the society of Christina. The business in the store was not only absurdly premature and irksome in itself, but it made it perfectly impossible for Swift to hear any more that night of the late Ruth Luttrell, whose present name was not to be remembered. He found it hard to possess his soul in patience and to answer questions satisfactorily under such circumstances. For an hour, indeed, he did both; but the station store faced the main building, and when Tiny Luttrell appeared in the veranda of the latter with a lighted candle in her hand, he could do neither any longer. Saying candidly that he must bid her good-night, he hurried out of the store and across the yard, and was in time to catch Christina at one end of the broad veranda which entirely surrounded the house.

At supper Mr. Luttrell had made him take the head of the table, by virtue of his office, declaring that he himself was merely a visitor. And on the strength of that Swift was perhaps justified now in adding a host's apology to his good-night. "I'm afraid you'll have to rough it most awfully," was what he said.

"Far from it. You have given me my old room, the one we papered with *Australasians*, if you remember; they are only a little more fly-blown than they used to be."

This was Christina's reply, which naturally led to more.

"But it won't be as comfortable as it used to be," said Swift unhappily; "and it won't be what you are accustomed to nowadays."

"Never mind, it's the dearest little den in the colonies!"

"That sounds as if you were glad to get back to Riverina?"

"Glad? No one knows how glad I am."

One person knew now. The measure of her gladness was expressed in her face not less than in her tones, and it was no ordinary measure. Over the candle she held in her hand Swift was enabled for the first time to peer unobstructedly into her face. He found it more winsome than ever, but he noticed some ancient blemishes under the memorable eyes. She had, in fact, some freckles, which he recognized with the keenest joy. She might stoop to a veil—she had not sunk to doctoring her complexion; she had come back to the bush an incomplete worldling after all. Yet there was that in her face which made him feel a stranger to her still.

"Do you know," he said, smiling, "that I'm in a great funk of you? I can't say quite what it is, but somehow you're so

grand. I suppose it's Melbourne."

Miss Luttrell thanked him, bowing so low that her candle shed grease upon the boards. "You've altered too," she added in his own manner; "I suppose it's being boss. But I haven't seen enough of you to be sure. You evidently told off your new storekeeper to entertain me for the evening. He is a trying young man; he *will* talk. But of course he is a new chum fresh from home."

"Still he's a very good little chap; but it wasn't my fault that he and I didn't change places. Mr. Luttrell wanted to speak to me about several things, besides glancing through the books; I thought we might have put it off, and I wondered how you were getting on. By the way, it struck me once or twice that your father was coming up to give me the sack; and it's just the reverse, for now I'm permanent manager."

He told her this with a natural exultation, but she did not seem impressed by it. "Do you know why he did come up?" she asked him.

"Yes; for his Easter holidays, chiefly."

"And why I would come with him?"

"No; I'm afraid we never mentioned you. I suppose you came for a holiday too?"

"Shall I tell you why I did come?"

"I wish you would."

"Well, I came to say good-by to Wallandoon," said Christina solemnly.

"You're going to be married!" exclaimed Swift, with conviction, but with perfect nonchalance.

"Not if I know it," cried Christina. "Are you?"

"Not I."

"But there's Miss Trevor of Meringul!"

"I see them once in six months."

"That may be in the bond."

"Well, never mind Miss Trevor of Meringul. You haven't told me how it is you've come to say good-by to the station, Miss Luttrell of Wallandoon."

"Then I'll tell you, seriously: it's because I sail for England on the 4th of May."

"For England!"

"Yes, and I'm not at all keen about it, I can tell you. But I'm not going to see England, I'm going to see Ruth; Australia's worth fifty Englands any day."

Swift had recovered from his astonishment. "I don't know," he said doubtfully; "most of us would like a trip home, you know, just to see what the old country's like; though I dare say it isn't all it's cracked up to be."

"Of course it isn't. I hate it!"

"But if you've never been there?"

"I judge from the people—from the samples they send out. Your new storekeeper is one; you meet worse down in Melbourne. Herbert's going with me; he's going to Cambridge, if they'll have him. Didn't you know that? But he could go alone, and if it wasn't for Ruth I wouldn't cross Hobson's Bay to see their old England!"

The serious bitterness of her tone struck him afterward as nothing less than grotesque; but at the moment he was gazing into her face, thoughtfully yet without thoughts.

"It's good for Herbert," he said presently. "I couldn't do anything with him here; he offered to fight me when I tried

to make him work. I suppose he will be three or four years at Cambridge; but how long are you going to stay with Mrs. —Mrs. Ruth?"

"How stupid you are at remembering a simple name! Do try to remember that her name is Holland. I beg your pardon, Jack, but you have been really very forgetful this evening. I think it must be Miss Trevor of Meringul."

"It isn't. I'm very sorry. But you haven't told me how long you think of staying at home."

"How long?" said the young girl lightly. "It may be for years and years, and it may be forever and ever!"

He looked at her strangely, and she darted out her hand.

"Good-night again, Jack."

"Good-night again."

What with the pauses, each of them an excellent opportunity for Christina to depart, it had taken them some ten minutes to say that which ought not to have lasted one. But you must know that this was nothing to their last good-night, on the self-same spot two years before, when she had rested in his arms.

CHAPTER II.
SWIFT OF WALLANDOON.

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Christina was awakened in the morning by the holland blind flapping against her open window. It was a soft, insinuating sound, that awoke one gradually, and to Christina both the cause and the awakening itself seemed incredibly familiar. So had she lain and listened in the past, as each day broke in her brain. When she opened her eyes the shadow of the sash wriggled on the blind as it flapped, a blade of sunshine lay under the door that opened upon the veranda, and neither sight was new to her. The same sheets of the *Australasian* with which her own hands had once lined the room, for want of a conventional wallpaper, lined it still; the same area of printed matter was in focus from the pillow, and she actually remembered an advertisement that caught her eye. It used to catch her eye two years before. Thus it became difficult to believe in those two years; and it was very pleasant to disbelieve in them. More than pleasant Christina found it to lie where she was, hearing the old noises (the horses were run up before she rose), seeing the old things, and dreaming that the last two years were themselves a dream. Her life as it stood was a much less charming composition than several possible arrangements of the same material, impossible now. This is not strange, but it was a little strange that neither sweet impossibilities nor bitter actualities fascinated her much; for so many good girls are morbidly introspective. As for Christina, let it be clearly and early understood that she was neither an

introspective girl by nature nor a particularly good one from any point of view. She was not in the habit of looking back; but to look back on the old days here at the station without thinking of later days was like reading an uneven book for the second time, leaving out the poor part.

In making, but still more in closing that gap in her life (as you close a table after taking out a leaf) she was immensely helped by the associations of the present moment. They breathed of the remote past only; their breath was sweet and invigorating. Her affection for Wallandoon was no affectation; she loved it as she loved no other place. And if, as she dressed, her thoughts dwelt more on the young manager of the station than on the station itself, that only illustrates the difference between an association and an associate. There is human interest in the one, but it does not follow that Tiny Luttrell was immoderately interested in Jack Swift. Even to herself she denied that she had ever done more than like him very much. To some "nonsense" in the past she was ready to own. But in the vocabulary of a Tiny Luttrell a little "nonsense" may cover a calendar of mild crimes. It is only the Jack Swifts who treat the nonsense seriously and deny that the crimes are anything of the sort, because for their part they "mean it." Women are not deceived. Besides, it is less shame for them to say they never meant it.

"He must marry Flo Trevor of Meringul," Christina said aloud. "It's what we all expect of him. It's his duty. But she isn't pretty, poor thing!"

The remarks happened to be made to Christina's own reflection in the glass. She, as we know, was very pretty

indeed. Her small head was finely turned, and carried with her own natural grace. Her hair was of so dark a brown as to be nearly black, but there was not enough of it to hide the charming contour of her head. If she could have had the altering of one feature, she would probably have shortened her lips; but their red freshness justified their length; and the crux of a woman's beauty, her nose, happened to be Christina's best point. Her eyes were a sweeter one. Their depth of blue is seen only under dark blue skies, and they seemed the darker for her hair. But with all her good features, because she was not an English girl, but an Australian born and bred, she had no complexion to speak of, being pale and slightly freckled. Yet no one held that those blemishes prevented her from being pretty; while some maintained that they did not even detract from her good looks, and a few that they saved her from perfection and were a part of her charm. The chances are that the authorities quoted were themselves her admirers one and all. She had many such. To most of them her character had the same charm as her face; it, too, was freckled with faults for which they loved her the more.

One of the many she met presently, but one of them now, though in his day the first of all. Swift was hastening along the veranda as she issued forth, a consciously captivating figure in her clean white frock. He had on his wide-awake, a newly filled water-bag dripped as he carried it, the drops drying under their eyes in the sun, and Christina foresaw at once his absence for the day. She was disappointed, perhaps because he was one of the many; certainly it was for this reason she did not let him see her

disappointment. He told her that he was going with her father to the out-station. That was fourteen miles away. It meant a lonely day for Christina at the homestead. So she said that a lonely day there was just what she wanted, to overhaul the dear old place all by herself, and to revel in it like a child without feeling that she was being watched. But she told a franker story some hours later, when Swift found her still on the veranda where he had left her, but this was now the shady side, seated in a wicker chair and frowning at a book. For she promptly flung away that crutch of her solitude, and seemed really glad to see him. Her look made him tingle. He sat down on the edge of the veranda and leaned his back against a post. Then he inquired, rather diffidently, how the day had gone with Miss Luttrell.

"I am ashamed to tell you," said Christina graciously, for though his diffidence irritated her, she was quite as glad to see him as she looked, "that I have been bored very nearly to death!"

"I knew you would be," Swift said quite bitterly; but his bitterness was against an absent man, who had gone indoors to rest.

"I don't see how you could know anything," remarked Christina. "I certainly didn't know it myself; and I'm very much ashamed of it, that's another thing! I love every stick about the place. But I never knew a hotter morning; the sand in the yard was like powdered cinders, and you can't go poking about very long when everything you touch is red hot. Then one felt tired. Mrs. Duncan took pity on me and came and talked to me; she must be an acquisition to you, I am sure; but her cooking's better than her conversation. I

think she must have sent the new chum to me to take her place; anyway I've had a dose of him, too, I can tell you!"

"Oh, he's been cutting his work, has he?"

"He has been doing the civil; I think he considered that his work."

"And quite right too! Tell me, what do you think of him?"

Christina made a grotesque grimace. "He's such a little Englishman," she simply said.

"Well, he can't help that, you know," said Swift, laughing; "and he's not half a bad little chap, as I told you last night."

"Oh, not a bit bad; only typical. He has told me his history. It seems he missed the army at home, front door and back, in spite of his crammer—I mean his cwammer. He was no use, so they sent him out to us."

"And he is gradually becoming of some use to us, or rather to me; he really is," protested Swift in the interests of fair play, which a man loves. "You laugh, but I like the fellow. He's much more use—forgive my saying so—than Herbert ever would have been—here. At all events he doesn't want to fight! He's willing, I will say that for him. And I think it was rather nice of him to tell you about himself."

"It's nicer of you to think so," said Christina to herself. And her glance softened so that he noticed the difference, for he was becoming sensitive to a slight but constant hardness of eye and tongue distressing to find in one's divinity.

"He went so far as to hint at an affair of the heart," she said aloud, and he saw her eyes turn hard again, so that his own glanced off them and fell. But he forced a chuckle as he looked down.

"Well, you gave him your sympathy there, I hope?"

"Not I, indeed. I urged him to forget all about her; she has forgotten all about him long before now, you may be sure. He only thinks about her still because it's pleasant to have somebody to think about at a lonely place like this; and if she's thinking about him it's because he's away in the wilderness and there's a glamour about that. It wouldn't prevent her marrying another man to-morrow, and it won't prevent him making up to some other girl when he gets the chance."

"So that's your experience, is it?"

"Never mind whose experience it is. I advised the young man to give up thinking about the young woman, that's all, and it's my advice to every young man situated as he is."

Swift was not amused. Yet he refused to believe that her advice was intended for himself: firstly, because it was so coolly given, which was his ignorance, and secondly, because, literally speaking, he was not himself situated as the young Englishman was, which was merely unimaginative. In his determination, however, not to meet her in generalizations, but to get back to the storekeeper, he was wise enough.

"I know something about his affairs, too," he said quietly; "he's the frankest little fellow in the world; and I have given him very different advice, I must say."

Tiny Luttrell bent down on him a gaze of fiendish innocence.

"And what sort of advice does he give you, pray?"

"You had better ask him," said Swift feebly, but with effect, for he was honestly annoyed, and man enough to

show it. As he spoke, indeed, he rose.

"What, are you going?"

"Yes; you go in for being too hard altogether."

"I don't go in for it. I am hard. I'm as hard as nails," said Christina rapidly.

"So I see," he said, and another weak return was strengthened by his firmness; for he was going away as he spoke, and he never looked round.

"I wouldn't lose my temper," she called after him.

Her face was white. He disappeared. She colored angrily.

"Now I hate you," she whispered to herself; but she probably respected him more, and that was as it only should have been long ago.

But Swift was in an awkward position, which indeed he deserved for the unsuspected passages that had once taken place between Tiny Luttrell and himself. It is true that those passages had occurred at the very end of the Luttrells' residence at Wallandoon; they had not been going on for a period preceding the end; but there is no denying that they were reprehensible in themselves, and pardonable only on the plea of exceeding earnestness. Swift would not have made that excuse for himself, for he felt it to be a poor one, though of his own sincerity he was and had been unwaveringly sure. Beyond all doubt he was properly in love, and, being so, it was not until the girl stopped writing to him that he honestly repented the lengths to which he had been encouraged to go. It is easy to be blameless through the post, but they had kept up their perfectly blameless correspondence for a very few weeks when Christina ceased firing; she was to have gone on forever. He

was just persistent enough to make it evident that her silence was intentional; then the silence became complete, and it was never again broken. For if Swift's self-control was limited, his self-respect was considerable, and this made him duly regret the limitations of his self-control. His boy's soul bled with a boy's generous regrets. He had kissed her, of course, and I wonder whose fault you think that was? I know which of them regretted and which forgot it. The man would have given one of his fingers to have undone those kisses, that made him think less of himself and less of his darling. Nothing could make him love her less. He heard no more of her, but that made no difference. And now they were together again, and she was hard, and it made this difference: that he wanted her worse than ever, and for her own gain now as much as for his.

But two years had altered him also. In a manner he too was hardened; but he was simply a stronger, not a colder man. The muscles of his mind were set; his soul was now as sinewy as his body. He knew what he wanted, and what would not do for him instead. He wanted a great deal, but he meant having it or nothing. This time she should give him her heart before he took her hand; he swore it through his teeth; and you will realize how he must have known her of old even to have thought it. The curious thing is that, having shown him what she was, she should have made him love her as he did. But that was Tiny Luttrell.

She was half witch, half coquette, and her superficial cynicism was but a new form of her coquetry. He liked it less than the unsophisticated methods of the old days. Indeed, he liked the girl less, while loving her more. She had given