

***JOHN
GALSWORTHY***

A woman with long brown hair, wearing a dark coat, a white and black striped scarf, and dark boots, stands on a sandy beach. She is holding a white bag and looking towards the camera. The ocean waves are breaking in the background under a cloudy sky. The word "BEYOND" is written in large, bold, white letters at the bottom of the image.

BEYOND

John Galsworthy

Beyond

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Part I

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I

At the door of St. George's registry office, Charles Clare Winton strolled forward in the wake of the taxi-cab that was bearing his daughter away with "the fiddler fellow" she had married. His sense of decorum forbade his walking with Nurse Betty—the only other witness of the wedding. A stout woman in a highly emotional condition would have been an incongruous companion to his slim, upright figure, moving with just that unexaggerated swing and balance becoming to a lancer of the old school, even if he has been on the retired list for sixteen years.

Poor Betty! He thought of her with irritated sympathy—she need not have given way to tears on the door-step. She might well feel lost now Gyp was gone, but not so lost as himself! His pale-gloved hand—the one real hand he had, for his right hand had been amputated at the wrist—twisted vexedly at the small, grizzling moustache lifting itself from the corners of his firm lips. On this grey February day he wore no overcoat; faithful to the absolute, almost shamefaced quietness of that wedding, he had not even donned black coat and silk hat, but wore a blue suit and a hard black felt. The instinct of a soldier and hunting man to exhibit no sign whatever of emotion did not desert him this dark day of his life; but his grey-hazel eyes kept contracting, staring fiercely, contracting again; and, at moments, as if overpowered by some deep feeling, they darkened and seemed to draw back in his head. His face was narrow and

weathered and thin-cheeked, with a clean-cut jaw, small ears, hair darker than the moustache, but touched at the side wings with grey—the face of a man of action, self-reliant, resourceful. And his bearing was that of one who has always been a bit of a dandy, and paid attention to “form,” yet been conscious sometimes that there were things beyond. A man, who, preserving all the precision of a type, yet had in him a streak of something that was not typical. Such often have tragedy in their pasts.

Making his way towards the park, he turned into Mount Street. There was the house still, though the street had been very different then—the house he had passed, up and down, up and down in the fog, like a ghost, that November afternoon, like a cast-out dog, in such awful, unutterable agony of mind, twenty-three years ago, when Gyp was born. And then to be told at the door—he, with no right to enter, he, loving as he believed man never loved woman—to be told at the door that SHE was dead—dead in bearing what he and she alone knew was their child! Up and down in the fog, hour after hour, knowing her time was upon her; and at last to be told that! Of all fates that befall man, surely the most awful is to love too much.

Queer that his route should take him past the very house to-day, after this new bereavement! Accursed luck—that gout which had sent him to Wiesbaden, last September! Accursed luck that Gyp had ever set eyes on this fellow Fiorsen, with his fatal fiddle! Certainly not since Gyp had come to live with him, fifteen years ago, had he felt so forlorn and fit for nothing. To-morrow he would get back to Mildenhams and see what hard riding would do. Without Gyp

—to be without Gyp! A fiddler! A chap who had never been on a horse in his life! And with his crutch-handled cane he switched viciously at the air, as though carving a man in two.

His club, near Hyde Park Corner, had never seemed to him so desolate. From sheer force of habit he went into the card-room. The afternoon had so darkened that electric light already burned, and there were the usual dozen of players seated among the shaded gleams falling decorously on dark-wood tables, on the backs of chairs, on cards and tumblers, the little gilded coffee-cups, the polished nails of fingers holding cigars. A crony challenged him to piquet. He sat down listless. That three-legged whist—bridge—had always offended his fastidiousness—a mangled short cut of a game! Poker had something blatant in it. Piquet, though out of fashion, remained for him the only game worth playing—the only game which still had style. He held good cards and rose the winner of five pounds that he would willingly have paid to escape the boredom of the bout. Where would they be by now? Past Newbury; Gyp sitting opposite that Swedish fellow with his greenish wildcat's eyes. Something furtive, and so foreign, about him! A mess—if he were any judge of horse or man! Thank God he had tied Gyp's money up—every farthing! And an emotion that was almost jealousy swept him at the thought of the fellow's arms round his soft-haired, dark-eyed daughter—that pretty, willowy creature, so like in face and limb to her whom he had loved so desperately.

Eyes followed him when he left the card-room, for he was one who inspired in other men a kind of admiration—none

could say exactly why. Many quite as noted for general good sportsmanship attracted no such attention. Was it “style,” or was it the streak of something not quite typical—the brand left on him by the past?

Abandoning the club, he walked slowly along the railings of Piccadilly towards home, that house in Bury Street, St. James's, which had been his London abode since he was quite young—one of the few in the street that had been left untouched by the general passion for puffing down and building up, which had spoiled half London in his opinion.

A man, more silent than anything on earth, with the soft, quick, dark eyes of a woodcock and a long, greenish, knitted waistcoat, black cutaway, and tight trousers strapped over his boots, opened the door.

“I shan't go out again, Markey. Mrs. Markey must give me some dinner. Anything'll do.”

Markey signalled that he had heard, and those brown eyes under eyebrows meeting and forming one long, dark line, took his master in from head to heel. He had already nodded last night, when his wife had said the gov'nor would take it hard. Retiring to the back premises, he jerked his head toward the street and made a motion upward with his hand, by which Mrs. Markey, an astute woman, understood that she had to go out and shop because the gov'nor was dining in. When she had gone, Markey sat down opposite Betty, Gyp's old nurse. The stout woman was still crying in a quiet way. It gave him the fair hump, for he felt inclined to howl like a dog himself. After watching her broad, rosy, tearful face in silence for some minutes, he shook his head,

and, with a gulp and a tremor of her comfortable body, Betty desisted. One paid attention to Markey.

Winton went first into his daughter's bedroom, and gazed at its emptied silken order, its deserted silver mirror, twisting viciously at his little moustache. Then, in his sanctum, he sat down before the fire, without turning up the light. Anyone looking in, would have thought he was asleep; but the drowsy influence of that deep chair and cosy fire had drawn him back into the long-ago. What unhappy chance had made him pass HER house to-day!

Some say there is no such thing as an affinity, no case—of a man, at least—made bankrupt of passion by a single love. In theory, it may be so; in fact, there are such men—neck-or-nothing men, quiet and self-contained, the last to expect that nature will play them such a trick, the last to desire such surrender of themselves, the last to know when their fate is on them. Who could have seemed to himself, and, indeed, to others, less likely than Charles Clare Winton to fall over head and ears in love when he stepped into the Belvoir Hunt ballroom at Grantham that December evening, twenty-four years ago? A keen soldier, a dandy, a first-rate man to hounds, already almost a proverb in his regiment for coolness and for a sort of courteous disregard of women as among the minor things of life—he had stood there by the door, in no hurry to dance, taking a survey with an air that just did not give an impression of “side” because it was not at all put on. And—behold!—SHE had walked past him, and his world was changed for ever. Was it an illusion of light that made her whole spirit seem to shine through a half-startled glance? Or a little trick of gait, a swaying, seductive

balance of body; was it the way her hair waved back, or a subtle scent, as of a flower? What was it? The wife of a squire of those parts, with a house in London. Her name? It doesn't matter—she has been long enough dead. There was no excuse—not an ill-treated woman; an ordinary, humdrum marriage, of three years standing; no children. An amiable good fellow of a husband, fifteen years older than herself, inclined already to be an invalid. No excuse! Yet, in one month from that night, Winton and she were lovers, not only in thought but in deed. A thing so utterly beyond “good form” and his sense of what was honourable and becoming in an officer and gentleman that it was simply never a question of weighing pro and con, the cons had it so completely. And yet from that first evening, he was hers, she his. For each of them the one thought was how to be with the other. If so—why did they not at least go off together? Not for want of his beseeching. And no doubt, if she had survived Gyp's birth, they would have gone. But to face the prospect of ruining two men, as it looked to her, had till then been too much for that soft-hearted creature. Death stilled her struggle before it was decided. There are women in whom utter devotion can still go hand in hand with a doubting soul. Such are generally the most fascinating; for the power of hard and prompt decision robs women of mystery, of the subtle atmosphere of change and chance. Though she had but one part in four of foreign blood, she was not at all English. But Winton was English to his back-bone, English in his sense of form, and in that curious streak of whole-hearted desperation that will break form to smithereens in one department and leave it

untouched in every other of its owner's life. To have called Winton a “crank” would never have occurred to any one—his hair was always perfectly parted; his boots glowed; he was hard and reticent, accepting and observing every canon of well-bred existence. Yet, in that, his one infatuation, he was as lost to the world and its opinion as the longest-haired lentil-eater of us all. Though at any moment during that one year of their love he would have risked his life and sacrificed his career for a whole day in her company, he never, by word or look, compromised her. He had carried his punctilious observance of her “honour” to a point more bitter than death, consenting, even, to her covering up the tracks of their child's coming. Paying that gambler's debt was by far the bravest deed of his life, and even now its memory festered.

To this very room he had come back after hearing she was dead; this very room which he had refurnished to her taste, so that even now, with its satinwood chairs, little dainty Jacobean bureau, shaded old brass candelabra, divan, it still had an air exotic to bachelordom. There, on the table, had been a letter recalling him to his regiment, ordered on active service. If he had realized what he would go through before he had the chance of trying to lose his life out there, he would undoubtedly have taken that life, sitting in this very chair before the fire—the chair sacred to her and memory. He had not the luck he wished for in that little war—men who don't care whether they live or die seldom have. He secured nothing but distinction. When it was over, he went on, with a few more lines in his face, a few more wrinkles in his heart, soldiering, shooting tigers, pig-sticking,

playing polo, riding to hounds harder than ever; giving nothing away to the world; winning steadily the curious, uneasy admiration that men feel for those who combine reckless daring with an ice-cool manner. Since he was less of a talker even than most of his kind, and had never in his life talked of women, he did not gain the reputation of a woman-hater, though he so manifestly avoided them. After six years' service in India and Egypt, he lost his right hand in a charge against dervishes, and had, perforce, to retire, with the rank of major, aged thirty-four. For a long time he had hated the very thought of the child—his child, in giving birth to whom the woman he loved had died. Then came a curious change of feeling; and for three years before his return to England, he had been in the habit of sending home odds and ends picked up in the bazaars, to serve as toys. In return, he had received, twice annually at least, a letter from the man who thought himself Gyp's father. These letters he read and answered. The squire was likable, and had been fond of HER; and though never once had it seemed possible to Winton to have acted otherwise than he did, he had all the time preserved a just and formal sense of the wrong he had done this man. He did not experience remorse, but he had always an irksome feeling as of a debt unpaid, mitigated by knowledge that no one had ever suspected, and discounted by memory of the awful torture he had endured to make sure against suspicion.

When, plus distinction and minus his hand, he was at last back in England, the squire had come to see him. The poor man was failing fast from Bright's disease. Winton entered again that house in Mount Street with an emotion, to stifle

which required more courage than any cavalry charge. But one whose heart, as he would have put it, is “in the right place” does not indulge the quaverings of his nerves, and he faced those rooms where he had last seen her, faced that lonely little dinner with her husband, without sign of feeling. He did not see little Ghita, or Gyp, as she had nicknamed herself, for she was already in her bed; and it was a whole month before he brought himself to go there at an hour when he could see the child if he would. The fact is, he was afraid. What would the sight of this little creature stir in him? When Betty, the nurse, brought her in to see the soldier gentleman with “the leather hand,” who had sent her those funny toys, she stood calmly staring with her large, deep-brown eyes. Being seven, her little brown-velvet frock barely reached the knees of her thin, brown-stockinged legs planted one just in front of the other, as might be the legs of a small brown bird; the oval of her gravely wondering face was warm cream colour without red in it, except that of the lips, which were neither full nor thin, and had a little tuck, the tiniest possible dimple at one corner. Her hair of warm dark brown had been specially brushed and tied with a narrow red ribbon back from her forehead, which was broad and rather low, and this added to her gravity. Her eyebrows were thin and dark and perfectly arched; her little nose was perfectly straight, her little chin in perfect balance between round and point. She stood and stared till Winton smiled. Then the gravity of her face broke, her lips parted, her eyes seemed to fly a little. And Winton's heart turned over within him—she was the very child of her

that he had lost! And he said, in a voice that seemed to him to tremble:

“Well, Gyp?”

“Thank you for my toys; I like them.”

He held out his hand, and she gravely put her small hand into it. A sense of solace, as if some one had slipped a finger in and smoothed his heart, came over Winton. Gently, so as not to startle her, he raised her hand a little, bent, and kissed it. It may have been from his instant recognition that here was one as sensitive as child could be, or the way many soldiers acquire from dealing with their men—those simple, shrewd children—or some deeper instinctive sense of ownership between them; whatever it was, from that moment, Gyp conceived for him a rushing admiration, one of those headlong affections children will sometimes take for the most unlikely persons.

He used to go there at an hour when he knew the squire would be asleep, between two and five. After he had been with Gyp, walking in the park, riding with her in the Row, or on wet days sitting in her lonely nursery telling stories, while stout Betty looked on half hypnotized, a rather queer and doubting look on her comfortable face—after such hours, he found it difficult to go to the squire's study and sit opposite him, smoking. Those interviews reminded him too much of past days, when he had kept such desperate check on himself—too much of the old inward chafing against the other man's legal ownership—too much of the debt owing. But Winton was triple-proofed against betrayal of feeling. The squire welcomed him eagerly, saw nothing, felt nothing, was grateful for his goodness to the child. Well, well! He had

died in the following spring. And Winton found that he had been made Gyp's guardian and trustee. Since his wife's death, the squire had muddled his affairs, his estate was heavily mortgaged; but Winton accepted the position with an almost savage satisfaction, and, from that moment, schemed deeply to get Gyp all to himself. The Mount Street house was sold; the Lincolnshire place let. She and Nurse Betty were installed at his own hunting-box, Mildenhams. In this effort to get her away from all the squire's relations, he did not scruple to employ to the utmost the power he undoubtedly had of making people feel him unapproachable. He was never impolite to any of them; he simply froze them out. Having plenty of money himself, his motives could not be called in question. In one year he had isolated her from all except stout Betty. He had no qualms, for Gyp was no more happy away from him than he from her. He had but one bad half-hour. It came when he had at last decided that she should be called by his name, if not legally at least by custom, round Mildenhams. It was to Markey he had given the order that Gyp was to be little Miss Winton for the future. When he came in from hunting that day, Betty was waiting in his study. She stood in the centre of the emptiest part of that rather dingy room, as far as possible away from any good or chattel. How long she had been standing there, heaven only knew; but her round, rosy face was confused between awe and resolution, and she had made a sad mess of her white apron. Her blue eyes met Winton's with a sort of desperation.

“About what Markey told me, sir. My old master wouldn't have liked it, sir.”

Touched on the raw by this reminder that before the world he had been nothing to the loved one, that before the world the squire, who had been nothing to her, had been everything, Winton said icily:

“Indeed! You will be good enough to comply with my wish, all the same.”

The stout woman's face grew very red. She burst out, breathless:

“Yes, sir; but I've seen what I've seen. I never said anything, but I've got eyes. If Miss Gyp's to take your name, sir, then tongues'll wag, and my dear, dead mistress—”

But at the look on his face she stopped, with her mouth open.

“You will be kind enough to keep your thoughts to yourself. If any word or deed of yours gives the slightest excuse for talk—you go. Understand me, you go, and you never see Gyp again! In the meantime you will do what I ask. Gyp is my adopted daughter.”

She had always been a little afraid of him, but she had never seen that look in his eyes or heard him speak in that voice. And she bent her full moon of a face and went, with her apron crumpled as an apron had never been, and tears in her eyes. And Winton, at the window, watching the darkness gather, the leaves flying by on a sou'-westerly wind, drank to the dregs a cup of bitter triumph. He had never had the right to that dead, forever-loved mother of his child. He meant to have the child. If tongues must wag, let them! This was a defeat of all his previous precaution, a deep victory of natural instinct. And his eyes narrowed and stared into the darkness.

II

In spite of his victory over all human rivals in the heart of Gyp, Winton had a rival whose strength he fully realized perhaps for the first time now that she was gone, and he, before the fire, was brooding over her departure and the past. Not likely that one of his decisive type, whose life had so long been bound up with swords and horses, would grasp what music might mean to a little girl. Such ones, he knew, required to be taught scales, and "In a Cottage near a Wood" with other melodies. He took care not to go within sound of them, so that he had no conception of the avidity with which Gyp had mopped up all, and more than all, her governess could teach her. He was blind to the rapture with which she listened to any stray music that came its way to Mildenhams—to carols in the Christmas dark, to certain hymns, and one special "Nunc Dimittis" in the village church, attended with a hopeless regularity; to the horn of the hunter far out in the quivering, dripping coverts; even to Markey's whistling, which was full and strangely sweet.

He could share her love of dogs and horses, take an anxious interest in her way of catching bumblebees in the hollow of her hand and putting them to her small, delicate ears to hear them buzz, sympathize with her continual ravages among the flowerbeds, in the old-fashioned garden, full of lilacs and laburnums in spring, pinks, roses, cornflowers in summer, dahlias and sunflowers in autumn, and always a little neglected and overgrown, a little squeezed in, and elbowed by the more important surrounding paddocks. He could sympathize with her attempts to draw his attention to the song of birds; but it

was simply not in him to understand how she loved and craved for music. She was a cloudy little creature, up and down in mood—rather like a brown lady spaniel that she had, now gay as a butterfly, now brooding as night. Any touch of harshness she took to heart fearfully. She was the strangest compound of pride and self-disparagement; the qualities seemed mixed in her so deeply that neither she nor any one knew of which her cloudy fits were the result. Being so sensitive, she “fancied” things terribly. Things that others did to her, and thought nothing of, often seemed to her conclusive evidence that she was not loved by anybody, which was dreadfully unjust, because she wanted to love everyone—nearly. Then suddenly she would feel: “If they don't love me, I don't care. I don't want anything of anybody!” Presently, all would blow away just like a cloud, and she would love and be gay, until something fresh, perhaps not at all meant to hurt her, would again hurt her horribly. In reality, the whole household loved and admired her. But she was one of those delicate-treading beings, born with a skin too few, who—and especially in childhood—suffer from themselves in a world born with a skin too many.

To Winton's extreme delight, she took to riding as a duck to water, and knew no fear on horseback. She had the best governess he could get her, the daughter of an admiral, and, therefore, in distressed circumstances; and later on, a tutor for her music, who came twice a week all the way from London—a sardonic man who cherished for her even more secret admiration than she for him. In fact, every male thing fell in love with her at least a little. Unlike most girls, she never had an epoch of awkward plainness, but grew like a

flower, evenly, steadily. Winton often gazed at her with a sort of intoxication; the turn of her head, the way those perfectly shaped, wonderfully clear brown eyes would “fly,” the set of her straight, round neck, the very shaping of her limbs were all such poignant reminders of what he had so loved. And yet, for all that likeness to her mother, there was a difference, both in form and character. Gyp had, as it were, an extra touch of “breeding,” more chiselling in body, more fastidiousness in soul, a little more poise, a little more sheer grace; in mood, more variance, in mind, more clarity and, mixed with her sweetness, a distinct spice of scepticism which her mother had lacked.

In modern times there are no longer “toasts,” or she would have been one with both the hunts. Though delicate in build, she was not frail, and when her blood was up would “go” all day, and come in so bone-tired that she would drop on to the tiger skin before the fire, rather than face the stairs. Life at Mildenhams was lonely, save for Winton's hunting cronies, and they but few, for his spiritual dandyism did not gladly suffer the average country gentleman and his frigid courtesy frightened women.

Besides, as Betty had foreseen, tongues did wag—those tongues of the countryside, avid of anything that might spice the tedium of dull lives and brains. And, though no breath of gossip came to Winton's ears, no women visited at Mildenhams. Save for the friendly casual acquaintanceships of churchyard, hunting-field, and local race-meetings, Gyp grew up knowing hardly any of her own sex. This dearth developed her reserve, kept her backward in sex-perception, gave her a faint, unconscious contempt for men—creatures

always at the beck and call of her smile, and so easily disquieted by a little frown—gave her also a secret yearning for companions of her own gender. Any girl or woman that she did chance to meet always took a fancy to her, because she was so nice to them, which made the transitory nature of these friendships tantalizing. She was incapable of jealousies or backbiting. Let men beware of such—there is coiled in their fibre a secret fascination!

Gyp's moral and spiritual growth was not the sort of subject that Winton could pay much attention to. It was pre-eminently a matter one did not talk about. Outward forms, such as going to church, should be preserved; manners should be taught her by his own example as much as possible; beyond this, nature must look after things. His view had much real wisdom. She was a quick and voracious reader, bad at remembering what she read; and though she had soon devoured all the books in Winton's meagre library, including Byron, Whyte-Melville, and Humboldt's "Cosmos," they had not left too much on her mind. The attempts of her little governess to impart religion were somewhat arid of result, and the interest of the vicar, Gyp, with her instinctive spice of scepticism soon put into the same category as the interest of all the other males she knew. She felt that he enjoyed calling her "my dear" and patting her shoulder, and that this enjoyment was enough reward for his exertions.

Tucked away in that little old dark manor house, whose stables alone were up to date—three hours from London, and some thirty miles from The Wash, it must be confessed that her upbringing lacked modernity. About twice a year, Winton took her up to town to stay with his unmarried sister

Rosamund in Curzon Street. Those weeks, if they did nothing else, increased her natural taste for charming clothes, fortified her teeth, and fostered her passion for music and the theatre. But the two main nourishments of the modern girl—discussion and games—she lacked utterly. Moreover, those years of her life from fifteen to nineteen were before the social resurrection of 1906, and the world still crawled like a winter fly on a window-pane. Winton was a Tory, Aunt Rosamund a Tory, everybody round her a Tory. The only spiritual development she underwent all those years of her girlhood was through her headlong love for her father. After all, was there any other way in which she could really have developed? Only love makes fruitful the soul. The sense of form that both had in such high degree prevented much demonstration; but to be with him, do things for him, to admire, and credit him with perfection; and, since she could not exactly wear the same clothes or speak in the same clipped, quiet, decisive voice, to dislike the clothes and voices of other men—all this was precious to her beyond everything. If she inherited from him that fastidious sense of form, she also inherited his capacity for putting all her eggs in one basket. And since her company alone gave him real happiness, the current of love flowed over her heart all the time. Though she never realized it, abundant love FOR somebody was as necessary to her as water running up the stems of flowers, abundant love FROM somebody as needful as sunshine on their petals. And Winton's somewhat frequent little runs to town, to Newmarket, or where not, were always marked in her by a

fall of the barometer, which recovered as his return grew near.

One part of her education, at all events, was not neglected—cultivation of an habitual sympathy with her poorer neighbours. Without concerning himself in the least with problems of sociology, Winton had by nature an open hand and heart for cottagers, and abominated interference with their lives. And so it came about that Gyp, who, by nature also never set foot anywhere without invitation, was always hearing the words: “Step in, Miss Gyp”; “Step in, and sit down, lovey,” and a good many words besides from even the boldest and baddest characters. There is nothing like a soft and pretty face and sympathetic listening for seducing the hearts of “the people.”

So passed the eleven years till she was nineteen and Winton forty-six. Then, under the wing of her little governess, she went to the hunt-ball. She had revolted against appearing a “fluffy miss,” wanting to be considered at once full-fledged; so that her dress, perfect in fit, was not white but palest maize-colour, as if she had already been to dances. She had all Winton's dandyism, and just so much more as was appropriate to her sex. With her dark hair, wonderfully fluffed and coiled, waving across her forehead, her neck bare for the first time, her eyes really “flying,” and a demeanour perfectly cool—as though she knew that light and movement, covetous looks, soft speeches, and admiration were her birthright—she was more beautiful than even Winton had thought her. At her breast she wore some sprigs of yellow jasmine procured by him from town—a flower of whose scent she was very fond, and that he had

never seen worn in ballrooms. That swaying, delicate creature, warmed by excitement, reminded him, in every movement and by every glance of her eyes, of her whom he had first met at just such a ball as this. And by the carriage of his head, the twist of his little moustache, he conveyed to the world the pride he was feeling.

That evening held many sensations for Gyp—some delightful, one confused, one unpleasant. She revelled in her success. Admiration was very dear to her. She passionately enjoyed dancing, loved feeling that she was dancing well and giving pleasure. But, twice over, she sent away her partners, smitten with compassion for her little governess sitting there against the wall—all alone, with no one to take notice of her, because she was elderly, and roundabout, poor darling! And, to that loyal person's horror, she insisted on sitting beside her all through two dances. Nor would she go in to supper with anyone but Winton. Returning to the ballroom on his arm, she overheard an elderly woman say: “Oh, don't you know? Of course he really IS her father!” and an elderly man answer: “Ah, that accounts for it—quite so!” With those eyes at the back of the head which the very sensitive possess, she could see their inquisitive, cold, slightly malicious glances, and knew they were speaking of her. And just then her partner came for her.

“Really IS her father!” The words meant TOO much to be grasped this evening of full sensations. They left a little bruise somewhere, but softened and anointed, just a sense of confusion at the back of her mind. And very soon came that other sensation, so disillusioning, that all else was

crowded out. It was after a dance—a splendid dance with a good-looking man quite twice her age. They were sitting behind some palms, he murmuring in his mellow, flown voice admiration for her dress, when suddenly he bent his flushed face and kissed her bare arm above the elbow. If he had hit her he could not have astonished or hurt her more. It seemed to her innocence that he would never have done such a thing if she had not said something dreadful to encourage him. Without a word she got up, gazed at him a moment with eyes dark from pain, shivered, and slipped away. She went straight to Winton. From her face, all closed up, tightened lips, and the familiar little droop at their corners, he knew something dire had happened, and his eyes boded ill for the person who had hurt her; but she would say nothing except that she was tired and wanted to go home. And so, with the little faithful governess, who, having been silent perforce nearly all the evening, was now full of conversation, they drove out into the frosty night. Winton sat beside the chauffeur, smoking viciously, his fur collar turned up over his ears, his eyes stabbing the darkness, under his round, low-drawn fur cap. Who had dared upset his darling? And, within the car, the little governess chattered softly, and Gyp, shrouded in lace, in her dark corner sat silent, seeing nothing but the vision of that insult. Sad end to a lovely night!

She lay awake long hours in the darkness, while a sort of coherence was forming in her mind. Those words: “Really IS her father!” and that man's kissing of her bare arm were a sort of revelation of sex-mystery, hardening the consciousness that there was something at the back of her

life. A child so sensitive had not, of course, quite failed to feel the spiritual draughts around her; but instinctively she had recoiled from more definite perceptions. The time before Winton came was all so faint—Betty, toys, short glimpses of a kind, invalidish man called “Papa.” As in that word there was no depth compared with the word “Dad” bestowed on Winton, so there had been no depth in her feelings towards the squire. When a girl has no memory of her mother, how dark are many things! None, except Betty, had ever talked of her mother. There was nothing sacred in Gyp's associations, no faiths to be broken by any knowledge that might come to her; isolated from other girls, she had little realisation even of the conventions. Still, she suffered horribly, lying there in the dark—from bewilderment, from thorns dragged over her skin, rather than from a stab in the heart. The knowledge of something about her conspicuous, doubtful, provocative of insult, as she thought, grievously hurt her delicacy. Those few wakeful hours made a heavy mark. She fell asleep at last, still all in confusion, and woke up with a passionate desire to KNOW. All that morning she sat at her piano, playing, refusing to go out, frigid to Betty and the little governess, till the former was reduced to tears and the latter to Wordsworth. After tea she went to Winton's study, that dingy little room where he never studied anything, with leather chairs and books which—except “Mr. Jorrocks,” Byron, those on the care of horses, and the novels of Whyte-Melville—were never read; with prints of superequine celebrities, his sword, and photographs of Gyp and of brother officers on the walls. Two bright spots there

were indeed—the fire, and the little bowl that Gyp always kept filled with flowers.

When she came gliding in like that, a slender, rounded figure, her creamy, dark-eyed, oval face all cloudy, she seemed to Winton to have grown up of a sudden. He had known all day that something was coming, and had been cudgelling his brains finely. From the fervour of his love for her, he felt an anxiety that was almost fear. What could have happened last night—that first night of her entrance into society—meddlesome, gossiping society! She slid down to the floor against his knee. He could not see her face, could not even touch her; for she had settled down on his right side. He mastered his tremors and said:

“Well, Gyp—tired?”

“No.”

“A little bit?”

“No.”

“Was it up to what you thought, last night?”

“Yes.”

The logs hissed and crackled; the long flames ruffled in the chimney-draught; the wind roared outside—then, so suddenly that it took his breath away:

“Dad, are you really and truly my father?”

When that which one has always known might happen at last does happen, how little one is prepared! In the few seconds before an answer that could in no way be evaded, Winton had time for a tumult of reflection. A less resolute character would have been caught by utter mental blankness, then flung itself in panic on “Yes” or “No.” But Winton was incapable of losing his head; he would not

answer without having faced the consequences of his reply. To be her father was the most warming thing in his life; but if he avowed it, how far would he injure her love for him? What did a girl know? How make her understand? What would her feeling be about her dead mother? How would that dead loved one feel? What would she have wished?

It was a cruel moment. And the girl, pressed against his knee, with face hidden, gave him no help. Impossible to keep it from her, now that her instinct was roused! Silence, too, would answer for him. And clenching his hand on the arm of his chair, he said:

“Yes, Gyp; your mother and I loved each other.” He felt a quiver go through her, would have given much to see her face. What, even now, did she understand? Well, it must be gone through with, and he said:

“What made you ask?”

She shook her head and murmured:

“I'm glad.”

Grief, shock, even surprise would have roused all his loyalty to the dead, all the old stubborn bitterness, and he would have frozen up against her. But this acquiescent murmur made him long to smooth it down.

“Nobody has ever known. She died when you were born. It was a fearful grief to me. If you've heard anything, it's just gossip, because you go by my name. Your mother was never talked about. But it's best you should know, now you're grown up. People don't often love as she and I loved. You needn't be ashamed.”

She had not moved, and her face was still turned from him. She said quietly:

"I'm not ashamed. Am I very like her?"

"Yes; more than I could ever have hoped."

Very low she said:

"Then you don't love me for myself?"

Winton was but dimly conscious of how that question revealed her nature, its power of piercing instinctively to the heart of things, its sensitive pride, and demand for utter and exclusive love. To things that go too deep, one opposes the bulwark of obtuseness. And, smiling, he simply said:

"What do you think?"

Then, to his dismay, he perceived that she was crying—struggling against it so that her shoulder shook against his knee. He had hardly ever known her cry, not in all the disasters of unstable youth, and she had received her full meed of knocks and tumbles. He could only stroke that shoulder, and say:

"Don't cry, Gyp; don't cry!"

She ceased as suddenly as she had begun, got up, and, before he too could rise, was gone.

That evening, at dinner, she was just as usual. He could not detect the slightest difference in her voice or manner, or in her good-night kiss. And so a moment that he had dreaded for years was over, leaving only the faint shame which follows a breach of reticence on the spirits of those who worship it. While the old secret had been quite undisclosed, it had not troubled him. Disclosed, it hurt him. But Gyp, in those twenty-four hours, had left childhood behind for good; her feeling toward men had hardened. If she did not hurt them a little, they would hurt her! The sex-

instinct had come to life. To Winton she gave as much love as ever, even more, perhaps; but the dew was off.

III

The next two years were much less solitary, passed in more or less constant gaiety. His confession spurred Winton on to the fortification of his daughter's position. He would stand no nonsense, would not have her looked on askance. There is nothing like "style" for carrying the defences of society—only, it must be the genuine thing. Whether at Mildenham, or in London under the wing of his sister, there was no difficulty. Gyp was too pretty, Winton too cool, his quietness too formidable. She had every advantage. Society only troubles itself to make front against the visibly weak.

The happiest time of a girl's life is that when all appreciate and covet her, and she herself is free as air—a queen of hearts, for none of which she hankers; or, if not the happiest, at all events it is the gayest time. What did Gyp care whether hearts ached for her—she knew not love as yet, perhaps would never know the pains of unrequited love. Intoxicated with life, she led her many admirers a pretty dance, treating them with a sort of bravura. She did not want them to be unhappy, but she simply could not take them seriously. Never was any girl so heart-free. She was a queer mixture in those days, would give up any pleasure for Winton, and most for Betty or her aunt—her little governess was gone—but of nobody else did she seem to take account, accepting all that was laid at her feet as the due of her looks, her dainty frocks, her music, her good riding and dancing, her talent for amateur theatricals and mimicry. Winton, whom at least she never failed, watched that

glorious fluttering with quiet pride and satisfaction. He was getting to those years when a man of action dislikes interruption of the grooves into which his activity has fallen. He pursued his hunting, racing, card-playing, and his very stealthy alms and services to lame ducks of his old regiment, their families, and other unfortunates—happy in knowing that Gyp was always as glad to be with him as he to be with her. Hereditary gout, too, had begun to bother him.

The day that she came of age they were up in town, and he summoned her to the room, in which he now sat by the fire recalling all these things, to receive an account of his stewardship. He had nursed her greatly embarrassed inheritance very carefully till it amounted to some twenty thousand pounds. He had never told her of it—the subject was dangerous, and, since his own means were ample, she had not wanted for anything. When he had explained exactly what she owned, shown her how it was invested, and told her that she must now open her own banking account, she stood gazing at the sheets of paper, whose items she had been supposed to understand, and her face gathered the look which meant that she was troubled. Without lifting her eyes she asked:

“Does it all come from—him?”

He had not expected that, and flushed under his tan.

“No; eight thousand of it was your mother's.”

Gyp looked at him, and said:

“Then I won't take the rest—please, Dad.”

Winton felt a sort of crabbed pleasure. What should be done with that money if she did not take it, he did not in the

least know. But not to take it was like her, made her more than ever his daughter—a kind of final victory. He turned away to the window from which he had so often watched for her mother. There was the corner she used to turn! In one minute, surely she would be standing there, colour glowing in her cheeks, her eyes soft behind her veil, her breast heaving a little with her haste, waiting for his embrace. There she would stand, drawing up her veil. He turned round. Difficult to believe it was not she! And he said:

“Very well, my love. But you will take the equivalent from me instead. The other can be put by; some one will benefit some day!”

At those unaccustomed words, “My love,” from his undemonstrative lips, the colour mounted in her cheeks and her eyes shone. She threw her arms round his neck.

She had her fill of music in those days, taking piano lessons from a Monsieur Harmost, a grey-haired native of Liege, with mahogany cheeks and the touch of an angel, who kept her hard at it and called her his “little friend.” There was scarcely a concert of merit that she did not attend or a musician of mark whose playing she did not know, and, though fastidiousness saved her from squirming in adoration round the feet of those prodigious performers, she perched them all on pedestals, men and women alike, and now and then met them at her aunt's house in Curzon Street.

Aunt Rosamund, also musical, so far as breeding would allow, stood for a good deal to Gyp, who had built up about her a romantic story of love wrecked by pride from a few words she had once let drop. She was a tall and handsome