

## THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE

private prayer." I would go and pray to be delivered from my stupendous temptation. I pictured myself in the little dim chapel, as the marvellous music of the evensong service raptured my soul, with tears over my wickedness. I couldn't feel in the least wicked, that's why I wanted to go to St. Faith's and pray, so that I could get some of the suitable and exciting sense of Sin.

But instead my heart blazed a way for itself through the walls; it saw into the palace opposite, the long stone corridors, the stained windows, the men, my lover. And, as a general rule, I went over after my prayers and had tea on the Terrace. The Abbey was so convenient.

## FIFTH DAY

I LIKE the roar of the wind against the cabin behind me. I like being safe in this sheltered place. The storm whirls close, but I am as still as though in the clasped centre of a maelstrom. One does not realise the sea till it is seen in this mood, nor the sea's power and the winter of the air meeting in a mist of snow—a Circe who draws near to the waves till they are changed to ice.

It puts in front of the eyes the mood that I love, the unmatched power, the clanging fury, straight from the limits of the world. It is like the violence of ourselves of which I am curious, the great motives, great brains, great crimes, the

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wine of the world that has intoxicated humanity to strange abandonments.

And as each one of us is the sum of humanity, crime is part of us; and if we repudiate it, we repudiate a part of our own force. But to break one law implies the mental permission to break them all. It isn't easy, this cult of curiosity!

And now I, who have done one thing called wrong, must try each forbidden thing, against my own unreal point of view—pick them up, one after another, as one would gather the weight of sand in one's hands, to let it slip again through the fingers, in glittering atoms. It is the first real act of my life. I shall have to measure it against the dreams.

But this stripping oneself from scruples is a man's life, and I don't know whether I have a man's strength. For the gaining

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of all the joy of life is audacity; requires not brains so much as fearlessness.

I should like not to be afraid of myself, to give the inner thing permission to get for me all the excitement it craves. If I could only burn from existence each weakness of mood, each repugnance, to feel that I had gained all the extreme beauty of the world, the limit of the disclosure of the senses, against and through every barrier and law the world can enact.

The very fact of having no money forces me to adventure. In some moments I am almost glad I have no choice.

If I had been rich, all my inherited blood would have held me in Arctic restraint. I would have had my excesses from Strauss and Velasquez and the East, and lived in frigid contempt of the palate of colour, the scale of blood, the eternal fire that human flesh and blood can give.

But, as it is, I am pushed out of dreams

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into reality; I must pirate the colour of life.

I am far too clever to let myself be found out, no matter what thing I may do; and to the excitement of forbidden things I shall have added the amusement of outraging every law made for women, and getting all the advantages our inferred morality brings us. To get all the magnetism of different temperaments, have the money to travel as much as I like, and the humour of painting in my travels by all the extreme incidents of passion; to engrave on my mind palaces and sunsets and the tropics and seas, by the intensity of Nature's climax; to pay one's way by passion; to string the world around like a string of beads—each tremendous city and country the keynote of tremendous things called wrong.

But Sin in this way isn't the act of unlawful things. It is the curiosity of our

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own temperament, the deliberate expression of our own tendencies, the welding into an Art of act or incident some raw emotion of the blood. For we castrate our minds to the extent by which we deny our bodies.