

THE HOUSE

New York.—I had to keep myself at the apex of feeling, even though it meant stepping from mountain top to mountain top over unnameable gorges.

The heat here subdues you, relaxes you, maddens you to strange things. Tides of ourselves, we welter out on black seas, drink from hidden sources, find shade in secret groves of unknown trees. It wraps you in a veil, you move forward blindly through paths—any path away from the feeling of it. And we are the gate to everything. The gate to everything—ourselves; and I had thought life was the mystery, the thing to be discovered. No matter how strange and fearful a thing we may do, it becomes at once, it is, only

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the expression of our own minds; is natural, usual, a commonplace of emotion. I think our association of mystery with the forces of Nature is only our dissatisfaction with our own powers.

Because this, the climax of horror, the altitude of abomination for women, seems to me in reality only the lazy translation of an Arabian fantasy, a Balzac Conte Drolatique, a Rabelaisian mood put into flesh.

The mood of a summer afternoon when the hammock yields to you, and the perfume of the wallflowers and the lilies subdues you. An afternoon when you swing between the trees, and see the fields yellow, warm, swelling in the golden mist; are held by the languid calls of the birds and the vague scent of the coming night.

It has, too, all the humour of the scientific sneer and disclosure. One can watch the worlds in the making as it were, de-

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void of the walls of sham, naked and unafraid. There is no pretence, no affectation, no cant about the soul. It is only "I want you," and creation has said its uttermost.

Poetry, the House of Life, each satin phrase, each catch of the breath at a "thou" of the "solstice," the whine of music, the blurred dissatisfaction of painting, are set simple, and washed of the birth-stain of unreal desire in the clear light of untempered humanity. It expresses itself variously, it has its gradations, its beauties, and its ugliness; but the fact, the undiluted brutal dominating fact, is there undefiled. Even the Devil would be blackened if he pretended to want only one individual in his Hell.

I am not shocked, I am not disgusted, I am only intensely interested and occasionally amused. Of course, neither the

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men nor women are quite real to me, they flicker around me like the disclosed dances of the Eleusinian Mysteries.

They recognise me as of another world. Yet it is much the same luxury, the same costly dresses, the same heady scent of flowers and wine.

I would walk over fire to get what I wanted, and so I stake myself for what I want. I do not intend to be found out, and whatever flesh and blood I have belongs to myself. I shall do what I like with it, it is my only bank account.

If I went into a Zoo, and everything commenced to talk, or if a dream should persist into the day, it could not seem more fictitious than this. I trail my long dress through the long rooms and smile at myself curiously, admiringly, in the long mirrors. It is unquestionably brave, it has taken overwhelming courage to come here. But how shudderingly unnatural

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it seems to use the inherited pluck of fighting men to face the bathos of this! But I must use all I am to conquer, to win; even though I may throw it away after, let it fall through my hands like drops of water. To have power, to see all the glory the world has, to be able to buy all its beauty, to have the power to destroy what I may hate.

Opal Pendant.—This morning at four o'clock the drawing-room seemed close and heavy, the air was full of the smell of champagne and the odour of the bowl of big pink roses fading in the heat. Both the lace and the silk curtains were drawn across the windows and all the lights were blazing. Then Billie went to one of the windows and dragged back the curtains. "The rosy-fingered," he laughed, "the rosy-fingered is almost here"; and then he came and begged me to go with him to

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meet the rosy-fingered—there—at four in the morning. The idea struck me.

His motor was waiting at the door, so I went with him to the park. The flowers and shrubs and trees were raising themselves under the tingling sweetness of new day, the world was opening out and stretching up its arms to the coming light.

Squirrels would sometimes jump across the path, and once a bat whirred out of the shadow of a pine, and drifted down into the deeper darkness of a gorge on the other side of our way.

Billie showed me a little hill we had to go down, and then something was disclosed, the opening of a veil of leaves, to show a memory, a desire, a vision of the Orient. A tiny lake covered by the wide leaves of the lotus, fringed by their uneven stalks, and studded by the immaculate huge lilies that held the air in their fragrance. Great lilies, that made the barge

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of Cleopatra pause, that led to the land of dreams. The sky at first was weak, you might think, before the desire of the sun, and then it flushed, lightened, wavered, and turned to tremulous radiance in the glamour of the completed dawn. The light startled a crane in the reeds of the furthest bank, and it started up with a discordant cry, and, with its pointed wings stretched out, flew straight across the lotus lake.

"The Lotus-eaters—the world forgotten!" I cried to Billie, and he caught my hands and tried to kiss them; but, as far as I was concerned, Billie didn't exist for me. A hand had crept into my mind and closed on it with talons—the Orient—the smell of the pungent mystery of the East, the yellow skies, the spiked trees and entangled flowers. I must have the Orient, must inhale the secret of its untempered colour, black and gold leaf and Imperial

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yellow, the tortuous ivories, the oblique reserve, the domination of the white blood.

Nine o'clock p.m.—This life has not changed me, it has only brought into being traits of me that otherwise would have lain dormant.

I gird myself in quiet for fear I shall betray the fact that I am amused. I drop my eyes to conceal the springing of life that answers from me here, as to the swaying with the roulette wheel at Monte Carlo. Here are the beginnings of all ultimate passions, finalities, the limits of humanity. Strange awful things and secrets creep through it—the inversion of Byblis, the caricature of Sappho, queer laughs like the cackle of some of the light monstrous stories of the Arabian Nights; the opal effervescence of drugs, the thick pink petalled flowers, the apes; the humanity in me chuckles and delights that if

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it is different, it at least understands, sees it, reads it, like the pages of a Persian book—set too, in silken walls, and under gilt cornices, before the limpid crystal of wide mirrors. It is life; I am life; I see it all. Nothing is hidden. I see the soul of humanity, squeezed like a sponge, and the drops of its animating blaze trickle out—not viscous or black, but red, healthy, vital.

Either your humanity is greater than the things it is capable of, or they are greater than you.

Friday.—He was physically a fine thing, though not the type I like at all. In the first place, I detest men with a moustache, even though it is small and modern, and he was so carnally common, for all his being the President of an island in the Caribbean. Hidalgo blood vitalised

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by pure Indian. The Indian in him crisped his hair, brutalised his neck.

Yet his exquisite manner was like the mood of a Spanish painting. It was absolutely simple, there was no shadow of affectation in it, but the walls changed to colonnades, and everything that was said seemed to be an echo from Castilian palaces.

Still, I am utterly a thing of my country, of my race, of my day, cold, curious, super-civilised; I looked at him across a mist, a blood instinct, of raw emotion, tempered though it was in him by all his inherited mental craft of ancient centuries.

He made me feel my hair fairer, my body thinner, my pale mauve dress more ethereal. I smoothed the palms of my hands softly against the gilt arms of my chair and watched his face as he talked. It was not the beast of the tiger, it was the beast of the bull, this thing that looked

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at me, who was speaking—half in French, half in English—of Madrid, of Buenos Ayres, of D'Annunzio, and bull-fights, and Satanism.

"I want to feel everything, know everything, do everything—yes, even the blood and pain and the abomination, feel every passion a man can feel."

They sounded grotesque from a man—these phrases I have so often used myself.

And I was the new emotion he wanted to know—I with the fair hair and the thin body and the ethereal mauve dress; flesh iced by a caustic mind. Oh, yes, I knew all this, felt all this, as I smoothed the palms of my hands against the gilt and watched his eyes grow bloodshot and wide.

It amused me, this thing of hunger, the Indian blood that would strike me down where I was, the Spanish gentleman whose very voice was homage.

How far dared I go? There was no

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point in making him drink champagne till he grovelled with all the absurdity of the human beast undisguised; he was too much accustomed to it in excess. I would be far too tired by that time to get any amusement out of it. Could I trust to his breeding to hold down the race that made the glint of red in his eyes, that shook his hands and made them burn like ice? If I just let him talk and kiss me—yes, I would let him kiss me, he was too much a brute not to make that a thing I would like—to the very limit of final action. And then to stop, and see him suffer! Could I mentally quote from him: "See everything, even the pain and the abomination." I smiled, and held out my hands to him, and he came and knelt in front of my chair and kissed first one hand and then the other, and muttered into them, "I do not know what to say; I am in your hands, everything—all I am——"

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It was a beautiful scene. It only wanted violins playing cadenzas in C sharp minor.

Cheque on Munroe's: Silenus, Priapus—more, perhaps, because his hair was that peculiar iron grey that is vibrant with vigour, his face ruddy, his body heavy as though it had always ridden on flower-harnessed asses.

He charmed me when he first commenced to talk of China. I curled up at the end of the window divan, scrunched cushions behind me, and let my imagination wanton around all the fire-words he was using—the Bund, Palanquin, Jinrikshaw, the Bubbling Wells, Buddha, the yellow temples, Yamen, Junk, Typhoons, Singapore, Polo—the air dimmed and formed into clouds of musk and spices. I saw the jeer on yellow faces, and heard the clamour of obscure tongues, saw the

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waving panels of red and yellow with the satanic Chinese marks swaying and clinking from the windows of narrow pit-like streets;—saw the herds of strange blood and form clattering by on their straw-bound feet through the filth of temple-crowned towns.

The smell of the Orient, streaked with sulphur burnt over by the sun, beaten by monsoons, seething with the secrets of unknown birth; lacquered, embroidered, rouged, enamelled—I heard the tinkle of its jade and saw closed doors of teak wood.

When we were alone we had cigarettes he had brought himself from Cairo, and I leaned back and watched the smoke curl into rings that floated, I thought, down the dim aisles of ancient trees leading to the forbidden doors of closed temples.

He liked to talk, I liked to listen. We

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were both of us slaves to the same master—the call of the East. His voice seemed to sound for me the murmur of a familiar worship. His strong, brutal, crafty face, the full lips and dominating eyes, I understood and yielded to unresistingly, because he was as much in thrall as I to the dream, the visions, the sense of uncomprehended things.

When he slipped down on his knees beside me, and drew my face over to his lips, I did not think of refusing; it seemed part of the ritual to a long-acknowledged faith. Why should I resist? We both of us granted something stronger, an attraction deeper, a fascination more intense than the human sense could satisfy. It was only the symbol of the less for the greater. He kissed me as I, in thought, clambered up the steps of some difficult shrine to waste touch on the vapour of its incense.

NEW JERSEY

Woodlawn.—When I wakened this morning the pungent smell of burning leaves was creeping into my room through the crevices of the curtains, with the sunshine.

The air tingled when I threw the shutters open as though it had dissolved from crystals of excitement. The gardener was raking together great heaps of dead leaves and setting fire to them on the lawn, the fox-terriers were tearing around in insane concern and barking deliriously. I flung myself back on the bed, and let the air, the sun, sweep over me, and flutter the magazines on the table and ripple all the frills on the soft white curtains. It was sanctuary.