connected, and named after the great Mysteries they are connected with, that lies in the angle of Park Lane and Piccadilly. Persons of exaggerated sense of locality or mature hereditary experience can make short cuts through this district, but the wayfarer (broadly speaking) had better not try, lest he be found dead in a mews by the Coroner, and made the subject of a verdict according to the evidence. Sally knew all about it of old, and went as straight through the fog as the ground-plan of the streets permitted to the house where her mother and a nurse were doing what might be done to prolong the tenancy of the top-floor. But both knew the occupant had received notice to quit. Only, it did seem so purposeless, this writ of ejectment and violent expulsion, when he was quite ready to go, and wanted nothing but permission.

CHAPTER XXIII

OF A FOG THAT WAS UP-TO-DATE, AND HOW A FIRE-ENGINE RELIEVED SALLY FROM A BOY. HOW SALLY GOT IN AT A GENTLEMEN'S CLUB, AND HOW VETERANS COULD RECOLLECT HER FATHER. BUT THEY KNOW WHAT SHE CAN BE TOLD, AND WHAT SHE CAN'T. HOW MAJOR ROPER WOULD GO OUT IN THE FOG

Mrs. Fenwick was not sorry to break down a little, now that her daughter had come to break down on. She soon pulled together, however. Breaking down was not a favourite relaxation of hers, as we have seen. Her husband had, of course, left her to go to his place of business, not materially the worse for a night spent without closed eyes and in the anxiety of a sick-chamber.

"Oh, mother darling! you are quite worn out. How is he?"

"He's quiet now, kitten; but we thought the cough would have killed him in the night. He's only so quiet now because of the opiates. Only at his age——" Mrs. Fenwick stopped and looked at the nurse, whose shake of the head was an assent to the impossibility of keeping a patient of eighty alive on opiates. Then, having gone thus far in indicating the grim probabilities of the case, Sally's mother added, as alleviation to a first collision with Death: "But Dr. Mildmay says the inflammation and fever may subside, and then, if he can take nourishment——" but got no further, for incredulity of this sort of thing is in the air of the establishment.

Not, perhaps, on Sally's part. Young people who have not seen Death face-to-face have little real conception of his horrible unasked intrusion into the house of Life. That house is to them almost as inviolable as the home of our babyhood was to the most of us, a sacred fane under the protection of an omnipotent high-priest and priestess—papa and mamma. Almost as inviolable, that is, when those who live in it are our friends. Of course, the people in the newspapers go dying—are even killed in railway accidents. This frame of mind will change for Sally when

she has seen this patient die. For the time being, she is half insensible—can think of other things.

"What did the party mean that let me in, mother darling? The fusty party? She said she thought it was the Major. I didn't take any notice till now. I wanted to get up."

"It was the other Major, dear—Major Roper. Don't you know? *He* used to talk of him, and say he was an old gossip." In the dropped voice and the stress on the pronoun one can hear how the speaker's mind knows that the old Colonel is almost part of the past. "But they were very old friends. They were together through the Mutiny. *He* was his commanding officer." Sally's eyes rest on the old sabre that hangs on its hook in the wall, where she has often seen it, ranking it prosaically with the other furnishings of "the Major's" apartment. Now, a new light is on it, and it becomes a reality in a lurid past, long, long before there was any Sally. A past of muzzle-loading guns and Minié rifles, of forced marches through a furnace-heat to distant forts that hardly owned the name, all too late to save the remnant of their defenders; a past of a hundred massacres and a thousand heroisms; a past that clings still, Sally dear, about the memory of us oldsters that had to know it, as we would fain that no things that are, or are to be, should ever cling about yours. But you have read the story often, and the tale of it grows and lives round the old sabre on the wall.

Except as an explanation of the fusty party's reference to a Major, Old Jack—that was Sally's Major's name for him—got very little foothold in her mind, until a recollection of her mother's allusion to him as an old gossip having made her look for a suitable image to place there, she suddenly recalled that it was he that had actually seen her father; talked to him in India twenty years ago; could, and no doubt would, tell her all about the divorce. But there!—she couldn't speak to him about it here and now. It was impossible.

Still, she was curious to see him, and the fusty but genteel one had evidently expected him. So, during the remainder of what seemed to Sally the darkest day, morally and atmospherically, that she had ever spent—all but the bright morning when she ran into the fog somewhere near Surbiton, full of tales to tell of the house-party that now seemed a happy dream—during this

gloomy remainder Sally wondered what could have happened that the other Major should not have turned up. The fog would have been more than enough to account for any ordinary non-appearance; hardly for this one.

For it turned out, as soon as it got full powers to assert itself, the densest fog on record. The Londoner was in his element. He told the dissatisfied outsider with pride of how at midday it had been impossible to read large pica on Ludgate Hill; he didn't say why he tried to do so. He retailed frightful stories—but always with a sense of distinction—of folk crushed under hoofs and cart-wheels. If one half were true, some main thoroughfares must have been paved with flattened pedestrians. The satisfaction he derived from the huge extra profits of the gas-companies made his hearer think he must be a shareholder, until *pari passu* reasoning proved him to have invested in fog-signals. His legends of hooligans preying on the carcasses of strangled earls undisturbed had a set-off in others of marauders who had rushed into the arms of the police and thought them bosom friends; while that of an ex-Prime Minister who walked round and round for an hour, and then rang at a house to ask where he was, ended in consolation, as the door was opened by his own footman, who told him he wasn't at home. Exact estimates were current, most unreasonably, of the loss to commerce; so much so that the other Londoner corrected him positively with, "Nearer three-quarters of a million, they say," and felt proud of his higher knowledge. But neither felt the least ashamed, nor the least afraid of the hideous, inevitable future fog, when a suffocated population shall find, as it surely will, that it is at the bottom of a sea of unbreathable air, instead of one that merely makes it choke its stomach up and kills an old invalid or two. On the contrary, both regarded it as the will of a judicious Providence, a developer of their own high moral qualities and a destroyer of their germs.

Bronchitis and asthma are kittle-cattle to shoe behind, even where the sweet Mediterranean air blows pure upon Rapallo and Nervi, but what manner of cattle are they in a London fog? Can they be shoed at all? As Mrs. Fenwick sits and waits in terror to hear the first inevitable cough as the old man wakes, and talks in whispers to her daughter in the growing darkness,

she feels how her own breath drags at the tough air, and how her throat resents the sting of the large percentage of sulphur monoxide it contains. The gas-jet is on at the full—or rather the tap is, for the fish-tail burner doesn't realise its ideal. It sputters in its lurid nimbus—gets bronchitis on its own account, tries to cough its tubes clear and fails. Sally and her mother sit on in the darkness, and talk about it, shirking the coming suffocation of their old friend, and praying that his sleep may last till the deadly air lightens, be it ever so little. Sally's animated face shows that she is on a line of cogitation, and presently it fructifies.

"Suppose every one let their fires out, wouldn't the fog go? It couldn't go on by itself."

"I don't know, chick. I suppose it's been all thought out by committees and scientific people. Besides, we should all be frozen."

"Not if we went to bed."

"What! In the daytime?"

"Better do nothing in bed than be choked up."

"I dare say the fog wouldn't go away. You see, it's due to atmospheric conditions, so they say."

"That's only because nobody's there to stop 'em talking nonsense. Look at all that smoke going up our chimney." So it was, and a jolly blaze there was going to be when the three shovelfuls Sally had enthusiastically heaped on had incubated, and the time was ripe for the poker.

Had you been there you would have seen in Sally's face as it caught the firelight-flicker and pondered on the cause of the fog, that *she* had not heard a choking fit of the poor old sleeper in the next room. And in her mother's that she *had*, and all the memory of the dreadful hours just passed. Her manner, too, was absent as she talked, and she listened constantly. Sally was to know what it was like soon. The opium sleep would end.

"Isn't that him?" The mother's sharp ear of apprehension makes her say this; the daughter has not heard the buried efforts of the lung that cannot cough. It will succeed directly, if the patient is raised up, so. Both have gone quickly and quietly into the sick-chamber, and it is the nurse who speaks. Her

prediction is fulfilled, and the silent struggle of suffocation becomes a tearing convulsion, that means to last some while and does it. How the old, thin tenement of life can go on living unkilled is a problem to solve. But it survives this time. Perhaps the new cough-mixture will make the job easier next time. We shall see.

Anyhow, this attack—bad as it was—has not been so bad as the one he had at three this morning. Rosalind and Nurse Emilia invent a paroxysm of diabolical severity, partly for the establishment of a pinnacle for themselves to look down on Sally from, partly for her consolation. He wasn't able to speak for ever so long after that, and this time he is trying to say something. . . . "What is it, dear?"

"Couldn't we have a window open to let a little air in?"

Well!—we could have a window open. We could let a little air in—but only a very little. And that very little would bring with it copious percentages of moisture saturated with finely subdivided carbonaceous matter, of carbon dioxide, and sulphur dioxide, and traces of hydric chloride, who is an old friend of our youth, known to us then as muriatic acid.

"It's such a thick fog, Major dear. As soon as it clears a little we'll open the window. Won't we, Sally?"

"Is Sally there? . . . Come and touch my hand, kitten. . . . That's right. . . ." What is left of the Major can still enjoy the plump little white hand that takes the old fingers that once could grasp the sword that hangs on the wall. It will not be for very long now. A newspaper paragraph will soon give a short record of all the battles that sword left its scabbard to see, and will tell of its owner's service in his later days as deputy Commissioner at Umritsur, and of the record of long residence in India it established, exceeding that of his next competitor by many years. Not a few old warriors that were in those battles, and many that knew his later time, will follow him beyond it very soon. But he is not gone yet, and his hand can just give back its pressure to Sally's, as she sits by him, keeping her heart in and her tears back. The actual collapse of vital forces has not come—will not come for a few days. He can speak a little as she stoops to hear him.

"Young people like you ought to be in bed, chick, getting

beauty-sleep. You must go home, and make your mother go. . . . *You* go. *I* shall be all right. . . ."

"It isn't night, Major dear"—Sally makes a paltry attempt to laugh—"it's three in the afternoon. It's the fog." But she cannot hear what he says in answer to this, go close as she may. After a pause of rest he tries again, with raised voice:

"Roper—Roper—Old Jack . . . mustn't come . . . asthma in the fog . . . somebody go to stop him." He is quite clear-headed, and when Sally says she will go at once, he spots the only risk she would run, being young and healthy:

"Sure you can find your way? Over the club-house—Hurkaru Club——" And then is stopped by a threat of returning cough.

But Sally knows all about it, and can find her way anywhere—so she says. She is off in a twinkling, leaving her mother and the nurse to wait for the terrible attack that means to come, in due course, as soon as the new cough-mixture gets tired.

Sally is a true Londoner. *She* won't admit, whoever else does, that a fog is a real evil. On the contrary, she inclines to Prussian tactics—flies in the face of adverse criticism with the decision that a fog is rather a lark when you're out in it. Actually face to face with a human creature choking, Sally's optimism had wavered. It recovers itself in the bracing atmosphere of a main-thoroughfare charged to bursting with lines of vehicles, any one of which would go slowly alone, but the collective slowness of which finds a vent in a deadlock a mile away—an hour before we can move, we here.

By what human agency it comes about that any wheeled vehicle drawn of horses can thunder at a hand-gallop through the matrix of such a deadlock, Heaven only knows! But the glare of the lamps of the fire-brigade, hot upon the wild excitement of their war-cry, shows that this particular agglomeration of brass and copper, fraught with suppressed energy of steam well up, means to try for it—seems to have had some success already, in fact. It quite puts Sally in spirits—the rapid *crescendo* of the hissing steam, the gleaming boiler-dome that might be the fruitful mother of all the helmets that hang about her skirts, the sudden leaping of the whole from the turgid opacity behind and equally sudden disappearance into the void beyond, the vanishing "Fire!" cry from which all consonants have gone, leaving only a

sound of terror, all confirm her view of the fog as a lark. For, you see, Sally believed the Major might pull through even now.

Also the coming of the engine relieved her from what threatened to become a permanent embarrassment. A boy, who may have been a good boy or may not, had attached himself to her, under pretext of either a strong organ of locality or an extensive knowledge of town.

"Take yer 'most anywhere for fourpence! Anywhere yer like to name. 'Ammersmith, 'Ackney Wick, Noo Cross, Covent Garden Market, Regency Park. Come, I say, missis!"

Sally shouldn't have shaken her head as she did. She ought to have ignored his existence. He continued:

"I don't mind makin' it thruppence to the Regency Park. Come, missis, I say! Think what a little money for the distance. How would *you* like to do it yourself?" Sally rashly allowed herself to be led into controversy.

"I tell you I don't want to go to Regents Park." But the boy passed this protest by—ignored it.

"You won't get no better oarfer. You ask any of the boys. They'll tell you all alike. Regency Park for thruppence. Or, lookey here now, missis! You make it acrorst Westminster Bridge, and I'll say twopence-'a'penny. Come now! Acrorst a bridge!" This boy had quite lost sight of the importance of selecting a destination with reference to its chooser's life-purposes, in his contemplation of the advantages of being professionally conducted to it. Sally was not sorry when the coming of the fire-engine distracted his attention, and led to his disappearance in the fog.

Pedestrians must have been stopping at home to get a breath of fresh air indoors, as the spectres that shot out of the fog, to become partly solid and vanish again in an instant, seemed to come always one at a time.

"Can you tell me, sir"—Sally is addressing a promising spectre, an old gentleman of sweet aspect—"have I passed the Hurkaru Club?" The spectre helps an imperfect hearing with an ear-covering outspread hand, and Sally repeats her question.

"I hope so, my dear," he says, "I hope so. Because if you haven't, I have. I wonder where we are. What's this?" He pats a building at its reachable point—a stone balustrade at a

step corner. "Why, here we are! This is the Club. Can I do anything for you?"

"I want Major Roper"—and then, thinking more explanation asked for, adds—"who wheezes." It is the only identification she can recall from Tishy's conversation and her mother's description. She herself had certainly seen their subject once from a distance, but she had only an impression of something purple. She could hardly offer that as identification.

"Old Jack! He lives in a kennel at the top. Mulberry, tell Major Roper lady for him. Yes, better send your card up, my dear; that's right!"

By this time they are in a lobby full of fog, in which electric light spots are showing their spiritless nature. Mulberry, who is like Gibbon the historian painted in carmine (a colour which clashes with his vermilion lappets), incites a youth to look sharp; also, to take that card up to Major Roper. As the boy goes upstairs with it two steps at a time Sally follows the old gentleman into a great saloon with standing desks to read skewered journals on and is talking to him on the hearthrug. She thinks she knows who he is.

"I came to stop Major Roper coming round to see *our* Major —Colonel Lund, I mean. It isn't fit for him to come out in the fog."

"Of course, it isn't. And Lund mustn't come out at his age. Why, he's older than I am. . . . What? Very ill with bronchitis? I heard he'd been ailing, but they said he was all right again. Are you his Rosey?"

"No, no; mamma's that! She's more the age, you know. I'm only twenty."

"Ah dear! how one forgets! Of course, but he's bad, I'm afraid."

"He's very bad. Oh, General Pellew—because I know it's you—his cough is so dreadful, and there's no air for him because of this nasty fog! Poor mamma's there, and the nurse. I ought to hurry back; but he wanted to prevent Major Roper coming round and getting worse himself; so we agreed for me to come. I'll just give my message and get back."

"Your mamma was Mrs. Graythorpe. I remember her at Umballa years ago. I know; she changed her name to Nightingale. She is now Mrs. . . . ?" Sally supplied her mother's married name. "And you," continued Lord Pellew, "were Baby Graythorpe on the boat."

"Of course. You came home with Colonel Lund; he's told me about that. Wasn't I a handful?" Sally is keenly interested.

"A small handful. You see, you made an impression. I knew you before, though. You had bitten me at Umballa."

"He's told me about that, too. Isn't that Major Roper coming now?" If it is not, it must be some one exactly like him, who stops to swear at somebody or something at every landing. He comes down by instalments. Till the end of the last one, conversation may continue. Sally wants to know more about her *trajet* from India—to take the testimony of an eyewitness. "Mamma says always I was in a great rage because they wouldn't let me go overboard and swim."

"I couldn't speak to that point. It seems likely, though. I always want to jump overboard now, but reason restrains me. You were not reasonable at that date."

"It *is* funny, though, that I have got so fond of swimming since. I'm quite a good swimmer."

Major Roper is by this time manifest volcanically at the bottom of the staircase, but before he comes in Lord Pellew has time to say so is his nasturtium granddaughter a good swimmer. He has thirteen, and has christened each of them after a flower. He hopes thirteen isn't unlucky, and then Major Roper comes in apologetic. Sally can just recollect having seen him before, and thinks him as purple as ever.

"Lund—er!—Lund—er!—Lund—er!—Lund," he begins; each time he says the name being baffled by a gasp, but holding tight to Sally's hand, as though to make sure of her staying till he gets a chance. He gets none, apparently, for he gives it up, whatever he was going to say, with the hand, and says instead, in a lucky scrap of intermediate breath: "I was comin' round—just comin'—only no gettin' those dam boots on!" And then becomes convulsively involved in an apology for swearing before a young lady. She, for her part, has no objection to his damning his boots if he will take them off, and not go out. This she partly conveys, and then, after a too favourable brief report of the patient's state—inevitable under the circumstances—she continues:

"That's what I came on purpose to say, Major Roper. You're not to come out on any account in the fog. Colonel Lund wouldn't be any better for your coming, because he'll think of you going back through the fog, and he'll fret. Please do give up the idea of coming until it clears. Besides, he isn't my grandfather." An inconsecutive finish to correct a mistake of Old Jack's. She resumes the chair she had risen from when he came in, and thereupon he, suffering fearfully from having no breathing-apparatus and nothing to use it on, makes concession to a chair himself, but all the while waves a stumpy finger to keep Sally's last remark alive till his voice comes. The other old soldier remains standing, but somewhat on Sally's other side, so that she does not see both at once. A little voice, to be used cautiously, comes to the Major in time.

"Good Lard, my dear—excuse—old chap, you know!—why, good Lard, what a fool I am! Why, I knoo your father in India."

But he stops suddenly, to Sally inexplicably. She does not see that General Pellew has laid a finger of admonition on his lips.

"I never saw my father," she says. It is a kind of formula of hers which covers all contingencies with most people. This time she does not want it to deadlock the conversation, which is what it usually serves for, so she adds: "You really knew him?"

"Hardly knoo," is the reply. "Put it I met him two or three times, and you'll about toe the line for a start. Goin' off at that, we soon come up to my knowin' the Colonel's not your grandfather." Major Roper does not get through the whole of the last word—asthma forbids it—but his meaning is clear. Only, Sally is a direct Turk, as we have seen, and likes clearing up things.

"You know my friend Lætitia Wilson's mother, Major Roper?" The Major expresses not only that he does, but that his respectful homage is due to her as a fine woman—even a queenly one—by kissing his finger-tips and raising his eyes to heaven. "Well, Lætitia (Tishy, I call her) says you told her mother you knew my father in India, and went out tiger-hunting with him, and he shot a tiger two hundred yards off and gave you the skin." Sally

lays stress on the two hundred yards as a means of identification of the case. No doubt the Major owned many skins, but shot at all sorts of distances.

It is embarrassing for the old boy, because he cannot ignore General Pellew's intimations over Sally's head, which she does not see. He is to hold his tongue—that is their meaning. Yes, but when you have made a mistake, it may be difficult to begin holding it in the middle. Perhaps it would have been safer to lose sight of the subject in the desert of asthma, instead of reviving it the moment he got to an oasis.

"Some misunderstandin'," said he, when he could speak. "I've got a tiger-skin the man who shot it gave me out near Nagpore, but he wasn't your father." How true that was!

"Do you remember his name?" Sally wants him to say it was Palliser again, to prove it all nonsense, but a warning finger of the old General makes him desperate, and he selects, as partially true, the supposed alias which—do you remember all this?—he had ascribed to the tiger-shooter in his subsequent life in Australia.

"Perfectly well. His name was Harrisson. A fine shot. He went away to Australia after that."

Sally laughs out. "How very absurd of Tishy!" she says. "She hadn't even got the name you said right. *She* said it was Palliser. It sounds like Harrisson." She stopped to think a minute. "But even if she had said it right it wouldn't be my father, because his name, you know, was Graythorpe—like mine before we both changed to Nightingale—mother and I. We did, you know."

Old Jack assents to this with an expenditure of breath not warranted where breath is so scarce. He cannot say "of course," and that he recollects, too often. Perhaps he is glad to get on a line of veracity. The General says "of course," also. "Your mother, my dear, was Mrs. Graythorpe when I knew her at Umballa and on the boat." Both these veterans call Sally "my dear," and she doesn't resent it.

But her message is really given, and she ought to get back. She succeeds in finally overruling Major Roper's scheme of coming out into the fog, which has contrived to get blacker still during this conversation; but has more trouble with the other old

soldier. She only overcomes that victor in so many battle-fields by representing that if he does see her safe to Ball Street *she* will be miserable if she doesn't see *him* safe back to the club. "And then," she adds, "we shall go on till doomsday. Besides, I *am* young and sharp!" At which the old General laughs, and says isn't *he?* Ask his granddaughters! Sally says no, he isn't, and she can't have him run over to please anybody. However, he will come out to see her off, though Old Jack must do as he's told, and stop indoors. He watches the little figure vanish in the fog, with a sense of the merry eyebrows in the pretty shoulders, like the number of a cab fixed on behind.

When General Pellew had seen Sally out, to the great relief of Gibbon of the various reds in the lobby, he returned and drew a chair for himself beside Major Roper, who still sat, wrestling with the fog, where he had left him.

"What a dear child! . . . Oh yes; she'll be all right. Take better care of herself than I should of her. She would only have been looking after me, to see that I didn't get run over." He glanced round and dropped his voice, leaning forward to the Major. "She must never be told."

"You're right, Pelloo! Dam mistake of mine to say! I'm a dam mutton-headed old gobblestick! No better!" We give up trying to indicate the Major's painful interruptions and struggles. Of course, he might have saved himself a good deal by saying no more than was necessary. General Pellew was much more concise and to the purpose.

"*Never* be told. I see one thing. Her mother has told her little or nothing of the separation."

"No! Dam bad business! Keep it snug's the word."

"You saw she had no idea of the name. It *was* Palliser, wasn't it?"

"Unless it was Verschoyle." Major Roper only says this to convince himself that he might have forgotten the name—a sort of washy palliation of his Harrisson invention. It brings him within a measurable distance of a clear conscience.

"No, it wasn't Verschoyle. I remember the Verschoyle case." By this time Old Jack is feeling quite truthful. "It *was* Palliser, and it's not for me to blame him. He only did what you

or I might have done—any man. A bit hot-headed, perhaps. But look here, Roper. . . ."

The General dropped his voice, and went on speaking almost in a whisper, but earnestly, for more than a minute. Then he raised it again.

"It was that point. If you say a word to the girl, or begin giving her any information, and she gets the idea you can tell her more, she'll just go straight for you and say she must be told the whole. I can see it in her eyes. And *you can't tell her the whole.* You know you can't!"

The Major fidgeted visibly. He knew he should go round to learn about his old friend (it was barely a quarter of a mile) as soon as the least diminution of the fog gave him an excuse. And he was sure to see Sally. He exaggerated her age. "The gyairl's twenty-two," said he weakly. The General continued:

"I'm only speaking, mind you, on the hypothesis. . . . I'm supposing the case to have been what I told you just now. Otherwise, you could work the telling of it on the usual lines—unfaithfulness, estranged affections, desertion—all the respectable produceable phrases. But as for making that little Miss Nightingale *understand*—that is, without making her life unbearable to her—it can't be done, Major. It can't be done, old chap!"

"I see your game. I'll tell her to ask her mother."

"It can't be done that way. I hope the child's safe in the fog." The General embarked on a long pause. There was plenty of time—more time than he had (so his thought ran) when his rear-guard was cut off by the Afridis in the Khyber Pass. But then the problem was not so difficult as telling this live girl how she came to be one—telling her, that is, without poisoning her life and shrouding her heart in a fog as dense as the one that was going to make the street-lamps outside futile when night should come to help it—telling her without dashing the irresistible glee of those eyebrows and quenching the smile that opened the casket of pearls that all who knew her thought of her by.

Both old soldiers sat on to think it out. The older one first recognised the insolubility of the problem. "It can't be done," said he. "Girls are not alike. She's too much like my nasturtium granddaughter now . . ."

"I shall have to tell her dam lies."

"That won't hurt you, Old Jack."

"I'm not complainin'."

"Besides, I shall have to tell 'em, too, as likely as not. You must tell me what you've told, so as to agree. I should go round to ask after Lund, only I promised to meet an old thirty-fifth man here at five. It's gone half-past. He's lost in the fog. But I can't go away till he comes." Old Jack is seized with an unreasoning sanguineness.

"The fog's clearin'," he says. "You'll see, it'll be quite bright in half-an-hour. Nothin' near so bad as it was, now. Just you look at that window."

The window in question, when looked at, was not encouraging. So far as could be seen at all through the turgid atmosphere of the room, it was a parallelogram of solid opacity crossed by a window-frame, with a hopeless tinge of Roman ochre. But Old Jack was working up to a fiction to serve a purpose. By the time he had succeeded in believing the fog was lifting he would be absolved from his promise not to go out in it. It was a trial of strength between credulity and the actual. The General looked at the window and asked a bystander what he thought, sir? Who felt bound to testify that he thought the prospect hopeless.

"You're allowin' nothin' for the time of day," said Major Roper, and his motive was transparent. Sure enough, after the General's friend had come for him, an hour late, the Major took advantage of the doubt whether absolute darkness was caused by fog or mere night, and in spite of all remonstrances, began pulling on his overcoat to go out. He even had the effrontery to appeal to the hall-porter to confirm his views about the state of things out of doors. Mr. Mulberry added his dissuasions with all the impressiveness of his official uniform and the cubic area of its contents. But even his powerful influence carried no weight in this case. It was useless to argue with the infatuated old boy, who was evidently very uneasy about Major Lund, and suspected also that Miss Nightingale had not reported fair, in order to prevent him coming. He made himself into a perfect bolster with wraps, and put on a respirator. This damned thing, however, he took off again, as it impeded respiration, and then went out into the all but solid fog, gasping and choking frightfully, to feel his

way to Hill Street and satisfy himself the best thing was being done to his old friend's bronchitis.

"They'll kill him with their dam nostrums," said he to the last member of the Club he spoke to, a chance ex-Secretary of State for India, whom he took into his confidence on the doorstep. "A little common-sense, sir—that's what's wanted in these cases. It's all very fine, sir, when the patient's young and can stand it. . . ." His cough interrupted him, but he was understood to express that medical attendance was fraught with danger to persons of advanced years, and that in such cases his advice should be taken in preference to that of the profession. He recovered enough to tell Mulberry's subordinate to stop blowin' that dam whistle. There were cabs enough and to spare, he said, but they were affecting non-existence from malicious motives, and as a stepping-stone to ultimate rapacity. Then he vanished in the darkness, and was heard coughing till he turned a corner.