

gether is evidently on good terms with his cigar—so the doctor thinks—and the tremor has gone from his hands. A short pause, and he goes on speaking: “Until we pitched on the Klondyke just now I knew nothing of this. I shall get it all back in time. Let me see! . . .”

The doctor recovered his presence of mind. “Stop a minute,” said he. “Do you know, Fenwick, if I were you I shouldn’t try to tell anything until you’re clearer about the whole thing. Don’t talk to me now. Wait till you are in a state to know how much you wish to tell.” But Fenwick would have none of this. He shook his head decidedly.

“I *must* talk to some one about it. And my wife I cannot. . . .”

“Why not?”

“You will see. You need not be frightened of too many confidences. I haven’t recollected any grave misdemeanours yet. I’ll keep them to myself when they come. Now listen to what I can and do recollect pretty clearly.” He paused a second, as if his first item was shaky; then said, “Yes!—of course.” And went on as though the point were cleared up.

“Of course! I went up to the Klondyke almost in the first rush, in ’97. I’ll tell you all about that after. Others besides myself became enormously rich that summer, but I was one of the luckiest. However, I don’t want to tell you about Harrisson at Klondyke—(that’s how I find it easiest to think of myself, third person singular!)—but to get at the thing in the dream, that concerns me most *now*. Listen! . . . Only remember this, Vereker dear! I can only recall jagged fragments yet awhile. I have been stunned, and can’t help that. . . .” He stopped the doctor, who was about to speak, with: “I know what you are going to say; let it stand over a bit—wait and be patient—all that sort of game! All very good and sensible, but I *can’t!*”

“Can’t?”

“No! Can’t—simply *can’t*. Because, look you! One of the things that has come back is that I am a married man—by which I mean that Harrisson was. Oh dear! It is such an ease to me to think of Harrisson as somebody else. You can’t understand that.” But Vereker is thoroughly discomposed.

“But didn’t you say—only just now—there was nothing—

nothing—to unsettle your present life? No; I can’t understand—I *can’t* understand.” His reply is to Fenwick’s words, but the reference is to the early part of his speech.

“You will understand it better if I tell you more. Let me do it my own way, because I get mixed, and feel as if I might lose the clue any moment. All the time I was with the Clemenceaux at Ontario I was a married man—I mean that I *knew* I was a married man. And I remember knowing it all that time. Indeed, I did! But if you ask me who my wife was—she wasn’t there, you know; you’ve got all that clear?—why, I can’t tell you any more than Adam! All I know is that all that time little Ernestine was growing from a girl to a woman, the reason I felt there could be no misunderstanding on that score was that Clemenceau and his wife knew quite well I had been married and divorced or something—there was something rum, long before—and you know Papists would rather the Devil outright than have their daughter marry a divorced man. But as to who the wife had been, and what it was all about . . .”

He stopped again suddenly, seizing Vereker by the arm with a strong hand that trembled as it had done before. His face went very white, but he kept self-possession, as it were mechanically; so completely that the long ash on his half-smoked cigar remained unbroken. He waited a moment, and then spoke in a controlled way.

“I can remember nothing of the story; or what seems to come I *know* is only confusion . . . by things in it. . . .” Vereker thought it might be well to change the current of his thoughts.

“Who were the Clemenceaux at Ontario?” said he.

“Of course, I ought to tell you that. Only there were so many things. Clemenceau was a jeweller at Ontario. I lived in the flat over his shop, and used to see a great deal of his family. I must have lived almost entirely among French Canadians while I was there—it was quite three or four years. . . .”

“And all that time, Fenwick, you thought of yourself as a married man?”

“Married or divorced—yes. And long before that.”

“It is quite impossible for me—you must see it—to form any picture in my mind of how the thing presents itself to you.”

"Quite."

"It seems—to me—perfectly incredible that you should have no recollection at all of the marriage, or divorce, or whatever it was. . . ."

"I did not say I had no recollection *at all*. Listen. Don't you know this, Vereker?—of course you do, though—how one wakes from a hideous dream and remembers exactly the feeling it produced, and how the same feeling comes back when one recalls from the dream some fragment preserved from all one has forgotten of it—something nowise horrible in itself, but from its associations in the dream?"

"Oh yes, perfectly!"

"Well—that's my case. When I try to bring back the memories I know I *must* have had at that time in Canada, nothing comes back but a horror—something like a story read in boyhood and shuddered at in the night—but all details gone. I mean all details with horror in them. Because, do you know? . . ."

"Yes—?" Vereker stopped beside him on the path, as Fenwick stopped and hesitated. Utter perplexity almost forbidding speech was the impression the doctor received of his condition at this moment. After a moment's silence he continued:

"You will hardly believe me, but almost the only thing I can revive—that is, have revived so far—is an occurrence that must needs at the time have been a happiness and a delight. And yet it now presents itself to me as an excruciating torment—as part of some tragedy in which I had to be an actor, but of which I can seize no detail that does not at once vanish, leaving mere pain and confusion."

"What was it? You don't mind . . ."

"Mind telling you? Oh no!—why should I? I may be happier if I can tell it. It's like this. I am at a railway-station in the heat somewhere, and am expecting a girl who is coming to marry me. I can remember the heat and our meeting, and then all is Chaos again. Then, instead of remembering more, I go over and over again the old thing as at first. . . . No! nothing new presents itself. Only the railway-station and the palm-trees in the heat. And the train coming slowly in, and my knowing that she is in it, and coming to marry me."

"Do you mean that the vision—or scene—in your mind stops dead, and you don't see her get out of the carriage?"

They had walked on slowly again a short distance. Fenwick made another halt, and as he flicked away a most successful crop of cigar-ash that he had been cultivating—so it struck Vereker—as a kind of gauge or test of his own self-control, he answered:

"I couldn't say that. Hardly! I see a girl or woman get out of the carriage, but *not her*. . . .!"

Vereker was completely at a loss—began to be a little afraid his companion's brain might be giving way. "How *can* you tell that," said he, "unless you know who she ought to have been?"

Fenwick resumed his walk, and when he replied did so in a voice that had less tension in it, as though something less painful had touched his mind:

"It's rum, I grant you. But the whole thing is too rum to bear thinking of—at least, to bear talking about. As to the exact reason *why* I know it's not her, that's simple enough!"

"What is it?"

"Because Mrs. Fenwick gets out of the train—my Rosey, here, Sally's mother. And it's just the same with the only other approach to a memory that connects itself with it—a shadowy, indistinct ceremony, also in the heat, much more indistinct than the railway-station. My real wife's image—Rosey's, here—just takes the place at the altar where the other one should be, and prevents my getting at any recollection of her. It is the only thing that makes the dream bearable."

Vereker said nothing. He did not want to disturb any lull in the storm in his companion's mind. After a slight pause the latter continued:

"The way I account for it seems to me sufficient. I cannot conceive any woman being to me what . . . or, perhaps I should express it better by saying I cannot connect the *wife-idea* with any image except hers. And, of course, the strong dominant idea displaces the feeble memory."

Vereker was ready with an unqualified assent at the moment. For though Sally, as we have seen, had taken him into her confidence the day after her mother's wedding—and, indeed, had talked over the matter many times with him since—the actual truth was far too strange to suggest itself offhand, as it would

have been doing had the doctor connected the fact that Sally's mother went out to India to be married with this meeting of two lovers at a simmering railway-station, name not known. The idea of the *impossible per se* is probably the one a finite intelligence most readily admits, and is always cordially welcome in intellectual difficulties—a universal resolution of logical discords. In the case of these two men, at that moment, neither was capable of knowing the actual truth had he been told it, whatever the evidence; still less of catching at slight connecting-links. Fenwick went on speaking:

"I don't know whether you will understand it—yes! I think, perhaps, you might—that it's a consolation to me this way Mrs. Fenwick comes in. It seems to bring fresh air into what else would be—ugh!" He shuddered a half-intentional shudder; then, dropping his voice, went on, speaking quickly: "The thing makes part of some tragedy—some sad story—something best forgotten! If I could only dare to hope I might remember no more—might even forget it altogether."

"Perhaps if you could remember the whole the painfulness might disappear. Does not anything in the image of the railway-station give a clue to its whereabouts?"

"No. It hardly amounts to an image at all—more a fact than an image. But the heat was a fact. And the dresses were all white—thin—tropical. . . ."

"Then the Mrs. Fenwick that comes out of the train isn't dressed as she dresses here?"

"Why, n-n-no! . . . No, certainly not. But that's natural, you know. Of course, my mind supplies a dress for the heat."

"It doesn't diminish the puzzlement."

"Yes—yes—but it does, though. Because, look here! It's not the *only* thing. I find myself consciously making Rosey look *younger*. I can't help my mind—my *now* mind—working, do what I will! But as to where it was, I fancy I have a clue. I can remember remembering—if you understand me—that I had been in Australia—remembered it at Ontario—talked about it to Tina Clemenceau. . . ."

If Vereker had had any tendency to get on a true scent at this point, the reference to Australia would have thrown him off it. And the thought of the Canadian girl took Fenwick's mind once

more to his American life: "It was my thinking of that girl made all this come back to me, you know. Just after you left us, when we were throwing stones in the sea, last night. . . ."

"Throwing stones in the sea? . . ."

"Yes—we went down to the waves on the beach, and my throwing a stone in reminded me of it all, after. I was just going to get to sleep, when, all of a sudden, what must I think of but Niagara!—at least, the rapids. I was standing with Mademoiselle Tina—no one else—on a rock overlooking the great torrent, and I threw a stone in, and she said no one would ever see that stone again. I said, 'Like a man when he dies and is forgotten,' or something of that sort. I recollect her now—poor child!—turning her eyes full on me and saying, 'But I should not forget you, Mr. Harrisson.' You see how it was? Only it seems a sort of disloyalty to the poor girl to tell it. It was all plain, and she meant it to be. I can't remember now whether I said, 'I can't marry you, Tina, because I don't know that my wife is dead,' or whether I only thought it. But I know that I then knew I was, or had been, married and divorced or deserted. And it was that unhappy stone that brought it all back to me."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Quite sure that began it. I was just off, and some outlying scrap of my mind was behindhand, and that stone saw it and pounced on it. I remembered more after that. I know I was rather glad to start off to the new gold river, because of Ernestine Clemenceau. I don't think I should have cared to marry Ernestine. Anyhow, I didn't. She seems to me Harrisson's affair now. Don't laugh at me, doctor!"

"I wasn't laughing." And, indeed, this was true. The doctor was very far from laughing.

They had walked some little way inland, keeping along a road sunk in the chalk. This now emerged on an exposed hill-side, swept by the sea wind; which, though abated, still made talk less easy than in the sheltered trench, or behind the long wall where Fenwick lit his cigar. Vereker suggested turning back; and, accordingly, they turned. The doctor found time to make up his mind that no harm could be done now by referring to his interview with Rosalind, the day before.

"Your wife told me yesterday that you had just had a tiresome

recurrence when you came out after us—at the jetty-end, you know.”

“Surely! So I had. Did she tell you what it was?” Evidently, in the stress and turmoil of his subsequent experience in the night, it had slipped from him. The doctor said a reminding word or two, and it came back.

“I know, I know. I’ve got it now. That was last night. But now—that again! *Why* was it so horrible? That was dear old Kreutzkammer, at ‘Frisco. What could there be horrible about *him?* . . .” A clear idea shot into the doctor’s mind—not a bad thing to work on.

“Fenwick!—don’t you see how it is? These things are only horrible to you *because* you half recollect them. The pain is only the baffled strain on the memory, not the thing you are trying to recover.”

“Very likely.” He assents, but his mind is dwelling on Kreutzkammer, evidently. For he breaks into a really cheerful laugh, pleasant in the ears of his companion. “Why, *that* was Diedrich Kreutzkammer!” he exclaims, “up at that Swiss place. And I didn’t know *him* from Adam!”

“Of course it was. But look here, Fenwick—isn’t what I say true? Half the things that come back to you will be no pain at all when you have fairly got hold of them. Only, *wait!* Don’t struggle to remember, but let them come.”

“All right, old chap! I’ll be good.” But he has no very strong convictions on the subject, clearly. The two walk on together in silence as far as the low flint wall, in another recess of which Fenwick lights another cigar, as before. Then he turns to the doctor and says:

“Not a word of this to Rosey—nor to Sallykin!” The doctor seems perplexed, but assents and promises. “Honest Injun!—as Sally says,” adds Fenwick. And the doctor repeats that affidavit, and then says:

“I shall have to finesse a good deal. I can manage with Mrs. Fenwick. But—I wish I felt equally secure with Miss Sally.” He feels very insecure indeed in that quarter, if the truth is told. And he is afflicted with a double embarrassment here, as he has never left Sally without her “miss” in speaking to Fenwick, while, on the other hand, he holds a definite licence from her

mother—is, as it were, a chartered libertine. But that’s a small matter, after all. The real trouble is having to look Sally in the face and conceal anything.

“Miss who?” says Fenwick. “Oh—Sally, you mean! Of course she’ll rush the position. Trust her!” He can’t help laughing as he thinks of Sally, with Dr. Conrad vainly trying to protect his outworks.

The momentary hesitation about how to speak of Sally may have something to do with Vereker’s giving the conversation a twist. It turns, however, on a point that has been waiting in his mind all through their interview, ever since Fenwick spoke of his identity with Harrisson.

“Look here, Fenwick,” he says. “It’s all very fine your talking about keeping Mrs. Fenwick in the dark about this. I know it’s for her own sake—but you can’t.”

“And why not? I can’t have Rosey know I have another wife living. . . .”

“You don’t know she’s alive, for one thing!”

“H’m! . . . I don’t *know*, certainly. But I should have known, somehow, if she were dead. Of course, if further memory or inquiry proves that she *is* dead, that’s another matter.”

“But, in the meanwhile, how can you prove your identity with Harrisson and claim all your property without her knowing? . . . What I mean is, I can’t think it out. There may be a way. . . .”

“My dear boy”—Fenwick says this very quietly—“that’s exactly the reason why I said you would have to help me to settle whether I should be that man again or not. I say *not*, if the decision lies with me.”

“Not?—not *at all?* The doctor fairly gasps; his breath is taken away. Never perhaps was a young man freer from thought and influence of money than he, more absorbed in professional study and untainted by the supremacies of property. But for all that he was human, and English, and theoretically accepted gold as the thing of things, the one great aim and measure of success. Of other men’s success, that is, and *their* aim, not his. For he was, in his own eyes, a humble plodder, not in the swim at all. But he ascribed to the huge sums real people had a right to, outside the limits of the likes of him, a kind of

sacredness that grew in a geometrical ratio with their increase. It gave him much more pain to hear that a safe had been robbed of thousands in gold than he felt when, on opening a wrapped-up fee, what seemed a guinea to the touch turned out a new farthing and a shilling to the sight. It was in the air that he lived in—that all of us live in.

So, when Fenwick made in this placid way a choice of conduct that must needs involve the sacrifice of sums large enough to be spoken of with awe, even in the sacred precincts of a bank, poor Dr. Conrad felt that all his powers of counsel had been out-shot, and that his mind was reeling on its pedestal. That a poor man should give up his savings *en bloc* to help a friend would have seemed to him natural and reasonable; that he should do so for honest love of a woman still more so; but that a millionaire should renounce his millions! Was it decent? was it proper? was it considerate to Mammon? But that must have been Fenwick's meaning, too. The doctor did not recover his speech before Fenwick spoke again:

"Why should I claim all my property? How should I be the gainer if it made Rosey unhappy?"

"I see. I quite see. I feel with you, you know; feel as you do. But what will become of the money?"

"The poor darling money? Just think! It will lie neglected at the bank, unclaimed, forsaken, doing no more mischief than when it was harmless dust and nuggets in the sand of the Klondyke. While it was there, gold was a bit—a mighty small bit—dearer than it has become since. Now that it is in the keeping of chaps who won't give it up half as easily as the Klondyke did, I suppose it has appreciated again, as the saying is. The difference of cost between getting it out of the ground and out of the bank is a negligible factor. . . ." Fenwick seemed to find ease in chatting economics in this way. Some of it was so obviously true to Vereker that he at once concluded it would be classed among fallacies; he had had experience of this sort of thing. But he paid little attention, as he was thinking of how much of this interview he could repeat to Sally, to whom every step they took brought him nearer. The roar of a lion in his path was every moment more audible to the ears of his imagination. And it left him silent; but Fenwick went on speaking:

"We won't trouble about the darling dust and nuggets; let them lie in pawn, and wait for a claimant. They won't find Mr. Harrisson's heir-at-law in a hurry. If ever proof comes of the death of Mrs. Harrisson—whoever she was—I'll be Mr. Harrisson again. Till then . . ."

"Till then what?"

"Till then, Vereker dear"—Fenwick said this very seriously, with emphasis—"till then we shall do most wisely to say nothing further to Mrs. Fenwick or to Sally. You must see that it won't be possible to pick and choose, to tell this and reserve that. I shall speak of the recurrences of memory that come to me, as too confused for repetition. I shall tell lies about them if I think it politic. Because I can't have Rosey made miserable on any terms. As for the chick, you'll have to manage the best you can."

"I'll do my best," the doctor says, without a particle of confidence in his voice. "But about yourself, Fenwick?"

"I shall do very well, as long as I can have a chat with you now and again. You've no idea what a lot of good it has done me, this talking to you. And, of course, I haven't told you one-tenth of the things I remember. There was one thing I wanted to say though just now, and we got off the line—what was it now? Oh, I know, about my name. It wasn't really Harrisson."

"Not really Harrisson? What was it then?" What next, and next?—is the import of the speaker's face.

"I'll be hanged if I know! But it's true, rum as it seems. I know I knew it wasn't Harrisson every time I signed a cheque in America. But as for what it *was*, that all belongs to the dim time before. Isn't that them coming to meet us?"

Yes, it was. And there was something else also the doctor had had it on his tongue to say, and it had got away on a siding. But it didn't matter—it was only about whether the return of memory had or had not been due to the galvanic battery on the pier.