

away, and gone to bed. It was then past eleven. But he was reckoning without his host.

Fenwick said to him, as they stood on Iggulden's threshold and doormat respectively—presuming rashly, on imperfect information, to delay farewells—"Now look here, Conrad, my dear boy (I like your name Conrad), don't you go and boil over to Sally to-morrow, nor next day. You'll only spoil the rest of your stay, maybe. . . . What! well—what I mean is that nothing I say prejudices the kitten. You'll understand that, I'm sure?"

"Perfectly. Of course, if Sally were to say she knew somebody she would like a deal better, there's no reason why she shouldn't. . . . I mean *I* couldn't complain."

"Yes—yes! I see. You'd exonerate her. Good boy! Very proper." And indeed the doctor had felt, as the words passed his lips, that he was rather a horrid liar. But the point didn't matter. Fenwick laughed it off: "Just you take my advice, and refer the matter to the kitten the last day you're here. Monday, won't it be? And don't think about it!"

"Oh no! I'm a philosophical sort of chap, I am! Never in extremes. Good-night!"

"I see. *Sperat infestis metuit secundis alteram sortem bene præparatum pectus*—Horace." Fenwick ran this through in a breath; and the doctor, a little hazy in school-memories of the classics, said, "What's that?" and began translating it—"The bosom well prepared for either lot, fears . . ." Fenwick caught him up and completed the sentence:

"Fears what is good, and hopes for what is not. Cut away to bed, old chap, and sleep sound. . . ." Then he paused a moment, as he saw the doctor looking a question at him intently, and just about to speak it. He answered it before it came:

"No, no! Nothing more. I mean to forget all about it, and take my life as it stands. Bother Mr. Harrison!" He dropped his voice to say this; then raised it again. "Don't you fret about me, doctor. Remember, I'm Algernon Fenwick! Good-night!"

"Good-night!" And then the doctor, with the remains of heart-turmoil in him, and a brain reeling, more or less, went up into what he conceived to be an empty dark room, and was dis-

concerted by an ill-used murmur in the darkness—a meek, submissive voice of one accustomed to slights:

"I told her to blow it out and go to bed. It is all—quite—right, my dear. So do not complain. Now help me with my things, and I will get to bed."

"My dear mother! I *am* so sorry. I had no idea you had not gone long ago!"

"My dear!—it does not matter in the least now. What is done, is done. Be careful with the grease over my work. These candles drop dreadfully, unless you hold them exactly upright. And gutter. Now give me your arm, and I will go to bed. I *think* I shall sleep." And the worthy woman was really—if her son could only have got his eyes freed from the scales of domestic superstition, and seen it—intensely happy and exultant at this fiendish little piece of discomfort-mongering. She had scored; there was no doubt of it. She was even turning it over in her own mind whether it would not bear repetition at a future time; and quite intended, if so, to enjoy herself over it. Now the doctor was contrite and heavy at heart at his cruel conduct; walking about—just think!—and talking over his own affairs while his self-sacrificing mother was sitting in the dark, with the lamp out! To be sure there was no visible reason why she should have had it put out, except as a picturesque and imaginative way of rubbing her altruism into its nearest victim. Unless, indeed, it was done in order that the darkened window should seem to announce to the returning truant that she had gone to bed, and to lull his mind to unconsciousness of the ambush that awaited him.

Anyhow, the doctor was so impressed with his own delinquency that he felt it would be impossible, the lamp having been put out, to take his mother into his confidence about his conversation with Fenwick. Which he certainly would have done—late as the hour was—if it had been left in. So he said good-night, and carried the chaos of his emotions away to bed with him, and lay awake with them till cock-crow.

As Fenwick walked back home, timing his pace by his expectation of his cigar's duration, he wondered whether, perhaps, he had not been a little rash. He felt obliged to go back on inter-

views with Sally, in which the doctor had been spoken of. He recalled for his justification one in particular. The family conclave at Krakatoa Villa had recurred to a remark of Rosalind's about the drawback to Vereker's practice of his bachelorhood. He was then, as it were, brought up for a second reading, and new clauses added to him containing schedules of possible wives. Fenwick had noticed, then, that Sally's assent to the insertion of any candidate's name turned on two points: one, the lady's consent being taken for granted; the other, that every young single female human creature known by name or describable by language was actually out of the question, or inadmissible in its answer. She rejected almost all applicants for the post of a doctor's wife without examining their claims, on the ground of moral or physical defect—as, for instance, you never would go and tie up poor Prosy to a wife that golloped. Sylvia Peplow, indeed! Interrogated about the nature of "golloping," Sally could go no nearer than that Miss Peplow looked as if she couldn't help it. And her sister was worse: she was perfectly pecky, and shut up with a click. And as for the large Miss Baker—why, you knew how large *she* was, and it would be quite ridiculous! Besides, her stupidity!

The only candidates that got the least consideration owed their success to their names or expectations. Caroline Smith had, or would have sometime, a thousand a year. But she squinted. Still, she might be thought over. Mrs. Pollicitus Biggs's cousin Isabella would have two thousand when her mother died, but the vitality of the latter was indescribable. Besides, she was just like her name, Isabella, and did her hair religiously. There was Chariclea Epimenides, certainly, who had got three thousand, and would have six more. She might be worth thinking of. . . .

"Why don't you have him yourself, Sarah?" Fenwick had asked at this point. Rosalind had just left the room to speak to Ann. But he didn't want Sarah to be obliged to answer, so he went on: "Why are all these young ladies' incomes exactly in round thousands?"

To which Sally had replied: "They always are, when you haven't got 'em." But had fallen into contemplation, and presently said—out of the blue—"Because I'm an unsettled sort of party—a vagrant. I shouldn't do for a G.P.'s wife, thank

you, Jeremiah! I should like to live in a caravan, and go about the country, and wood fires out of doors." Was it, Fenwick wondered, the gipsies they had seen to-day that had made him think of this? and then he recalled how he afterwards heard the kitten singing to herself the old ballad:

"What care I for my goose-feather bed?
What care I for my money oh?"

and hearing her so sing had somehow imputed to the parade of bravado in the swing of its rhythm a something that might have belonged to a touched chord. Like enough a mistake of his, said Reason. But for all that the reminiscence played its part in soothing Fenwick's misgivings of his own rashness.

"The kitten's all right," said he to himself. "And if she doesn't want Master Conrad, the sooner he knows it the better!" But he had little doubt of the course things would take as he stopped to look at that venturesome star, that seemed to be going altogether too near the moon for safety.

In a few moments he turned again towards home. And then his mind must needs go off to the thing of all others he wished not to think of—*himself*. He had come to see this much clearly, that until the veil floated away from between him and his past and left the whole atmosphere transparent, there could be no certainty that a recrudescence of that past would not be fatal to his wife's happiness. And inevitably, therefore, to his own. Having once formulated the idea that for the future *he* was to be one person and Harrisson another, he found its entertainment in practice easier than he had anticipated. He had only to say to himself that it was for her sake that he did it, and he did not find it altogether impossible to dismiss his own identity from the phantasmagoria that kept on coming back and back before his mind, and to assign the whole drama to another person; to whom he allowed the name of Harrisson all the easier from his knowledge that it never had been really his own. Very much the easier, too, no doubt, from the sense that the function of memory was still diseased, imperfect, untrustworthy. How could it be otherwise when he still was unable to force it back beyond a certain limit? It was mainly a vision of America, and, previous to that, a mystery of interminable avenues of trees, and

an inexplicable horror of a struggle with death. There he always lost himself. In the hinterland of this there was that vision of a wedding somewhere. And then bewilderment, because the image of his living wife, his very soul of the world he now dwelt in, the woman whose daughter had grown into his heart as his own—yes, not only the image, but the very name of her—had come in and supplanted that of the forgotten wife of that forgotten day. So much so that more than once, in striving to follow the clue given by that railway-carriage, his mind had involuntarily called the warm living thing that came into his arms from it "Rosey." In the face of that, what was the worth of anything he should recollect now, that he should not discard it as a mere phantasm, for her sake? How almost easy to say to himself, "that was Harrisson," and then to add, "whoever he was," and dismiss him.

Do you—you who read—find this so very difficult to understand? Can you recall no like imperfect memory of your own that, multiplied a hundredfold, would supply an analogy, a standpoint to look into Fenwick's disordered mind from?

After his delirious collision with his first vigorous revival of the past, he was beginning to settle down to face it, helped by the talisman of his love for Rosalind, whom it was his first duty to shield from whatever it should prove to hold of possible injury to her. That happy hour of the dying sunset in the shorn corn-fields, with her and Sally and the sky above and the sea beyond, had gone far to soothe the perturbation of the night. And his talk of the morning with this young man he had just left had helped him strongly. For he knew in his heart he could safely go to him again if he could not bear his own silence, could trust him with whatever he could tell at all to any one. Could he not, when he was actually ready to trust him with—Sally?

So, though he was far from feeling at rest, a working equilibrium was in sight. He could acquiesce in what came back to him, as it came; need never struggle to hasten or retard it. Little things would float into his mind, like house-flies into the ray from a shutter-crack in a darkened room, and float away again uncaptured, or whizz and burr round and against each other as the flies do, and then decide—as the flies do—that neither concerns the other and each may go his way. But he was nowise

bound to catch these things on the wing, or persuade them to live in peace with one another. If they came, they came; and if they went, they went.

Such a one caught his thoughts, and held them for a moment as, satisfied that astronomy would see to that star, he turned to go straight home to Lobjoit's. That would just last out the cigar. But what was it now? What was the fly that flew into his sun-ray this time, that it should make him remember a line of Horace, to be so pat with it, and to know what it meant, too?

But this fact, that he could not tell how he came to know its meaning, showed him how decisively the barrier line across the memory of his boyhood was drawn, or, it might be, his early manhood. He could not remember, properly speaking, the whole of his life in the States, but he could remember telling a man—one Larpent, a man with a club-foot, in Ontario—that he had been there over fifteen years. This man has nothing to do with this story, but he happens to serve as an illustration of the disjointed way in which small details would tell out clear against a background of confusion. Why, Fenwick could remember his face plainly—how close-shaven he was, and black over the razor-land; how his dentist had inserted an artificial tooth that didn't match, and shone out white. But as to the fifteen years he had spent in the States, that he had told Mr. Larpent of, they grew dimmer and dimmer as he tried to carry his recollection further back. Beyond them—or rather, longer ago than they, properly speaking—came that endless, intolerable labyrinth of trees, and then, earlier still, that railway-carriage. It was getting clearer; but the worst of it was that the clearer it got, the clearer grew the Rosey that came out of it. As long as that went on, there was nothing of it all he could place faith in. He had been told that no man could be convinced, by his own reason, of his own hallucination. He would supply a case to the contrary. It would amuse him one day, if ever he came to know that girl of the railway-carriage was dead, to tell Rosalind all his experiences, and how bravely he fought against what he knew to be delusion.

But he must make an effort against this sort of thing. Here was he, who had just made up his mind—so he phrased it—to remain himself, and refuse to be Harrisson, no sooner was he left alone for a few minutes than he must needs be raking up

the past. And that, too, because of a line of Horace!—sound in itself, but quite cut asunder from its origin, the book he read it in, or the voice he heard read it. What did that line matter? Leave it for Mr. Harrisson in that state of pre-existence. As well make a point of recalling the *provenance* of any little thing that had happened in this his present life. Well, for instance, Mary and the fat boy in "Pickwick." Rosalind had read him that aloud, he knew, but he couldn't say when. Was he going to worry himself to recall that which could do him no harm to know? Surely not. And if so, why strive to bring back things better forgotten? It is useless to endeavour to make the state of Fenwick's mind, at this point of the imperfect revival of memory, appear other than incredible. A person who has had the painful experience of forgetting his own name in a dream would perhaps understand it best. Or, without going so far, can no help be got towards it from our frequent certainties about some phrase (for instance) that we think we cannot possibly forget? about some date that we believe no human power will ever obliterate? And in five minutes—gone—utterly gone! Truly, there is no evidence but a man's own word for what he does or does not, can or cannot, recollect.

"I say, Rosey, when was it you read to me about Mary and the fat boy in 'Pickwick'?" Fenwick, having suggested a doubt to himself about his power to recall what he supposed to have happened recently, had, of course, set about doing it directly. His question was asked of his wife as he came into her bedroom on his return. He mounted the stairs singing to himself,

"Que nous mangerons Marott-e,
Bec-à-bec et toi et moi,"

till he came in to where Rosalind was sitting reading, with her wonderful hair combed free—probably by Sally for a treat. Then he asked his question rather suddenly, and it made her start.

"I was in the middle of my book, and you made me jump." He gave her a kiss for apology. "What's the question? When did I read to you about Mary and the fat boy? I couldn't say. I feel as if I had, though."

"Was it out in the garden at K. Villa? It wasn't here." He usually called Krakatoa "K." for working purposes.

"No, it certainly wasn't here. It must have been at home, only I can't recollect when. Ask Sally."

"The kitten wasn't there."

"She would know, though. She always knows. She's not asleep yet. . . . Sallykin!" The young person is on the other side of a mere wooden partition, congenial to the architecture of Lobjoit's, and her reply conveys the idea of a speaker in bed who hasn't moved to answer.

"What? Be quick. I'm going to sleep."

"I'm so sorry, chick. When was it I read to this man Mary and the fat boy in 'Pickwick'?"

"How should I know? Not when I was there."

"All right, Sarah." Thus Fenwick, to whom Sarah responds:

"Good-night, Jeremiah. Go to bed, and don't keep decent Christian people awake at this hour of the night. Take mother's book away, and cut it."

Rosalind closes her book and says: "I don't know, darling, if Sally doesn't. Why do you want to know?"

"Couldn't say. It crossed my mind. I know the kitten wasn't there, though. Good-night, love. . . . Oh yes, I shall sleep to-night. Ta, ta, Sarah—pleasant dreams!"

But he had not reached the door when the voice of Sarah came again, with the implication of a mouth that had come out into the open.

"Stop, Jeremiah!" it said. "It wasn't at K. Villa."

"Why not, chick?"

"Because Pickwick's *lost!* It was lent to those impossible people at Turnham Green, and they stole it. I know they did. Name like Marylebene."

"The Haliburtons? Why, that's ever so long ago." Thus Rosalind.

"Of course it is. It's been gone ages. I'm going to sleep. Good-night!" And Jeremiah said good-night once more and departed.

Sally didn't go straight to sleep, but she made a start on her way there. It was not a vigorous start, for she had hardly begun upon it when she desisted, and sat up in bed and listened.

"What's that, mother? Nothing wrong, is there?"

"No, darling child, what should be wrong? Go to sleep."

"I thought I heard you gasp, or snuffle, or sigh, or sob, or click in your throat. That's all. Sure you didn't?"

"Quite sure. Now, do be a reasonable kitten, and go to sleep; I shall be in bed in half-a-second."

And Sally subsides, but first makes a stipulation: "You *will* sleep in your hair, mother darling, won't you? Or, at least, do it up, and not that hateful nightcap?"

But though Rosalind felt conscientiously able to disclaim any of the sounds Sally had described, something audible had occurred in her breathing. Sally's first word had gone nearest, but it was hardly a full-grown gasp.

Her husband's question about "Pickwick" had scarcely taken her attention off an exciting story-climax, and she really did want to know why the Archbishop turned pale as death when the Countess kissed him. Gerry was looking well and cheerful again, and there was nothing to connect his inquiry with any reminiscence of "B.C." So, as soon as he had gone, she reopened her book—not without a mental allusion to a dog in Proverbs—and went on where she had left off. The writer had not known how to manage his Archbishop and Countess, and the story went flat and slushy like an ill-whipped *zabajone*. She put the book aside, and wondered whether "Pickwick" really *had* been alienated by the impossible Haliburtons; sat thinking, but only of the thing of *now*—nothing of buried records.

So she sat, it might be for two minutes. Then, quite suddenly, she had bitten her lip and her brows had wrinkled. And her eyes had locked to a fixed look that would stay till she had thought this out. So her face said, and the stillness of her hand.

For she had suddenly remembered when and where it was she had read to that man about Mary and the fat boy. It was in the garden at her mother's twenty-two years ago. She remembered it well now, and quite suddenly. She could remember how Gerry, young-man-wise, had tried to utilise Thackeray to show his greater knowledge of the world—had flaunted Piccadilly and Pall Mall before the dazzled eyes of an astonished suburban. She could remember how she read it aloud to him, because, when he read over her shoulder, she always turned the page before he was ready. And his decision that Dickens's characters were never gentlemen, and her saying perhaps that was why he was so

amusing. And then how he got the book from her and went on reading while she went away for her lawn-tennis shoes, and when she came back found he had only two more pages to read, and then he would come and play.

But it spoke well for her husband's chances of a quiet time to-night that he should hold this memory in his mind, and yet be secure against a complete resurrection of the past. Nothing else might grow from it. He evidently thought the reading had been at Shepherd's Bush. He would hardly have said, "the kitten wasn't there," unless his ideas had been glued to that spot. But then—and Rosalind's mind swam to think of it—how very decisively the kitten was "not there" in that other garden two-and-twenty years ago.

It was at that moment the gasp, or sigh, or sob, or whatever it was, awoke Sally. Her mother had been strong against the mere memory of the happy hour of thoughtless long ago; but then, this that was to come—this thing the time was thoughtless of! Was it not enough to force a gasp from self-control itself? a cry from any creature claiming to be human? "*The kitten wasn't there!*" No, truly she was not.