Dodo

by E. F. Benson

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DODO

A DETAIL OF THE DAY

BY

E.F. BENSON

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I

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Contents (vol. 1 and 2)

And far out, drifting helplessly on that grey, angry sea, I saw a small boat at the mercy of the winds and waves. And my guide said to me, 'Some call the sea "Falsehood," and that boat "Truth," and others call the sea "Truth," and the boat "Falsehood;" and, for my part, I think that one is right as the other.'—The Professor of Ignorance.

CHAPTER ONE

Poets of all ages and of all denominations are unanimous in assuring us that there was once a period on this grey earth known as the Golden Age. These irresponsible bards describe it in terms of the vaguest, most poetic splendour, and, apart from the fact, upon which they are all agreed, that the weather was always perfectly charming, we have to reconstruct its characteristics in the main for ourselves. Perhaps if the weather was uniformly delightful, even in this nineteenth century, the golden age might return again. We all know how perceptibly our physical, mental and spiritual level is raised by a few days of really charming weather; but until the weather determines to be always golden, we can hardly expect it of the age. Yet even now, even in England, and even in London, we have every year a few days which must surely be waifs and strays from the golden age, days which have fluttered down from under the hands of the recording angel, as he tied up his reports,

and, after floating about for years in dim, interplanetary space, sometimes drop down upon us. They may last a week, they have been known to last a fortnight; again, they may curtail themselves into a few hours, but they are never wholly absent.

At the time at which this story opens, London was having its annual golden days; days to be associated with cool, early rides in the crumbly Row, with sitting on small, green chairs beneath the trees at the corner of the Park; with a general disinclination to exert oneself, or to stop smoking cigarettes; with a temper distinctly above its normal level, and a corresponding absence of moods. The crudeness of spring had disappeared, but not its freshness; the warmth of the summer had come, but not its sultriness; the winter was definitely over and past, and even in Hyde Park the voice of the singing bird was heard, and an old gentleman, who shall be nameless, had committed his annual perjury by asserting in the Morning Post that he had heard a nightingale in the elm-trees by the Ladies' Mile, which was manifestly impossible.

The sky was blue; the trees, strange to say, were green, for the leaves were out, and even the powers of soot which hover round London had not yet had time to shed their blackening dew upon them. The season was in full swing, but nobody was tired of it yet, and "all London" evinced a tendency to modified rural habits, which expressed themselves in the way of driving down to Hurlingham, and giving water parties at Richmond.

To state this more shortly, it was a balmy, breezy day towards the middle of June. The shady walks that line the side of the Row were full of the usual crowds of leisurely, well-dressed people who constitute what is known as London. Anyone acquainted with that august and splendid body would have seen at once that something had happened; not a famine in China, nor a railway accident, nor a revolution, nor a war, but emphatically "something." Conversation was a thing that

made time pass, not a way of passing the time. Obviously the larger half of London was asking questions, and the smaller half was enjoying its superiority, in being able to give answers. These indications are as clear to the practised eye as the signs of the weather appear to be to the prophet Zadkiel. To the amateur one cloud looks much like another cloud: the prophet, on the other hand, lays a professional finger on one and says "Thunder," while the lurid bastion, which seems fraught with fire and tempest to the amateur, is dismissed with the wave of a contemptuous hand.

A tall, young man was slowly making his way across the road from the arch. He was a fair specimen of "the exhausted seedlings of our effete aristocracy"—long-limbed, clean-shaven, about six feet two high, and altogether very pleasant to look upon. He wore an air of extreme leisure and freedom from the smallest touch of care or anxiety, and it was quite clear that such was his normal atmosphere. He waited with serene patience for a large number of well-appointed carriages to go past, and then found himself blocked by another stream going in the opposite direction. However, all things come to an end, even the impossibility of crossing from the arch at the entrance of the Park to the trees on a fine morning in June, and on this particular morning I have to record no exception to the rule. A horse bolting on to the Row narrowly missed knocking him down, and he looked up with mild reproach at its rider, as he disappeared in a shower of dust and soft earth.

This young gentleman, who has been making his slow and somewhat graceful entrance on to our stage, was emphatically "London," and he too saw at once that something had happened. He looked about for an acquaintance, and then dropped in a leisurely manner into a chair by his side.

"Morning, Bertie," he remarked; "what's up?"

Bertie was not going to be hurried. He finished lighting a cigarette, and adjusted the tip neatly with his fingers.

"She's going to be married," he remarked.

Jack Broxton turned half round to him with a quicker movement than he had hitherto shown.

"Not Dodo?" he said.

"Yes."

Jack gave a low whistle.

"It isn't to you, I suppose?"

Bertie Arbuthnot leaned back in his chair with extreme languor. His enemies, who, to do him justice, were very few, said that if he hadn't been the tallest man in London, he would never have been there at all.

"No, it isn't to me."

"Is she here?" said Jack, looking round.

"No I think not; at least I haven't seen her."

"Well, I'm——" Jack did not finish the sentence.

Then as an after-thought he inquired: "Whom to?"

"Chesterford," returned the other.

Jack made a neat little hole with the ferrule of his stick in the gravel in front of him, and performed a small burial service for the end of his cigarette. The action was slightly allegorical.

"He's my first cousin," he said. "However, I may be excused for not feeling distinctly sympathetic with my first cousin. Must I congratulate him?"

"That's as you like," said the other. "I really don't see why you shouldn't. But it is rather overwhelming, isn't it? You know Dodo is awfully charming, but she hasn't got any of the domestic virtues. Besides, she ought to be an empress," he added loyally.

"I suppose a marchioness is something," said Jack. "But I didn't expect it one little

bit. Of course he is hopelessly in love. And so Dodo has decided to make him happy."

"It seems so," said Bertie, with a fine determination not to draw inferences.

"Ah, but don't you see——" said Jack.

"Oh, it's all right," said Bertie. "He is devoted to her, and she is clever and stimulating. Personally I shouldn't like a stimulating wife. I don't like stimulating people, I don't think they wear well. It would be like sipping brandy all day. Fancy having brandy at five o'clock tea. What a prospect, you know! Dodo's too smart for my taste."

"She never bores one," said Jack.

"No, but she makes me feel as if I was sitting under a flaming gas-burner, which was beating on to what Nature designed to be my brain-cover."

"Nonsense," said Jack. "You don't know her. There she is. Ah!"

A dog-cart had stopped close by them, and a girl got out, leaving a particularly diminutive groom at the pony's head. If anything she was a shade more perfectly dressed than the rest of the crowd, and she seemed to know it. Behind her walked another girl, who was obviously intended to walk behind, while Dodo was equally obviously made to walk in front.

Just then Dodo turned round and said over her shoulder to her,—

"Maud, tell the boy he needn't wait. You needn't either unless you like."

Maud turned round and went dutifully back to the dog-cart, where she stood irresolutely a few moments after giving her message.

Dodo caught sight of the two young men on the chairs, and advanced to them. The radiant vision was evidently not gifted with that dubious quality, shyness.

"Why, Jack," she exclaimed in a loudish voice, "here I am, you see, and I have come to be congratulated! What are you and Bertie sitting here for like two Patiences on

monuments? Really, Jack, you would make a good Patience on a monument.

"Was Patience a man? I never saw him yet. I would come and sketch you if you stood still enough. What are you so glum about? You look as if you were going to be executed. I ought to look like that much more than you. Jack, I'm going to be a married woman, and stop at home, and mend the socks, and look after the baby, and warm Chesterford's slippers for him. Where's Chesterford? Have you seen him? Oh, I told Maud to go away. Maud," she called, "come back and take Bertie for a stroll: I want to talk to Jack. Go on, Bertie; you can come back in half an hour, and if I haven't finished talking then, you can go away again—or go for a drive, if you like, with Maud round the Park. Take care of that pony, though; he's got the devil of a temper."

"I suppose I may congratulate you first?" asked Bertie.

"That's so dear of you," said Dodo graciously, as if she was used to saying it. "Good-bye; Maud's waiting, and the pony will kick himself to bits if he stands much longer. Thanks for your congratulations. Good-bye."

Bertie moved off, and Dodo sat down next Jack.

"Now, Jack, we're going to have a talk. In the first place you haven't congratulated me. Never mind, we'll take that as done. Now tell me what you think of it. I don't quite know why I ask you, but we are old friends."

"I'm surprised," said he candidly; "I think it's very odd."

Dodo frowned.

"John Broxton," she said solemnly, "don't be nasty. Don't you think I'm a very charming girl, and don't you think he's a very charming boy?"

Jack was silent for a minute or two, then he said,—

"What is the use of this, Dodo? What do you want me to say?"

"I want you to say what you think. Jack, old boy, I'm very fond of you, though I

couldn't marry you. Oh, you must see that. We shouldn't have suited. We neither of us will consent to play second fiddle, you know. Then, of course, there's the question of money. I must have lots of money. Yes, a big must and a big lot. It's not your fault that you haven't got any, and it wouldn't have been your fault if you'd been born with no nose; but I couldn't marry a man who was without either."

"After all, Dodo," said he, "you only say what every one else thinks about that. I don't blame you for it. About the other, you're wrong. I am sure I should not have been an exacting husband. You could have had your own way pretty well."

"Oh, Jack, indeed no," said she;—"we are wandering from the point, but I'll come back to it presently. My husband must be so devoted to me that anything I do will seem good and charming. You don't answer that requirement, as I've told you before. If I can't get that—I have got it, by the way—I must have a man who doesn't care what I do. You would have cared, you know it. You told me once I was in dreadfully bad form. Of course that clinched the matter. To my husband I must never be in bad form. If others did what I do, it might be bad form, but with me, no. Bad form is one of those qualities which my husband must think impossible for me, simply because I am I. Oh, Jack, you must see that—don't be stupid! And then you aren't rich enough. It's all very well to call it a worldly view, but it is a perfectly true one for me. Don't you see I must have everything I want. It is what I live on, all this," she said, spreading her hands out. "All these people must know who I am, and that they should do that, I must have everything at my command. Oh, it's all very well to talk of love in a cottage, but just wait till the chimney begins to smoke."

Dodo nodded her head with an air of profound wisdom.

"It isn't for you that I'm anxious," said Jack, "it's for Chesterford. He's an awfully good fellow. It is a trifle original to sing the husband's praise to the wife, but I do want you to know that. And he isn't one of those people who don't feel things because they don't show it—it is just the other way. The feeling is so deep that he

can't. You know you like to turn yourself inside out for your friend's benefit, but he doesn't do that. And he is in love with you."

"Yes, I know," she said, "but you do me an injustice. I shall be very good to him. I can't pretend that I am what is known as being in love with him—in fact I don't think I know what that means, except that people get in a very ridiculous state, and write sonnets to their mistress's front teeth, which reminds me that I am going to the dentist to-morrow. Come and hold my hand—yes, and keep withered flowers and that sort of thing. Ah, Jack, I wish that I really knew what it did mean. It can't be all nonsense, because Chesterford's like that, and he is an honest man if you like. And I do respect and admire him very much, and I hope I shall make him happy, and I hear he's got a delightful new yacht; and, oh! do look at that Arbuthnot girl opposite with a magenta hat. It seems to me inconceivably stupid to have a magenta hat. Really she is a fool. She wants to attract attention, but she attracts the wrong sort. Now she is in bad form. Bertie doesn't look after his relations enough."

"Oh, bother the Arbuthnot girl," said Jack angrily. "I want to have this out with you. Don't you see that that sort of thing won't do with Chesterford? He is not a fool by any means, and he knows the difference between the two things."

"Indeed he doesn't," said Dodo. "The other day he was talking to me, and I simply kept on smiling when I was thinking of something quite different, and he thought I was adorably sympathetic. And, besides, I am not a fool either. He is far too happy for me to believe that he is not satisfied."

"Well, but you'll have to keep it up," said Jack. "Don't you see I'm not objecting to your theory of marriage in itself—though I think it's disgusting—but it strikes me that you have got the wrong sort of man to experiment upon. It might do very well if he was like you."

"Jack, you sha'n't lecture me," said Dodo; "I shall do precisely as I like. Have you ever known me make a fool of myself? Of course you haven't. Well, if I was going

to make a mess of this, it would be contrary to all you or anyone else knows of me. I'm sorry I asked your opinion at all. I didn't think you would be so stupid."

"You told me to tell you what I thought," said Jack in self-defence. "I offered to say what you wanted, or to congratulate or condole or anything else; it's your own fault, and I wish I'd said it was charming and delightful, and just what I had always hoped."

Dodo laughed.

"I like to see you cross, Jack," she remarked, "and now we'll be friends again. Remember what you have said to-day—we shall see in time who is right, you or I. If you like to bet about it you may—only you would lose. I promise to tell you if you turn out to be right, even if you don't see it, which you must if it happens, which it won't, so you won't," she added with a fine disregard of grammar.

Jack was silent.

"Jack, you are horrible," said Dodo impatiently, "you don't believe in me one bit. I believe you are jealous of Chesterford; you needn't be."

Then he interrupted her quickly.

"Ah, Dodo, take care what you say. When you say I needn't be, it implies that you are not going to do your share. I want to be jealous of Chesterford, and I am sorry I am not. If I thought you loved him, or would ever get to love him, I should be jealous. I wish to goodness I was. Really, if you come to think of it, I am very generous. I want this to be entirely a success. If there is one man in the world who deserves to be happy it is Chesterford. He is not brilliant, he does not even think he is, which is the best substitute. It doesn't much matter how hard you are hit if you are well protected. Try to make him conceited—it is the best you can do for him."

He said these words in a low tone, as if he hardly wished Dodo to hear. But Dodo did hear.

"You don't believe in me a bit," she said. "Never mind, I will force you to. That's always the way—as long as I amuse you, you like me well enough, but you distrust me at bottom. A woman's a bore when she is serious. Isn't it so? Because I talk nonsense you think I am entirely untrustworthy about things that matter."

Dodo struck the ground angrily with the point of her parasol.

"I have thought about it. I know I am right," she went on. "I shall be immensely happy as his wife, and he will be immensely happy as my husband."

"I don't think it's much use discussing it," said he. "But don't be vexed with me, Dodo. You reminded me that we were old friends at the beginning of this extremely candid conversation. I have told you that I think it is a mistake. If he didn't love you it wouldn't matter. Unfortunately he does."

"Well, Jack," she said, "I can't prove it, but you ought to know me well enough by this time not to misjudge me so badly. It is not only unjust but stupid, and you are not usually stupid. However, I am not angry with you, which is the result of my beautiful nature. Come, Jack, shake hands and wish me happiness."

She stood up, holding out both her hands to him. Jack was rather moved.

"Dodo, of course I do. I wish all the best wishes that my nature can desire and my brain conceive, both to you and him, him too; and I hope I shall be outrageously jealous before many months are over."

He shook her hands, and then dropped them. She stood for a moment with her eyes on the ground, looking still grave. Then she retreated a step or two, leaned against the rail, and broke into a laugh.

"That's right, Jack, begone, dull care. I suppose you'll be Chesterford's best man. I shall tell him you must be. Really he is an excellent lover; he doesn't say too much or too little, and he lets me do exactly as I like. Jack, come and see us this evening; we're having a sort of Barnum's Show, and I'm to be the white elephant. Come and be a white elephant too. Oh, no, you can't; Chesterford's the other. The elephant is an

amiable beast, and I am going to be remarkably amiable. Come to dinner first, the Show begins afterwards. No, on the whole, don't come to dinner, because I want to talk to Chesterford all the time, and do my duty in that state of life in which it has pleased Chesterford to ask me to play my part. That's profane, but it's only out of the Catechism. Who wrote the Catechism? I always regard the Catechism as only a half-sacred work, and so profanity doesn't count, at least you may make two profane remarks out of the Catechism, which will only count as one. I shall sing, too. Evelyn has taught me two little nigger minstrel songs. Shall I black my face? I'm not at all sure that I shouldn't look rather well with my face blacked, though I suppose it would frighten Chesterford. Here are Maud and Bertie back again. I must go. I'm lunching somewhere, I can't remember where, only Maud will know. Maud, where are we lunching, and have you had a nice drive, and has Bertie been making love to you? Good-bye, Jack. Remember to come this evening. You can come, too, Bertie, if you like. I have had a very nice talk with Jack, and he has been remarkably rude, but I forgive him."

Jack went with her to her dog-cart, and helped her in.

"This pony's name is Beelzebub," she remarked, as she took the reins, "because he is the prince of the other things. Good-bye."

Then he went back and rejoined Bertie.

"There was a scene last night," said Bertie. "Maud told me about it. She came home with Dodo and Chesterford, and stopped to open a letter in the hall, and when she went upstairs into the drawing-room, she found Dodo sobbing among the sofa cushions, and Chesterford standing by, not quite knowing what to do. It appeared that he had just given her the engagement ring. She was awfully-pleased with it, and said it was charming, then suddenly she threw it down on the floor, and buried her face in the cushions. After that she rushed out of the room, and didn't appear again for a quarter of an hour, and then went to the Foreign Office party, and to two balls."

Jack laughed hopelessly for a few minutes. Then he said,—

"It is too ridiculous. I don't believe it can be all real. That was drama, pure spontaneous drama. But it's drama for all that. I'm sure I don't know why I laughed, now I come to think of it. It really is no laughing matter. All the same I wonder why she didn't tell me that. But her sister has got no business to repeat those kind of things. Don't tell anyone else, Bertie."

Then after a minute he repeated to himself, "I wonder why she didn't tell me that."

"Jack," said Bertie after another pause, "I don't wish you to think that I want to meddle in your concerns, and so don't tell me unless you like, but was anything ever up between you and Dodo? Lie freely if you would rather not tell me, please."

"Yes," he said simply. "I asked her to marry me last April, and she said 'No.' I haven't told anyone till this minute, because I don't like it to be known when I fail. I am like Dodo in that. You know how she detests not being able to do anything she wants. It doesn't often happen, but when it does, Dodo becomes damnable. She has more perseverance than I have, though. When she can't get anything, she makes such a fuss that she usually does succeed eventually. But I do just the other thing. I go away, and don't say anything about it. That was a bad failure. I remember being very much vexed at the time."

Jack spoke dreamily, as if he was thinking of something else. It was his way not to blaze abroad anything that affected him deeply. Like Dodo he would often dissect himself in a superficial manner, and act as a kind of showman to his emotions; but he did not care to turn himself inside out with her thoroughness. And above all, as he had just said, he hated the knowledge of a failure; he tried to conceal it even from himself. He loved to show his brighter side to the world. When he was in society he always put on his best mental and moral clothes, those that were newest and fitted him most becomingly; the rags and tatters were thrown deep into the darkest cupboard, and the key sternly turned on them. Now and then, however, as on this

occasion, a friend brought him the key with somewhat embarrassing openness, and manners prevented him from putting his back to the door. But when it was unlocked he adopted the tone of, "Yes, there are some old things in there, I believe. May you see? Oh, certainly; but please shut it after you, and don't let anyone else in. I quite forget what is in there myself, it's so long since I looked."

Bertie was silent. He was on those terms of intimacy with the other that do not need ordinary words of condolence or congratulation. Besides, from his own point of view, he inwardly congratulated Jack, and this was not the sort of occasion on which to tell him that congratulation rather than sympathy was what the event demanded. Then Jack went on, still with the air of a spectator than of a principal character,—

"Dodo talked to me a good deal about her marriage. I am sorry about it, for I think that Chesterford will be terribly disillusioned. You know he doesn't take things lightly, and he is much too hopelessly fond of Dodo ever to be content with what she will grant him as a wife. But we cannot do anything. I told her what I thought, not because I hoped to make any change in the matter, but because I wished her to know that for once in her life she has made a failure—a bad, hopeless mistake. That has been my revenge. Come, it's after one, I must go home. I shall go there this evening; shall I see you?"

CHAPTER TWO

Jack went home meditating rather bitterly on things in general. He had a sense that Fate was not behaving very prettily to him. She had dealt him rather a severe blow in April last, which had knocked him down, and, having knocked him down, she now proceeded in a most unsportsmanlike way to kick him. Jack had a great idea of fair play, and Fate certainly was not playing fair. He would have liked to have a few words with her on the subject. The world had been very kind on the whole to him. He had always been popular, and his life, though perhaps rather aimless, was at least enjoyable. And since the world had been kind to him, he was generous to the world

in general, and to his friends in particular. It had always held a high opinion of him, as a thoroughly healthy-minded and pleasant companion, and he was disposed to hold a similar opinion of it. Consequently, when Dodo had refused him that spring, he had not thought badly of her. He did not blame her, or get bitter about it; but though he had flattered himself that he was used to Dodo's ways, and had always recognised her capabilities in the way of surprising her friends, he had not been quite prepared for the news of her engagement. In fact, he was surprised, and also rather resentful, chiefly against the general management of mundane affairs, but partly also against Dodo herself. Dodo had not told him of her engagement; he had been left to find it out for himself. Then, again, she was engaged to a man who was hopelessly and entirely in love with her, and for whom, apart from a quiet, unemotional liking, she did not care two straws, except in so far as he was immensely rich and had a title, two golden keys which unlocked the most secret doors of that well-furnished apartment known as Society, which constituted Dodo's world. Hitherto her position had been precarious: she had felt that she was on trial. Her personality, her great attractiveness and talents, had secured for herself a certain footing on the very daïs of that room; but she had always known that unless she married brilliantly she would not be sure of her position. If she married a man who would not be always certain of commanding whatever money and position—for she would never have married a wealthy brewer—could command, or, worst of all, if in her unwillingness to accept anything but the best she could get, she did not marry at all, Dodo knew that she never would have that unquestioned position that she felt was indispensable to her. Jack knew all this perfectly well—in fact Dodo had referred to it that morning—and he accepted it philosophically as being inevitable. But what he did not like was being told that he would not have done on general grounds, that he was too fond of his own way, that he would not have given Dodo rein enough. He had known Dodo too long and too well, when he proposed to her, to have any of a lover's traditional blindness to the faults of his love. He knew that she

was, above all things, strongly dramatic, that she moved with a view to effect, that she was unscrupulous in what she did, that her behaviour was sometimes in questionable taste; but this he swallowed whole, so to speak. He was genuinely attached to her, and felt that she possessed the qualities that he would most like to have in his wife. Bertie had said to him that morning that she was stimulating, and would not wear well. Stimulating she certainly was—what lovable woman is not?—and personally he had known her long, and she did wear well. The hidden depths and unsuspected shallows were exactly what he loved her for; no one ever fell in love with a canal; and though the shallows were commoner than the depths, and their presence was sometimes indicated by a rather harsh jarring of the keel, yet he believed, fully and sincerely, in the dark, mysterious depths for love to lose itself in. Besides, a wife, whose actions and thoughts were as perfectly calculable and as accurately calculated as the trains in a Bradshaw, was possessed of sterling qualities which, however estimable, were more suited to a housekeeper than a mistress.

These reflections were the outcome of an intimate knowledge of Dodo in the mind of a man who was in the habit of being honest with himself and the object of his love, a quality rare enough whether the lover is rejected or accepted.

He had had time to think over the matter quietly to himself. He knew, and had known for many weeks, that Dodo was out of his reach, and he sat down and thought about the inaccessible fruit, not with the keen feelings of one who still hoped to get it, but with a resignation which recognised that the fruit was desirable, but that it must be regarded from a purely speculative point of view.

And to do him justice, though he was very sorry for himself, he was much more sorry for Chesterford. Chesterford was his cousin, they had been brought up together at Eton and Oxford, and he knew him with that intimacy which is the result of years alone.

Chesterford's old friends had all a great respect and liking for him. As Dodo had

said, "He was an honest man if you like." Slight acquaintances called him slow and rather stupid, which was true on purely intellectual grounds. He was very loyal, and very much devoted to what he considered his duty, which consisted in being an excellent landlord and J.P. of his county, in voting steadily for the Conservative party in the House of Lords, in giving largely and anonymously to good objects, in going to Church on Sunday morning, where he sang hymns with fervour, and read lessons with respect, in managing a hunt in a liberal and satisfactory manner, and in avoiding any introspection or speculation about problems of life and being. He walked through the world with an upright gait, without turning his eyes or his steps to the right hand or the left, without ever concerning himself with what was not his business, but directing all his undoubtedly sterling qualities to that. He had a perfect genius for doing his duty. Nobody had ever called him shallow or foolish, but nobody on the other hand had ever, called him either deep or clever. He had probably only made one real mistake in his life, and that was when he asked Dodo to marry him; and we have seen that Jack, who knew Dodo well, and whose opinion might be considered to be based on good grounds, thought that Dodo had committed her first grand error in accepting him. The worst of the business certainly was that he was in love with Dodo. If he had been a different sort of man, if he had proposed to Dodo with the same idea that Dodo had, when she accepted him, if he had wanted a brilliant and fascinating woman to walk through life with, who could not fail to be popular, end who would do the duties of a mistress of a great house in a regal fashion, he could not have chosen better. But what he wanted in a wife was someone to love. He loved Dodo, and apparently it had not entered his calculations that she, in accepting him, might be doing it from a different standpoint from his own in proposing to her. Dodo had smiled on him with the air of a benignant goddess who marries a mortal, when he offered her his hand and heart, and he had taken that smile as a fulfilment of his own thought. Decidedly Jack might have justification for feeling apprehensive.

Jack's only hope lay in that vein which did exist in Dodo, and which she had manifested in that outburst of tears the night before. He put it down to her dramatic instincts to a large extent, but he knew there was something besides, for Dodo did not care to play to an empty house, and the presence of her future husband alone constituted anything but a satisfactory audience. Jack had always had a considerable belief in Dodo: her attractiveness and cleverness were, of course, beyond dispute, and required proof no more than the fact that the sun rose in the morning; but he believed in something deeper than this, which prompted such actions as these. He felt that there was some emotion that she experienced at that moment, of which her tears were the legitimate outcome, and, as he thought of this, there occurred to him the remark that Dodo had made that morning, when she expressed her regret at never having felt the sort of love that she knew Chesterford felt for her.

Mrs. Vane was perhaps perfectly happy that night. Was not her daughter engaged to a marquis and a millionaire? Was not her house going to be filled with the brightest and best of our land? She had often felt rather resentful against Dodo, who alternately liked and despised people whom Mrs. Vane would have given her right hand to be in a position to like, and both hands to be in a position to despise. Dodo was excellent friends with "London," only "London" did not come and seek her at her own house, but preferred asking her to theirs. Consequently, on Mrs. Vane and Maud devolved the comparatively menial duty of leaving their cards and those of Dodo, and attending her in the capacity of the necessary adjunct. They would be asked to the same houses as Dodo, but that was all; when they got there they had the privilege of seeing Dodo performing her brilliant evolutions, but somehow none of Dodo's glory got reflected on to them. To be the mirror of Dodo was one of Mrs. Vane's most cherished ideas, and she did not recollect that there are many substances whose nature forbids their acting as such to the most brilliant of illuminations. Mr. Vane was kept still more in the background. It was generally supposed that he was looking after his affairs in the country, whilst the rest of the family were amusing

themselves in London. It was well known that he was the proprietor of a flourishing iron foundry somewhere in Lancashire, and apparently the iron needed special care during the months of May, June and July. In any case he was a shadow in the background, rather than a skeleton at the banquet, whom it was not necessary to ignore, because he never appeared in a position in which he could be ignored. Mrs. Vane had two principal objects in life, the first of which was to live up to Dodo, and the second to obtain, in course of time, a suitable brilliant son-in-law. The latter of these objects had been practically obtained by Dodo herself, and the first of them was in a measure realised by the large and brilliant company who assembled in her rooms that night.

Mrs. Vane was a large, high-coloured woman of about middle age, whose dress seemed to indicate that she would rather not, but that, of course, may only have been the fault of the dressmaker. She had an effusive manner, which sometimes made her guests wonder what they could have done to have made her so particularly glad to see them. She constantly lamented Mr. Vane's absence from London, and remarked, with a brilliant smile, that she felt quite deserted. Mrs. Vane's smile always suggested a reformed vampire, who had permanently renounced her bloodthirsty habits, but had not quite got out of the way of gloating on what would have been her victims in the unregenerate days. It is only fair to say that this impression was due to the immensity of her smile, which could hardly be honestly accounted for by this uncharitable world. She was busily employed in receiving her guests when Jack came, and was, perhaps, more stupendously cordial than ever.

"So kind of you to come," she was just saying to a previous arrival when Jack came in. "I know Dodo was dying to see you and be congratulated. Darling," she said, turning to Maud, "run and tell Dodo that Lord Burwell has arrived. So good of you to come. And how do you do, dear Mr. Broxton? Of course Dodo has told you of our happiness. Thanks, yes—we are all charmed with her engagement. And the Marquis is your cousin, is he not? How nice! May I tell Maud she may call you Cousin Jack?

Such pleasure to have you. Dodo is simply expiring to see you. Did she see you this morning? Really! she never told me of it, and my sweet child usually tells me everything."

Dodo was playing the amiable white elephant to some purpose. She was standing under a large chandelier in the centre of the room, with Chesterford beside her, receiving congratulations with the utmost grace, and talking nonsense at the highest possible speed. Jack thought to himself that he had never seen anyone so thoroughly charming and brilliant, and almost wondered whether he had not been doing her an injustice all day. He saw it was impossible to get near her for the present, so he wandered off among other groups, exchanging greetings and salutations. He had made the circuit of the room, and was standing about near the door, feeling a little lonely, when Dodo came quickly towards him. She was looking rather white and impatient.

"Come away out of this, Jack," she said; "this is horrible. We've done our duty, and now I want to talk. I've been smiling and grinning till my cheeks are nearly cracked, and everyone says exactly the same thing. Come to my room—come." She turned round, beckoning to him, and found herself face to face with Chesterford. "Dear old boy," she said to him, "I'm not going to bore you any more to-night. I shall bore you enough after we are married. Jack and I are going away to talk, and he's going to tell me to be a good girl, and do as his cousin bids me. Good-night; come again to-morrow morning."

"I came here on purpose to congratulate you," said Jack, grasping Chesterford's hand, "and I wish you all joy and prosperity."

"Come, Jack," said Dodo. "Oh, by the way, Chesterford, ask Jack to be your best man. You couldn't have a better, and you haven't got any brother, you know."

"I was just going to," said Chesterford. "Jack, you will be, won't you? You must."

"Of course I will," said Jack. "All the same we're all awfully jealous of you, you

know, for carrying Dodo off."

"So you ought to be," said he, enthusiastically. "Why, I'm almost jealous of myself. But now go and talk to Dodo, if she wants you."

The sight of Chesterford with Dodo made Jack groan in spirit. He had accepted Dodo's rejection of him as quite final, and he never intended to open that closed book again. But this was too horrible. He felt a genuine impulse of pure compassion for Chesterford, and an irritated disgust for Dodo. Dodo was an admirable comrade, and, for some, he thought, an admirable wife. But the idea of her in comradeship with Chesterford was too absurd, and if she could never be his comrade, by what perversity of fate was it that she was going to become his wife? Jack's serenity was quite gone, and he wondered what had become of it. All he was conscious of was a chafing refusal to acquiesce just yet, and the anticipation of a somewhat intimate talk with Dodo. He felt half inclined to run away from the house, and not see her again, and as he followed her up to her room, he began to think that his wisdom had followed his serenity. After all, if he asked her again about her resolution to marry Chesterford, what was he doing but continuing the conversation they had in the Park that morning, in which Dodo herself had taken the initiative. "These things are on the knees of the gods," thought Jack to himself piously, as the door of Dodo's room closed behind him. Dodo threw herself down in a low arm-chair with an air of weariness.

"Go on talking to me, Jack," she said. "Interest me, soothe me, make me angry if you like. Chesterford's very nice. Don't you like him immensely? I do."

Jack fidgeted, lit a match and blew it out again. Really it was not his fault that the conversation was going to be on this subject. He again laid the responsibility on the knees of the gods. Then he said,—

"Dodo, is this irrevocable? Are you determined to marry this man? I swear I don't ask you for any selfish reasons, but only because I am sincerely anxious for your

happiness and his. It is a confounded liberty I am taking, but I sha'n't apologise for it. I know that it isn't any business of mine, but I risk your displeasure."

Dodo was looking at him steadily. Her breath came rather quickly, and the look of weariness had left her face.

"Jack," she said, "don't say this sort of thing to me again. You are quite right, it is a confounded liberty, as you say. I shall do as I please in this matter. Ah, Jack, don't be angry with me," she went on as he shrugged his shoulders, and half turned away. "I know you are sincere, but I must do it. I want to be safe. I want to be married. Chesterford is very safe. Jack, old boy, don't make me quarrel with you. You are the best friend I have, but I'm sure you're wrong about this."

She rose and stood by him, and laid one hand on his as it lay on the mantelpiece. He did not answer her. He was disappointed and baffled. Then she turned away from him, and suddenly threw up her arms.

"Oh, my God," she said, "I don't know what to do. It isn't my fault that I am made like this. I want to know what love is, but I can't—I can't. You say I shall make him unhappy, and I don't want to do that. I don't believe I shall. Jack, why did you come here suggesting these horrible things?"

There was a great anger in her voice, and she stood trembling before him.

Just then the door opened, and a middle-aged lady walked in. She did not seem at all surprised. Nobody who had known Dodo long was often surprised.

She walked up to Dodo and kissed her.

"I came late," she said, "and your mother said you were in your room, so I came up to congratulate you with all my heart."

"Thank you very much," said Dodo, returning the kiss. "Jack, do you know Mrs. Vivian?—Mr. Broxton."

Mrs. Vivian bowed, and Jack bowed, and then nobody seemed quite to know what

to say next. Mrs. Vivian recovered herself first.

"I wish you would show me the necklace Lord Chesterford has given you," she said to Dodo. "Mrs. Vane said the diamonds were magnificent."

"Certainly, I will fetch it," said Dodo, with unusual docility. "Don't go away, Jack."

Dodo left the room, and Mrs. Vivian turned to Jack.

"My dear young man," she said, "I am old enough to be your mother, and you mustn't mind what I am going to say. This sort of thing won't do at all. I know who you are perfectly well, and I warn you that you are playing with fire. You were at liberty to do so before Dodo was engaged, and I daresay you have burned your fingers already. Several young men have—but now it won't do. Besides that, it isn't fair on either Chesterford or Dodo herself."

Jack wanted to think "what an impertinent old woman," but there was something in her manner that forbade it.

"I believe you are right," he said simply; "but it wasn't wholly my fault."

Then he felt angry with himself for having shifted any of the blame on to Dodo.

"Honi soit," said the other ambiguously. "I don't mean that—Ah, here is Dodo."

The diamonds were duly shown and admired, and the three went downstairs again.

Mrs. Vivian took her leave shortly. She was very gracious to Jack, and as they parted she said,—

"Come and see me at any time; I should like to talk to you. Here is my address."

Jack sought Mrs. Vane to inquire who Mrs. Vivian was. Mrs. Vane was even more effusive than usual.

"Oh, she is quite one of our leading people," she said.—"She has not been in London, or, in fact, in England for two years. She was unhappily married. Her husband was a scamp, and after his death she suddenly left London, and has only just returned. She is quite an extraordinary woman—everyone used to rave about

her. She never gave herself airs, but somehow she was more looked up to than anyone else. Quite royal in fact. I feel immensely honoured by her presence here. I hardly dared to ask her—so fascinating, and so clever."

Dodo came up to Jack before he left.

"Jack," she said, "I was angry with you, and I am sorry. Don't bear me malice. If Mrs. Vivian had not come in, I should have said something abominable. I am afraid of her. I don't quite know why. She always seems to be taking stock of one, and noticing how very small one is. Don't forget to-morrow. We're all going on a water-party at Richmond. Mind you come."

"I think I had better not," said Jack bluntly.

Dodo lifted her eyebrows in surprise that may have been genuine.

"Why not?" she asked.

Jack had no reasonable answer to give her.

"What did Mrs. Vivian say to you?" asked Dodo suddenly.

Jack paused.

"A few polite nothings," he said; "and half the royal motto. Mrs. Vane said she was quite royal, which, of course, explains it."

"I can't conceive what you're talking about," remarked Dodo. "It seems to me to be sheer nonsense."

Jack smiled.

"On the whole, I think it is sheer nonsense," he said. "Yes, I'll come."

Dodo swept him the prettiest little curtsey.

"How good of you," she said. "Good-night, Jack. Don't be cross, it really isn't worth while, and you can behave so prettily if you like. Oh, such a nice gentleman!"

"No, I expect it isn't worth while," said Jack.

CHAPTER THREE

There is a particular beauty about the Thames valley for which you may search for years elsewhere, and not find; a splendid lavishness in the way that the woods are cast down broadcast along the river, and a princely extravagance of thick lush hayfields, that seem determined not to leave a spare inch of land between them and the water. The whole scene has been constructed with a noble disregard of expense, in the way of water, land, and warm wood-land air. The tall, clean-limbed beech-trees have room to stretch their great, lazy arms without being prosecuted for their clumsy trespasses, and the squirrels that chatter at you from their green houses seem to have a quite unusual sleekness about them, and their insolent criticisms to each other about your walk, and general personal unattractiveness, are inspired by a larger share of animal spirits than those of other squirrels. As you row gently up in the middle of the stream, you may see a heron standing in the shallows, too lazy to fish, too supremely confident to mind the approach of anything so inferior as yourself, and from the cool shadow of the woods you may hear an old cock pheasant talking to himself, and not troubling to practise a new and original method of rocketing in June, for he knows that his time is not yet.

At this time of year, too, you need not trouble to look round, to see if there are large boats full of noisy people bearing down on you; like the pheasant, their time is not yet. But now and then the long strings of creamy bubbles appearing on the deep, quiet water, and a sound rich in associations of cool plunges into frothy streams, warns you that a lock is near. And above you may see some small village clustering down to the river's edge, to drink of its sweet coolness, or a couple of shaggy-footed cart-horses, looking with mild wonder at this unexpected method of locomotion, lifting their dripping noses from the bright gravelly shallows to stare at you, before they proceed to finish their evening watering.

Dodo was very fond of the Thames valley, and she really enjoyed giving up a day of

June in London to the woods and waters. They were to start quite early in the morning, Dodo explained, and everyone was to wear their very oldest clothes, for they were going to play ducks and drakes, and drink milk in dairies, and pick buttercups, and get entirely covered with freckles. Dodo herself never freckled, and she was conscious of looking rather better for a slight touch of the sun, and it would be very dear of Mrs. Vivian if she would come too, if she didn't mind being silly all day; and, if so, would she call for them, as they were on her way? Chesterford, of course, was going, and Jack, and Maud and her mother; it was quite a small party; and wasn't Jack a dear?

Mrs. Vane had got hold of a certain idea about Mrs. Vivian, distinctly founded on fact. She was one of those women who cannot help making an impression. How it is done, or exactly what it is, one would be puzzled to define, but everyone noticed when she came info a room, and was aware when she went out. It was not her personal appearance, for she was short rather than tall, stout rather than graceful, and certainly middle-aged rather than young. Dodo has mentioned the effect she produced on her, and many people felt in the same way that Mrs. Vivian was somehow on a higher plane than they, that her mind was cast in a larger mould. Happily for our peace of mind such people are not very common; most of our fellow-men are luckily much on the same level, and they are not more than units among units. But Mrs. Vivian was much more than a unit. Dodo had said of her that she was two or three at least. And evidently nothing was further from Mrs. Vivian's wishes than trying to make an impression, in fact, the very impressive element was rather due to her extreme naturalness. We are most of us so accustomed to see people behave, and to behave ourselves, in a manner not quite natural, that to see anyone who never does so, is in itself calculated to make one rather nervous.

Mrs. Vivian evidently intended to take her life up again at the point where she had left off, so to speak—in other words, at the period before her marriage. Of her husband, perhaps, the less said the better. He died, owing to an accident, after ten

years of married unhappiness, and left Mrs. Vivian poorer than she had been before. After his death she had travelled abroad for two years, and then returned to England to live with her sister, who had married a rich judge and kept house rather magnificently in Prince's Gate. Lady Fuller had always disapproved of her sister's marriage, and she was heartily glad to see her well quit of her husband, and, on her return to England, received her with open arms, and begged her, on behalf of her husband and herself, to make their home hers. Mrs. Vivian accordingly settled down in the "extremely commodious" house in Prince's Gate, and, as I said, took up her life where it had left off. A standing grievance that her husband had had with her was, that she interested herself in the poor, and in the East End slums, that she went to cabmen's shelters, and espoused the cause of overdriven factory girls. He had told her that it was meddling with other people's business; that nothing was so objectionable as an assumption of charitable airs; that a woman who went to balls and dinner-parties was a hypocrite if she pretended to care about the state of the poor, and that she only did it because she wished to appear unlike other people. But he altogether failed to perceive that her actions were entirely uninfluenced by the impression they were to make, and mistook her extreme naturalness for the subtlest affectation. However, Mrs. Vivian resolutely banished from her mind the remembrance of those ten years, and, being unable to think of her husband with tenderness or affection, she preferred to forget her married life altogether. The Vanes had been their neighbours in the country for many years, and she had known Dodo since she was a child. Dodo had once asked to accompany her in her visits to the East End, and had been immensely struck by what she saw, and determined to be charitable too. This sort of thing seemed extremely chic to Dodo's observant mind. So she took up a factory of miserable match-girls, and asked them all to tea, and got Mrs. Vivian to promise her help; but when the afternoon came, Dodo particularly wished to go to a morning concert, and on Mrs. Vivian's arrival she found, indeed, plenty of match-girls, but no Dodo. Dodo came back later and made herself

extremely fascinating. She kissed the cleanest of the girls, and patted the rest on the shoulder, and sang several delightful little French songs to them to her own accompaniment on the banjo, and thanked Mrs. Vivian for being "such a dear about the slums." But on the next occasion when she had nothing to do, and called on Mrs. Vivian to ask to be taken to another of those "darling little slums," Mrs. Vivian hinted that, though she would be charmed to take her, she thought that Dodo had perhaps forgotten that the Four-in-hand Club met that day in Hyde Park. Dodo had forgotten it, and, as she had bespoken the box seat on one of her friends' coaches, she hurried home again, feeling it freshly borne in upon her that Mrs. Vivian thought she was very contemptible indeed.

Altogether Mrs. Vivian knew Dodo well, and when she went home that evening, she thought a good deal about the approaching marriage. She was glad to have had that occasion of speaking to Jack, he seemed to her to be worth doing it for. She knew that she ran the risk of being told, in chillingly polite English, that she was stepping outside her province, and that Jack did not belong to the East End class who welcomed any charitable hand; but she had a remarkably keen eye, and her intuitive perception told her at once that Jack's sense of the justice of her remark would stifle any feeling he might have that she was officious and meddlesome, and the event had justified her decision.

In the course of the next few days she met Jack several times. They both went to the water-party Dodo spoke of, and she took the opportunity to cultivate his acquaintance.

They were sitting on the bank of the river below the Clivedon woods, a little apart from the others, and she felt that as he had behaved so well, she owed him some apology.

"It was very nice of you, Mr. Broxton," she said, "to be so polite to me last night. To tell you the truth, I did know you, though you didn't know me. I was an old friend of

your mother's, but I hadn't time to explain that, and you were good enough to take me without explanations. I always wonder what our attitude towards old friends of our mothers ought to be. I really don't see why they should have any claim upon one."

Jack laughed.

"The fact was that I knew you were right as soon as you spoke to me, though I wanted to resent it. I had been putting it differently to myself; that was why I spoke to Dodo."

"Tell me more," she said. "From the momentary glance I had of you and her, I thought you had been remonstrating with her, and she had been objecting. I don't blame you for remonstrating in the general way. Dodo's conduct used not to be always blameless. But it looked private, and that was what I did object to. I daresay you think me a tiresome, impertinent, old woman."

Jack felt more strongly than ever that this woman could not help being well-bred in whatever she did.

"It sounds disloyal to one's friends, I know," he said, "but it was because I really did care for both of them that I acted as I did. What will happen will be that he will continue to adore her, and by degrees she will begin to hate him. He will not commit suicide, and I don't think Dodo will make a scandal. Her regard for appearances alone would prevent that. It would be a confession of failure."

Mrs. Vivian looked grave.

"Did you tell Dodo this?"

"More or less," he replied. "Except about the scandal and the suicide."

Mrs. Vivian's large, grey, serious eyes twinkled with some slight amusement.

"I think while I was about it I should have told her that too," she said; "that's the sort of argument that appeals to Dodo. You have to scream if you want her to listen to

what she doesn't want to hear. But I don't think it was quite well judged of you, you know."

"I think she ought to know it," said Jack, "though I realise I ought to have been the last person to tell her, for several reasons."

Mrs. Vivian looked at him inquiringly.

"You mean for fear of her putting a wrong construction on it? I see," she said.

Jack felt that it could not have been more delicately done.

"How did you know?"

"Oh," she said, "that is the kind of intuition which is the only consolation we women have for getting old. We are put on the shelf, no doubt, after a certain age, but we get a habit of squinting down into the room below. That is the second time I have shown myself a meddling old woman, and you have treated me very nicely both times. Let us join the others. I see tea is ready."

Dodo meanwhile had walked Chesterford off among the green cool woods that bordered the river. She had given Jack's remarks a good deal of consideration, and, whether or no she felt that he was justified in them on present data, she determined that she would make the event falsify his predictions. Dodo had an unlimited capacity for interfering in the course of destiny. She devoted herself to her aims, whatever they might be, with a wonderful singleness of purpose, and since it is a fact that one usually gets what one wants in this world, if one tries hard enough, it followed that up to this time she had, on the whole, usually got her way. But she was now dealing with an unknown quantity, which she could not gauge. She had confessed to Jack her inability to understand what love meant, and it was with a certain sense of misgiving that she felt that her answers for the future would be expressed in terms of that unknown quantity "x." To Dodo's concrete mind this was somewhat discouraging, but she determined to do her best to reduce things to an equation in which the value of "x" could be found in terms of some of those many

symbols which she did know.

Dodo had an inexhaustible fund of vivacity, which was a very useful instrument to her; like a watch-key that fits all watches, she was able to apply it as required to very different pieces of mechanism. When she wished to do honour to a melancholy occasion, for instance, her vivacity turned any slight feeling of sorrow she had into hysterical weeping; when the occasion was joyful, it became a torrent of delightful nonsense. To-day the occasion was distinctly joyful. She had a large sense of success. Chesterford was really a very desirable lover; his immense wealth answered exactly the requirements of Dodo's wishes. Furthermore, he was safe and easily satisfied; the day was charming; Jack was there; she had had a very good lunch, and was shortly going to have a very good tea; and Chesterford had given orders for his yacht to be in readiness to take them off for a delightful honeymoon, directly after their marriage—in short, all her circumstances were wholly satisfactory. She had said to him after lunch, as they were sitting on the grass, "Come away into those delicious woods, and leave these stupid people here," and he was radiant in consequence, for, to tell the truth, she had been rather indulgent of his company than eager for it the last day or two. She was in the highest spirits as they strolled away.

"Oh do give me a cigarette," she said, as soon as they had got out of sight. "I didn't dare smoke with that Vivian woman there. Chesterford, I am frightened of her. She is as bad as the Inquisition, or that odious man in Browning who used to walk about, and tell the king if anything happened. I am sure she puts it down in a book whenever I say anything I shouldn't. You know that's so tantalising. It is a sort of challenge to be improper. Chesterford, if you put down in a book anything I do wrong, I swear I shall go to the bad altogether."

To Chesterford this seemed the most attractive nonsense that ever flowed from female lips.

"Why, you can't do anything wrong, Dodo," he said simply; "at least not what I think

wrong. And what does it matter what other people think?"

Dodo patted his hand, and blew him a kiss approvingly.

"That's quite right," she said; "bear that in mind and we shall never have a quarrel. Chesterford, we won't quarrel at all, will we? Everybody else does, I suppose, now and then, and that proves it's vulgar. Mrs. Vivian used to quarrel with her husband, so she's vulgar. Oh, I'm so glad she's vulgar. I sha'n't care how much she looks at me now. Bother! I believe it was only her husband that used to swear at her. Never mind, he must have been vulgar to do that, and she must have vulgar tastes to have married a vulgar person. I don't think I'm vulgar, do you? Really it's a tremendous relief to have found out that she's vulgar. But I am afraid I shall forget it when I see her again. You must remind me. You must point at her and say V, if you can manage it. Or are you afraid of her too?"

"Oh, never mind Mrs. Vivian," said he, "she can wait."

"That's what she's always doing," said Dodo. "Waiting and watching with large serious eyes. I can't think why she does it, for she doesn't make use of it afterwards. Now when I know something discreditable of a person, if I dislike him, I tell everybody else, and if I like him, I tell him that I know all about it, and I am so sorry for him. Then he thinks you are charming and sympathetic, and you have a devoted admirer for life."

Chesterford laughed. He had no desire to interrupt this rapid monologue of Dodo's. He was quite content to play the part of the Greek chorus.

"I'm going to sit down here," continued Dodo. "Do you mind my smoking cigarettes? I'm not sure that it is in good form, but I mean to make it so. I want to be the fashion. Would you like your wife to be the fashion?"

He bent over her as she sat with her head back, smiling up at him.

"My darling," he said, "do you know, I really don't care a straw whether you are the fashion or not, as long as you are satisfied. You might stand on your head in

Piccadilly if you liked, and I would come and stand too. All I care about is that you are you, and that you have made me the happiest man on God's earth."

Dodo was conscious again of the presence of this unknown quantity. She would much prefer striking it out altogether; it seemed to have quite an unreasonable preponderance.

Chesterford did not usually make jokes, in fact she had never heard him make one before, and his remark about standing on his head seemed to be only accounted for by this perplexing factor. Dodo had read about love in poems and novels, and had seen something of it, too, but it remained a puzzle to her. She hoped her calculations might not prove distressingly incorrect owing to this inconvenient factor. But she laughed with her habitual sincerity, and replied,—

"What a good idea; let's do it to-morrow morning. Will ten suit you? We can let windows in all the houses round. I'm sure there would be a crowd to see us. It really would be interesting, though perhaps not a very practical thing to do. I wonder if Mrs. Vivian would come. She would put down a very large bad mark to me for that, but I shall tell her it was your suggestion."

Chesterford laughed with pure pleasure.

"Dodo," he said, "you are not fair on Mrs. Vivian. She is a very good woman."

"Oh, I don't doubt that," said Dodo, "but, you see, being good doesn't necessarily make one a pleasant companion. Now, I'm not a bit good, but you must confess you would rather talk to me than to the Vivian."

"Oh, you are different," said he rapturously. "You are Dodo."

Dodo smiled contentedly. This man was so easy to please. She had felt some slight dismay at Jack's ill-omened prophecies, but Jack was preposterously wrong about this.

They rejoined the others in course of time. Dodo made fearful ravages on the

eatables, and after tea she suddenly announced,—

"Mrs. Vivian, I'm going to smoke a cigarette. Do you feel dreadfully shocked?"

Mrs. Vivian laughed.

"My dear Dodo, I should never venture to be shocked at anything you did. You are so complete that I should be afraid to spoil you utterly, if I tried to suggest corrections."

Dodo lit a cigarette with a slightly defiant air. Mrs. Vivian's manner had been entirely sincere, but she felt the same sort of resentment that a prisoner might feel if the executioner made sarcastic remarks to him. She looked on Mrs. Vivian as a sort of walking Inquisition.

"My darling Dodo," murmured Mrs. Vane, "I do so wish you would, not smoke, it will ruin your teeth entirely."

Dodo turned to Mrs. Vivian.

"That means you think it would be very easy to spoil me, as you call it."

"Not at all," said that lady. "I don't understand you, that's all, and I might be pulling out the key-stone of the arch unawares. Not that I suppose your character depends upon your smoking."

Dodo leaned back and laughed.

"Oh, this is too dreadfully subtle," she exclaimed. "I want to unbend my mind. Chesterford, come and talk to me, you are deliciously unbending."

CHAPTER FOUR

Lord and Lady Chesterford were expected home on the 6th of December. The marriage took place late in August, and they had gone off on the yacht directly afterwards, in order to spend a few warm months in the Mediterranean. Dodo had written home occasionally to Mrs. Vane, and now and then to Jack. To Jack her letters had never been more than a word or two, simply saying that they were

enjoying themselves enormously, and that Jack had been hopelessly wrong. Mrs. Vane also had much reason to be satisfied. She had spent her autumn in a variety of fashionable watering-places, where her dresses had always been the awe and wonder of the town; she had met many acquaintances, to whom she had poured out her rapture over Dodo's marriage; had declared that Chesterford was most charming, and that he and Dodo were quite another Adam and Eve in Paradise, and that she was really quite jealous of Dodo. When they left England, they had intended to spend the winter abroad and not come back till February, but early in December a telegram had arrived at Winston, Lord Chesterford's country house, saying that they would be back in ten days. About the same time Jack received a letter, saying that their change of plans was solely owing to the fact that Dodo was rather tired of the sea, and the weather was bad, and that she had never been so happy in her life. Dodo's eagerness to assure Jack of this struck him as being in rather bad taste. She ought to have entirely ignored his warnings. The happiness of a newly-married woman ought to be so absorbing, as to make her be unaware of the existence of other people; and this consciousness in Dodo of her triumphant superiority of knowledge, led him to suppose he was right rather than wrong. He was unfeignedly sorry not to be sure that she had been right. When he told Dodo that he wished to be jealous of Chesterford, he was quite sincere. Since he could not have Dodo himself, at any rate let her make someone happy. Dodo also informed him that they were going to have a house-party that Christmas and that he must come, and she had asked Mrs. Vivian, to show that she wasn't afraid of her any longer, and that Maud was coming, and she wished Jack would marry her. Then followed a dozen other names belonging to Dodo's private and particular set, who had all been rather disgusted at her marrying what they chose to call a Philistine. It had been quite hoped that she would marry Jack. Jack was not a Philistine at all, though the fact of his having proposed to her remained a secret. Maud, on the other hand, was a Philistine; and it was one of Dodo's merits that she did not drop those who originally had claims on her, when she became the fashion.

She was constantly trying to bring Maud into notice, but Maud resisted the most well-meant shoves. She had none of Dodo's vivacity and talents; in fact, her talents lay chiefly in the direction of arranging the places at a dinner-party, and in doing a great deal of unnecessary worsted work. What happened to her worsted work nobody ever knew. It was chiefly remarkable for the predominance of its irregularities, and a suggestion of damaged goods about it, in consequence of much handling. To Dodo it seemed an incredible stupidity that anyone should do worsted work, or, if they did do it, not do it well. She used to tell Maud that it was done much more cheaply in shops, and much better. Then Maud would drop it for a time, and take to playing the piano, but that was even more oppressively stupid to Dodo's mind than the worsted work. Maud had a perfect genius for not letting her right hand know what her left hand was doing, a principle which was abhorrent to Dodo in every application. The consequence of all this was, that Dodo was apt to regard her sister as a failure, though she still, as in the present instance, liked giving Maud what she considered a helping hand. It must be confessed that Dodo's efforts were not altogether unselfish. She liked her environment to be as great a success as herself, as it thus added to her own completeness, just as a picture looks better in a good frame than in a shabby one. Maud, however, had no desire to be a success. She was perfectly happy to sit in the background and do the worsted work. She longed to be let alone. At times she would make her escape to the iron works and try to cultivate the domestic virtues in attending to her father. She thought with a kind of envy of the daughters of country clergymen, whose mediocre piano-playing was invaluable to penny readings and village concerts, and for whose worsted work there was a constant demand, in view of old women and almshouses. She had hoped that Dodo's slumming experiences would bring her into connection with this side of life, and had dispensed tea and buns with a kind of rapture on the occasion of Dodo's tea-party, but her sister had dropped her slums, as we have seen, at this point, and Maud was too shy and uninitiative to take them up alone. She had an excellent heart, but

excellent hearts were out of place in Mrs. Vane's establishment. Dodo had confessed her inability to deal with them.

Dodo's general invitation to Jack was speedily followed by a special one from Winston, naming the first week in January as the time of the party. Jack was met on his arrival by Chesterford, and as they drove back the latter gave him particulars about the party in the house.

"They are chiefly Dodo's friends," he said. "Do you know, Jack, except for you, I think I am rather afraid of Dodo's friends, they are so dreadfully clever, you know. Of course they are all very charming, but they talk about character. Now I don't care to talk about character. I know a good man when I see him, and that's all that matters as far as I can judge. Dodo was saying last night that her potentiality for good was really much stronger than her potentiality for evil, and that her potentiality for evil was only skin deep, and they all laughed, and said they didn't believe it. And Dodo said, 'Ask Chesterford if it isn't,' and God only knows what I said."

Jack laughed.

"Poor old fellow," he said, "you and I will go to the smoking-room, and talk about nothing at all subtle. I don't like subtleties either."

"Ah, but they expect great things of you," said Chesterford ruefully. "Dodo was saying you were an apostle. Are you an apostle, Jack?"

"Oh, that's only a nickname of Dodo's," he said, smiling. "But who are these dreadfully clever people?"

"Oh, there's Ledgers—you know him, I suppose—and a Miss Edith Staines, and a girl whom I don't know, called Miss Grantham, whom Ledgers said, when she was out of the room last night, that he had 'discovered.' What he meant Heaven knows. Then there's Maud, who is a nice girl. She went round to the keeper's with me this afternoon, and played with the baby. Then there's Bertie Arbuthnot, and I think that's all."

Jack laughed.

"I don't think we need mind them," he said. "We'll form a square to resist cavalry.".

"Bertie's the best of the lot," said Chesterford, "and they laughed at him rather, I think. But he is quite unconscious of it."

They drove on in silence a little way. Then. Chesterford said,—

"Jack, Dodo makes me the happiest of men. I am afraid sometimes that she is too clever, and wishes I was more so, but it makes no difference. Last night, as I was in the smoking-room she sent to say she wanted to see me, and I went up. She said that she wanted to talk to me, now she had got rid of all those tiresome people, and said so many charming things that I got quite conceited, and had to stop her. I often wonder, Jack, what I have done to deserve her. And she went on talking about our yachting, and those months in London when we were first engaged, and she told me to go on smoking, and she would have a cigarette too. And we sat on talking, till I saw she was tired, and then I went away, though she would hardly let me."

This communication had only the effect of making Jack rather uncomfortable. Knowing what he did, he knew that this was not all genuine on Dodo's part. It was obviously an effort to keep it up, to use a vulgar term. And since it was not all genuine, the doubt occurred as to whether any of it was. Jack had a profound belief in Dodo's dramatic talents. That the need for keeping it up had appeared already was an alarming symptom, but the real tragedy would begin on that day when Dodo first failed to do so. And from that moment Jack regarded his prophecy as certain to be fulfilled. The overture had begun, and in course of time the curtain would rise on a grim performance.

They drove up to the door, and entered the large oak-panelled hall, hung all round with portraits of the family. The night was cold, and there was a fire sparkling in the wide, open grate. As they entered, an old collie, who was enjoying the fruits of a well-spent life on the hearthrug, stretched his great, tawny limbs, and shoved a

welcoming nose into Chesterford's hand. This produced heartburnings of the keenest order in the mind of a small fox-terrier pup, who consisted mainly of head and legs, which latter he evidently considered at present more as a preventive towards walking than an aid. Being unable to reach his hand the puppy contented himself with sprawling over his boots, and making vague snaps at the collie. It was characteristic of Chesterford that all animals liked him. He had a tender regard for the feelings of anything that was dependent on him. Dodo thought this almost inexplicable. She disliked to see animals in pain, because they usually howled, but the dumb anguish of a dog who considers himself neglected conveyed nothing to her. From within a door to the right, came sounds of talking and laughter.

There was something pathetic in the sight of this beautiful home, and its owner standing with his back to the fire, as Jack divested himself of his coat. Chesterford was so completely happy, so terribly unconscious of what Jack felt sure was going on. He looked the model of the typical English gentleman, with his tall stature and well-bred face. Jack remembered passing on the road a labourer who was turning into his cottage. The firelight had thrown a bright ray across the snow-covered road, and inside he had caught a momentary glimpse of the wife with a baby in her arms, and a couple of girls laying the table-cloth. He remembered afresh Dodo's remark about waiting until the chimney smoked, and devoutly hoped that the chimney of this well-appointed house was in good order.

Chesterford led the way to the drawing-room door, and pushed it open for Jack to enter. Dodo was sitting at the tea-table, talking to some half-dozen people who were grouped round her.

As Jack entered, she rose and came towards him with a smile of welcome.

"Ah, Jack," she said, "this is delightful; I am tremendously glad to see you! Let's see, whom do you know? May I introduce you to Miss Grantham? Mr. Broxton. I think you know everybody else. Chesterford, come here and sit by me at once. You've

been an age away. I expect you've been getting into mischief." She wheeled a chair up for him, and planted him down in it. He looked radiantly happy.

"Now, Jack," she went on, "tell us what you've been doing all these months. It's years since we saw you. I think you look all right. No signs of breaking down yet. I hoped you would have gone into a rapid consumption, because I was married, but it doesn't seem to have made any difference to anybody except Chesterford and me. Jack, don't you think I shall make an excellent matron? I shall get Maud to teach me some of her crochet-stitches. Have you ever been here before? Chesterford, you shut it up, didn't you, for several years, until you thought of bringing me here? Sugar, Jack? Two lumps? Chesterford, you mustn't eat sugar, you're getting quite fat already. You must obey me, you know. You promised to love, honour and obey. Oh, no; I did that. However, sugar is bad for you."

"Dodo keeps a tight hand on me, you see," said Chesterford, from the depths of his chair. "Dodo, give me the sugar, or we shall quarrel."

Dodo laughed charmingly.

"He would quarrel with his own wife for a lump of sugar," said Dodo dramatically; "but she won't quarrel with him. Take it then."

She glanced at Jack for a moment as she said this, but Jack was talking to Miss Grantham, and either did not see, or did not seem to. Jack had a pleasant impression of light hair, dark grey eyes, and a very fair complexion. But somehow it produced no more effect on him than do those classical profiles which are commoner on the lids of chocolate boxes than elsewhere. Her "discoverer" was sitting in a chair next her, talking to her with something of the air of a showman exhibiting the tricks of his performing bear. His manner seemed to say, "See what an intelligent animal." The full sublimity of Lord Ledgers' remark had not struck him till that moment.

Miss Grantham was delivering herself of a variety of opinions in a high, penetrating voice.

"Oh, did you never hear him sing last year?" she was saying to Lord Ledgers. "Mr. Broxton, you must have heard him. He has the most lovely voice. He simply sings into your inside. You feel as if someone had got hold of your heart, and was stroking it. Don't you know how some sounds produce that effect? I went with Dodo once. She simply wept floods, but I was too far gone for that. He had put a little stopper on my tear bottle, and though I was dying to cry, I couldn't."

"I always wonder how sorry we are when we cry," said Lord Ledgers in a smooth, low voice. "It always strikes me that people who don't cry probably feel most."

"Oh, you are a horrid, unfeeling monster," remarked Miss Grantham; "that's what comes of being a man. Just because you are not in the habit of crying yourself, you think that you have all the emotions, but stoically repress them. Now I cultivate emotions. I would walk ten miles any day in order to have an emotion. Wouldn't you, Mr. Broxton?"

"It obviously depends on what sort of emotion I should find when I walked there," said Jack. "There are some emotions that I would walk further to avoid."

"Oh, of course, the common emotions, 'the litany things,' as Dodo calls them," said Miss Grantham, dismissing them lightly with a wave of her hand. "But what I like is a nice little sad emotion that makes you feel so melancholy you don't know what to do with yourself. I don't mean deaths and that sort of thing, but seeing someone you love being dreadfully unhappy and extremely prosperous at the same time."

"But it's rather expensive for the people you love," said Jack.

"Oh, we must all make sacrifices," said Miss Grantham. "It's quite worth while if you gratify your friends. I would not mind being acutely unhappy, if I could dissect my own emotions, and have them photographed and sent round to my friends."

"What a charming album we might all make," said Lord Ledgers. "Page 1. Miss Grantham's heart in the acute stage. Page 2. Mortification setting in. Page 3. The lachrymatory gland permanently closed by a tenor voice."

"Poor old Chesterford," thought Jack, "this is rather hard on him."

But Chesterford was not to be pitied just now, for Dodo was devoting her exclusive conversation to him in defiance of her duties as hostess. She was recounting to him how she had spent every moment of his absence at the station. Certainly she was keeping it up magnificently at present.

"And Mrs. Vivian comes to-morrow," she was saying. "You like her, don't you, Chesterford? You must be awfully good to her, and take her to see all the drunken idlers in the village. That will be dear of you. It's just what she likes. She has sort of passion for drunken cabmen, who stamp on their wives. If you stamped on me a little every evening, she would cultivate you to any extent. Shall I lie down on the floor for you to begin?"

Chesterford leant back in his chair in a kind of ecstasy.

"Ah, Dodo," he said, "you are wonderfully good to me. But I must go and write two notes before dinner; and you must amuse your guests. I am very glad Jack has come. He is a very good chap. But don't make him an apostle."

Dodo laughed.

"I shall make a little golden hoop for him like the apostles in the Arundels, and another for you, and when nobody else is there you can take them off, and play hoops with them. I expect the apostles did that when they went for a walk. You couldn't wear it round your hat, could you?"

Miss Grantham instantly annexed Dodo.

"Dodo," she said, "come and take my part. These gentlemen say you shouldn't cultivate emotions."

"No, not that quite," corrected Jack. "I said it was expensive for your friends if they had to make themselves miserable, in order to afford food for your emotions."

"Now, isn't that selfish?" said Miss Grantham, with the air of a martyr at the stake.

"Here am I ready to be drawn and quartered for anyone's amusement, and you tell me you are sorry for your part, but that it costs too much. Maud, come off that sofa, and take up the daggers for a too unselfish woman."

"I expect I don't know much about these things," said Maud.

"No; Maud would not go further than wrapping herself in a winding-sheet of blue worsted," remarked Dodo incisively.

Maud flushed a little.

"Oh, Dodo!" she exclaimed deprecatingly.

"It's no use hitting Maud," said Dodo pensively. "You might as well hit a feather bed. Now, if you hit Jack, he will hit back."

"Well, I'd prefer you hit me," said Jack, "than that you should hit anyone who can't hit back."

"Can't you see that I have determined not to hit feather beds," said Dodo in a low tone. "Really, Jack, you do me an injustice."

Jack looked up at her quickly.

"Do you say that already?" he asked.

"Oh, if you are going to whisper, I shall whisper too," remarked Miss Grantham calmly. "Lord Ledgers, I want to tell you a secret."

"I was only telling. Jack he was stupid," said Dodo. "I thought I would spare him before you all, but I see I have to explain. Have you seen Bertie yet, Jack? He's in the smoking-room, I think. Edith Staines is probably there too. She always smokes after tea, and Chesterford doesn't like it in the drawing-room. You know her, don't you? She's writing a symphony or something, and she's no use except at meal-times. I expect she will play it us afterwards. We must make Bertie sing too. There's the dressing-bell. I'm going to be gorgeous to-night in honour of you, Jack."

Jack found himself making a quantity of reflections, when he retired to his room that

night. He became aware that he had enjoyed himself more that evening than he had done for a very long time. He questioned himself as to when he had enjoyed himself so much, and he was distinctly perturbed to find that the answer was, when he had last spent an evening with Dodo. He had formed an excellent habit of being exactly honest with himself, and he concluded that Dodo's presence had been the cause of it. It was a very unpleasant blow to him. He had accepted her refusal with an honest determination to get over it. He had not moped, nor pined, nor striven, nor cried. He had no intentions of dying of a broken heart, but the stubborn fact remained that Dodo exercised an unpleasantly strong influence over him. He could have repeated without effort all she had said that night. She had not said anything particularly remarkable, but somehow he felt that the most striking utterances of other men and women would not have produced any such effect on him. It really was very inconvenient. Dodo had married a man who adored her, for whom she did not care two pins' heads, and this man was one of his oldest friends. Decidedly there was something left-handed about this particular disposition of destiny. And the worst of it was that Chesterford was being hopelessly duped. About that he felt no doubt. Dodo's acting was so remarkably life-like, that he mistook it at present for reality. But the play must end some time, and the sequel was too dark and involved to be lightly followed out. He could not conceive why this elaborate drama on Dodo's part did not disgust him more. He wished he had been deceived by it himself, but having been behind the scenes, he had seen Dodo, as it were, in the green-room, putting on the rouge and powder. But failing that, he wished that a wholesome impulse of disgust and contempt had superseded his previous feelings with regard to her. But he believed with her that under the circumstances it was the best thing to do. The marriage was a grand mistake, true, but given that, was not this simply so many weeks of unhappiness saved? Then he had an immense pity for Dodo's original mistake. She had told him once that she was no more responsible for her philosophy than for the fact that she happened to be five foot eight in height, and had black eyes

and black hair. "It was Nature's doing," she had said; "go and quarrel with her, but don't blame me. If I had made myself, I should have given myself a high ideal; I should have had something to live up to. Now, I have no ideal. The whole system of things seems to me such an immense puzzle, that I have given up trying to find a solution. I know what I like, and what I dislike. Can you blame me for choosing the one, and avoiding the other? I like wealth and success, and society and admiration. In a degree I have secured them, and the more I secure them the more reason I have to be satisfied. To do otherwise would be like putting on boots that were too large for me—they are excellent for other people, but not for me. I cannot accept ideals that I don't feel. I can understand them, and I can sympathise with them, and I can and do wish they were mine; but, as Nature has denied me them, I must make the best of what I have."

Jack felt hopeless against this kind of reasoning, and angry with himself for letting this woman have such dominion over him. In a measure he felt himself capable of views bounded by a horizon not so selfishly fatalistic, and the idea of the smoking chimney in the cottage did not seem to matter, provided that Dodo was sitting on the other side of the hearthrug. He would willingly have sacrificed anything else, to allow himself to give full reins to his thought on this point. But the grand barrier which stood between him and Dodo, was not so much her refusal of him, but the existence of her husband. At this Jack pulled himself up sharp. There are certain feelings of loyalty that still rank above all other emotions. Miss Grantham would certainly have classed such among the litany things. There was nothing heroic about it. It simply consisted in a sturdy refusal to transgress, even in vaguest thought, a code which deals with the most ordinary and commonplace virtues and vices. There is nothing heroic in a street boy passing by the baker's cart without a grab at the loaves, and it sounds almost puritanical to forbid him to cast a glance at them, or inhale a sniff of their warm fragrance. "Certainly this side of morality is remarkably dull," thought Jack; and the worst of it is, that it is not only dull but difficult. With

practice most of us could become a Simeon Stylites, provided we are gifted with a steady head, and a constitution that defies showers. It is these commonplace acts of loyalty, the ordinary and rational demands of friendship and society, that are so dreadfully taxing to most of us who have the misfortune not to be born saints. Then Jack began to feel ill-used. "Why the deuce should Chesterford be born a marquis and not I? What has he done to have a title and fortune and Dodo that I have been given the chance to do?" It struck him that his reflections were deplorably commonplace, and that his position ought to be made much more of. He wondered whether this sort of situation was always so flat. In novels there is always a touch of the heroic in the faithful friend who is loyal to his cousin, and steadily avoids his cousin's wife; but here he is in identically the same situation, feeling not at all heroic, but only discontented and quarrelsome with this ill-managed world. Decidedly he would go to bed.

Owing to a certain habit that he had formed early in life he slept soundly, and morning found him not only alive, but remarkably well and hearty, and with a certain eagerness to follow up what he had thought out on the previous night. He was in an excellently managed household, which imposed no rules on its inhabitants except that they should do what they felt most inclined to do; he was in congenial company, and his digestion was good. It is distressing how important those material matters are to us. The deeper emotions do but form a kind of background to our coarser needs. We come down in the morning feeling rather miserable, but we eat an excellent breakfast, and, in spite of ourselves, we are obliged to confess that we feel distinctly better.

As Jack crossed the hall, he met a footman carrying a breakfast tray into the drawing-room. The door was half open, and there came from within the sounds of vigorous piano-playing, and now and then a bar or two of music sung in a rich, alto voice. These tokens seemed to indicate that Miss Edith Staines was taking her breakfast at the piano. Jack found himself smiling at the thought; it was a great treat

to find anyone so uniformly in character as Miss Staines evidently was. He turned into the dining-room, where he found Miss Grantham sitting at the table alone. Dodo was lolling in a great chair by the fire, and there were signs that Lord Chesterford had already breakfasted. Dodo was nursing a little Persian kitten with immense tenderness. Apparently she had been disagreeing with Miss Grantham on some point, and had made the kitten into a sort of arbitrator.

"Oh, you dear kitten," she was saying, "you must agree with me, if you think it over. Now, supposing you were very fond of a tom-cat that had only the woodshed to lie in, and another very presentable torn belonging to the Queen came—Ah, Jack, here you are. Chesterford's breakfasted, and there's going to be a shoot to-day over the home covers. Edith is composing and breakfasting. She says she has—an idea. So Grantie and I are going to bring you lunch to the keeper's cottage at half-past one."

"And Bertie?" asked Jack.

"Oh, you must get Edith to tell you what Bertie's going to do. Perhaps she'll want him to turn over the pages for her, or give her spoonfuls of egg and bacon, while she does her music. He's in the drawing-room now. Edith's appropriated him. She usually does appropriate somebody. We told Chesterford to get Bertie to come if possible, but Edith's leave is necessary. Maud is going to meet Mrs. Vivian, who comes this afternoon, and, as she has some shopping to do, she will lunch in Harchester, and drive out afterwards; Ledgers has had a telegram, and has made a blasphemous departure for town. He comes back this evening."

"Well, Dodo," remarked Miss Grantham, "now let's go on with what we were discussing. Mr. Broxton will make a much better umpire than the kitten."

"Oh, shut up, Grantie," said Dodo, with fine candour, "Jack agrees with neither of us."

"Tell me what it is," said Jack, "and then I'll promise to agree with somebody."

"I don't care about your agreeing with me," said Miss Grantham. "I know I'm right,

so it doesn't signify what anybody else thinks."

Miss Grantham, it may be noticed, showed some signs of being ruffled:

"Oh, now, Grantie's angry," said Dodo. "Grantie, do be amiable. Call her Grantie, Jack," she added with feeling.

"Dodo, darling," said Miss Grantham, "you're really foolish, now and then. I'm perfectly amiable. But, you know, if you don't care for a man at all, and he does care for you a great deal, it's sure to be a failure. I can't think of any instance just now, but I know I'm right."

Dodo looked up and caught Jack's eye for a moment. Then she turned to Miss Grantham.

"Dear Grantie, please shut up. It's no use trying to convince me. I know a case in point just the other way, but I am not at liberty to mention it. Am I, Jack?"

"If you mean the same as the case I'm thinking of, certainly not," said Jack.

"Well, I'm sure this is very pleasant for me," said Miss Grantham, in high, cool tones.

At this moment a shrill voice called Dodo from the drawing-room.

"Dodo, Dodo," it cried, "the man brought me two tepid poached eggs! Do send me something else. Is there such a thing as a grilled bone?"

These remarks were speedily followed up by the appearance of Miss Staines at the dining-room door. In one hand she held the despised eggs, in the other a quire of music paper. Behind her followed a footman with her breakfast-tray, in excusable ignorance as to what was required of him.

"Dear Dodo," she went on, "you know when I'm composing a symphony I want something more exciting than two poached eggs. Mr. Broxton, I know, will take my side. You couldn't eat poached eggs at a ball—could you? They might do very well for a funeral march or a nocturne, but they won't do for a symphony, especially for

the scherzo. A brandy-and-soda and a grilled bone is what one really wants for a scherzo, only that would be quite out of the question."

Edith Staines talked in a loud, determined voice, and emphasised her points with little dashes and nourishes of the dish of poached eggs. At this moment one of them flew on to the floor and exploded. But it is an ill wind that blows nobody any good, and at any rate this relieved the footman from his state of indecision. His immediate mission was clearly to remove it.

Dodo threw herself back in her chair with a peal of laughter.

"Go on, go on," she cried, "you are too splendid. Tell us what you write the presto on."

"I can't waste another moment," said Edith. "I'm in the middle of the most entrancing motif, which is working out beautifully. Do you mind my smoking in the drawing-room? I am awfully sorry, but it makes all the difference to my work. Burn a little incense there afterwards. Do send me a bone, Dodo. Come and hear me play the scherzo later on. It's the best thing I've ever done. Oh, by the way, I telegraphed to Herr Truffen to come to-morrow—he's my conductor, you know. You can put him up in the village or the coal-hole, if you like. He's quite happy if he gets enough beer. He's my German conductor, you know. I made him entirely. I took him to the Princess the other day when I was at Aix, and we all had beer together in the verandah of the Beau Site. You'll be amused with him."

"Oh, rather," said Dodo; "that will be all right. He can sleep in the house. Will he come early to-morrow? Let's see—to-morrow's Sunday. Edith, I've got an idea. We'll have a dear little service in the house—we can't go to church if it snows—and you shall play your Mass, and Herr What's-his-name shall conduct, and Bertie, and Grantie, and you and I will sing. Won't it be lovely? You and I will settle all that this afternoon. Telegraph to Truffler, or whatever his name is, to come by the eight-twenty. Then he'll be here by twelve, and we'll have the service at a quarter

past."

"Dodo, that will be grand," said Edith. "I can't wait now. Good-bye. Hurry up my breakfast—I'm awfully sharp-set."

Edith went back to the drawing-room, whistling in a particularly shrill manner.

"Oh, did you ever!" said Dodo, who was laughing feebly in her chair. "Edith really is splendid. She is so dreadfully sure of herself, and she tells you so. And she does talk so loud—it goes right through your head like a chirping canary. Chesterford can't bear her."

Jack laughed.

"She was giving him advice about the management of his kennels at dinner last night," he said. "I heard her say to him impressively, as she left the room, 'Try brimstone.' It took Chesterford at least five minutes to recover. He was dreadfully depressed."

"He must take Mrs. Vivian in to-night," said Dodo. "You'll hear them talking about slums, and over-crowding, and marriage among minors, and the best cure for dipsomaniacs. The other night they were talking about someone called 'Charlie,' affectionately but gravely, and I supposed they meant your brother, Jack, but it was the second laundress's young man. Oh, they shook their heads over him."

"I don't think common people are at all interesting," said Miss Grantham. "They only think about things to eat, and heaven, and three aces, and funerals."

She had by this time finished her breakfast, and stood warming her back in a gentlemanly manner by the fire.

The door opened and Lord Chesterford came in.

"Morning, Jack," he said, "what a lazy chap you are. It's half-past ten, and you're still breakfasting. Dodo, what a beastly smell of smoke."

"Oh, it's Edith," remarked Dodo. "You mustn't mind her, dear. You know she's

doing a symphony, and she has to smoke to keep the inspiration going. Dear old boy, you are so sweet about these things; you've never made a fuss since I knew you first. You look very nice this morning. I wish I could dress in a homespun Norfolk jacket and knickerbockers. Grantie and I are going to bring you lunch. What should you like? You'd better have some champagne. Don't step in that egg, dear; it will make your nice brown boots all beastly. It's awfully cold. You'd better have two bottles. Tell Raikes to send you two. Chesterford, I wish you'd tell Raikes to cut off the end of his nose. I'm always afraid he'll hit me with it when he hands things. He might have it grafted into his chin, you know; he hasn't got any chin. Jack, have you finished? Yes, you'd better start. We'll meet you at the bothy. I'll go and ask Edith if she can spare Bertie."

"What does she want Bertie for?" said Chesterford.

"Oh, I expect she'll let him come," remarked Dodo; "she's really busy this morning. She's been composing since a quarter past eight."

Dodo went across the hall and opened the drawing-room door. Edith was completely absorbed in her work. The grilled bone lay untouched on a small table by the piano. Bertie was sitting before the fire.

"Bertie," said Dodo, "are you coming shooting?"

This woke Edith up.

"Oh, it's splendid," she said. "Dodo, listen to this."

She ran her hands over the piano, and then broke out into a quick, rippling scherzo. The music flew on, as if all the winds of heaven were blowing it; then it slowed down, halted a moment, and repeated itself till Dodo burst out: "Oh, Edith, it's lovely! I want to dance." She wheeled a table out of the way, kicked a chair across the room, and began turning and twisting with breathless rapidity. Her graceful figure looked admirable in the quick movements of her impromptu dance. Bertie thought he had never seen anything so deliciously fresh. Dodo danced with peculiar

abandon. Every inch of her moved in perfect time and harmony to the music.

She had caught up a thin, Indian shawl from one of the sofas, and passed it behind her back, round her head, this way and that, bending, till at one moment it swept the ground in front of her, at another flew in beautiful curves high above her head, till at last the music stopped, and she threw herself down exhausted in an arm-chair.

"Oh, that was glorious," she panted. "Edith, you are a genius. I never felt like that before. I didn't dance at all, it was the music that danced, and pulled me along with it."

"That was the best compliment my music has ever received," said Edith. "That scherzo was meant to make you want to dance. Now, Dodo, could I have done that after eating two poached eggs?"

"You may have grilled bones seven times a day," said Dodo, "if you'll compose another scherzo."

"I wanted a name for the symphony," said Edith, "and I shall call it the 'Dodo.' That's a great honour, Dodo. Now, if you only feel miserable during the 'Andante,' I shall be satisfied. But you came about something else, I forget what."

"Oh, about Bertie. Is he coming shooting?".

"I wish it was right for women to shoot," said Edith. "I do shoot when I'm at home, and there's no one there. Anyhow I couldn't to-day. I must finish this. Dodo, if you are going to take lunch with them, I'll come with you, if you don't go too early. You know this music makes me perfectly wild, but it can't be done on poached eggs. Now set me down at the Handel Festival, and I'll be content with high tea, cold meat and muffins, you know. Handel always reminds me of high tea, particularly the muffins. He must have written the 'Messiah' between tea and dinner on Sunday evening, after an afternoon service in summer. I've often thought of taking the Salvation Army hymn-book and working the tunes up into fugual choruses, and publishing them as a lost work of Handel's, Noah, or Zebedee's children, or the Five

Foolish Virgins. I don't believe anyone would know the difference."

Dodo was turning over the leaves of Edith's score book.

"I give it up," she said at last; "you are such a jumble of opposites. You sit down and write a Sanctus, which makes one feel as if one wants to be a Roman Catholic archbishop, and all the time you are smoking cigarettes and eating grilled bone."

"Oh, everyone's a jumble of opposites," said Edith, "when you come to look at them. It's only because my opposites are superficial, that you notice them. A Sanctus is only a form of expression for thoughts which everyone has, even though their tastes appear to lie in the music-hall line; and music is an intelligible way of expressing these thoughts. Most people are born dumb with regard to their emotions, and you therefore conclude that they haven't got any, or that they are expressed by their ordinary actions."

"No, it's not that," said Dodo. "What I mean is that your Sanctus emphasises an emotion I should think you felt very little."

"I!" said Edith with surprise. "My dear Dodo, you surely know me better than that. Just because I don't believe that grilled bones are necessarily inconsistent with deep religious feeling, you assume that I haven't got the feeling."

Dodo laughed.

"I suppose one associates the champions of religion with proselytising," she said. "You don't proselytise, you know."

"No artist does," said Edith; "it's their business to produce—to give the world an opportunity of forming conclusions, not to preach their own conclusions to the world."

"Yes; but your music is the expression of your conclusions, isn't it?"

"Yes, but I don't argue about it, and try to convert the world to it. If someone says to me, 'I don't know what you mean! Handel seems to me infinitely more satisfactory, I

can understand him,' I simply say, 'For Heaven's sake, then, why don't you go to hear Handel? Why leave a creed that satisfies you?' Music is a conviction, but Handel's music has nothing to do with my convictions, nor mine with Handel's."

Edith sat down sternly, and buried herself in heir convictions.

CHAPTER FIVE

It was a perfect winter's day, and when, two hours afterwards, Dodo and the others drove off to meet the shooting-party, the grass in the shadow was still crisp with the light, hoar frost, but where the sun had touched it, the fields were covered with a moist radiance. It had just begun to melt the little pieces of ice that hung from the bare, pendulous twigs of the birch-trees, and send them, shivering to the ground. Through the brown bracken you could hear the startled scuttle of the rabbit, or the quick tapping of a pheasant, who had realised that schemes were on foot against him. A night of hard frost had turned the wheel-ruts into little waves and billows of frozen mud, which the carriage wheels levelled as they passed over them.

They caught up the shooting party shortly before lunch, and, as it was cold, Edith and Dodo got out, leaving Miss Grantham, who preferred being cold to walking under any circumstances, to gather up the extra rugs round her.

"See that there's a good fire, Grantie," called Dodo after her, "and tell them to have the champagne opened."

The sight of abundant game was too much for Edith, and, as Lord Chesterford fell out of line to join Dodo, she asked him if she might have a couple of shots.

The keeper's face expressed some reasonable surprise when he observed Edith snapping the cartridges into her gun with a practised hand. His previous views with regard to women in connection with guns were based upon the idea that most women screamed, when they saw a gun, and considered it a purely unaccountable weapon, which might go off without the least encouragement or warning, and devastate the country for miles round. He was still more surprised when he saw her

pick off a couple of pheasants with precision and deadliness of aim. She gave her gun back to Lord Chesterford as they neared the lodge, and volunteered to join them after lunch for an hour, if they didn't mind. Chesterford stole an appealing glance, at Dodo, who, however, only gave him a half-amused, half-pitying look, and nodded assent.

"The worst of it is," said Edith, "I care for such lots of things. There's my music, and then there's any sort of game—have you ever seen me play tennis?—and there isn't time for everything. I am a musician, and a good shot, and an excellent rider, and a woman, and heaps of other things. It isn't conceit when I say so—I simply know it."

Dodo laughed.

"Well, you know, Edith, you're not modest. Your worst enemies don't accuse you of that. I don't mean to say that I am, for that matter. Did you ever play, the game of marking people for beauty, and modesty, and cleverness, and so on? We played it here the night before you came, and you didn't get a single mark from anybody for modesty. I only got eleven, and five of those were from Chesterford, and six from myself. But I don't believe your husband will ever give you five. You see, Bertie didn't give you any, if you're thinking of marrying him."

"Oh, I'm not going to marry anybody," said Edith. "You know I get frightfully attached to someone about three times a week, and after that never think of any of them again. It isn't that I get tired of them, but somebody else turns up, and I want to know him too. There are usually several good points about everyone, and they show those to new acquaintances first; after that, you find something in them you don't like, so the best thing is to try somebody else."

"Oh, that depends on the people," said Dodo, meditatively. "Some people wear well, you know, and those improve on acquaintance. Now I don't. The first time a man sees me, he usually thinks I'm charming, and sympathetic, and lively. Well, so I am, to do myself justice. That remains all through. But it turns out that I've got a bad

temper, that I smoke and swear, and only amuse myself. Then they begin to think they rated me too high at first, and if they happen to be people who wear well themselves, it is just then that you begin to like them, which is annoying. So one goes on, disgusting the people one wants to like, and pleasing people whom one doesn't like at all. It's fate, I suppose."

Dodo plucked a piece of dead bracken, and pulled it to bits with a somewhat serious air.

"You oughtn't to complain, Dodo," said Edith. "You're married to a man who, I am sure, wears well, as you call it, though it's a dreadfully coarse expression, and he doesn't seem to get tired of you. I always wonder if it's really worth while trotting oneself out or analysing one's nature in this way. I don't think it is. It makes one feel small and stupid."

"Ah, but it's better to do it yourself, than to feel that other people think you small and stupid," said Dodo. "That's disagreeable, if you like. Wait till Mrs. Vivian comes, and she'll do it for you. She's the only person who makes me feel really cheap—about three-halfpence a dozen, including the box."

"Oh, but she won't make me feel small," said Edith coolly, "because I'm not small really. It's only myself that makes me feel small."

"I don't think I should call you morbidly modest," said Dodo. "But here's the keeper's cottage. I'm awfully hungry. I hope they've brought some pâté, Don't you like pâté? Of course one's very sorry for the poor, diseased goose with a bad inside, but there are so many other things to think about besides diseased geese, that it doesn't signify much. Come on, Chesterford, they can count the dead things afterwards. Grantie's waiting. Jack, pick up that pheasant by you. Have you shot well? Look at the sun through those fir-trees—isn't it lovely? Edith, why aren't we two nice, little simple painters who could sit down, and be happy to paint that, instead of turning ourselves inside out? But, after all, you know, one is much more

interesting than anybody or anything else, at least I am. Aren't you? What a blessing it is one didn't happen to be born a fool!"

Dodo was sitting alone late in the afternoon. The shooting-party had come back, and dispersed to their rooms to wash and dress. "You all look remarkably dirty and funny," Dodo had said when they came in, "and you had better have tea sent up to you. Does shooting bring on the inspiration, Edith? Take a bath."

Edith had gone up to her room, after insisting on having two of Dodo's bottles of eau-de-cologne in her hot bath. "There is nothing so refreshing," she said, "and you come out feeling like a goddess." Certainly Edith looked anything but a goddess just now. Her hat was pushed rakishly on to the side of her head, there was a suggestion of missing hair-pins about her hair; she wafted with her about the room a fine odour of tobacco and gunpowder; she had burned her dress with a fusee head that had fallen off; her boots were large and unlaced, and curiously dirty, and her hands were black with smoke and oil, and had a sort of trimming in the way of small feathers and little patches of blood. Decidedly, if she came out feeling or looking like a goddess, the prescription ought to want no more convincing testimonial. But she insisted she had never enjoyed herself so much, she talked, and screamed, and laughed as if nothing serious had occurred since breakfast. As Dodo sat in the drawing-room, opening a few letters and skipping all except the shortest paragraphs in the Times, she heard the noise of wheels outside, and hurried into the hall to meet Mrs. Vivian. Somehow she looked forward to Mrs. Vivian's coming with a good deal of pleasure and interest. She was aware that another strain in the house might be advisable. Bertie and Jack, and Miss Grantham and Edith, were all somewhat on the same lines. Personally, she very much preferred those lines; and it was chiefly for her husband's sake that she wanted the new arrival. Lord Chesterford had done his duty nobly, but Dodo's observant eye saw how great an effort it was to him; at lunch he had been silent, at tea even more so. Dodo acknowledged that Edith had relieved the party from any sense of the necessity of supporting conversation, but it was

obvious to her that Chesterford was hopelessly out of his element, and she felt a keen desire to please him. She had sat by him after lunch, as they smoked and talked, before resuming the shooting, and Dodo had patted his hand and called him a "dear old darling" when nobody happened to be listening, but she had a distinct sense of effort all day in attending to him, and enjoying the company of the others as much as she wished. There was certainly a want of balance in the party, and Mrs. Vivian's weight would tend to keep things even. Dodo had even aroused herself to a spasmodic interest in the new curate, but Lord Chesterford had exhibited such unmistakable surprise at this new departure, that she at once fell back on the easier and simpler expedient of blowing smoke rings at him, and drinking out of the same glass by mistake.

Mrs. Vivian was extremely gracious, and apparently very much pleased to see Dodo. She kissed her on both cheeks, and shook both her hands, and said what a pleasant drive she had had with dear Maud, and she hoped Lord Chesterford was as well and happy as Dodo appeared to be, and they both deserved to be.

"And you must have a great talk with me, Dodo," she said, "and tell me all about your honeymoon."

Dodo was pleased and rather flattered. Apparently Mrs. Vivian had left off thinking she was very small. Anyhow, it was a good thing to have her. Lord Chesterford would be pleased to see her, and he was building some charming almshouses for old women, who appeared to Dodo to be supremely uninteresting and very ugly. Dodo had a deep-rooted dislike for ugly things, unless they amused her very much. She could not bear babies. Babies had no profiles, which seemed to her a very lamentable deficiency, and they were not nearly so nice to play with as kittens, and they always howled, unless they were eating or sleeping. But Mrs. Vivian seemed to revel in ugly things. She was always talking to drunken cabmen, or workhouse people, or dirty little boys who played in the gutter. Dodo's cometic interest in the

East End had been entirely due to her. That lady had a masterly and efficient way of managing, that won Dodo's immediate admiration, and had overcome for the moment her distaste for the necessary ugliness. Anything masterly always found a sympathetic audience in Dodo. Success was of such paramount importance in her eyes, that even a successful organiser of days in the country for match-girls was to be admired, and even copied, provided the other circumstances of success were not too expensive.

Mrs. Vivian was a complete and immediate success on this occasion. Dodo made a quantity of mental notes on the best way to behave, when you have the misfortune to become middle-aged and rather plain. Everyone who already knew her seemed to consider her arrival as the last drop in their cup of happiness. Lord Chesterford, on entering the room, had said, "My dear Mrs. Vivian, this is too delightful of you. We are all charmed to see you," and he had sat down by her, and quite seemed to forget that Dodo was sitting on the other side of the fire. Jack also had, so to speak, flown into her arms. Dodo immediately resolved to make a friend of her; a person who could be as popular among the aristocracy as she was among cabmen was distinctly a person to cultivate. She decidedly wanted the receipt.

"It is so good of you, Dodo, to ask me like this," said Mrs. Vivian, when Dodo went and sat by her. "It always seems to me a great compliment to ask people quietly to your house when only a few friends are there. If you have a great houseful of people, it does not matter much whom you ask, but I mean to take this as a sign that you consider me an old friend."

Dodo was always quick at seeing what was required of her.

"Of course I do," she answered. "Who are my old friends if you are not?"

"That is so nice of you," said Mrs. Vivian. "I want to have a long talk with you, and learn all about you. I am going to stay with your mother next week, and she will never forgive me unless I give a full and satisfactory account of you. Satisfactory it

cannot help being." She looked across to Lord Chesterford, who was talking to Miss Grantham, and laughing politely at her apostolic jokes. "Oh, Dodo, you ought to be very happy!"

Dodo felt that this was rather like the ten minutes before dinner. She had a vague idea of telling Chesterford to sound the gong, but she was skilled at glances with meaning, and she resorted to this method.

"Lord Chesterford tells me you have Miss Staines with you," continued Mrs. Vivian. "I am so anxious to meet her. She has a wonderful gift for music, I hear."

At this moment the sound of hurrying feet was heard in the hall. The drawing-room door flew open and Edith entered. Dodo laughed inwardly and hopelessly. Edith began to talk at the top of her voice, before, she was fairly inside the room.

"Dodo, Dodo," she screamed, "we must settle about the service at once. I have heard from Herr Truffen, and he, will be here by twelve; and we must have everything ready, and we'd better do my Mass in G flat; on the whole it's the easiest. I suppose you couldn't hire four or five French horns in the village. If you could, we might do the one in A; but we must have them for the Gloria. We must have a practice to-night. Have you got any musical footmen or housemaids?"

"Mrs. Vivian, Miss Edith Staines," remarked Dodo sweetly.

There was a moment's silence, and then Dodo broke down.

"Oh, Edith, you are a good chap; isn't she, Mrs. Vivian? Mrs. Vivian was just talking about you, and you came in so opportunely that, until you began talking about Masses, I really thought you must be the other thing. Oh, Chesterford, I haven't told you. We're going to have a delicious little service in the drawing-room to-morrow morning, and we are going to sing a Mass. Grantie can't possibly go to church in this weather, and Jack and Bertie are not as good about it as they might be, so you see it would be really removing the temptation of not going to church if we have church here, and can you sing, Mrs. Vivian? Will you come, Chesterford? You might go to

church first, and then come in here afterwards; that will be two services. How dreadfully unbearably conceited you will be all the afternoon. You might read the second lesson for us; no, I think I shall read both. Yes, Edith, I'll come in a few minutes. I don't know of any musical footmen. You might have them up one by one and make them sing scales, and Jack can try the housemaids' voices. I'm awfully glad Herr Truffen is coming. He's a tremendous German swell, Mrs. Vivian, and conducts at the Crystal Palace, and St. James's, and St. Paul's and everywhere."

"That will be charming," said Mrs. Vivian. "I shall certainly avail myself of it, Dodo, if I may, only I think I shall go to church first with Lord Chesterford. He has promised to show me all his schemes for the village. I think Maud means to go too. But if you will let me, I will go to my room, and write a few letters, and then you will be free to practise. It will be a great pleasure to hear your Mass, Miss Staines; I am very fortunate in coming just in time."

"Really, Dodo," said Edith, "you ought to cultivate the musical talents of your establishment. Last winter I was in the Pyrenees, and there was only an old sexton, who was also a charcoal burner, and my maid, and Charlie and his valet and his wife, but we had magnificent music, and a midnight service on New Year's Eve. Charlie took tenor, and Sybil treble, and I alto, and the sexton bass. You have no idea of the trouble it was to get the sexton to learn his part. I had to hunt him up in those little brutal sheds, and thrust the book into his hand, and forbid him to eat chestnuts, and force him to drink porter and Spanish liquorice. Come on; let's begin."

The practice went off satisfactorily, and Edith expressed herself as pleased. She and Dodo then had a talk to arrange what Dodo called the "Play-bill." Dodo had arranged to read the lessons, and wished to make a small selection of prayers, but there Edith put her foot down.

"No, Dodo," she said, "you're taking a wrong idea of it. I don't believe you're

serious. Now I am. I want to do this Mass because I believe we can do it well, but I haven't the least confidence in your reading prayers well, or caring at all about them. I am rather in doubt about the lessons, but I suppose we can have those."

It was distinctly news to Dodo that Edith was serious. For herself she had only wished to have a nice little amusement for Sunday morning, which, in Dodo's experience, was rather a tiresome time if you stopped at home, but on the whole preferable there than at a country church. But Edith was really in earnest whatever she did, whether it was shooting, or music, or playing lawn-tennis. Frivolity, was the one charge she could not brook for a moment. Her amusements might, indeed, be frivolous, but she did them with all her heart. So the service was arranged to consist of a lesson, a Mass, and another lesson. The choice of lessons was left to Dodo. Accordingly, next morning Lord Chesterford and Mrs. Vivian drove off with Maud to eleven o'clock church, leaving the others still at breakfast. After that meal was over Dodo announced she was going to get the drawing-room ready.

"We must move all the sofas out of the room, because they don't look religious," she said; "and I shall cover up the picture of Venus and Adonis. I have got the sweetest little praying-table upstairs, and a skull. Do you think we'd better have the skull, Edith? I think it makes one feel Sunday-like. I shall put the praying-table in the window, and shall read the lessons from there. Perhaps the skull might frighten old Truffler. I have found two dreadfully nice lessons. I quite forgot the Bible was such a good book. I think I shall go on with it. One of them is about the bones in Ezekiel, which were very dry—you know it—and the other is out of the Revelation. I think——"

"Dodo," broke in Edith, "I don't believe you're a bit serious. You think it will be rather amusing, and that's all. If you're not serious I sha'n't come."

"Dear Edith," said Dodo demurely, "I'm perfectly serious. I want it all to be just as nice as it can be. Do you think I should take all the trouble with the praying-table

and so on, if I wasn't?"

"You want to make it dramatic," said Edith decidedly. "Now, I mean to be religious. You are rather too dramatic at times, you know, and this isn't an occasion for it. You can be dramatic afterwards, if you like. Herr Truffen is awfully religious. I used to go with him to Roman Catholic services, and once to confession. I nearly became a Roman Catholic."

"Oh, I should like to be a nice little nun," said Dodo; "those black and white dresses are awfully becoming, with a dear trotty rosary, you know, on one side, and a twisty cord round one's waist, and an alms-box. But I must go and arrange the drawing-room. Tell me when your conductor comes. I hope he isn't awfully German. Would he like some beer first? I think the piano is in tune. I suppose he'll play, won't he? Make him play a voluntary, when we come in. I'm afraid we can't have a procession though. That's a pity. Oh, I'm sorry, Edith. I'm really going to be quite serious. I think it will be charming."

Dodo completed her arrangements in good time, and forebore to make any more frivolous allusions to the service. She was sitting in the drawing-room, regarding her preparations with a satisfied air, when Herr Truffen was announced. Dodo greeted him in the hall as if it was the most natural thing in the world that he should be called upon to accompany Edith's Mass.

"We're going to have service directly, if you're ready. We want you to accompany Miss Staines's Mass in G flat, but you mustn't take the Kyrie too quick, if you don't mind. Bertie Arbuthnot's singing tenor, and he's not very quick—are you, Bertie? Oh, by the way, this is Bertie. His other name is Mr. Arbuthnot."

Herr Truffen was most gratified by so charming an arrangement, and so great a musical treat. When Edith came down she greeted him effusively.

"My dear Professor, this is delightful," she said. "It's quite like old times, isn't it? We're going to do the Mass in G flat. I wanted the one in A, only there are no French

horns in the village—isn't that benighted? And would you believe it, Lady Chesterford has positively got not one musical footman."

Herr Truffen was a large, spectacled German, who made everyone else look unnecessarily undersized.

He laughed and fitted his fingers together with great nicety.

"Are we to begin at once?" he asked. "The congregation—haf they arrived?"

"Oh, there's no congregation," explained Dodo; "we are all performers. It is only a substitute for going to church. I hope you aren't shocked; it was such a disgusting morning."

"Lady Chesterford is surely a congregation in herself," remarked Herr Truffen, with elephantine elegance.

"Lord Chesterford is coming by-and-by," continued Dodo. "He has gone to church. I don't know whether he will be in time for the Mass."

"Then you haf all the service in a little chapel here, no doubt," said the Professor.

"Oh, no," said Dodo; "we're going to have two lessons and the Mass, and there isn't a chapel, it's only in the drawing-room. I'm going to read the lessons."

Herr Truffen bowed with undiminished composure, and Dodo led the way back into the drawing-room.

Miss Grantham and Jack were introduced, and Dodo took her place at the praying-table, and Herr Truffen at the piano. Dodo gave out the lesson, and read the chapter through..

"Oh, it is nice!" she exclaimed. "Sha'n't I go on to the next chapter? No, I think I won't."

"It would spoil the delightful impression of the very dry bones?" interrogated Herr Truffen from the piano. "Ah, that is splendid; but you should hear it in the Fatherland tongue."

"Now, Dodo, come here," said Edith. "We must go on with this. You can discuss it afterwards. On the third beat. Will you give us the time, Professor?"

The Mass had scarcely begun when Lord Chesterford came in, followed by Mrs. Vivian and Maud. The Professor, who evidently did not quite understand that he was merely a sort of organist, got up and shook hands all round with laboured cordiality. Edith grew impatient.

"Come," she said, "you mustn't do that. Remember you are practically in church, Professor. Please begin again."

"Ah, I forgot for the moment," remarked the Professor; "this beautiful room made me not remember. Come—one, two. We must begin better than that. Now, please."

This time the start was made in real earnest. Edith's magnificent voice, and the Professor's playing, would alone have been sufficient to make it effective. The four performers knew their parts well, and when it was finished, there followed that silence which is so much more appreciative than applause. Then Herr Truffen turned to Edith.

"Ah, how you have improved," he said. "Who taught you this? It is beyond me. Perhaps you prayed and fasted, and then it came to you."

As Edith had chiefly written the Mass while smoking cigarettes after a hearty breakfast she merely said,—

"How does anything come to anyone? It is part of oneself, as much as one's arms and legs. But the service is not over yet."

Dodo meanwhile had gone back to the praying-table.

"I can't find it," she said, in a distracted whisper. "It's a chapter in the Revelation about a grey horse and a white horse."

"Dodo," said Edith, in an awful voice.

"Yes, dear," said Dodo. "Ah, here it is."

Dodo read the chapter with infinite feeling in her beautiful clear, full voice.

Chesterford was charmed. He had not seen this side of Dodo before. After she had finished, he came and sat by her side, while the others got up and began talking among themselves.

"Dodo," he said, "I never knew you cared about these things. What an unsympathetic brute I must seem to you. I never talked to you about such things, because I thought you did not care. Will you forgive me?"

"I don't think you need forgiveness much," said Dodo softly. "If you only knew——" She stopped and finished her sentence by a smile.

"Dodo," he said again, "I've often wanted to suggest something to you, but I didn't quite like to. Why don't we have family prayers here? I might build a little chapel."

Dodo felt a sudden inclination to laugh. Her æsthetic pleasure in the chapter of Revelation was gone. She felt annoyed and amused at this simple-minded man, who thought her so perfect, and ascribed such fatiguingly high interpretations to all her actions. He really was a little stupid and tiresome. He had broken up all her little pleasant thoughts.

"Oh, family prayers always strike me as rather ridiculous," she said, with a half yawn. "A row of gaping servants is not conducive to the emotions."

She got up and joined the other groups, and then suddenly became aware that, for the first time, she had failed in her part. Jack was watching her, and saw what had happened. Chesterford had remained, seated at the window, pulling his long, brown moustache, with a very perceptible shade of annoyance on his face. Dodo felt a sudden impulse of anger with herself at her stupidity. She went back to Chesterford.

"Dear old boy," she said, "I don't know why I said that. I was thinking of something else. I don't know that I like family prayers very much. We used to have them at home, when my father was with us, and it really was a trial to hear him read the Litany. I suppose it is that which has made me rather tired of them. Come and talk to

the Professor."

Then she went across to Jack.

"Jack," she said, in a low voice, "don't look as if you thought you were right."

CHAPTER SIX

The same afternoon Chesterford took Mrs. Vivian off to see "almshouses and drunkards," as Dodo expressed it to Jack. She also told him that Edith and her Herr were playing a sort of chopsticks together in the drawing-room. Maud had, as usual, effaced herself, and Bertie was consuming an alarming number of cigarettes in the smoking-room, and pretending to write letters.

It was natural, therefore, that when Jack strolled into the hall, to see what was going on, he should find Dodo there with her toes on the fender of the great fireplace, having banished the collie to find other quarters for himself. Dodo was making an effort to read, but she was not being very successful, and hailed Jack's entrance with evident pleasure.

"Come along," she said; "I sent the dog off, but I can find room for you. Sit here, Jack."

She moved her chair a little aside, and let him pass.

"I can't think why a merciful providence sends us a day like this," she said. "I want to know whom it benefits to have a thick snowfall. Listen at that, too," she added, as a great gust of wind swept round the corner of the house, and made a deep, roaring sound up in the heart of the chimney.

"It makes it all the more creditable in Chesterford and Mrs. Vivian to go to see the drunkards," remarked Jack.

"Oh, but that's no credit," said Dodo. "They like doing it, it gives them real pleasure. I don't see why that should be any better, morally speaking, than sitting here and talking. They are made that way, you and I are made this. We weren't consulted, and

we both follow our inclinations. Besides, they will have their reward, for they will have immense appetites at tea."

"And will give us something to talk about now," remarked Jack lazily.

"Don't you like Grantie, Jack?" asked Dodo presently. "She and Ledgers are talking about life and being in my room. I went to get a book from here, and the fire was so nice that I stopped."

"I wish Ledgers wouldn't treat her like a menagerie, and put her through her tricks," said Jack. "I think she is very attractive, but she belongs too much to a class."

"What class?" demanded Dodo.

"Oh, the class that prides itself on not being of any class—the all things to all men class."

"Oh, I belong to that," said Dodo.

"No, you don't," said he. "You are all things to some men, I grant, but not to all."

"Oh, Jack, that's a bad joke," said Dodo, reprovingly.

"It's quite serious all the same," said he.

"I'm all things to the only man to whom it matters that I should be," said Dodo complacently.

Jack felt rather disgusted.

"I wish you would not state things in that cold-blooded way," he said. "Your very frankness to me about it shows you know that it is an effort."

"Yes," she said, "it is an effort sometimes, but I don't think I want to talk about it. You take things too ponderously. Don't be ponderous; it doesn't suit you in the least. Besides, there is nothing to be ponderous about."

Dodo turned in her chair and looked Jack full in the face. Her face had a kind of triumph about it.

"I want to say something more," said Jack.

"Well, I'm magnanimous to-day," said Dodo. "Go on."

"All you are doing," said he gravely, "is to keep up the original illusion he had about you. It is not any good keeping up an illusion, and thinking you're doing your whole duty."

"Jack, that's enough," said Dodo, with a certain finality in her tone. "If you go on, you may make me distrust myself. I do not mean that as a compliment to your powers, but as a confession to a stupid superstitious weakness in myself. I am afraid of omens."

They sat silent a minute or two, until a door at the far end of the hall opened and Miss Grantham came through, with her showman in tow.

"Lord Ledgers and I were boring each other so," said Miss Grantham, "that we came to bore someone else. When you are boring people you may as well do it wholesale. What a pity it is that one hasn't got a tail like a dog, that cannot help wagging if the owner is pleased, and which stops wagging when he isn't."

"I shall certainly buy a tail," said Dodo, with grave consideration. "One or two, in case the first gets out of order. Must you wag it whenever you are pleased, Grantie? Is it to be an honest tail? Suppose you only think you are pleased, when you are not really, what does the tail do then? Oh, it's very complicated."

"The tail shares the same illusions as the dog," said Miss Grantham.

"Jack and I were talking about illusions," said Dodo.

"I'm going to get a quantity of illusions," said Miss Grantham. "In any case, what did you find to say about them?"

"Jack said it was a bad thing to keep an illusion up," said Dodo, broadly.

Miss Grantham was staring pensively at the fire.

"I saw two boys sitting on a gate yesterday," she said, "and they pushed each other

off, and each time they both roared with laughter. I'm sure it was an illusion that they were amused. I would go and sit on a gate with pleasure and get my maid to push me off, if I thought it would amuse either of us. Mr. Broxton, would you like me to push you off a gate?"

"Oh, I'm certain that the people with many illusions are the happiest," said Dodo. "Consequently, I wouldn't willingly destroy any illusion anyone held about anything."

"What a lot of anys," said Miss Grantham.

Lord Ledgers was leaning back in his chair with a sense of pleased proprietorship. It really was a very intelligent animal. Jack almost expected him to take a small whip from his pocket and crack it at her. But his next remark, Jack felt, was a good substitute; at any rate, he demanded another performance.

"What about delusions, Miss Grantham?" he said.

"Oh, delusions are chiefly unpleasant illusions," she said. "Madmen have delusions that somebody wants to kill them, or they want to kill somebody, or that King Charles's head isn't really cut off, which would be very unsettling now."

"Grantie, I believe you're talking sheer, arrant nonsense," said Dodo. "It's all your fault, Tommy. When one is asked a question, one has to answer it somehow or other in self-defence. If you asked me about the habits of giraffes I should say something. Edith is the only really honest person I know. She would tell you she hadn't any idea what a giraffe was, so would Chesterford, and you would find him looking up giraffes in the Encyclopædia afterwards."

Lord Ledgers laughed a low, unpleasant laugh.

"A very palpable hit," he murmured.

The remark was inaudible to all but Jack. He felt quite unreasonably angry with him, and got up from his chair.

Dodo saw something had happened, and looked at him inquiringly. Jack did not meet her eye, but whistled to the collie, who flopped down at his feet.

"I really don't know where I should begin if I was going to turn honest," said Miss Grantham. "I don't think I like honest people. They are like little cottages, which children draw, with a door in the middle, and a window at each side, and a chimney in the roof with smoke coming out. Long before you know them well, you are perfectly certain of all that you will find inside them. They haven't got any little surprises, or dark passages, or queer little cupboards under the stairs."

"Do you know the plant called honesty, Grantie?" asked Dodo. "It's a very bright purple, and you can see it a long way off, and it isn't at all nicer when you get close than it looks from a distance."

"Oh, if you speak of someone as an honest man," said Miss Grantham, "it implies that he's nothing particular besides. I don't mind a little mild honesty, but it should be kept in the background."

"I've got a large piece of honesty somewhere about me," said Jack. "I can't always lay my hand on it, but every now and then I feel it like a great lump inside me."

"Yes," said Dodo, "I believe you are fundamentally honest, Jack. I've always thought that."

"Does that mean that he is not honest in ordinary matters?" asked Miss Grantham. "I've noticed that people who are fundamentally truthful, seldom tell the truth."

"In a way it does," said Dodo. "But I'm sure Jack would be honest in any case where it really mattered."

"Oh, I sha'n't steal your spoons, you know," said Miss Grantham.

"That's only because you don't really want them," remarked Dodo. "I can conceive you stealing anything you wanted."

"Trample on me," said Miss Grantham serenely. "Tell us what I should steal."

"Oh, you'd steal lots of things," said Dodo. "You'd steal anyone's self-respect if you could manage to, and you couldn't get what you wanted any other way. Oh, yes, you'd steal anything important. Jack wouldn't. He'd stop just short of that; he would never be really disloyal. He'd finger things to any extent, but I am pretty sure that he would drop them at the last minute."

"How dreadfully unpleasant I am really," said Miss Grantham meditatively. "A kind of Eugene Aram."

Jack was acutely uncomfortable, but he had the satisfaction of believing that what Dodo said about him was true. He had come to the same conclusion himself two nights ago. He believed that he would stop short of any act of disloyalty, but he did not care about hearing Dodo give him so gratuitous a testimonial before Miss Grantham and the gentleman whom he mentally referred to as "that ass of a showman."

The front door opened, and a blast of cold wind came blustering round into the inner hall where they were sitting, making the thick tapestry portière belly and fill like a ship's sail, when the wind first catches it. The collie pricked his ears, and thumped his tail on the floor with vague welcome.

Mrs. Vivian entered, followed by Lord Chesterford. He looked absurdly healthy and happy.

"It's a perfectly beastly day," he said cheerfully, advancing to the fireplace. "Mrs. Vivian, let Dodo send you some tea up to your room. You must be wet through. Surely it is tea-time, Dodo."

"I told you so," said Dodo to Jack.

"Has Jack been saying it isn't tea-time?" asked Chesterford.

"No," said Dodo. "I only said that your virtue in going to see almshouses would find its immediate reward in an appetite for tea."

Mrs. Vivian laughed.

"You mustn't reduce our virtues to the lowest terms, as if we were two vulgar fractions."

"Do you suppose a vulgar fraction knows how vulgar it is?" asked Miss Grantham.

"Vulgar without being funny," said. Jack, with the air of helping her out of a difficulty.

"I never saw anything funny in vulgar fractions," remarked Lord Ledgers. "Chesterford and I used to look up the answers at the end of the book, and try to make them correspond with the questions."

Dodo groaned.

"Oh, Chesterford, don't tell me you're not honest either."

"What do you think about honesty, Mrs. Vivian?" asked Miss Grantham.

Mrs. Vivian considered.

"Honesty is much maligned by being called the best policy," she said; "it' isn't purely commercial. Honesty is rather fine sometimes."

"Oh, I'm sure Mrs. Vivian's honest," murmured Miss Grantham. "She thinks before, she tells you her opinion. I always give my opinion first, and think about it afterwards."

"I've been wanting to stick up for honesty all the afternoon," said Dodo to Mrs. Vivian, "only I haven't dared. Everyone has been saying that it is dull and obtrusive, and like labourers' cottages. I believe we are all a little honest, really. No one has got any right to call it the best policy. It makes you feel as if you were either a kind of life assurance, or else a thief."

Chesterford looked a trifle puzzled.

Dodo turned to him.

"Poor old man," she said, "did they call him names? Never mind. We'll go and be

labelled 'Best policy. No others need apply.'"

She got up from her chair, and pulled Chesterford's moustache.

"You look so abominably healthy, Chesterford," she said. "How's Charlie getting on? Tell him if he beats his wife anymore, I shall; beat you. You wouldn't like that, you know. Will you ring for tea, dear? Mrs. Vivian, I command you to go to your room. I had your fire lit, and I'll send tea up. You're a dripping sop."

Mrs. Vivian pleaded guilty, and vanished. Sounds of music still came from the drawing-room. "It's no use telling Edith to come to tea," remarked Dodo. "She said the other day that if anyone ever proposed to her, whom she cared to marry, she will feel it only fair to tell him that the utmost she can offer him, is to play second fiddle to her music."

Edith's music was strongly exciting, and in the pause that followed, Dodo went to the door and opened it softly, and a great tangle of melody poured out and filled the hall. She was playing the last few pages of the overture to an opera that she had nearly completed. The music was gathering itself up for the finale. Note after note was caught up, as it were, to join an army of triumphant melody overhead, which grew fuller and more complete every moment, and seemed to hover, waiting for some fulfilment. Ah, that was it. Suddenly from below crashed out a great kingly motif, strong with the strength of a man who is pure and true, rising higher and higher, till it joined the triumph overhead, and moved away, strong to the end.

There was a dead silence; Dodo was standing by the door, with her lips slightly parted, feeling that there was something in this world better and bigger, perhaps, than her own little hair-splittings and small emotions. With this in her mind, she looked across to where Chesterford was standing. The movement was purely instinctive, and she could neither have accounted for it, nor was she conscious of it, but in her eyes there was the suggestion of unshed tears, and a look of questioning shame. Though a few bars of music cannot change the nature of the weakest of us,

and Dodo was far from weak, she was intensely impressionable, and that moment had for her the germ of a possibility which might—who could say it could not?—have taken root in her and borne fruit. The parable of the mustard seed is as-old and as true as time. But Chesterford was not musical; he had taken a magazine from the table, and was reading about grouse disease.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Dodo was sitting in a remarkably easy-chair in her own particular room at the house in Eaton Square. As might have been expected, her room was somewhat unlike other rooms. It had a pale orange-coloured paper, with a dado of rather more intense shade of the same colour, an orange-coloured carpet and orange-coloured curtains. Dodo had no reason to be afraid of orange colour just yet. It was a room well calculated to make complete idleness most easy. The tables were covered with a mass of albums, vases of flowers, and a quantity of entirely useless knick-knacks. The walls were hung with several rather clever sketches, French prints and caricatures of Dodo's friends. A small bookcase displayed a quantity of flaring novels and a large tune hymn-book, and in a conspicuous corner was Dodo's praying-table, on which the skull regarded its surroundings with a mirthless and possibly contemptuous grin. The mantelpiece was entirely covered with photographs, all signed by their prototypes. These had found their quarters gradually becoming too small for them, and had climbed half way up the two-sides of a Louis Quinze mirror, that formed a sort of overmantel. The photographs were an interesting study, and included representatives from a very wide range of classes. No one ever accused Dodo of being exclusive. In the corner of the room were a heap of old cotillion toys, several hunting-whips, and a small black image of the Virgin, which Dodo had picked up abroad. Above her head a fox's mask grinned defiantly at another fox's brush opposite. On the writing table there was an inkstand made of the hoof of Dodo's favourite hunter, which had joined the majority shortly after Christmas, and the "Dodo" symphony, which had just come out with great éclat at the Albert Hall, leant

against the wall. A banjo case and a pair of castanets, with a dainty silver monogram on them, perhaps inspired Dodo when she sat down to her writing-table.

Dodo's hands were folded on her lap, and she was lazily regarding a photograph of herself which stood oh the mantelpiece. Though the afternoon was of a warm day in the end of May, there was a small fire on the hearth which crackled pleasantly. Dodo got up and looked at the photograph more closely. "I certainly look older," she thought to herself, "and yet that was only taken a year ago. I don't feel a bit older, at least I sha'n't when I get quite strong again. I wish Jack could have been able to come this afternoon. I am rather tired of seeing nobody except Chesterford and the baby. However, Mrs. Vivian will be here soon."

Dodo had made great friends with Mrs. Vivian during the last months. Her sister and brother-in-law had been obliged to leave England for a month at Easter, and Dodo had insisted that Mrs. Vivian should spend it with them, and to-day was the first day that the doctor had let her come down, and she had written to Jack and Mrs. Vivian to come and have tea with her.

A tap was heard at the door, and the nurse entered, bearing the three weeks' old baby. Dodo was a little disappointed; she had seen a good deal of the baby, and she particularly wanted Mrs. Vivian. She stood with her hands behind her back, without offering to take it. The baby regarded her with large wide eyes, and crowed at the sight of the fire. Really it was rather attractive, after all.

"Well, Lord Harchester," remarked Dodo, "how is your lordship to-day? Did it ever enter your very pink head that you were a most important personage? Really you have very little sense of your dignity. Oh, you are rather, nice. Come here, baby."

She held out her arms to take it, but his lordship apparently did not approve of this change. He opened his mouth in preparation for a decent protest.

"Ah, do you know, I don't like you when you howl," said Dodo; "you might be an Irish member instead of a piece of landed interest. Oh, do stop. Take him please,

nurse; I've got a headache, and I don't like that noise. There, you unfilial scoundrel, you're quiet enough now."

Dodo nodded at the baby with the air of a slight acquaintance.

"I wonder if you'll be like your father," she said; "you've got his big blue eyes. I rather wish your eyes were dark. Do a baby's eyes change when he gets older? Ah, here's your godmother. I am so glad to see you," she went on to Mrs. Vivian. "You see his lordship has come down to say how do you do."

"Dear Dodo," said Mrs. Vivian, "you are looking wonderfully better. Why don't they let you go out this lovely day?"

"Oh, I've got a cold," said Dodo, "at least I'm told so. There—good-bye, my lord. You'd better take him upstairs again, nurse. I am so delighted to see you," she continued; pouring out tea. "I've been rather dull all day. Don't you know how, when you particularly want to see people; they never come. Edith looked in this morning, but she did nothing but whistle and drop things. I asked Jack to come, but he couldn't."

"Ah," said Mrs. Vivian softly, "he has come back, has he?"

"Yes," said Dodo, "and I wanted to see him. Did you ever hear of anything so ridiculous as his going off in that way. You know he left England directly after his visit to us in January, and he's only just back. It's too absurd for Jack to pretend he was ill. He swore his doctor had told him to leave England for three months. Of course that's nonsense. It was very stupid of him."

Mrs. Vivian sipped her tea reflectively without answering.

"Chesterford is perfectly silly about the baby," Dodo went on. "He's always afraid it's going to be ill, and he goes up on tiptoe to the nursery, to see if it's all right. Last night he woke me up about half-past ten, to say that he heard it cough several times, and did I think it was the whooping cough."

Mrs. Vivian did not seem to be listening.

"I heard from Mr. Broxton once," she said; "he wrote from Moscow, and asked how you were, and three weeks ago he telegraphed, when he heard of the birth of the baby."

"I don't know what's the matter with Jack," said Dodo, rather petulantly. "He wrote to me once, the silliest letter you ever saw, describing the Kremlin, and Trèves Cathedral, and the falls of the Rhine. The sort of letter one writes to one's great-aunt. Now I'm not Jack's great-aunt at all."

There was another tap at the door.

"That's Chesterford," remarked Dodo, "he always raps now, and if I don't answer he thinks I'm asleep, and then he goes away. You just see."

The tap came again, and after a moment's interval the door opened.

"Jack!" exclaimed Dodo.

She got up from her chair and went quickly towards him. Jack was pale, and his breath came rather short, as if he had been running.

"Why, Dodo," he cried, "I thought I couldn't come, and then I thought I could, so I did."

He broke off rather lamely, and greeted Mrs. Vivian.

"Dear old Jack," said Dodo, "it does me good to see you. Your face is so nice and familiar, and I've wanted you awfully. Jack, what do you mean by writing me such a stupid letter? especially when I'd written to you so nicely. Really, I'm not your grand-mother yet, though I am a mother. Have you seen the baby? It isn't particularly interesting at present, though of course it's rather nice to think that that wretched little morsel of flesh and bones is going to be one of our landed proprietors. He'll be much more important than you will ever be, Jack. Aren't you jealous?"

Dodo was conscious of quite a fresh tide of interest in her life. Her intellectual faculties, she felt, had been neglected. She could not conceive why, because she had a husband and baby, she should be supposed not to care for other interests as well. Chesterford was an excellent husband, with a magnificent heart; but Dodo had told herself so often that he was not very clever, that she had ceased trying to take an intellectual pleasure in his society, and the baby could not be called intellectual by the fondest parent at present. There were a quantity of women who were content to pore on their baby's face for hour after hour, with no further occupation than saying "Didums" occasionally. Dodo had given what she considered a fair trial to this treatment, and she found it bored her to say "Didums" for an indefinite period, and she did not believe it amused the baby. She had a certain pride in having given birth to the son and heir of one of the largest English properties, and she was extremely glad to have done so, and felt a certain pleased sort of proprietorship in the little pink morsel, but she certainly had experienced none of the absorbing pleasures of maternity. She had got used to not being in love with her husband, and she accepted as part of this same deficiency the absence of absorbing pleasure in the baby. Not that she considered it a deficiency, it was merely another type turned out of Nature's workshop. Dodo laid all the blame on Nature. She shrugged her shoulders and said: "You made me so without consulting me. It isn't my fault!" But Dodo was aware that Nature had given her a brain, and she found a very decided pleasure in the company of clever people. Perhaps it was the greatest pleasure of her life to be admired and amused by clever people. Of course Chesterford always admired her, but he was in love with her, and he was not clever. Dodo had felt some difficulty before her marriage in dealing with this perplexing unknown quantity, and she had to confess it puzzled her still. The result was, that when it occurred, she had to admit her inability to tackle it, and as soon as possible to turn to another page in this algebra of life.

But she still felt that her marriage had been a great success. Chesterford had entirely

fulfilled what she expected of him: he was immensely rich, he let her do as she liked, he adored her. Dodo quite felt that it was better that he should adore her. As long as that lasted, he would be blind to any fault of hers, and she acknowledged that, to a man of Chesterford's character, she must seem far from faultless, if he contemplated her calmly. But he was quite unable to contemplate her calmly. For him she walked in a golden cloud that dazzled and entranced him. Dodo was duly grateful to the golden cloud.

But she felt that the element which Jack, and Mrs. Vivian, and other friends of hers brought, had been conspicuously absent, and she welcomed its return with eagerness.

"You know we haven't been leading a very intellectual life lately," Dodo continued. "Chesterford is divinely kind to me, but he is careful not to excite me. So he talks chiefly about the baby, and how he lost his umbrella at the club; it is very soothing, but I have got past that now. I want stimulating. Sometimes I go to sleep, and then he sits as still as a mouse till I wake again. Pity me, Jack, I have had a dull fortnight; and that is worse than anything else. I really never remember being bored before!"

Dodo let her arms drop beside her with a little hopeless gesture.

"I know one's got no business to be bored, and it's one's own fault as a rule if one is," she went on. "For instance, that woman in the moated Grange ought to have swept away the blue fly that buzzed in the pane, and set a mouse-trap for the mouse that shrieked, and got the carpenter to repair the mouldering wainscot, and written to the Psychical Research, how she had heard her own sad name in corners cried, and it couldn't have been the cat, or she would have caught the shrieking mouse. Oh, there were a hundred things she might have done, before she sat down and said, 'He cometh not,' But I have had a period of enforced idleness. If I had set a trap for the mouse, the doctor would have told me not to exert myself so much.' I used to play Halma with Chesterford, only I always beat him; and then nobody ever cried my

name in sad corners, that I remember; it would have been quite interesting."

Jack laughed.

"What a miserable story, Dodo," he said. "I always said—you had none of the domestic virtues, and I am right, it seems."

"Oh, it isn't that," said Dodo, "but I happen to have a brain as well, and if I don't use it, it decays, and when it decays, it breeds maggots. I've got a big maggot in my head now, and that is, that the ineffable joys of maternity are much exaggerated. Don't look shocked, Geraldine. I know it's a maggot, and simply means that I haven't personally experienced them, but the maggot says, 'You are a woman, and if you don't experience them, either they don't exist, or you are abnormal.' Well, the maggot lies, I know it, I believe they do exist, and I am sure I am not abnormal. Ah, this is unprofitable, isn't it. You two have come to drive the maggot out."

Mrs. Vivian felt a sudden impulse of anger, which melted into pity.

"Poor Dodo," she said, "leave the maggot alone, and he will die of inanition. At present give me some more tea. This really is very good tea, and you drink it the proper way, without milk or sugar, and with a little slice of lemon."

"Tea is such a middle-aged thing any other way," said Dodo, pouring out another cup. "I feel like an old woman in a workhouse if I put milk and sugar in it. Besides, you should only drink tea at tea. It produces the same effect as tobacco, a slight soothing of the nerves. One doesn't want to be soothed at breakfast, otherwise the tedious things we all have to do in the morning are impossible. Chesterford has a passion for the morning. He quoted something the other day about the divine morning. It isn't divine, it is necessary; at least you can't get to the evening without a morning, in this imperfect world. Now if it had only been 'the evening and the evening were the first day,' what a difference it would have made."

Mrs. Vivian laughed.

"You always bring up the heavy artillery to defend a small position, Dodo," she said.

"Keep your great guns for great occasions."

"Oh, I always use big guns," said Jack. "They do the work quicker. Besides, you never can tell that the small position is not the key to the large. The baby, for instance, that Dodo thinks very extremely insignificant now, may be horribly important in twenty years."

"Yes, I daresay Chesterford and I will quarrel about him," said Dodo. "Supposing he falls in love with a curate's daughter, Chesterford will say something about love in a cottage, and I shall want him to marry a duke's daughter, and I shall get my way, and everybody concerned will be extremely glad afterwards."

"Poor baby," said Mrs. Vivian, "you little think what a worldly mother you have."

"Oh, I know I am worldly," said Dodo. "I don't deny it for a moment. Jack and I had it out before my marriage. But I believe I am capable of an unworldly action now and then. Why, I should wish Maud to marry a curate very much. She would do her part admirably, and no one could say it was a worldly fate. But I like giving everybody their chance. That is why I have Maud to stay with me, and let her get a good look at idle worldly people like Jack. After a girl has seen every sort, I wish her to choose, and I am unworldly enough to applaud her choice, if it is unworldly; only I shouldn't do it myself. I have no ideal; it was left out."

Jack was conscious of a keen resentment at Dodo's words. He had accepted her decision, but he didn't like to have it flaunted before him in Dodo's light voice and careless words. He made an uneasy movement in his chair. Dodo saw it.

"Ah, Jack, I have offended you," she said; "it was stupid of me. But I have been so silent and lonely all these days, that it is such a relief to let my tongue wag at all, whatever it says. Ah, here's Chesterford. What an age you have been! Here am I consoling myself as best I can. Isn't it nice to have Jack again?"

Chesterford saw the fresh light in her eyes, and the fresh vivaciousness in her speech, and he was so unfeignedly glad to see her more herself again, that no

thought of jealousy entered his heart. He thought without bitterness, "How glad she must be to have her friends about her again! She looks better already. Decidedly I am a stupid old fellow, but I think Dodo loves me a little."

He shook hands with Jack, and beamed delightedly on Dodo.

"Jack, it is good of you to come so soon," he said; "Dodo has missed you dreadfully. Have you seen the boy? Dodo, may I have him down?"

"Oh, he's been down," said she, "and has only just gone up again. He's rather fractious to-day. I daresay it's teeth. It's nothing to bother about; he's as well as possible."

Lord Chesterford looked disappointed, but ac-quiesced.

"I should like Jack to see him all the same," he remarked. "May he come up to the nursery?"

"Oh, Jack doesn't care about babies," said Dodo, "even when they belong to you and me. Do you, Jack? I assure you it won't amuse you a bit."

"I can't go away without seeing the baby," said Jack, "so I think I'll go with Chesterford, and then I must be off. Good-bye, Dodo. Get well quickly. May I come and see you to-morrow?"

"I wish Chesterford wouldn't take Jack off in that way," said Dodo rather querulously, as they left the room. "Jack came to see me, and I wanted to talk more to him—I'm very fond of Jack. If he wasn't so fearfully lazy, he'd make no end of a splash. But he prefers talking to his friends to talking to a lot of Irish members. I wonder why he came after he said he wouldn't. Jack usually has good reasons."

Dodo lay back in her chair and reflected.

"You really are the most unnatural mother," said Mrs. Vivian, with a laugh. "I am glad Mr. Broxton went with your husband, or he would have been disappointed, I think."

Dodo looked a little anxious.

"He wasn't vexed, was he?" she asked. "I hate vexing people, especially Chesterford. But he really is ridiculous about the baby. It is absurd to suppose it is interesting yet."

"I don't suppose he would call it interesting," said Mrs. Vivian. "But you know there are other things beside that."

Dodo grew a trifle impatient.

"Ah, that's a twice-told tale," she said. "I consider I have done my duty admirably, but just now I confess I am pining for a little amusement. I have been awfully dull. You know one can't exist on pure love."

Mrs. Vivian rose to go.

"Well, I must be off," she said. "Good-night, Dodo; and remember this, if ever anything occurs on which you want advice or counsel, come to me for it. You know I have been through all this; and—and remember Lord Chesterford loves you very deeply."

Dodo looked up inquiringly.

"Yes, of course, I know that," she said, "and we get on magnificently together. In any case I should always ask you for advice. You know I used to be rather afraid of you."

Mrs. Vivian stood looking out of the window. Her eyes suddenly filled with tears.

"Ah, my dear, don't be afraid of me," she said.

Dodo wondered, when she had gone, what made her so suddenly grave. Her own horizon was singularly free from clouds. She had been through an experience which she had looked forward to with something like dread. But that was over; she and the baby were both alive and well. Chesterford was more devoted than ever, and she?—well, she was thoroughly satisfied. And Jack had come back, and all was

going delightfully.

"They all talk about love as if it were something very dreadful," she thought. "I'm sure it isn't dreadful at all. It is rather a bore sometimes; at least one can have enough of it, but that is a fault on the right side."

The door opened softly, and Chesterford came in.

"I am glad to find you alone, darling," he said, "I haven't seen you all day. You are looking much better. Get Jack to come and see you again as soon as he can."

Dodo smiled benignantly on him.

"The baby really is wonderful," he continued. "It was sitting up with its bottle just now, and I really believe it winked at me when it saw me. Do you think it knows me?"

"Oh, I daresay it does," said Dodo; "it sees enough of you anyhow."

"Isn't it all wonderful," he went on, not noticing her tone. "Just fancy. Sometimes I wonder whether it's all real."

"It's real enough when it cries," said Dodo. "But it is rather charming, I do think."

"It's got such queer little fists," said he, "with nice pink nails."

Dodo laughed rather wearily.

"Are you a little tired, darling?" he said. "Won't you go to bed? You know you've been up quite a long time. Perhaps you'd like to see the baby before you go."

"Oh, I said good-night to the baby," said Dodo. "I think I will go to bed. I wish you'd send Wilkins here."

He bent over her and kissed her forehead softly.

"Ah, my darling, my darling," he whispered.

Dodo lay with half-shut eyes.

"Good-night, dear," she said languidly.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The questions about which a man is apt to, say that he alone can judge, are usually exactly those questions in which his judgment is most likely to be at fault, for they concern him very intimately—a truth which he expresses by saying that he alone can judge about them, and for that very reason his emotions are apt to colour what he considers his sober decision.

Jack was exactly in this position when he left the Chesterfords' door that afternoon. It was only six o'clock when he went away, and he wished to be alone, and to think about it. But the house seemed stuffy and unsuggestive, and he ordered a horse, and sat fuming and frowning till it came round. It fidgeted and edged away from the pavement when he tried to mount it, and he said, "Get out, you brute," with remarkable emphasis, and asked the groom whether he hadn't yet learned to hold a horse quiet. This was sufficient to show that he was in a perturbed frame of mind.

The Row was rather empty, for a great race meeting was going on, and Jack cantered quickly up to the end, and cursed his stupidity for not having gone to Sandown. Then he put his horse to a quiet pace, and determined to think the matter out.

He had left the Chesterfords in January with a full realisation of his position. He was in love with Dodo, perhaps more deeply than ever, and Dodo was hopelessly, irrevocably out of his reach. The only thing left to be done was to get over it; but his ordinary circle and its leisurely duties were quite impossible just at present, and he adopted the traditional English method of travelling, and shooting unoffending animals. Whether the absence of faith was responsible, is an open question; at any rate, the remedy did not result in a cure. He was intensely bored with foreign countries; they were quite as distasteful as England, and, on the whole, had less to offer. And he came back to London again as suddenly as he had left it. He only remembered one incident in his four months abroad which gave him any pleasure;

that was when he received a letter from Dodo at Berlin, which said nothing particular, and wound up with a little mild chaff on the absurdity of his going abroad at all. "I hope you are really better," wrote Dodo, "though I didn't know that you were in any immediate danger of breaking down when you left us. Anyhow, come back. London is particularly wholesome, and, to tell you the truth, it's just a wee bit dull. Don't be conceited."

Of course he came back; it was no good remaining abroad, and yawning in front of the Sistine Madonna, who, in her impossible serene mildness, had no message whatever for him. He wanted to see Dodo; why on earth shouldn't he? She was the only thing he really cared about, and she was quite out of his reach. Where was the harm?

For two days after his arrival in London he was still undecided, and made no effort to see her, and on the third day her note came. London was as bad as Dresden, and again, where was the harm? He wrote a note saying he would come, then he tore that up and sent a refusal, offering no excuse; and after all, he had gone, and parted from her with the words that he would come again the next day. But ah, how sweet it was to see her again! Such were the facts upon which Jack wished to form a conclusion. All this indecision was really too annoying. What was the use of a conscience that took the sugar out of your tea, and yet could not prevent you from drinking it? It was not strong enough to prevent him going to see Dodo, and it took the malicious line of making the visit as little enjoyable as possible. Well, it must be settled one way or the other.

The problem obviously depended on one question. Did his desire for Dodo grow stronger with seeing her? He decided that it did not make much difference to the quality or degree of his longing, but, on the other hand, her society gave him an inestimable pleasure. When she had refused him a year ago, he had gone on seeing her day after day, without the horrible, unsatisfied emptiness he had felt abroad.

That absorbing craving for her, he remembered, began when she was on her wedding tour. Then why not see her freely and frequently? No harm could possibly come out of it. Dodo, he thought, cared for him only as she cared for a dozen other friends, why should he, then, who cared so deeply for her, cut himself off from her? Again his deep-rooted affection and respect for her husband was an immense safeguard. Quixotism was a doubtful virtue at the best, and decidedly out of date, and besides, what would Dodo think if she suddenly found that one of her best friends invariably declined to meet her under any circumstances? She would certainly guess the reason, and if there was one possible solution of this stupid problem more undesirable than another, it was that. And Jack made up his mind.

Well, that was settled, and here was Bertie riding down upon him. He felt as if he wished to record a deliberate and sober conclusion. They joined forces and rode up together.

Then Jack said suddenly,—

"Bertie, I have been making a fool of myself, but I am better now."

"That's good," said Bertie placidly.

There was something indefinably soothing about Bertie's manner. Jack determined to be more explicit. It is often a relief to tell a friend one's own resolutions, especially if one does not expect unseasonable objections.

"It's about Dodo," he said. "You see I'm dreadfully in love with her. Awkward, isn't it?"

"Devilish," said Bertie, without a shade of emotion passing over his face.

"And the less I see of her," said Jack, "the worse I get, so I've determined that the more I see of her in the ordinary way, the better. It sounds an unusual treatment, I know, but you must acknowledge I gave the other method a fair chance. I went and killed pigs in Austria, and climbed the Matterhorn, but it wouldn't do."

They rode on a little time in silence. Then Bertie said,—

"Do you want my advice?"

"Well, yes," said Jack rather dubiously.

"Then I'm dashed if I like it, Jack," he said. "It's too dangerous. Just think——"

But Jack broke in,—

"Don't you see my friendship for Chesterford is an absolute safeguard. Dodo gives me more pleasure than anyone I know, and when I can't see her, life becomes unbearable. Chesterford is one of those men to whom one couldn't do a mean thing, and, furthermore, Dodo doesn't love me. If those two facts don't ensure safety, I don't know what would. Besides, Bertie, I'm not a rascal."

"I can't like it," said Bertie. "If one has a propensity for falling into the fire, it's as well to keep off the hearthrug. I know you're not a rascal, but this is a thing one can't argue about. It is a matter of feeling."

"I know," said Jack, "I've felt it too. But I think it's outweighed by other considerations. If I thought any mischief could come of it, I should deserve to be horse-whipped."

"I don't like it," repeated Bertie stolidly.

Jack went to see Dodo the next afternoon, and for many afternoons during the next fortnight he might have been seen on Chesterford's doorstep, either coming or going. Her husband seemed almost as glad as Dodo that Jack should come often. His visits were obviously very pleasant to her, and she had begun to talk nonsense again as fluently as ever. With Jack, however, she had some rather serious talks; his future appeared to be exercising her mind somewhat. Jack's life at this time was absolutely aimless. Before he had gone abroad he had been at the Bar, and had been called, but his chambers now knew him no more. He had no home duties, being, as Dodo expressed it, "a poor little orphan of six foot two," and he had enough money for an

idle bachelor life. Dodo took a very real interest in the career of her friends. It was part of her completeness, as I have said before, to be the centre of a set of successful people. Jack could do very well, she felt, in the purely ornamental line, and she by no means wished to debar him from the ornamental profession, but yet she was vaguely dissatisfied. She induced him one day to state in full, exactly the ideas he had about his own future.

"You dangle very well indeed," she said to him, "and I'm far from wishing you not to dangle, but, if it's to be your profession, you must do it more systematically. Lady Wrayston was here yesterday, and she said no one ever saw you now. That's lazy; you're neglecting your work."

Jack was silent a few minutes. The truth of the matter was that he was becoming so preoccupied with Dodo, that he was acquiring a real distaste for other society. His days seemed to have dwindled down to an hour or two hours each, according to the time he passed with Dodo. The interval between his leaving the house one day and returning to it the next, had got to be merely a tedious period of waiting, which he would gladly have dispensed with. In such intervals society appeared to him not a distraction, but a laborious substitute for inaction, and labour at any time was not congenial to him. His life, in fact, was a series of conscious pulses with long-drawn pauses in between. He was dimly aware that this sort of thing could not go on for ever. The machine would stop, or get quicker or slower, and there were endless complications imminent in either case.

"I don't know that I really care for dangling," said Jack discontentedly. "At the same time it is the least objectionable form of amusement."

"Well, you can't dangle for ever in any case," said Dodo. "You ought to marry and settle down. Chesterford is a sort of apotheosis of a dangler. By performing, with scrupulous care, a quantity of little things that don't matter much, like being J.P., and handing the offertory plate, he is in a way quite a busy man, to himself at least,

though nothing would happen if he ceased doing any or all of these things; and the dangler, who thinks himself busy, is the happiest of men, because he gets all the advantages of dangling, and none of the disadvantages, and his conscience—have you got a conscience, Jack?—so far from pricking him, tells him he's doing the whole duty of man. Then again he's married—to me, too. That's a profession in itself."

"Ah, but I can't be married to you too," remarked Jack.

"You're absurd," said Dodo; "but really, Jack, I wish you'd marry someone else. I sha'n't think you unfaithful."

"I don't flatter myself that you would," said Jack, with a touch of irritation.

Dodo looked up rather surprised at the hard ring in his voice. She thought it wiser to ignore this last remark.

"I never can quite make out whether you are ambitious or not," she said. "Now and then you make me feel as if you would rather like to go and live in a small cathedral town——"

"And shock the canons?" suggested Jack.

"Not necessarily; but cultivate sheer domesticity. You're very domestic in a way. Bertie would do admirably in a cathedral town. He'd be dreadfully happy among dull people. They would all think him so brilliant and charming, and the bishop would ask him over to dine at the palace whenever anyone came down from London."

"I'm not ambitious in the way of wanting to score small successes," said Jack. "Anyone can score them. I don't mind flying at high game and missing. If you miss of course you have to load again, but I'd sooner do that than make a bag of rabbits. Besides, you can get your rabbits sitting, as you go after your high game. But I don't want rabbits."

"What is your high game?" asked Dodo.

Jack considered.

"It's this," he said. "You may attain it, or at any rate strive after it, by doing nothing, or working like a horse. But, anyhow, it's being in the midst of things, it's seeing the wheels go round, and forming conclusions as to why they go round, it's hearing the world go rushing by like a river in flood, it's knowing what everyone thinks about, it's guessing why one woman falls in love with one man, and why another man falls in love with her. You don't get that in cathedral towns. The archdeacon's daughter falls in love with the dean's son, and nobody else is at all in love with either of them. The world doesn't rattle in cathedral towns, they take care to oil it; the world doesn't come down in flood in cathedral towns, there is nothing so badly regulated as that. I don't know why I should choose cathedral towns particularly to say these things about. I think you suggested that I should live in one. If you like you can plunge into the river in flood and go down with it—that's what they call having a profession—but it's just as instructive to stand on the bank and watch it; more instructive, perhaps, because you needn't swim, and can give your whole attention to it. On the whole, that is what I mean to do."

"That's good, Jack," said Dodo; "but you're not consistent. The fact that you haven't been going out lately, shows that you're standing with your back to it, with your hands in your pocket. After all, what you say only comes to this, that you are interested in the problem of human life. Well, there's just as much human life in your cathedral town."

"Ah, but there's no go about it," said he. "It's no more like life than a duck pond is to the river in flood."

"Oh, you're wrong there," said Dodo. "It goes on just the same, though it doesn't make such a fuss. But in any case you are standing with your back to it now, as I said."

"I'm going into details, just at present," said Jack.

"How do you mean?"

"I'm watching a little bit of it."

"I suppose you mean Chesterford and me. Do you find us very interesting?" demanded Dodo.

"Very."

Jack was rather uncomfortable. He wanted to say more, and wished he hadn't said so much. He wondered how Dodo would take it.

Dodo did not take it at all. She was, for the time at any rate, much more interested in Jack's prospects as they concerned him, than as they bore on herself.

"What is the upshot of all your observations?" she asked.

Jack hardly knew whether to feel relieved or slighted. Was Dodo's apparent unconsciousness of the tenor of what he had said genuine or affected? On that he felt a great deal depended. But whether it was genuine or not, the matter was closed for the present. Dodo repeated her question.

"My observations on you, or on the world in general?" he asked.

"Either will do," said Dodo; "we're very normal. Any conclusion you have formed about the rest of the world will apply to us."

"My conclusion is that you are not quite normal," said he.

Dodo laughed.

"Oh, I'm dreadfully normal," she said; "all my inconsistencies lie on the surface—I'm married, I've got a baby, I'm honest, I'm lazy. I'm all I should and shouldn't be. And Chesterford——"

"Oh, then Chesterford's normal too," said Jack.

CHAPTER NINE

June was drawing to a close in a week of magnificent weather. It was too hot to do

much during the middle of the day, and the Park was full of riders every morning from eight till ten. Dodo' was frequently to be seen there, usually riding a vicious black mare, that plunged and shied more than Lord Chesterford quite liked. But Dodo insisted on riding it.

"The risks one runs every moment of one's life," she told him, "are so many, that one or two more really don't matter. Besides, I can manage the brute."

On this particular morning Dodo descended the stairs feeling unusually happy. The period of enforced idleness was over, and she was making up for lost time with a vengeance. They had given a dance the night before, and Dodo had not gone to bed till after four; but for all that she was down again at half-past eight, and her mare was waiting for her. She turned into the dining-room to have a cup of tea before starting, and waited somewhat impatiently for Lord Chesterford to join her. He came in, in the course of a few minutes, looking rather worried.

"You look as if you had not gone to bed for a week," said Dodo, "and your hair is dreadfully untidy. Look at me now. Here I am a weak little woman, and I feel fit to move mountains, and you look as if you wanted quinine and iron. Don't come, if you'd rather not. Stop at home and play with the baby."

"I'm all right," said he, "but I'm rather worried about the boy. The nurse says he's not been sleeping much all night, but kept waking and crying, and he looks rather flushed. I think I'll send for the doctor."

Dodo felt a little impatient.

"He's as right as possible," she said. "You shouldn't worry so, Chesterford. You've wanted to send for the doctor a hundred times in the last month, either for him or me. But don't come if you'd rather not. Vivy is coming to breakfast at half-past nine; I quite forgot that. If you feel inclined to stop, you might give her breakfast, and I'll lengthen my ride. I shall be back at half-past ten. She's going to take me to see Wainwright's new Turner."

"Are you sure you don't mind, Dodo?" said he, still wavering. "If you don't, I really think I will stop, and perhaps see the doctor about him. The nurse says she would like to have the doctor here."

"Just as you like," said Dodo. "You'll have to pay a swinging bill anyhow. Good-bye, old boy. Don't worry your silly old head. I'm sure it's all right."

Dodo went off perfectly at ease in her mind. Chesterford was rather fussy, she thought, and she congratulated herself on not being nervous. "A pretty pair we should make if I encouraged him in his little ways," she said to herself. "We should one of us, live in the nursery." She put her horse into a quick trot, and felt a keen enjoyment in managing the vicious animal. The streets were somewhat crowded even at this hour, and Dodo had her work cut out for her.

However, she reached the Park in safety, and went up the Row at a swinging gallop, with her horse tearing at the rein and tossing its head. After a time the brute grew quieter, and Dodo joined a well-known figure who was riding some way in front of her.

"Good old Jack," she cried, "isn't it splendid! I had no idea how I loved motion and exercise and dancing and all that till I began again. Didn't you think our ball went off rather well? Did you stop, to the end? Oh, of course you did. That silly dowager What's-her-name was quite shocked at me, just because we had the looking-glass figure in the cotillion. It's the prettiest of the lot, I think. Old Major Ewart gave me a pair of ivory castanets with silver mountings last night, the sweetest things in the world. I really think he is seriously gone on me, and he must be sixty if he's an hour. I think I shall appeal to Chesterford for protection. What fun it would be to make Chesterford talk to him gravely like a grandson. He stopped at home this morning to look after the baby. I think I shall get jealous of the nurse, and pretend that he's sweet on her, and that's why he goes to the nursery so much."

Jack laughed.

"Between you, you hit the right average pretty well," he said. "If it wasn't for Chesterford, the baby would certainly have fallen downstairs half a dozen times. You don't half realise how important he is."

"Oh, you're entirely wrong, Jack," said Dodo calmly. "It's just that which I do recognise; what I don't recognise is that I should be supposed to find ineffable joys in watching it eat and sleep and howl. You know one baby is very much like another."

"In other words, supposing the boy had no expectations," said Jack, "and was not the heir-apparent of half Staffordshire, you would find him much less interesting."

"Would you think me very heartless if I said 'Yes'?" asked Dodo.

"Well, I never held a very high opinion of your heart, you know," said Jack, laughing, "and I don't know that I think much worse of it now."

"You judge so stupidly," said Dodo; "you elevate matrimony into a sacrament. Now I don't. It is a contract for mutual advantage. The husband gives wealth, position and all that, and the wife gives him a housekeeper, and heirs to his property. Don't frown, Jack. That's my eminently common-sense view of the question. It answers excellently, as I find by experience. But, of course, there are marriages for love. I suppose most of the lower middle-class marry for love, at least they haven't got any position or wealth to marry for. But we, the disillusioned and unromantic upper classes, see beyond that. I daresay our great grandfathers married for love, but the fact that so many of us don't, shows that ours is the more advanced and probably correct view. You know all wine-tasters agree on the superiority of one wine, and the inferiority of another. That's the result of education. The amateur thinks they are all more or less alike, and very probably prefers some sweet bad kind. That's the middle-class view of love-marriages. The more I think of it, the more I feel that love is an illusion. Think of all the people who marry for love, and get eternally tired of each other afterwards. They can't keep it up. The lovers grow into friends, and the

friends into enemies. Those are the enviable ones who remain friends; but it is better to marry as a friend than as a lover, because in the latter case there is a reaction and a disappointment, which may perhaps ruin the friendship. Aren't I a wise woman, Jack? I think I shall set up a general advice office."

Jack was, rather pale, and his fingers twitched nervously at his reins.

"Have you never felt that illusion?" he asked, in a low voice.

"Really, Jack," said Dodo, "you behave as if you were the inquisition. But I don't see why I shouldn't tell you. For Chesterford I never have. He is the most excellent husband, and I esteem and admire him immensely. Don't make your horse so fidgety, Jack. As I was saying, I don't see why I shouldn't tell you, considering you proposed to me once, and confessed to the same illusion yourself. Have you got over it, by the way? If I had married you, you certainly would have by this time."

There was a long pause. Then Jack said,—

"No, Dodo, I have never got over it."

The moment after he had said it, he would have given his right hand to have it unsaid. Dodo was silent for a moment, and Jack found himself noticing the tiny, trivial things about him. He observed a fly trying to alight oh his horse's ear, but the animal flicked it off with a little jerk, before it got fairly settled. He wondered whether the fly had illusions about that ear, and whether it imagined that it would be happy for ever and ever, if it could once settle there.

"You know we are saying the most frightfully unconventional things to each other," said Dodo. "I am very sorry for you, Jack, and I will administer consolation. When I said 'No' to you, I did it with real regret, with quite a different sort of feeling to that which I should have had if I had said 'No' to Chesterford. It was quite an unreasonable feeling, I couldn't define it, but I think it must have been because——"

Then Jack recovered his self-respect in a moment, by one of those strange contradictions in our nature, which urged him to stop his ears to what, a week

before, he had been almost tempting her to say.

"Ah, stop, stop," he said, "you don't know what you are saying. Dodo, this won't do. Think of Chesterford."

"Chesterford and the baby," said Dodo softly. "I believe you are right, Jack. This is unprofitable. But, Jack, since we renounce that, let us still be friends. Don't let this have made any difference to us. Try and realise that it is all an illusion."

Dodo half turned towards him, with a long glance in her brown eyes, and a little smile playing about her mouth.

"Yes, yes," said Jack, laughing nervously. "I told Bertie so the other day. I have been a madman for half an hour, but that is over. Shall we turn?"

They wheeled their horses round, and cantered down the Row.

"Oh, this beautiful world," exclaimed Dodo. "You've no idea what it is to me to come out of the house again, and ride, and dance and sing. I really believe, Jack, that I enjoy things more than anyone else I know. Everything that enjoys itself appeals to me. Jack, do enjoy yourself, although we settled you mustn't appeal to me. Who is that girl standing there with the poodle? I think I shall get Chesterford to buy me a poodle. There's a woman next her awfully like Vivy, do you see, shading her eyes with her hand. It is Vivy."

Dodo's face suddenly grew grave and frightened. She reined her horse in opposite to where Mrs. Vivian was standing.

"Quick, quick," she said, "tell me what has happened!"

Mrs. Vivian looked up at Dodo with infinite compassion in her eyes.

"Dodo, darling," she said, "give your horse to the groom. Please help her to dismount, Mr. Broxton."

Dodo got off, and Mrs. Vivian led her to a seat. Dodo had a sudden flash of remembrance of how she had sat here with Jack a year ago.

"Tell me quickly," she said again.

"My poor Dodo," said Mrs. Vivian, softly stroking the back of Dodo's hand. "You will be brave, won't you? It is worth while being brave. It is all over. The baby died this morning, half an hour after you had gone."

Dodo's first feeling was one of passionate anger and resentment. She felt she had been duped and tricked in a most unjustifiable manner. Fate had led her to expect some happy days, and she had been cruelly disappointed. It was not fair; she had been released from two tedious months of inactivity, only to be caught again. It was like a cat playing with a mouse. She wanted to revenge herself on something.

"Oh, it is too awful," she said. "Vivy, what can I do? It is cruel." Then her better nature came to her aid. "Poor Chesterford, poor dear old boy," she said simply.

Mrs. Vivian's face grew more tender.

"I am glad you thought of him," she said. "His first thought was for you. He was there all the time. As soon as it was over he said to himself, 'Please, God, help Dodo to bear it.' You bear it very well, dear. Come, the carriage is waiting."

"Oh, I can't, I can't," said Dodo passionately; "let me sit here a little while, and then go away somewhere else. I can bear it better alone. I can't see Chesterford."

"No, Dodo," she said, "you must not be cowardly. I know it is the worst part of it for you. But your duty lies with him. You must comfort him. You must make him feel that he has got you left. He is terribly broken, but he will be brave for your sake. Be brave for his."

Dodo sighed wearily.

"I suppose you are right," she said; "I will come."

She turned and looked round on to the gay scene. The Row was full of riders, and bright with the flooding sunlight.

"Oh, it is cruel," she said. "I only wanted to be happy, and I mayn't even be that.

What is the good of it all, if I mayn't enjoy it? Why was the baby ever born? I wish it never had been. What good does it do anyone that I should suffer?"

Mrs. Vivian felt horribly helpless and baffled. How could she appeal to this woman, who looked at everything from only her own standpoint?

"Come, Dodo," she said.

They drove back in silence. Chesterford was standing in the hall as they entered, waiting for them. He came forward to meet Dodo.

"My poor, poor darling," he said, "it is very hard on you. But we can bear it together, Dodo."

Dodo turned from him passionately, and left him standing there.

Dodo was sitting in the window of her morning-room late on the same afternoon. She and Lord Chesterford had been together to look at the baby as it lay there, with the little features that had been racked and distorted with pain, calm and set again, as if it only slept; and Dodo had at that moment one real pang of grief. Her first impulse, as we have seen, was one of anger and impatience at the stupidity of destiny. She had been enjoying herself, in a purely animal way so intensely, at that moment when she saw Mrs. Vivian waiting for her under the trees. She was just released from a tedious period of inactivity, and inactivity was to Dodo worse than anything in the Inferno.

"I daresay I should get accustomed to being roasted," she had said once to Miss Grantham. "It really would be rather interesting seeing your fingers curling up like fried bacon, but imagine being put in a nicely-furnished room with nobody to talk to, and a view over Hyde Park one side and Melton Mowbray the other, and never being able to get out! The longer that lasted, the worse it would become." And so she had felt the sort of rapture with which "the prisoner leaps to loose his chains" when she had gone out that morning, and again knew the infinite delight of feeling a fine horse answer to her hand, under a sort of playful protest. Then this had come

upon her, and Dodo felt that language, failed her to express her profound contempt and dislike for the destiny that shapes our ends.

But her generosity and sense of fair play had come to her aid. She was not alone in this matter, and she quite realised that it was worse for Chesterford than herself.

Chesterford had evinced the most intense interest in the baby in itself. Dodo, on the other hand, had frankly declared that the baby's potentialities possessed a far greater attraction, for her than its actualities. But she had voluntarily linked her life with his; and she must do her part—they had had a great loss, and he must not feel that he bore it alone. Dodo shook her head hopelessly over the unknown factor, that made her so much to him, and left him so little to her, but she accepted it as inevitable. Almost immediately after she had left him in the hall, she felt angry with herself for haying done so, just as she had been vexed at her reception of his proposal of family prayers, and a few minutes afterwards she sent for him, and they had gone together to see the baby. And then, because she was a woman, because she was human, because she was genuinely sorry for this honest true man who knelt beside her and sobbed as if his heart was broken, but with a natural instinct turned to her, and sorrowed more for her than for himself, her intense self-centredness for the time vanished, and with a true and womanly instinct she found her consolation in consoling him.

Dodo felt as if she had lived years since this morning, and longed to cut the next week out of her life, to lose it altogether. She wanted to get away out of the whole course of events, to begin again without any past. From a purely worldly point of view she was intensely vexed at the baby's death; she had felt an immense pride in having provided an heir, and it was all no use; it was over, it might as well never have been born. And, as the day wore on, she felt an overwhelming disgust of all the days that were to follow, the darkened house, the quieted movements, the enforced idleness. If only no one knew, Dodo felt that she would fling herself at once, this

very minute, into the outside world again. What was the use of all this retirement? It only made a bad job worse. Surely, when misfortune comes on one, it is best to forget it as soon as possible, and Dodo's eminently practical way of forgetting anything was to absorb herself in something else. "What a sensible man David was," she thought. "He went and oiled himself, which, I suppose, is the equivalent of putting on one's very best evening dress." She felt an inward laughter, more than half hysterical, as to what would happen if she went and oiled Chesterford.

She got up and went languidly across to the window. Lord Chesterford's room was on the story below, and was built on a wing by itself, and a window looked out on her side of the house. Looking down she saw him kneeling at his table, with his face buried in his hands. Dodo was conscious of a lump rising in her throat, and she went back to her chair, and sat down again.

"He is such a good, honest old boy," she thought, "and somehow, in a dim-lit way, he finds consolation in that. It is a merciful arrangement."

She walked downstairs to his study, and went in. He had heard her step, and stood near the door waiting to receive her. Dodo felt infinitely sorry for him. Chesterford drew her into a chair, and knelt down beside her.

"You've no idea what a help you have been to me, darling," he said. "It makes me feel as if I was an awful coward, when I see you so brave."

Dodo stroked his hand.

"Yes, yes," she said, "we must both be brave, we must help one another."

"Ah, my own wife," he said, "what should I have done if it had been you? and I was dreadfully afraid at one time! You know you are both the baby and yourself to me now, and yet I thought before you were all you could be."

Dodo felt horribly uncomfortable. She had been aware before that there had been moments when, as Jack expressed it, she was "keeping it up," but never to this extent.

"Tell me about it, Chesterford," she said.

"It was only half an hour after you went," he said, "that he suddenly got worse. The doctor came a few minutes after that. It was all practically over by then. It was convulsions, you know. He was quite quiet, and seemed out of pain for a few minutes before the end, and he opened his eyes, and put out his little arms towards me. Do you think he knew me, Dodo?"

"Yes, dear, yes," said Dodo softly.

"I should be so happy to think he did," said Lord Chesterford. "Poor little chap, he always took to me from the first, do you remember? I hope he knew me then. Mrs. Vivian came very soon after, and she offered to go for you, and met you in the Park, didn't she?"

"Yes," said Dodo; "Jack and I were together. She is very good to us. Would you like to see her to-night?"

"Ah no, Dodo," he said, "I can't see anyone but your dear self. But make her come and see you if you feel inclined, only come and talk to me again afterwards."

"No, dear," said Dodo. "I won't have her, if you feel against it."

"Then we shall have an evening together again, Dodo," he said. "I seem to have seen you so little, since you began to go about again," he added wistfully.

"Oh, it must be so," said Dodo; "you have one thing to do, and I have another. I've seen so many different people this last week, that I feel as if I had seen no one person."

"You are so active," he said; "you do half a dozen things while I am doing one."

"Oh, but you do great important man things," said Dodo, "and I do silly little woman things."

She felt the conversation was becoming much more bearable.

Chesterford smiled. Dodo seized on it as a favourable omen.

"I like seeing you smile, old boy," she said; "you look more yourself than you did two hours ago."

He looked at her earnestly.

"Dodo, you will not think me preaching or being priggish, will you, darling? You know me too well for that. There is one way of turning this into a blessing. We must try and see why this was sent us, and if we cannot see why, we must take it in faith, and go on living our lives simply and straightforwardly, and then, perhaps, we shall know sometime. Ah, my darling, it has taught me one thing already, for I never knew before how much I loved you. I loved you all I could before this, but it has somehow given me fresh power to love. I think the love I had for the boy has been added to the love I had for you, and it is yours, darling, all of it, always."

CHAPTER TEN

That same evening Edith Staines and Miss Grantham were seated together in a box at the opera. The first act was just over, and Edith, who had mercilessly silenced every remark Miss Grantham had made during it, relaxed a little. Miss Grantham's method of looking at an opera was to sit with her back to the stage, so as to command a better view of the house, and talk continuously. But Edith would not stand that. She had before her a large quarto containing the full score, and she had a pencil in her hand with which she entered little corrections, and now and then she made comments to herself.

"I shall tell Mancinelli of that," she murmured. "The whole point of the motif is that rapid run with the minim at the end, and he actually allowed that beast to make a rallentando."

But the act was over now, and she shut the book with a bang.

"Come outside, Grantie," she said, "it's so fearfully hot. I had to hurry over dinner in order to get here in time. The overture is one of the best parts. It isn't like so many overtures that give you a sort of abstract of the opera, but it hints at it all, and leaves

you to think it out."

"Oh, I didn't hear the overture," said Miss Grantham. "I only got here at Mephistopheles' appearance. I think Edouard is such a dear. He really looks a very attractive devil. I suppose it's not exactly the beauty of holiness, but extremes meet, you know."

"I must open the door," said Edith. "I want to sit in a draught."

"There's Mr. Broxton," remarked Miss Grantham. "I think he sees us. I hope he'll come up. I think it's simply charming, to see how devoted he still is to Dodo. I think he is what they call faithful."

"I think it's scandalous," said Edith hotly. "He's got no business to hang about like that. It's very weak of him—I despise weak people. It's no use being anything, unless you're strong as well; it's as bad as being second-rate. You may be of good quality, but if you're watered down, it's as bad as being inferior."

Jack meantime had made his way up to the box.

"We've just been saying all sorts of nice things about you," remarked Miss Grantham sweetly. "Have you seen Dodo to-day?"

"Haven't you heard?" asked Jack.

Edith frowned.

"No; what?" she asked.

"Their baby died this morning," he said.

Edith's score fell to the ground with a crash.

"Good heavens! is it true?" she asked. "Who told you?"

"I was riding with Dodo this morning," said he, "and Mrs. Vivian met Dodo and told her. I knew something had happened, so I went to inquire. No one has seen either of them again."

"Did you try and see her?" said Edith severely.

"Yes, I went this evening."

"Ah!" Edith frowned again. "How does he take it?" she asked.

"I don't know," he said; "no one has seen them since."

Edith picked up her score.

"Good-night, Grantie," she said. "Good-night, Mr. Broxton. I must go."

Miss Grantham looked up in astonishment. Edith was folding her opera cloak round her. Jack offered to help her.

"Thanks, I can do it," she said brusquely.

"What are you going for?" asked Miss Grantham, in surprise.

"It's all right," said Edith. "I've got to see someone. I shall come back, probably."

The door closed behind her.

"Of course it's awfully sad," remarked Miss Grantham, "but I don't see why Edith should go like that. I wonder where she's gone. Don't you adore the opera, Mr. Broxton? I think it's simply lovely. It's so awfully sad about Marguerite, isn't it? I wish life was really like this. It would be so nice to sing a song whenever anything important happened. It would smooth things so. Oh, yes, this is the second act, isn't it? It's where Mephisto sings that song to the village people. It always makes me feel creepy. Poor Dodo!"

"I am more sorry for him," said Jack; "you know he was simply wrapped up in the baby."

"Dodo certainly finds consolation quickly," said Miss Grantham. "I think she's sensible. It really is no use crying over spilt milk. I suppose she won't go out again this season. Dear me, it's Lady Bretton's ball the week after next, in honour of Lucas's coming of age. Dodo was to have led the cotillion with Lord Ledgers. That was a good note. Isn't the scene charming?"

"I don't know what Dodo will do," said Jack. "I believe they will leave London,

only—only—"

Miss Grantham looked at him inquiringly.

"You see Dodo has to be amused," said Jack. "I don't know what she would do, if she was to have to shut herself up again. She was frightfully bored after the baby's birth."

Miss Grantham was casting a roving London eye over the occupants of the stalls.

"There's that little Mr. Spencer, the clergyman at Kensington," she said. "I wonder how his conscience lets him come to see anything so immoral. Isn't that Maud next him? Dear me, how interesting. Bring them up here after the act, Mr. Broxton. I suppose Maud hasn't heard?"

"I think she's been with her father somewhere in Lancashire," said Jack. "She can only have come back to-day. There is Mrs. Vane, too. Dodo can't have telegraphed to them."

"Oh, that's so like Dodo," murmured Miss Grantham; "it probably never occurred to her. Dear me, this act is over. I am afraid we must have missed the 'Virgo.' What a pity. Do go, and ask them all to come up here."

"So charmed,", murmured Mrs. Vane, as she rustled into the box. "Isn't it a lovely night? Dear Prince Waldenech met me in the hall, and he asked so affectionately after Dodo. Charming, wasn't it? Yes. And do you know Mr. Spencer, dear Miss Grantham? Shall we tell Miss Grantham and Mr. Broxton our little secret, Maud? Cupid has been busy here," she whispered, with a rich elaborateness to Miss Grantham. "Isn't it charming? We are delighted. Yes, Mr. Spencer, Miss Grantham and Mr. Broxton, of course—Mr. Spencer."

Mr. Spencer bowed and smiled, and conducted himself as he should. He was a fashionable rector in a rich parish, who had long felt that the rich deserved as much looking after as the poor, and had been struck with Maud's zeal for the latter, and thought it would fit in very well with his zeal for the former, had won Maud's heart,

and now appeared as the happy accepted lover.

Mrs. Vane was anxious to behave in the way it was expected that she should, and, finding that Miss Grantham sat with her back to the stage and talked, took up a corresponding attitude herself. Miss Grantham quickly decided that she did not know about the death of Dodo's baby, and determined not to tell her. In the first place, it was to be supposed that she did not know either, and in the second, she was amused by the present company, and knew that to mention it was to break up the party.

Mr. Spencer had a little copy of the words, with the English on one side and the Italian on the other. When he came to a passage that he thought indelicate, he turned his attention to the Italian. Maud sat between him and Miss Grantham.

"I am so delighted, Maud," Miss Grantham was saying, "and I am sure Dodo will be charmed. She doesn't know yet, I suppose? When is it to be?"

"Oh, I don't quite know," said Maud confusedly. "Algy, that is Mr. Spencer, is going to leave London, you know, and take a living at Gloucester. I shall like that. There is a good deal of poverty at Gloucester."

Miss Grantham smiled sympathetically.

"How sweet of you," she said; "and you will go and work among the poor, and give them soup and prayer-books, won't you? I should love to do that. Mrs. Vivian will tell you all about those things, I suppose?"

"Oh, she took me to an awful slum before we left London," said Maud, in a sort of rapture—"you know we have been away at Manchester for a week with my father—and I gave them some things I had worked. I am doing a pair of socks for Dodo's baby."

Miss Grantham turned her attention to the stage.

"The Jewel song is perfectly lovely," she remarked. "I wish Edith was here. Don't

you think that girl sings beautifully? I wonder who she is."

At that moment the door of the box opened, and Edith entered. She grasped the situation at once, and felt furiously angry with Miss Grantham and Jack. She determined to put a stop to it.

"Dear Mrs. Vane, you can't have heard. I only knew this evening, and I suppose Mrs. Vivian's note has missed you somehow. I have just left her, and she told me she had written to you. You know Dodo's baby has been very ill, quite suddenly, and this morning—yes, yes—"

Mrs. Vane started up distractedly.

"Oh, my poor Dodo," she cried, "I never knew! And here I am enjoying myself, when she—Maud, did you hear? Dodo's baby—only this morning. My poor Dodo!"

She began crying in a helpless sort of way.

Maud turned round with a face full of horror.

"How awful! Poor Dodo! Come, mother, we must go."

Mr. Spencer dropped his English and Italian version.

"Let me see you to your carriage," he said. "Let me give you an arm, Mrs. Vane."

Maud turned to Jack, and for once showed some of Dodo's spirit.

"Mr. Broxton," she said, "I have an idea you knew. Perhaps I am wrong. If I am, I beg your pardon; if not, I consider you have behaved in a way I didn't expect of you, being a friend of Dodo's. I think—" she broke off, and followed the others. Jack felt horribly uncomfortable.

He and Edith and Miss Grantham stood in silence for a moment.

"It was horrible of you, Grantie," said Edith, "to let them sit here, and tell them nothing about it."

"My dear Edith, I could do nothing else," said Miss Grantham, in an even, calm voice. "There would have been a scene, and I can't bear scenes. There has been a

scene as it is, but you are responsible for that. You are rather jumpy to-night. Where have you been?"

"I have been to see Mrs. Vivian," said Edith. "I wanted to know about this. I told her I was coming back here, and she gave me this for you, Mr. Broxton."

She handed him a note. Then she picked up her big score, and sat down again with her pencil.

The note contained only two lines, requesting Mr. Broxton to come and see her in the morning. Jack read it and tore it up. He felt undecided how to act. Edith was buried in her score, and gave no sign. Miss Grantham had resumed her place, and was gazing languidly, at the box opposite. He picked up his hat, and turned to leave. Edith looked up from her score.

"I think I ought to tell you," she said, "that Mrs. Vivian and I talked about you, and that note is the result. I don't care a pin what you think."

Jack opened his eyes in astonishment. Edith had always struck him as being rather queer; and this statement seemed to him very queer indeed. Her manner was not conciliatory.

He bowed.

"I feel complimented by being the subject of your conversation," he replied with well-bred insolence, and closed the door behind him.

Miss Grantham laughed. A scene like this pleased her; it struck her as pure comedy.

"Really, Edith, you are very jumpy; I don't understand you a bit. You are unnecessarily rude. Why did you say you did not care a pin what he thought?"

"You won't understand, Grantie," said Edith. "Don't you see how dangerous it is all becoming? I don't care the least whether I am thought meddlesome. Jack Broxton is awfully in love with Dodo, anyone can see that, and Dodo evidently cares for him; and that poor, dear, honest fool Chesterford is completely blind to it all. It was bad

enough before, but the baby's death makes it twice as bad. Dodo will want to be amused; she will hate this retirement, and she will expect Mr. Broxton to amuse her. Don't you see she is awfully bored with her husband, and she will decline to be entirely confined to his company. While she could let off steam by dancing and riding and so on, it was safe; she only met Mr. Broxton among fifty other people. But decency, even Dodo's, will forbid her to meet those fifty other people now. And each time she sees him, she will return to her husband more wearied than before. It is all too horrible. I don't suppose she is in love with Jack Broxton, but she finds him attractive, and he knows it, and he is acting disgracefully in letting himself see her so much. Everyone knows he went abroad to avoid her—everyone except Dodo, that is, and she must guess. I respected him for that, but now he is playing the traitor to Chesterford. And Mrs. Vivian quite agrees with me."

"Oh, it's awfully interesting if you're right," said Miss Grantham reflectively; "but I think you exaggerate. Jack is not a cad. He doesn't mean any harm. Besides, he is a great friend of Chesterford's."

"Well, he's got no business to play with fire," said Edith. "His sense of security only increases the real danger. If Chesterford knew exactly how matters stood it would be different, but he is so simple-hearted that he is only charmed to see Jack Broxton, and pleased that Dodo likes him."

"Oh, it's awfully interesting," murmured Miss Grantham.

"I could cry when I think of Chesterford," said Edith. "The whole thing is such a fearful tragedy. If only they can get over this time safely, it may all blow over. I wish Dodo could go out again to her balls and concerts. She finds such frantic interest in everything about her, that she doesn't think much of any particular person. But it is this period, when she is thrown entirely on two or three people, that is so dangerous. She really is a frightful problem. Chesterford was a bold or a blind man to marry her. Oh, I can't attend to this opera to-night. I shall go home. It's nearly

over. Faust is singing hopelessly out of tune."

She shut her book, and picked up her fan and gloves.

"Dear Edith," said Miss Grantham languidly, "I think you mean very well, but you are rather over-drawing things. Are you really going? I think I shall come too."

Jack meantime was finding his way home in a rebellious and unchristian frame of mind. In the first place, he had just lost his temper, which always seemed to him to be a most misdirected effort of energy; in the second place, he resented Edith's interference with all his heart and soul; and in the third, he did not feel so certain that she was wrong. Of course he guessed what Mrs. Vivian's wish to see him meant, for it had occurred to him very vividly what consequences the death of the baby would have on him and Dodo: and he anticipated another period like that which had followed the birth. Jack could hardly dare to trust himself to think of that time. He knew it had been very pleasant to him, and that he had enjoyed Dodo's undisturbed company during many days in succession, but it was with a certain tingling of the ears that he thought of the events of the morning, and his mad confession to her. "I have a genius for spoiling things," thought Jack to himself. "Everything was going right; I was seeing Dodo enough to keep me happy, and free from that hateful feeling of last autumn, and then I spoilt it all by a stupid remark that could do no good, nor help me in any conceivable way. How will Dodo have taken it?"

But he was quite sure of one thing—he would not go and see Mrs. Vivian. He was, he felt, possessed of all the facts of the case, and he was competent to form a judgment on them—at any rate Mrs. Vivian was not competent to do it for him. No, he would give it another chance. He would again reason out the pros and cons of the case, he would be quite honest, and he would act accordingly.

That he should arrive at the same conclusion was inevitable. The one thing in the world that no man can account for, or allow for, is change in himself. If Jack had been able to foresee, when he went abroad, that he would be acting thus with regard

to Dodo, he would have thought himself mad, and it would have been as impossible for him to act thus then, as it was inevitable for him to act thus now. If we judge by our own standards, and our own standards alter, we cannot expect our verdicts to remain invariable. Under a strong attachment a man drifts, and he cannot at any one moment allow for, or feel the force of the current, for he is moving in it, though he thinks himself at rest. The horrible necessities of cause and effect work in us, as well as around us. As Edith had said, his sense of security was his danger, for his standard of security was not the same as it had been.

He sat down and wrote a note to Mrs. Vivian, saying that he regretted being unable to call on her to-morrow, and purposely forebore to give any reason. He had considerable faith in her power of reading between the lines, and the fact, baldly stated, was an unnecessary affront to her intellect.

Mrs. Vivian read the note with very little surprise, but with a good deal of regret. She was genuinely sorry for him, but she had other means at her disposal, though they were not so pleasant to use. They involved a certain raking up of old dust-heaps, and a certain awakening of disagreeable memories. But it never occurred to her to draw back. Naturally enough she went to see Dodo next morning, and found her alone. Mrs. Vivian had her lesson by heart, and she was only waiting for Dodo to tell her to begin, so to speak. Dodo hailed her with warmth; she had evidently found matters a little tedious.

"Dear Vivy," she said, "I'm so glad you've come; and Chesterford told me to ask you to see him, before you went away, in case you called. So you will, won't you? But I must have you for a long time first."

"How is he?" asked Mrs. Vivian.

"Oh, he's quite well," said Dodo, "but he feels it frightfully. But he is fortunate, he has spiritual consolation as his aid. I haven't, not one atom. It's a great nuisance, I know, but I don't see how to help it. Can the Ethiopian change his skin?"

"Ah, Dodo," said she, with earnestness in her tone, "you have a great opportunity—I don't think you realise how great."

"Why, what do you mean?" said Dodo.

"Of course I know what you feel," said Mrs. Vivian, "and it is necessary that with your grief there must be mixed up a great deal of vexation and annoyance. Isn't it so?"

"Yes, yes," said Dodo. "You don't despise me for feeling that?"

"Despise you!" said Mrs. Vivian. "You know me better than that. But you must not dwell on it. There is something more important than the cancelling of your smaller engagements. You have a big engagement, you know, which must not be cancelled."

Dodo rose from her chair with wide eyes.

"Ah, Vivy," she said, "you have guessed it, have you? It is quite true. Let me tell you all about it. It is just that which bothers me. These days when I only see Chesterford bore me more than I can say. I don't know why I tell you this; it isn't want of loyalty to him, but I want help. I don't know how to deal with him.. Yes, he bores me. I always foresaw this, but I hoped I shouldn't mind. I was wrong and Jack was right. He warned me of it, but he must never know he was right. Of course you see why. I think I did not expect that Chesterford's love for me would last. I thought he would cease being my lover, and I am terribly wrong. It gets stronger and stronger. He told me so last night, and I felt a brute. But I comforted him and deceived him again. Ah, what could I do? I don't love him. I would give anything to do so. I think I felt once what love was, but only once, and not for him."

Mrs. Vivian looked up inquiringly.

"No, I shan't tell you about that," said Dodo, speaking rapidly and excitedly; "it would be a sort of desecration. There is something divine about Chesterford's feeling for me. I know it, but it doesn't really touch me. I am not capable of it, and what happens is that I continue to amuse myself on my own lines, and all that goes over

my head. But I make him believe I understand. It makes him happy. And I know, I know, that when I am out of this, I shall go on just as usual, except that I shall feel like a prisoner escaped, and revel in my liberty. I know I shall. Sometimes I almost determine to make some sacrifice for him in a blind sort of way, like a heathen sacrificing to what he fears, yes, fears, but then that mood passes and I go on as usual. I long to get away from him. Sometimes I am afraid of hating him, if I see him too much or too exclusively."

"Yes, Dodo, I know, I know," said Mrs. Vivian. "I don't see how you are to learn it, unless it comes to you; but what you can do, is to act as if you felt it, not only in little tiny ways, like calling him an 'old darling,' but in living for him more."

"Ah, those are only words," said Dodo impatiently. "I realise it all, but I can't do it."

There was a long silence. Then Mrs. Vivian said,—

"Dodo, I am going to tell you what I have never told anyone before, and that is the story of my marriage. I know the current version very well, that I married a brute who neglected me. That he neglected me is true, but that is not all. Like you, I married without love, without even liking. There were reasons for it, which I need not trouble you with. I used to see a good deal of a man with whom I was in love, when I married Mr. Vivian. He interested me and made my life more bearable. My husband grew jealous of him, almost directly after my marriage. I saw it, and, God forgive me, it amused me, and I let it go on—in fact, I encouraged it. That was my mistake, and I paid dearly for it. I believe he loved me at first; it was my fault that he did not continue to do so. Then my baby was born, and, a month afterwards, somehow or other we quarrelled, and he said things to me which no woman ever forgets. He said it was not his child. I never forgot it, and it is a very short time ago that I forgave it. For two years after his death, as you know, I travelled abroad, and I fought against it, and I believe, before God, that I have forgiven him. Then I came back to London. But after that day when he said those things to me, we grew further

and further apart. I interested myself in other things, in the poor, and so on, and he took to drinking. That killed him. He was run over in the street, as he came back from somewhere where he had been dining. But he was run over because he was dead drunk at the time. When I was abroad I came under the influence of a certain Roman Catholic priest. He did not convert me, nor did he try to, but he helped me very much; and one day, I remember the day very well, I was almost in despair, because I could not forgive the wrong my dead husband had done me, somehow a change began in me. I can tell you no more than that a change comes, and it is there. It is the grace of God. There, Dodo, that is my history, and there is this you may learn from it, that you must be on your guard against making a mistake. You must never let Chesterford know how wide the gulf is between you. It will be a constant effort, I know, but it is all you can do. Set a watch on yourself; let your indifference be your safeguard, your warning."

Mrs. Vivian stood up. Her eyes were full of tears, and she laid her hands on Dodo's shoulders. Dodo felt comfort in the presence of this strong woman, who had wrestled and conquered.

Dodo looked affectionately at her, and, with one of those pretty motions that came so naturally to her, she pressed her back into her chair, and knelt beside her.

"Dear Vivy," she said, "my little troubles have made you cry. I am so sorry, dear. You are very good to me. But I want to ask you one thing. About that man your husband was jealous of—"

"No, no," said Mrs. Vivian quickly; "that was only one of the incidents which I had to tell you to make the story intelligible."

Dodo hesitated.

"You are sure you aren't thinking of anyone in my case—of Jack, for instance?" she suddenly said.

Mrs. Vivian did not answer for a moment. Then she said,—

"Dodo, I am going to be very frank with you. He is an instance—in a way. I don't mean to suppose for a moment that Chesterford is jealous of him, in fact, I know he can't be—it isn't in him; but he is a good instance of the sort of thing that makes you tend to neglect your husband."

"But you don't think he is an instance in particular?" demanded Dodo. "I don't mean to bind myself in any way, but I simply want to know."

Mrs. Vivian went straight to the point:

"That is a question which you can only decide for yourself," she said. "I cannot pretend to judge."

Dodo smiled.

"Then I will decide for myself," she said. "You see, Jack is never dull. I daresay you may think him so, but I don't. He always manages to amuse me, and, on the whole, the more I am amused the less bored I get in the intervals. He tides me over the difficult places. I allow they are difficult."

"Ah, that is exactly what you mustn't allow," said Mrs. Vivian. "You don't seem to realise any possible deficiency in yourself."

"Oh, yes, I do," said Dodo, as if she was announcing the most commonplace fact in the world. "I know I am deficient. I don't appreciate devotion, I don't appreciate the quality that makes one gaze and gaze, as it says in the hymn. It is rather frog-like that gazing; what do you call it—batrachian. Now, Maud is batrachian. I daresay it is a very high quality, but I don't quite live up to it. There are, of course, heaps of excellent things one doesn't live up to, like the accounts of the Stock Exchange in the Times. I fully understand that the steadiness of stockings makes a difference to somebody, only it doesn't make any difference to me."

"Dodo, you are incorrigible," said Mrs. Vivian, laughing in spite of herself. "I give you up—only, do the best you can. I believe, in the main, you agree with me. And now I must be off. You said Lord Chesterford wished to see me. I suppose he is

downstairs."

"I think I shall come too," said Dodo.

So they went down together. Lord Chesterford was in his study.

"Do you know what Mrs. Vivian has been saying to me?" remarked Dodo placidly, as she laid her hand on his shoulder. "She has been telling me I do not love you enough—isn't she ridiculous?"

Mrs. Vivian for the moment was nonplussed, but she recovered herself quickly.

"Dodo is very naughty to-day," she said. "She misconstrues everything I say."

"I don't think it's likely you said that," said he, capturing Dodo's hand, "because it isn't true."

"I am certainly de trop," murmured Mrs. Vivian, turning to go.

Dodo's hand lay unresistingly in his.

"She has been so good and brave," said Lord Chesterford to Mrs. Vivian, "she makes me feel ashamed."

Mrs. Vivian felt an immense admiration for him.

"I said you deserved a very great deal," she said, putting out her hand to him. "I must go, my carriage has been waiting an hour."

He retained Dodo's hand, and they saw her to the door.

The footman met them in the hall.

"Mr. Broxton wants to know whether you can see him, my lady," he said to Dodo.

"Would you like to see Jack?" she asked Chesterford.

"I would rather you told him you can't," he said.

"Of course I will," she answered. She turned to the footman. "Say I am engaged, but he may come again to-morrow and I will see him. You don't mind my seeing him, do you, Chesterford?"

"No, no, dear," he said.

Dodo and Chesterford turned back to the drawing-room. Jack was on the steps.

"I thought you were engaged at this hour," Mrs. Vivian said to him.

"So I was," he answered. "Dodo asked me to come and see her."

DODO

A DETAIL OF THE DAY

BY

E.F. BENSON

IN TWO VOLUMES

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And far out, drifting helplessly on that grey, angry sea, I saw a small boat at the mercy of the winds and waves. And my guide said to me, 'Some call the sea "Falsehood," and that boat "Truth," and others call the sea "Truth," and the boat "Falsehood;" and, for my part, I think that one is right as the other.'—The Professor of Ignorance.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

It was just three weeks after the baby's death, and Dodo was sitting in her room about eleven o'clock in the morning, yawning dismally over a novel, but she was conscious of a certain relief, a sense of effort suspended. Late the evening before, Lord Chesterford had consulted her about some business down at Harchester, and Dodo, in a moment of inspiration, had said that it must be done by someone on the spot, that an agent was not to be trusted, and that if Chesterford liked she would go. This, of course, led to his offering to go himself, and would Dodo come with him?

Dodo had replied that she was quite willing to go, but that there was no need of both of them making a tiresome journey on an infernally hot day. Chesterford had felt, rather wistfully, that he would not mind the journey if Dodo was with him, but he had learned lately not to say such things. Dodo was apt to treat them as nonsense. "My coming with you wouldn't make it any cooler, or less insufferably dusty," she would have said. The result was that Chesterford went, and Dodo was left alone' in London, with a distinct sense of relief and relaxation.

Dodo's next move was to send a note to Jack, saying that he was going to come and lunch with her. She was not conscious of any sense of deception in this, but she had seen that Chesterford had not cared to see anybody since the baby's death, except Mrs. Vivian, whereas she longed to be in the midst of people again. So, whenever opportunities occurred, she had been in the habit of seeing what she could of her friends, but was very careful not to bore her husband with them. She was quite alive to the truth of Mrs. Vivian's remarks.

But though Dodo felt a great relief in her husband's absence, she was more than ever conscious of the unutterable stupidity of spending, day after day doing nothing. It was something even to keep it up with Chesterford, but now there was nothing to do—nothing. Still, Jack, was coming to lunch, and perhaps she might get through a few hours that way. Chesterford had said Be would be back that night late or next morning.

The footman came in bearing a card. "Jack already," thought Dodo, with wonder. But it was not Jack. Dodo looked at it and pondered a moment. "Tell Lady Bretton I will see her," she said.

A few moments afterwards Lady Bretton rustled into the room. Dodo had always thought her rather like a barmaid, and she was sure that she would attract many customers at any public-house. She was charmingly pretty, and always said the right thing. Dodo felt she ought to know why she had come, but couldn't quite remember.

But she was not left in doubt long.

"Dearest Dodo," said Lady Bretton, "I have wanted to come and see you dreadfully, only I haven't been able. You know Lucas has been at home all this week."

Then it flashed upon Dodo.

"He comes of age to-day, you know, and we are giving a ball. I was so dreadfully shocked to hear your bad news, and am delighted to see you looking so well considering. Is Lord Chesterford at home?"

"No," said Dodo, as if weighing something in her mind. "He may come to-night, but I don't really expect him till to-morrow morning."

"Has he gone on some visit?" asked she. "I didn't suppose—"

"No, he's only gone on business to Harchester. He hasn't, of course, been out at all. But—"

Dodo paused.

Then she got quickly up from her chair, and clapped her hands.

"Yes, I will come. I am dying to go out again. Who leads the cotillion with me? Tommy Ledgers, isn't it? Oh, I shall enjoy it. I'm nearly dead for want of something to do. And he can dance, too. Yes, I'll come, but I must be back by half-past two. Chesterford will perhaps come by the night train getting here at two. I daresay it will be late. Are you going to have the mirror figure? Do have it. There's no one like Ledgers for leading that. He led it here with me. It will be like escaping from penal servitude for life. Talk of treadmills! I'm at the point of death for want of a dance. Let it begin punctually. I'll be there by ten sharp if you like. Tell Prince Waldenech I'm coming. He wrote to say he wouldn't go unless I did. He's badly in love with me. That doesn't matter, but he can dance. All those Austrians can. I'm going to have a regular debauch."

"I'm delighted," said Lady Bretton. "I came here to ask you whether you couldn't

possibly come, but I hardly dated. Dear Dodo, it's charming of you. It will make all the difference. I was in despair this morning. I had asked Milly Cornish to lead with Ledgers, but she refused, unless I asked you again first. We'll have a triumphant arch, if you like, with 'Welcome to Dodo' on it."

"Anything you like," said Dodo; "the madder the merrier. Let's see, how does the hoop figure go?"

Dodo snatched up an old cotillion hoop from where it stood in the corner with fifty other relics, and began practising it.

"We must have this right," she said; "it's quite new to most people. You must tell Tommy to come here for an hour this afternoon, and we'll rehearse. You start with it in the left hand, don't you? and then cross it over, and hold your partner's hoop in the right. Damn—I beg your pardon—but it doesn't go right. No, you must send Ledgers. Shall I want castanets? I think I'd better. We must have the new Spanish figure. Ah, that is right."

Dodo went through a series of mysterious revolutions with the hoop.

"I feel like a vampire who's got hold of blood again," said Dodo, pausing to get her breath. "I feel like a fish put back into the water, like a convict back in his own warm nest. No charge for mixed metaphors. Supplied free, gratis, and for nothing," she said, with emphasis.

Lady Bretton put her head a little on one side, and gushed at her. Her manners were always perfect.

"Now, I'm going to send you off," said Dodo. "Jack's coming to lunch, and I've got a lot to do. Jack who?' Jack Broxton, of course. Will he be with, you to-night? No?—I shall tell him I'm coming. You see if he doesn't come too. You sent him a card, of course. After lunch I shall want Tommy. Mind he comes. Good-bye."

Dodo felt herself again. There was the double relief of Chesterford's absence, and there was something to do. She hummed a little French song, snapped her castanets,

and pitched her novel into the grate.

"Oh, this great big world," she said, "you've been dead, and I've been dead for a month. Won't we have a resurrection this evening! Come in, Jack," she went on, as the door opened. "Here's your hoop. Catch it! Do you know the hoop figure? That's right; no, in your left hand. That's all with the hoop. Now we waltz."

Jack had a very vague idea as to why he happened to be waltzing with Dodo. It seemed to him rather like "Alice in Wonderland." However, he supposed it was all right, and on they went. A collision with the table, and a slow Stygian stream of ink dropping in a fatal, relentless manner on to the carpet, caused a stoppage, and Dodo condescended to explain, which she did all in one sentence.

"Chesterford's gone to Harchester after some stuffy business, and I'm going to the Brettons' ball, you must come, Jack, I'm going to lead the cotillion with Tommy, I simply must go, I'm dying to go out again; and, oh, Jack, I'm awfully glad to see you, and why haven't you been here for the last twenty years, and I'm out of breath, never mind the ink."

Dodo stopped from sheer exhaustion, and dropped a blotting-pad on to the pool of ink, which had now assumed the importance of an inland lake.

"Blanche has been here this morning," she continued, "and I told her I'd come, and would bring you. You must come, Jack. You're an awfully early bird, and I haven't got any worms for you, because they've all turned, owing to the hot weather, I suppose, and I feel so happy I can't talk sense. Tommy's coming this afternoon to practise. What time is it? Let's go and have lunch. That will do instead of worms. If Chesterford goes to attend to bailiff's business, why shouldn't I go and dance? It really is a kindness to Blanche. Nothing ought to stand in the way of a kindness. She was in despair; she told me so: herself. She might have committed suicide. It would have been pleasant to have a countess's corpse's blood on your head, wouldn't it?"

"I thought Chesterford was here," said Jack.

"Oh, I'm not good enough for you," remarked Dodo. "That's very kind of you. I suppose you, wouldn't have come, if you had known I should have had no one to meet you. Well, there isn't a soul, so you can go away if you like, or join the footmen in the servants' hall. Oh, I am so glad to be doing something again."

"I'm awfully glad you're coming to-night," said Jack; "it'll do you good."

"Ain't it a lark?" remarked Dodo, in pure Lancashire dialect, helping herself largely to beefsteak. "Jack, what'll you drink? Do you want beer? I'll treat you to what you like. You may dissolve my pearls in vinegar, if it will give you any satisfaction. Fetch Mr. Broxton my pearls, I mean some beer," said Dodo, upsetting the salt. "Really, Jack, I believe I've gone clean cracked. I've upset a lot of salt over your coat. Pour some claret upon it. Oh, no, that's the other way round, but I don't see why it shouldn't do. Have some more steak, Jack. Where's the gravy spoon? Jack, have you been trying to steal the silver? Oh, there it is. Have some chopped carrots with it. Who's that ringing at our door-bell? I'm a little—Who is it, Walter? Just go out and see. Miss Staines? Tell her there's lunch going on and Jack's here. There's an inducement. Jack, do you like Edith? She's rather loud. Yes, I agree, but we all make a noise at times. Can't she stop? Oh, very well, she may go away again. I believe she wouldn't come because you were here, Jack. I don't think she likes you, but you're a very good sort in your way. Jack, will you say grace? Chesterford always says grace. Well, for a Christian gentleman not to know a grace! Bring some cigarettes, Walter, or would you rather have a cigar, Jack? And some black coffee. Well, I'm very grateful for my good dinner, and I don't mind saying so."

Dodo went on talking at the top of her voice, quite continuously. She asked Jack a dozen questions without waiting for the answer.

"Where shall we go now, Jack?" she continued, when they had finished coffee—Dodo took three cups and a cigarette with each. "We must go somewhere. I can leave word for Ledgers to wait. Let's go to the Zoo and see all the animals in

cages. Ah, I sympathise with them. I have only just got out of my cage myself."

Dodo dragged Jack off to the Zoo, on the top of a bus, and bought buns for the animals and fruit for the birds, and poked a fierce lion with the end of her parasol, which the brute bit off, and nearly fell over into the polar bear's tank, and had all her money stolen by a pickpocket.

Then she went back home, and found Lord Ledgers, whom she put through his paces, and then she had tea, and dressed for the ball. She had ordered a very remarkable ball-dress from Worth's, just before the baby's death, which had never yet seen the light. It was a soft grey texture, which Dodo said looked like a sunlit mist, and it was strictly half mourning. She felt it was a badge of her freedom, and put it on with a fresh burst of exultation. She had a large bouquet of orchids, which Lord Bretton had caused to be sent her, and a fan painted by Watteau, and a French hair-dresser came and "did" her hair. By this time dinner was ready; and after dinner she sat in her room smoking and singing French songs to Lord Ledgers, who had come to fetch her, and at half-past nine the carriage was announced. About the same moment another carriage drove up to the door, and as Dodo ran downstairs she found her husband in the hall.

She looked at him a moment with undisguised astonishment, and a frown gathered on her forehead.

"You here?" she said. "I thought you weren't coming till late."

"I caught the earlier train," he said; "and where are you off to?"

"I'm going to the Brettons' ball," said Dodo frankly; "I can't wait."

He turned round and faced her.

"Oh, Dodo, so soon?" he said.

"Yes, yes, I must," said Dodo. "You know this kills me, this, sticking here with nothing to do from day to day, and nothing to see, and nobody to talk to. It's death; I

can't bear it."

"Very well," he said gently, "you are quite right to go if you want to. But I am not coming, Dodo."

Dodo's face brightened.

"No, dear, they don't expect you. I thought you wouldn't be back."

"I shouldn't go in any case," said he.

Lord Ledgers was here heard to remark "By Gad!"

Dodo laid her hand on his shoulder, conscious of restraining her impatience.

"No, that's just the difference between us," she said. "Go on, Tommy, get into the carriage. You don't want me not to go, dear, do you?"

"No, you are right to go, if you wish to," he said again.

Dodo grew impatient.

"Really, you might be more cordial about it," she said. "I needn't have consulted you at all."

Lord Chesterford was not as meek as Moses. He was capable of a sense of injustice.

"I don't know that you did consult me much," he said, "you mean to go in any case."

"Very well," said Dodo, "I do mean to go. Good-night, old boy. I sha'n't be very late. But I don't mean to quarrel with you."

Lord Chesterford turned into his room. But he would not keep Dodo, as she wished to go, even if he could have done so.

Ledgers was waiting in the carriage.

"Oh, the devil," said Dodo, as she stepped in.

Lady Bretton's ball is still talked about, I believe, in certain circles, though it ought to have been consigned, with all other events of last year, to oblivion. It was very brilliant, and several princes shed the light of their presence on it. But, as Lord

Ledgers was heard to remark afterwards, "There are many princes, but there is only one Dodo." He felt as if he was adapting a quotation from the Koran, which was somehow suitable to the positive solemnity of the occasion. Dodo can only be described as having been indescribable. Lucas, Lady Bretton's eldest son, in honour of whose coming of age the ball was given, can hardly allude to it even now. His emotions expressed themselves feebly in his dressing with even more care than usual, in hanging round Eaton Square, and in leaving cards on the Chesterfords as often as was decent.

Dodo was conscious of a frenzied desire to make the most of it, and to drown remembrance, for in the background of her mind was another picture, that she did not care to look at. There was a man she knew, leaning over a small dead child. The door of the room was half open, and a woman, brilliantly dressed, was turning to go out, looking back over her shoulder with a smile, half of impatience, half of pity, at the kneeling figure in the room. Through the half-open door came sounds of music and rhythmical steps, and a blaze of light. This picture had started unbidden into Dodo's mind, as she and Ledgers drove up to Lady Bretton's door, with such sudden clearness that she half wondered whether she had ever actually seen it. It reminded her of one of Orchardson's silent, well-appointed tragedies. In any case it gave her a rather unpleasant twinge, and she determined to shut it out for the rest of the evening, and, to do her justice, no one would have guessed that Dodo's brilliance was due to anything but pure spontaneity, or that, even in the deepest shades of her inmost mind, there was any remembrance that it needed an effort to stifle.

Many women, though few men, were surprised to see her there, and there was no one who was not glad; but the question arose more than once in the minds of two or three people, "Would society stand it if she didn't happen to be herself?" Dodo had treated a select party of her friends to a private exhibition of skirt-dancing during supper-time. The music from the band was quite loud enough to be heard distinctly in a small, rather unfrequented sitting-out room, and there Dodo had displayed her

incomparable grace of movement and limb to the highest advantage. Dodo danced that night with unusual perfection, and who has not felt the exquisite beauty of such motion? Her figure, clad in its long, clinging folds of diaphanous, almost luminous texture, stood out like a radiant statue of dawn against the dark panelling of the room; her graceful figure bending this way and that, her wonderful white arms now holding aside her long skirt, or clasped above her head; above all, the supreme distinction and conscious modesty of every posture seemed, to the little circle who saw her, to be almost a new revelation of the perfection of form, colour and grace.

Jack knew Dodo pretty well, but he stood and wondered. Was she a devil? was she a tiger? or was she, after all, a woman? Dodo had told him what had happened that evening, and yet he did not condemn her utterly. He knew how prison-like her life must have been to her during the last month. It was a thousand pities that Dodo's meat was Chesterford's poison, but he no more blamed Dodo for eating her meat than he blamed Chesterford for avoiding his poison; and to advance the conventional argument against Dodo, that her behaviour was not usual, was, equivalent to saying, "Why do you behave like yourself?" rather than, "Why don't you behave like other people?" Dodo's estimate of herself, as purely normal, was only another instance of her very abnormalness. No, on the whole, she was not a devil. The other question was harder to settle. Jack remembered a tigress he had seen that day with her at the Zoo. The brute had a small and perfectly fascinating tiger cub, in which she took a certain maternal pride; but when feeding-time came near, and the cub continued to be importunate, she gave it a cuff with her big velvety paw, and sent it staggering to the corner. Dodo's tiger cub was a mixture between Chesterford and the dead child, and Dodo's feeding-time had come round. Here she was feeding with an enviable appetite, and where was the cub? The tigress element was not wholly absent.

And yet, withal, she was a woman. Is it that certain attributes of pure womanliness run through the female of animals, or that every woman has a touch of the tigress about her? Jack felt incompetent to decide.

Dodo's dance came to an end. She accepted Prince Waldenech's arm, and went down to supper. As he advanced to her, Dodo dropped a curtsey, and he stooped and kissed her hand. "The brute," thought Jack, as he strolled out into the ballroom, where people were beginning to collect again. Many turned and looked at Dodo as, she passed out with her handsome partner. The glow of exercise and excitement and success burned brightly in her cheeks, and no one accused Dodo of using rouge. The supper was spread on a number of small tables, laid for four or six each. The Prince led her to an empty one, and sat down by her side.

"I have seen many beautiful things," he said, in French, which permits a man to say more than he may I in English, "but none so beautiful as what I have seen to-night."

Dodo was far too accomplished a coquette to pretend not to know what he meant. She made him a charming little obeisance.

"Politeness required that of your Highness," she said. "That is only my due, you know."

"I can never give you your due," said he.

"My due in this case is the knowledge I have pleased you."

Dodo felt suddenly a little uncomfortable. The forgotten picture flashed for a moment across her inward eye. She spoke of other things: praised the prettiness of the ballroom, the excellence of the band.

"Lady Bretton has given a fine setting to the diamond," said the Prince, "but the diamond is not hers."

Dodo laughed. He was a little ponderous, and he deserved to be told so.

"You Austrians have beautiful manners," she said, "but you are too serious. English are always accused of sharing that fault, but anyhow, when they pay compliments, they have at least the air of not meaning what they say."

"That is the fault of the English, or of the compliment."

"No one means what they say when they pay compliments," said Dodo. "They are only a kind of formula to avoid the unpleasantness of saying nothing."

"Austrians seldom pay compliments," said he; "but when they do, they mean them."

"Ouf," said Dodo; "that sounds homelike to you, doesn't it? All Austrians say 'ouf' in books—do they really say 'ouf,' by the way?—What a bald way of saying that I needn't expect any more to-night. Really, Prince, that's rather unflattering to you. No, don't excuse yourself; I understand perfectly. I'm not fishing for any more. Come, there's the pas de quatre beginning. That's the 'Old Kent Road' tune. It's much the best. What do you suppose 'Knocked 'em in the Old Kent Road' means? No foreigner has ever been able to translate it to me yet. This is your dance, isn't it? O dear me, half the night's gone, and I feel as if I hadn't begun yet. Some people are in bed now; what a waste of time, you know."

The ball went on and on, and Dodo seemed to gather fresh strength and brilliance with each hour. Extra dances were added and still added, and many who were tired with dancing stayed and watched her. The princes went away, and nobody noticed their departure. If Cleopatra herself had suddenly entered the ballroom, she would have found herself at a discount. It was the culmination of Dodo's successes. She seemed different in kind, as well as in degree, from the crowd around her. Pretty women seemed suddenly plain and middle-aged; well-dressed women looked dowdy beside her, and when at length, as the electric light began to pale perceptibly before the breaking day, Dodo asked her partner to take her to Lady Bretton, the dancers stopped, and followed Dodo and Prince Waldenech, for she was dancing with him, to where Lady Bretton was standing.

"It has been heavenly," said Dodo. "It's a dreadful bore to have people come and say how much they have enjoyed themselves, but I've done it now. Tell Lucas I wish he would come of age every year; he really is a public benefactor."

She took Prince Waldenech's arm, and stood waiting with him, while her carriage

detached itself from the others which lined the square, and drove up to the door. And, as they stood there, the crowd followed her slowly out of the ballroom, still silent, and still watching her, and lined the stairs, as she passed down to the front door.

Then, when she had got into her carriage, and had driven off, they looked at each other as if they had all been walking in their sleep, and no one knew exactly why they were there. And a quarter of an hour later the rooms were completely empty.

Meanwhile, as Dodo drove back through the still, cool, morning air, she threw down the windows of her carriage, and drew in deep satisfied breaths of its freshness. She thought of the crowds who had followed her down to the door, and laughed for pleasure. "It's life, it's life," she thought. "They followed me like sheep. Ah, how I love it!"

It was nearly six when she reached home; "Decidedly it would be too absurd to go to bed," she thought. "I shall go for a glorious gallop, and come back to breakfast with Chesterford. Tell them to saddle Starlight at once," she said to the footman: "I sha'n't want a groom. And tell Lord Chesterford, when he wakes, that I shall be back to breakfast."

CHAPTER TWELVE

Chesterford did not let Dodo see how strongly he had felt on the subject of the ball. He argued to himself that it would do no good. Dodo would not understand, or, understanding, would misunderstand the strength of his feeling, and he did not care that she should know that he thought her heartless. He was quite conscious that matters were a little strained between them, though Dodo apparently was sublimely unaware, of it. She had a momentary nervousness when they met at breakfast, on the morning after the ball, that Chesterford was going to make a fuss, and she could not quite see what it would end in, if the subject was broached. But he came in looking as usual. He told her how matters had gone with him on the previous day, and had

recounted, with a certain humour, a few sharp words which an old lady in his railway carriage had addressed to him, because he didn't help her to hand out two large cages of canaries which she was taking home.

Dodo welcomed all this as a sign of grace, and was only too happy to meet her husband half-way. He had been a trifle melodramatic on the previous evening, but we are all liable to make mountains out of molehills at times, she thought. Personally her inclination was to make molehills out of mountains, but that was only a difference in temperament; both implied a judgment at fault, and she was quite willing to forgive and forget. In a word, she was particularly nice to him, and when breakfast was over she took his arm, and led him away to her room.

"Sit down in that very big chair, old boy," she said, "and twiddle your thumbs while I write some notes. I'm going to see Mrs. Vivian this morning, and your lordship may come in my ladyship's carriage if it likes. Is lordship masculine, feminine, or neuter, Chesterford? Anyhow, it's wrong to say your lordship may come in your carriage, because lordship is the nominative to the sentence, and is in the third person—what was I saying? Oh, yes, you may come if it likes, and drop me there, and then go away for about half an hour, and then come back, and then we'll have lunch together at home."

"I've got to go to some stupid committee at the club," said Chesterford, "but that's not till twelve. I'll send your carriage back for you, but I sha'n't be able to be in at lunch."

"Oh, very good," remarked Dodo. "I'm sorry I married you. I might be a lone lorn widdy for all you care. He prefers lunching at his club," she went on, dramatically, addressing the black virgin, "to having his chop at home with the wife of his bosom. How sharper than a serpent's tooth to have a thankless Chesterford!".

Dodo proceeded to write her notes, and threw them one by one at her husband as he sat contentedly by the window, in the very big chair that Dodo had indicated.

Dodo's correspondence was as varied as the collection of photographs on her mantelpiece. The first note was to her groom at Winston, telling him to have another riding-horse sent up at once, as her own particular mare had gone lame. It missed Chesterford's head, and fell with an ominous clatter among some bric-à-brac and china.

"That'll be a bill for you to pay, darling," said Dodo sweetly. "Why didn't you put your silly old head in the light?"

The next was a slightly better shot, and fell right side upwards on to Chesterford's knee, but with the address upside down to him. He looked at it vaguely.

"His Serene Highness who?" he asked, spelling it out.

"That's not grammar," said Dodo. "It's only to Prince Waldenech. He is Serene, isn't he? He looks it, anyhow. He was at the Brettons' last night. Austrian but amiable."

Chesterford was fingering the envelope.

"He's an unmitigated blackguard," he said, after a little consideration. "I wish you'd let me tear it up, Dodo. What on earth have you got to say to him?"

"I shall have to write it again, dear, if you do," said she, conscious of bridling a rising irritation.

"He really is an awful brute," he repeated.

"Oh, my dear Chesterford, what does that matter?" asked Dodo, impatiently tapping the floor with the toe of her shoe. "It isn't my business to go raking up the character of people I'm introduced to."

"You mean you don't mind what a man's character is as long as he's agreeable."

"It isn't my business to be court inquisitor," she said. "Half of what one hears about people isn't true, and the other half—well, all you can say is, that it isn't exactly false."

Dodo could lose her temper very quickly on occasions, especially when she was in a

hurry, as she was now.

"My dear Dodo, do you happen to know the story of—"

"No, I don't," she said vehemently. "Shall I seem rude if I say I don't want to? I really think you might find something better to do than tell scandalous stories about people you don't know."

"I know all I want to know about Prince Waldenech," said Chesterford, rising.

"You'll know more about him soon," remarked Dodo, "because I've asked him to stay at Winston. I suppose you think I wanted to make a secret about it. I have no such intention, I assure you."

"Is this note to ask him to come?" he inquired.

"Certainly it is," said Dodo defiantly.

"I may as well tear it up," said he. "I don't mean him to be asked, Dodo. I don't wish to have him in the house."

Dodo had lost her temper thoroughly.

"His being asked to Winston is immaterial," she said, with scorn in her voice. "You certainly have the power to prevent his coming to your house. Your power I must regard, your wishes I shall not. I can see him in London with perfect ease."

"You mean you attach no weight to my wishes in this matter?" said Chesterford.

"None."

"Will no knowledge of what the man is really like, stop you holding further intercourse with him?" he asked.

"None whatever, now!"

"I don't wish it to be known that my wife associates with such people," he said.

"Your wife does not regard it in that light," replied Dodo. "I have no intention of proclaiming the fact from the housetops."

To do Chesterford justice he was getting angry too.

"It's perfectly intolerable that there should be this sort of dispute between you and me, Dodo," he said.

"That is the first point on which we have not differed."

"You entirely decline to listen to reason?"

"To your reason, you mean," said Dodo.

"To mine or any honest man's."

Dodo burst out into a harsh, mirthless laugh.

"Ah, you're beginning to be jealous," she said. "It is very bourgeois to be jealous."

Chesterford coloured, angrily.

"That is an insult, Dodo," he said. "Remember that there is a courtesy due even from a wife to her husband. Besides that, you know the contrary."

"Really, I know nothing of the sort," she remarked. "Your whole conduct, both last night and this morning, has been so melodramatic, that I begin to suspect all sorts of latent virtues in you."

"We are wandering from the point," said he. "Do you mean that nothing will deter you from seeing this Austrian?"

"He is received in society," said Dodo; "he is presentable, he is even amusing. Am I to tell him that my husband is afraid he'll corrupt my morals? If people in general cut him, I don't say that I should continue to cultivate his acquaintance. It is absurd to run amuck of such conventions. If you had approached me in a proper manner, I don't say that I mightn't have seen my way to meeting your wishes."

"I don't feel I am to blame in that respect," said he.

"That shows you don't know how far we are apart," she replied.

He was suddenly frightened. He came closer to her.

"Far apart, Dodo? We?"

"It seems to me that this interview has revealed some astonishing differences of opinion between us," she said. "I don't wish to multiply words. You have told me what you think on the subject, and I have told you what I think. You have claimed the power a husband certainly possesses, and I claim the liberty that my husband cannot deprive me of. Or perhaps you wish to lock me up. We quite understand one another. Let us agree to differ. Give me that note, please. I suppose you can trust me not to send it. I should like to keep it. It is interesting to count the milestones."

Dodo spoke with the recklessness of a woman's anger, which is always much more unwanton than that of a man. A man does not say cruel things when he is angry, because they are cruel, but because he is angry. Dodo was cruel because she wished to be cruel. He gave her the note, and turned to leave the room. Dodo's last speech made it impossible for him to say more. The only thing he would not sacrifice to his love was his honour or hers. But Dodo suddenly saw the horrible impossibility of the situation. She had not the smallest intention of living on bad terms with her husband. They had quarrelled, it was a pity, but it was over. A storm may only clear the air; it is not always the precursor of bad weather. The air wanted clearing, and Dodo determined that it should not be the prelude of rain and wind. To her, of course, the knowledge that she did not love her husband had long been a commonplace, but to him the truth was coming in fierce, blinding flashes, and by their light he could see that a great flood had come down into his happy valley, carrying desolation before it, and between him and Dodo stretched a tawny waste of water. But Dodo had no intention of quarrelling with him, or maintaining a dignified reserve in their daily intercourse. That would be quite unbearable, and she wished there to be no misunderstanding on that point.

"Chesterford," she said, "we've quarrelled, and that's a pity. I hardly ever quarrel, and it was stupid of me. I am sorry. But I have no intention of standing on my

dignity, and I sha'n't allow you to stand on yours. I shall pull you down, and you'll go flop. You object to something which I propose to do, you exert your rights, as far as having him in the house goes, and I exert mine by going to see him. I shall go this afternoon. Your veto on his coming to Winston seems quite as objectionable to me, as my going to see him does to you. That's our position; accept it. Let us understand each other completely. C'est aimer." As she spoke she recovered her equanimity, and she smiled serenely on him. Scenes like this left no impression on her. The tragedy passed over her head; and, though it was written in the lines of her husband's face, she did not trouble to read it. She got up from her chair and went to him. He was standing with his hands clasped behind him near the door. She laid her hands on his shoulder, and gave him a little shake.

"Now, Chesterford, I'm going to make it up," she said. "Twenty minutes is heaps of time for the most quarrelsome people to say sufficient nasty things in, and time's up. I'm going to behave exactly as usual. I hate quarrelling, and you don't look as if it agreed with you. Kiss me this moment. No, not on the top of my head. That's better. My carriage ought to be ready by this time, and you are coming with me as far as Prince's Gate."

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Lord and Lady Chesterford were sitting at breakfast at Winston towards the end of September. He had an open letter in front of him propped up against his cup, and between mouthfuls of fried fish he glanced at it.

"Dodo."

No answer.

"Dodo," rather louder.

Dodo was also reading a letter, which covered two sheets and was closely written. It seemed to be interesting, for she had paused with a piece of fish on the end of her fork, and had then laid it down again. This time, however; she heard.

"Oh, what?" she said abstractedly. "Jack's coming to-day; I've just heard from him. He's going to bring his hunter. You can get some cub-hunting, I suppose, Chesterford? The hunt itself doesn't begin till the 15th, does it?"

"Ah, I'm glad he can come," said Chesterford. "Little Spencer would be rather hard to amuse alone. But that isn't what I was going to say."

"What is it?" said Dodo, relapsing into her letter.

"The bailiff writes to tell me that they have discovered a rich coal shaft under the Far Oaks." A pause. "But, Dodo, you are not listening."

"I'm sorry," she said. "Do you know, Jack nearly shot himself the other day at a grouse drive?"

"I don't care," said Chesterford brutally. "Listen, Dodo. Tompkinson says they've discovered a rich coal shaft under the Far Oaks. Confound the man, I wish he hadn't."

"Oh, Chesterford, how splendid!" said Dodo, dropping her letter in earnest. "Dig it up and spend it on your party, and they'll make you a duke for certain. I want to be a duchess very much. Good morning, your grace," said Dodo reflectively.

"Oh, that's impossible," said he. "I never thought of touching it, but the ass tells me that he's seen the news of it in the Staffordshire Herald. So I suppose everybody knows, and I shall be pestered."

"But do you mean to say you're going to let the coal stop there?" asked Dodo.

"Yes, dear, I can't possibly touch it. It goes right under all those oaks, and under the Memorial Chapel, close to the surface."

"But what does that matter?" asked Dodo, in real surprise.

"I can't possibly touch it," said he; "you must see that. Why, the chapel would have to come down, and the oaks, and we don't want a dirty coal shaft in the Park."

"Chesterford, how ridiculous!" exclaimed Dodo. "Do you mean you're going to

leave thousands of pounds lying there in the earth?"

"I can't discuss it, dear, even with you," said he. "The only question is whether we can stop the report of it going about."

Dodo felt intensely irritated.

"Really you are most unreasonable," she said. "I did flatter myself that I had a reasonable husband. You were unreasonable about the Brettons' ball, and you were unreasonable about Prince Waldenech's coming here, and you are unreasonable about this."

Chesterford lost his patience a little.

"About the Brettons' ball," he said, "there was only one opinion, and that was mine. About the Prince's coming here, which we agreed not to talk about, you know the further reason. I don't like saying such things. You are aware what that officious ass Clayton told me was said at the club. Of course it was an insult to you, and a confounded lie, but I don't care for such things to be said about my wife. And about this—"

"About this," said Dodo, "you are as obstinate as you were about those other things. Excuse me if I find you rather annoying."

Chesterford felt sick at heart.

"Ah, Dodo," he said, "cannot you believe in me at all?" He rose and stood by her. "My darling, you must know how I would do anything for love of you. But these are cases in which that clashes with duty. I only want to be loved a little. Can't you see there are some things I cannot help doing, and some I must do?"

"The things that you like doing," said Dodo, in a cool voice pouring out some more tea. "I don't wish to discuss this either. You know my opinion. It is absurd to quarrel; I dislike quarrelling with anybody, and more especially a person whom I live with. Please take your hand away, I can't reach the sugar."

Dodo returned to her letter. Chesterford stood by her for a moment, and then left the room.

"It gets more and more intolerable every day. I can't bear quarrelling; it makes me ill," thought Dodo, with a fine sense of irresponsibility. "And I know he'll come and say he was sorry he said what he did. Thank goodness, Jack comes to-day."

Chesterford, meanwhile, was standing in the hall, feeling helpless and bewildered. This sort of thing was always happening now, do what he could; and the intervals were not much better. Dodo treated him with a passive tolerance that was very hard to bear. Even her frank determination to keep on good terms with her husband had undergone considerable modification. She was silent and indifferent. Now and then when he came into her room he heard, as he passed down the passage, the sound of her piano or her voice, but when he entered Dodo would break off and ask him what he wanted. He half wished that he did not love her, but he found himself sickening and longing for Dodo to behave to him as she used. It would have been something to know that his presence was not positively distasteful to her. Dodo no longer "kept it up," as Jack said. She did not pat his hand, or call him a silly old dear, or pull his moustache, as once she did. He had once taken those little things as a sign of her love. He had found in them the pleasure that Dodo's smallest action always had for him; but now even they, the husk and shell of what had never existed, had gone from him, and he was left with that which was at once his greatest sorrow and his greatest joy, his own love for Dodo. And Dodo—God help him! he had learned it well enough now—Dodo did not love him, and never had loved him. He wondered what the end would be—whether his love, too, would die. In that case he foresaw that they would very likely go on living together as fifty other people lived—being polite to each other, and gracefully tolerant of each other's presence; that nobody would know, and the world would say, "What a model and excellent couple."

So he stood there, biting the ends of his long moustache. Then he said to himself, "I

was beastly to her. What the devil made me say all those things."

He went back to the dining-room, and found Dodo as he had left her.

"Dodo, dear," he said, "forgive me for being so cross. I said a lot of abominable things."

Dodo was rather amused. She knew this would happen.

"Oh, yes," she said; "it doesn't signify. But are you determined about the coal mine?"

Chesterford was disappointed and chilled. He turned on his heel and went out again. Dodo raised her eyebrows, shrugged her shoulders imperceptibly, and returned to her letter.

If you had asked Dodo when this state of things began she could probably not have told you. She would have said, "Oh, it came on by degrees. It began by my being bored with him, and culminated when I no longer concealed it." But Chesterford, to whom daily intercourse had become an awful struggle between his passionate love for Dodo and his bitter disappointment at what he would certainly have partly attributed to his own stupidity and inadequacy, could have named the day and hour when he first realised how far he was apart from his wife. It was when he returned by the earlier train and met Dodo in the hall going to her dance; that moment had thrown a dangerous clear light over the previous month. He argued to himself, with fatal correctness, that Dodo could not have stopped caring for him in a moment, and he was driven to the inevitable conclusion that she had been drifting away from him for a long time before that; indeed, had she ever been near him? But he was deeply grateful to those months when he had deceived himself, or she had deceived him, into believing that she cared for him. He knew well that they had been the happiest in his life, and though the subsequent disappointment was bitter, it had not embittered him. His love for Dodo had a sacredness for him that nothing could remove; it was something separate from the rest of his life, that had stooped from heaven and entered into it, and lo! it was glorified. That memory was his for ever,

nothing could rob him of that.

In August Dodo had left him. They had settled a series of visits in Scotland, after a fortnight at their own house, but after that Dodo had made arrangements apart from him. She had to go and see her mother, she had to go here and there, and half way through September, when Chesterford had returned to Harchester expecting her the same night, he found a postcard from her, saying she had to spend three days with someone else, and the three days lengthened into a week, and it was only yesterday that Dodo had come and people were arriving that very evening. There was only one conclusion to be drawn from all this, and not even he could help drawing it.

Jack and Mr. Spencer and Maud, now Mrs. Spencer, arrived that evening. Maud had started a sort of small store of work, and the worsted and crochet went on with feverish rapidity. It had become a habit with her before her marriage, and the undeveloped possibilities, that no doubt lurked within it, had blossomed under her husband's care. For there was a demand beyond the limits of supply for her woollen shawls and comforters. Mr. Spencer's parish was already speckled with testimonies to his wife's handiwork, and Maud's dream of being some day useful to somebody was finding a glorious fulfilment.

Dodo, I am sorry to say, found her sister more unsatisfactory than ever. Maud had a sort of confused idea that it helped the poor if she dressed untidily, and this was a ministry that came without effort. Dodo took her in hand as soon as she arrived, and made her presentable. "Because you are a clergy-man's wife, there is no reason that you shouldn't wear a tucker or something round your neck," said she. "Your sister is a marchioness, and when you stay with her you must behave as if you were an honourable. There will be time to sit in the gutter when you get back to Gloucester."

Dodo also did her duty by Mr. Spencer. She called him Algernon in the friendliest way, and gave him several lessons at billiards. This done, she turned to Jack.

The three had been there several days, and Dodo was getting impatient. Jack and

Chesterford went out shooting, and she was left to entertain the other two. Mr. Spencer's reluctance to shoot was attributable not so much to his aversion to killing live animals, as his inability to slay. But when Dodo urged on him that he would soon learn, he claimed the higher motive. She was rather silent, for she was thinking about something important.

Dodo was surprised at the eagerness with which she looked forward to Jack's coming. Somehow, in a dim kind of way, she regarded him as the solution of her difficulties. She felt pretty certain Jack would do as he was asked, and she had made up her mind that when Jack went away she would go with him to see friends at other houses to which he was going. And Chesterford? Dodo's scheme did not seem to take in Chesterford. She had painted a charming little picture in her own mind as to where she should go, and whom she would see, but she certainly was aware that Chesterford did not seem to come in. It would spoil the composition, she thought, to introduce another figure. That would be a respite, anyhow. But after that, what then? Dodo had found it bad enough coming back this September, and she could not contemplate renewing this tête-à-tête that went on for months. And by degrees another picture took its place—a dim one, for the details were not worked out—but in that picture there were only two figures. The days went on and Dodo could bear it no longer.

One evening she went into the smoking-room after tea. Chesterford was writing letters, and Maud and her husband were sitting in the drawing-room. It may be presumed that Maud was doing crochet. Jack looked up with a smile as Dodo entered.

"Hurrah," he said, "I haven't had a word with you since we came. Come and talk, Dodo."

But Dodo did not smile.

"How have you been getting on?" continued Jack, looking at the fire. "You see I

haven't lost my interest in you."

"Jack," said Dodo solemnly, "you are right, and I was wrong. And I can't bear it any longer."

Jack did not need explanations.

"Ah!"—then after a moment, "poor Chesterford!"

"I don't see why 'poor Chesterford,'" said Dodo, "any more than 'poor me.' He was quite satisfied, anyhow, for some months, for a year in fact, more or less, and I was never satisfied at all. I haven't got a particle of pride left in me, or else I shouldn't be telling you. I can't bear it. If you only knew what I have been through you would pity me as well. It has been a continual effort with me; surely that is something to pity. And one day I broke down; I forget when, it is immaterial. Oh, why couldn't I love him! I thought I was going to, and it was all a wretched mistake."

Dodo sat with her hands clasped before her, with something like tears in her eyes.

"I am not all selfish," she went on; "I am sorry for him, too, but I am so annoyed with him that I lose my sorrow whenever I see him. Why couldn't he have accepted the position sooner? We might have been excellent friends then, but now that is impossible. I have got past that. I cannot even be good friends with him. Oh, it isn't my fault; you know I tried to behave well."

Jack felt intensely uncomfortable.

"I can't help you, Dodo," he said. "It is useless for me to say I am sincerely sorry. That is no word between you and me."

Dodo, for once in her life, seemed to have something to say, and not be able to say it.

At last it came out with an effort.

"Jack, do you still love me?"

Dodo did not look at him, but kept her eyes on the fire.

Jack did not pause to think.

"Before God, Dodo,", he said, "I believe I love you more than anything in the world."

"Will you do what I ask you?"

This time he did pause. He got up and stood before the fire. Still Dodo did not look at him.

"Ah, Dodo," he said, "what are you going to ask? There are some things I cannot do."

"It seems to me this love you talk of is a very weak thing," said Dodo. "It always fails, or is in danger of failing, at the critical point. I believe I could do anything for the man I loved. I did not think so once. But I was wrong, as I have been in my marriage."

Dodo paused; but Jack said nothing; it seemed to him as if Dodo had not quite finished.

"Yes," she said; then paused again. "Yes, you are he."

There was a dead silence. For one moment time seemed to Jack to have stopped, and he could have believed that that moment lasted for years—for ever.

"Oh, my God," he murmured, "at last."

He was conscious of Dodo sitting there, with her eyes raised to his, and a smile on her lips. He felt himself bending forward towards her, and he thought she half rose in her chair to receive his embrace.

But the next moment she put out her hand as if to stop him.

"Stay," she said. "Not yet, not yet. There is something first. I will tell you what I have done. I counted on this. I have ordered the carriage after dinner at half-past ten. You and I go in that, and leave by the train. Jack, I am yours—will you come?"

Dodo had taken the plunge. She had been wavering on the brink of this for days. It

had struck her suddenly that afternoon that Jack was going away next day, and she was aware she could not contemplate the indefinite to-morrow and to-morrow without him. Like all Dodo's actions it came suddenly. The forces in her which had been drawing her on to this had gathered strength and sureness imperceptibly, and this evening they had suddenly burst through the very flimsy dam that Dodo had erected between the things she might do, and the things she might not, and their possession was complete. In a way it was inevitable. Dodo felt that her life was impossible. Chesterford, with infinite yearning and hunger at his heart, perhaps felt it too.

Jack felt as if he was waking out of some blissful dream to a return of his ordinary everyday life, which, unfortunately, had certain moral obligations attached to it. If Dodo's speech had been shorter, the result might have been different. He steadied himself for a moment, for the room seemed to reel and swim, and then he answered her.

"No, Dodo," he said hoarsely, "I cannot do it. Think of Chesterford! Think of anything! Don't tempt me. You know I cannot. How dare you ask me?"

Dodo's face grew hard and white. She tried to laugh, but could not manage it.

"Ah," she said, "the old story, isn't it? Potiphar's wife again. I really do not understand what this love of yours is. And now I have debased and humbled myself before you, and there you stand in your immaculate virtue, not caring—"

"Don't, Dodo," He said. "Be merciful to me, spare me. Not caring—you know it is not so. But I cannot do this. My Dodo, my darling."

The strain was too great for him. He knelt down beside her, and kissed her hand passionately.

"I will do anything for you," he whispered, "that is in my power to do; but this is impossible. I never yet did, with deliberate forethought, what seemed to me mean or low, and I can't now. I don't want credit for it, because I was made that way; I don't

happen to be a blackguard by nature. Don't tempt me—I am too weak. But you mustn't blame me for it. You know—you must know that I love you. I left England last autumn to cure myself of it, but it didn't answer a bit. I don't ask more than what you have just told me. That is something—isn't it, Dodo? And, if you love me, that is something for you. Don't let us degrade it, let it be a strength to us and not a weakness. You must feel it so."

There was a long silence, and in that silence the great drama of love and life; and good and evil, which has been played every day of every year since the beginning of this world, and which will never cease till all mankind are saints or sexless, filled the stage. Dodo thought, at any rate, that she loved him, and that knowledge made her feel less abased before him. All love—the love for children, for parents, for husband, for wife, for lover, for mistress—has something divine about it, or else it is not love. The love Jack felt for her was divine enough not to seek its own, to sacrifice itself on the altar of duty and loyalty and the pure cold gods, and in its tumultuous happiness it could think of others. And Dodo's love was touched, though ever so faintly, with the same divine spark, a something so human that it touched heaven.

Now it had so happened that, exactly three minutes before this, Maud had found that she had left a particularly precious skein of wool in another room. About ten seconds' reflection made her remember she had left it in the smoking-room, where she had sat with Dodo after lunch, who had smoked cigarettes, and lectured her on her appearance. The smoking-room had two doors, about eight yards apart, forming a little passage lighted with a skylight. The first of those doors was of wood, the second, which led into the smoking-room, of baize. The first door was opened in the ordinary manner, the second with a silent push. Maud had made this silent push at the moment when Jack was kneeling by Dodo's side, kissing her hand. Maud was not versed in the wickedness of this present world, but she realised that this was a peculiar thing for Jack to do, and she let the door swing quietly back, and ran

downstairs, intending to ask her husband's advice. Chesterford's study opened into the drawing-room. During the time that Maud had been upstairs he had gone in to fetch Dodo, and seeing she was not there he went back, but did not close the door behind him. A moment afterwards Maud rushed into the drawing-room from the hall, and carefully shutting the door behind her, lest anyone should hear, exclaimed:—

"Algy, I've seen something awful! I went into the smoking-room to fetch my wool, and I saw Jack kissing Dodo's hand. What am I to do?"

Algernon was suitably horrified. He remarked, with much reason, that it was no use telling Dodo and Jack, because they knew already.

At this moment the door of Lord Chesterford's study was closed quietly. He did not wish to hear any more just yet. But they neither of them noticed it.

He had overheard something which was not meant for his ears, related by a person who had overseen what she was not meant to see; he hated learning anything that was not his own affair, but he had learned it, and it turned out to be unpleasantly closely connected with him.

His first impulse was to think that Jack had behaved in a treacherous and blackguardly manner, and this conclusion surprised him so much that he set to ponder over it. The more he thought of it, the more unlikely it appeared to him. Jack making love to his wife under cover of his own roof was too preposterous an idea to be entertained. He held a very high opinion of Jack, and it did not at all seem to fit in with this. Was there any other possibility? It came upon him with a sense of sickening probability that there was. He remembered the long loveless months; he remembered Dodo's indifference to him, then her neglect, then her dislike. Had Jack been hideously tempted and not been able to resist? Chesterford almost felt a friendly feeling for not being able to resist Dodo. What did all this imply? How long had it been going on? How did it begin? Where would it stop? He felt he had a right

to ask these questions, and he meant to ask them of the proper person. But not yet. He would wait; he would see what happened. He was afraid of judging both too harshly. Maud's account might have been incorrect; anyhow it was not meant for him. His thoughts wandered on dismally and vaguely. But the outcome was, that he said to himself, "Poor Dodo, God forgive her."

He had been so long used to the altered state of things that this blow seemed to him only a natural sequence. But he had been used to feed his starved heart with promises that Dodo would care for him again; that those months when they were first married were only the bud of a flower that would some day blossom. It was this feeble hope that what he had heard destroyed. If things had gone as far as that it was hopeless.

"Yes," he repeated, "it is all gone."

If anything could have killed his love for Dodo he felt that it would have been this. But, as he sat there, he said to himself, "She shall never know that I know of it." That was his final determination. Dodo had wronged him cruelly; his only revenge was to continue as if she had been a faithful wife, for she would not let him love her.

Dodo should never know, she should not even suspect. He would go on behaving to her as before, as far as lay in his power. He would do his utmost to make her contented, to make her less sorry—yes, less sorry—she married him.

Meanwhile Dodo and Jack were sitting before the fire in the smoking-room. He still retained Dodo's hand, and it lay; unresistingly in his. Dodo was the first to speak.

"We must make the best of it, Jack," she said; "and you must help me. I cannot trust myself any longer. I used to be so sure of myself, so convinced that I could be happy. I blame myself for it, not him; but then, you see, I can't get rid of myself, and I can of him. Hence this plan. I have been a fool and a beast. And he, you know, he is the best of men. Poor, dear old boy. It isn't his fault, but it isn't mine. I should like to know who profits by this absurd arrangement. Why can't I love him? Why can't I

even like him? Why can't I help hating him? Yes, Jack, it has come to that. God knows there is no one more sorry than I am about it. But this is only a mood. I daresay in half an hour's time I shall only feel angry with him, and not sorry at all. I wonder if this match was made in heaven. Oh, I am miserable."

Jack was really to be pitied more than Dodo. He knelt by her with her hand in his, feeling that he would have given his life without question to make her happy, but knowing that he had better give his life than do so. The struggle itself was over. He felt like a chain being pulled in opposite directions. He did not wrestle any longer; the two forces, he thought, were simply fighting it out over his rigid body. He wondered vaguely whether something would break, and, if so, what? But he did not dream for a moment of ever reconsidering his answer to Dodo. The question did not even present itself. So he knelt by her, still holding her hand, and waiting for her to speak again.

"You mustn't desert me, Jack," Dodo went on. "It is easier for Chesterford, as well as for me, that you should be with us often, and I believe it is easier for you too. If I never saw you at all, I believe the crash would come. I should leave Chesterford, not to come to you, for that can't be, but simply to get away."

"Ah, don't," said Jack, "don't go on talking about it like that. I can't do what you asked, you know that, simply because I love you and am Chesterford's friend. Think of your duty to him. Think, yes, think of our love for each other. Let it be something sacred, Dodo. Don't desecrate it. Help me not to desecrate it. Let it be our safeguard. It is better to have that, isn't it? than to think of going on living, as you must, without it. You said so yourself when you asked me to be with you often. To-night a deep joy has come into my life; let us keep it from disgrace. Ah, Dodo, thank God you love me."

"Yes, Jack, I believe I do," said Dodo. "And you are right; I always knew I should rise to the occasion if it was put forcibly before me. I believe I have an ideal—which

I have never had before—something to respect and to keep very clean. Fancy me with an ideal! Mother wouldn't know me again—there never was such a thing in the house."

They were silent for a few minutes.

"But I must go to-morrow," said Jack, "as I settled to, by the disgusting early train. And the dressing-bell has sounded, and the ideal inexorably forbids us to be late for dinner, so I sha'n't see you alone again."

He pressed her hand and she rose..

"Poor little ideal," said Dodo. "I suppose it would endanger its life if you stopped, wouldn't it, Jack? It must live to grow up. Poor little ideal, what a hell of a time it will have when you're gone. Poor dear."

Dinner went off as usual. Dodo seemed to be in her ordinary, spirits. Chesterford discussed parochial help with Mrs. Vivian. He glanced at Dodo occasionally through the little grove of orchids that separated them, but Dodo did not seem to notice. She ate a remarkably good dinner, and talked nonsense to Mr. Spencer who sat next her, and showed him how to construct a sea-sick passenger out of an orange, and smoked two cigarettes after the servants had left the room. Maud alone was ill at ease. She glanced apprehensively at Jack, as if she expected him to begin kissing Dodo's hand again, and, when he asked her casually where she had been since tea, she answered; "In the smoking-room—I mean the drawing-room." Jack merely raised his eyebrows, and remarked that he had been there himself, and did not remember seeing her.

In the drawing-room again Dodo was in the best spirits. She gave Mr. Spencer lessons as to how to whistle on his fingers, and sang a French song in a brilliant and somewhat broad manner. The ladies soon retired, as there was a meet early on the following morning, and, after they had gone, Jack went up to the smoking-room, leaving Chesterford to finish a letter in his study. Shortly afterwards the latter heard

the sound of wheels outside, and a footman entered to tell him the carriage was ready.

Chesterford was writing when the man entered, and did not look up.

"I did not order the carriage," he said.

"Her ladyship ordered it for half-past ten," said the man. "She gave the order to me."

Still Lord Chesterford did not look up, and sat silent so long that the man spoke again.

"Shall I tell her ladyship it is round?" he asked. "I came to your lordship, as I understood her ladyship had gone upstairs."

"You did quite right," he said. "There has been a mistake; it will not be wanted. Don't disturb Lady Chesterford, or mention it to her."

"Very good, my lord."

He turned to leave the room, when Lord Chesterford stopped him again. He spoke slowly.

"Did Lady Chesterford give you any other orders?"

"She told me to see that Mr. Broxton's things were packed, my lord, as he would go away to-night. But she told me just before dinner that he wouldn't leave till the morning."

"Thanks," said Lord Chesterford. "That's all, I think. When is Mr. Broxton leaving?"

"By the early train to-morrow, my lord."

"Go up to the smoking-room and ask him to be so good as to come here a minute."

The man left the room, and gave his message. Jack wondered a little, but went down.

Lord Chesterford was standing with his back to the fire. He looked up when Jack entered. He seemed to find some difficulty in speaking.

"Jack, old boy," he said at last, "you and I have been friends a long time, and you will not mind my being frank. Can you honestly say that you are still a friend of mine?"

Jack advanced towards him.

"I thank God that I can," he said simply, and held out his hand.

He spoke without reflecting, for he did not know how much Chesterford knew. Of course, up to this moment, he had not been aware that he knew anything. But Chesterford's tone convinced him. But a moment afterwards he saw that he had made a mistake, and he hastened to correct it.

"I spoke at random," he said, "though I swear that what I said was true. I do not know on what grounds you put the question to me."

Lord Chesterford did not seem to be attending.

"But it was true?" he asked.

Jack felt in a horrible mess. If he attempted to explain, it would necessitate letting Chesterford know the whole business. He chose between the two evils, for he would not betray Dodo.

"Yes, it is true," he said.

Chesterford shook his hand.

"Forgive me for asking you, Jack," he said. "Then that's done with. But there is something more, something which it is hard for me to say." He paused, and Jack noticed that he was crumpling a piece of paper he held in his hand into a tight hard ball. "Then—then Dodo is tired of me?"

Jack felt helpless and sick. He could not trust himself to speak.

"Isn't it so?" asked Chesterford again.

Jack for reply held out both his hands without speaking. There was something horrible in the sight of this strong man standing pale and trembling before him. In a

moment Chesterford turned away, and stood warming his hands at the fire.

"I heard something I wasn't meant to hear," he said, "and I know as much as I wish to. It doesn't much matter exactly what has happened. You have told me you are still my friend, and I thank you for it. And Dodo—Dodo is tired of me. I can reconstruct as much as is necessary. You are going off to-morrow, aren't you? I sha'n't see you again. Good-bye, Jack; try to forget I ever mistrusted you. I must ask you to leave me; I've got some things to think over."

But Jack still lingered.

"Try to forgive Dodo," he said; "and forgive me for saying so, but don't be hard on her. It will only make things worse."

"Hard on her?" asked Chesterford. "Poor Dodo, it is hard on her enough without that. She shall never know that I know, if I can help. I am not going to tell you what I know either. If you feel wronged that I even asked you that question, I am sorry for it, but I had grounds, and I am not a jealous man. The whole thing has been an awful mistake. I knew it in July, but I shall not make it worse by telling Dodo."

Jack went out from his presence with a kind of awe. He did not care to know how Chesterford had found out, or how much. All other feelings were swallowed up in a vast pity for this poor man, whom no human aid could ever reach. The great fabric which his love had raised had been shattered hopelessly, and his love sat among its ruins and wept. It was all summed up in that short sentence, "Dodo is tired of me," and Jack knew that it was true. The whole business was hopeless. Dodo had betrayed him, and he knew it. He could no longer find a cold comfort in the thought that some day, if the difficult places could be tided over, she might grow to love him again. That was past. And yet he had only one thought, and that was for Dodo. "She shall never know I know it." Truly there is something divine in those men we thought most human.

Jack went to his room and thought it all over. He was horribly vexed with himself

for having exculpated himself, but the point of Chesterford's question was quite clear, and there was only one answer to it. Chesterford obviously did mean to ask whether he had been guilty of the great act of disloyalty which Dodo had proposed, and on the whole he would reconstruct the story in his mind more faithfully than if he had answered anything else, or had refused to answer. But Jack very much doubted whether Chesterford would reconstruct the story at all. The details had evidently no interest for him. All that mattered was expressed in that one sentence, "Dodo is tired of me." Jack would have given his right hand to have been able to answer "No," or to have been able to warn Dodo; but he saw that there was nothing to be done. The smash had come, Chesterford had had a rude awakening. But his love was not dead, though it was stoned and beaten and outcast. With this in mind Jack took a sheet of paper from his writing-case, and wrote on it these words:—

"Do not desecrate it; let it help you to make an effort."

He addressed it to Dodo, and when he went downstairs the next morning he slipped it among the letters that were waiting for her. The footman told him she had gone hunting.

"Is Lord Chesterford up yet?" said Jack.

"Yes, sir; he went hunting too with her ladyship," replied the man.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Dodo was called that morning at six, and she felt in very good spirits. There was something exhilarating in the thought of a good gallop again. There had been frost for a week before, and hunting had been stopped, but Dodo meant to make up all arrears. And, on the whole, her interview with Jack had consoled her, and it had given her quite a new feeling of duty. Dodo always liked new things, at any rate till the varnish had rubbed off, and she quite realised that Jack was making a sacrifice to the same forbidding goddess.

"Well, I will make a sacrifice, too," she thought as she dressed, "and when I die I

shall be St. Dodo. I don't think there ever was a saint Dodo before, or is it saintess? Anyhow, I am going to be very good. Jack really is right; it is the only thing to do. I should have felt horribly mean if I had gone off last night, and I daresay I should have had to go abroad, which would have been a nuisance. I wonder if Chesterford's coming. I shall make him, I think, and be very charming indeed. Westley, go and tap at the door of Lord Chesterford's room, and tell him he is coming hunting, and that I've ordered his horse, and send his man to him, and let us have breakfast at once for two instead of one."

Dodo arranged her hat and stood contemplating her own figure at a cheval glass. It really did make a charming picture, and Dodo gave two little steps on one side, holding her skirt up in her left hand.

"Just look at that, Just look at this, I really think I'm not amiss,"

she hummed to herself. "Hurrah for a gallop."

She ran downstairs and made tea, and began breakfast. A moment afterwards she heard steps in the hall, and Chesterford entered. Dodo was not conscious of the least embarrassment, and determined to do her duty.

"Morning, old boy," she said, "you look as sleepy as a d. p. or dead pig. Look at my hat. It's a new hat, Chesterford, and is the joy of my heart. Isn't it sweet? Have some tea, and give me another kidney —two, I think. What happens to the sheep after they take its kidneys out? Do you suppose it dies? I wonder if they put india-rubber kidneys in. Kidneys do come from sheep, don't they? Or is there a kidney tree? Kidneys look like a sort of mushroom, and I suppose the bacon is the leaves, Kidnonia Baconiensis; now you're doing Latin, Chesterford, as you used to at Eton. I daresay you've forgotten what the Latin for kidneys is. I should like to have seen you at Eton, Chesterford. You must have been such a dear, chubby boy with blue eyes. You've got rather good eyes. I think I shall paint mine blue, and we shall have a nice little paragraph in the Sportsman. Extraordinary example of conjugal devotion. The

beautiful and fascinating Lady C. (you know I am beautiful and fascinating, that's why you married me), the wife of the charming and manly Lord C. (you know you are charming and manly, or I shouldn't have married you, and where would you have been then? like Methusaleh when the candle went out), who lived not a hundred miles from the ancient city of Harchester,' etc. Now it's your turn to say something, I can't carry on a conversation alone. Besides, I've finished breakfast, and I shall sit by you and feed you. Don't take such large mouthfuls. That was nearly a whole kidney you put in then. You'll die of kidneys, and then people will think you had something wrong with your inside, but I shall put on your tombstone, 'Because he ate them, two at a time.'"

Chesterford laughed. Dodo had not behaved like this for months. What did it all mean? But the events of the night before were too deeply branded on his memory to let him comfort himself very much. But anyhow it was charming to see Dodo like this again. And she shall never know.

"You'll choke if you laugh with five kidneys in your mouth," Dodo went on. "They'll get down into your lungs and bob about, and all your organs will get mixed up together, and you won't be able to play on them. I suppose Americans have American organs in their insides, which accounts for their squeaky voices. Now, have you finished? Oh, you really can't have any marmalade; put it in your pocket and eat it as you go along."

Dodo was surprised at the ease with which she could talk nonsense again. She abused herself for ever having let it drop. It really was much better than yawning and being bored. She had no idea how entertaining she was to herself. And Chesterford had lost his hang-dog look. He put her hat straight for her, and gave her a little kiss just as he used to. After all, things were not so bad.

It was a perfect morning. They left the house about a quarter to seven, and the world was beginning to wake again. There was a slight hoar-frost on the blades of grass

that lined the road, and on the sprigs of bare hawthorn. In the east the sky was red with the coming day. Dodo sniffed the cool morning air with a sense of great satisfaction.

"Decidedly somebody washes the world every night," she said, "and those are the soapsuds which are still clinging to the grass. What nice clean soap, all in little white crystals and spikes. And oh, how good it smells! Look at those poor little devils of birds looking for their breakfast. Poor dears, I suppose they'll be dead when the spring comes. There are the hounds. Come on, Chesterford, they're just going to draw the far cover. It is a sensible plan beginning hunting by seven. You get five hours by lunch-time."

None of Dodo's worst enemies accused her of riding badly. She had a perfect seat, and that mysterious communication with her horse that seems nothing short of magical. "If you tell your horse to do a thing the right way," she used to say, "he does it. It is inevitable. The question is, 'Who is master?' as Humpty Dumpty said. But it isn't only master; you must make him enjoy it. You must make him feel friendly as well, or else he'll go over the fence right enough, but buck you off on the other side, as a kind of protest, and quite right too."

Dodo had a most enjoyable day's hunting, and returned home well pleased with herself and everybody else. She found Jack's note waiting for her. She read it thoughtfully, and said to herself, "He is quite right, and that is what I mean to do. My young ideal, I am teaching you how to shoot."

She took up a pen, meaning to write to him, but laid it down again. "No," she said, "I can do without that at present. I will keep that for my bad days. I suppose the bad days will come, and I won't use my remedies before I get the disease."

The days passed on. They went hunting every morning, and Dodo began to form very high hopes of her new child, as she called her ideal. The bad days did not seem to be the least imminent. Chesterford behaved almost like a lover again in the light

of Dodo's new smiles. He kept his bad times to himself. They came in the evening usually when the others had gone to bed. He used to sit up late by himself over his study fire, thinking hopelessly, of the day that had gone and the day that was to come. It was a constant struggle not to tell Dodo all he knew. He could scarcely believe that he had heard what Maud had said, or that he ever had had that interview with Jack. He could not reconcile these things with Dodo's altered behaviour, and he gave it up. Dodo was tired of him, and he knew that he loved her more than ever. A more delicately-strung mind might almost have given way under the hourly struggle, but it is the fate of a healthy simple man to be capable of more continued suffering than one more highly developed. The latter breaks down, or he gets numbed with the pain; but Chesterford went on living under the slow ache, and his suffering grew no less. But through it all he looked back with deep gratitude to the chance that had sent Dodo in his way. He did not grow bitter, and realised in the midst of his suffering how happy he had been. He had only one strong wish. "Oh, God," he cried, "give me her back for one moment! Let her be sorry just once for my sake."

But there is a limit set to human misery, and the end had nearly come.

It was about a fortnight after Jack had gone. Maud and Mr. Spencer had gone too, but Mrs. Vivian was with them still. Dodo had more than once thought of telling her what had happened, but she could not manage it. When Mrs. Vivian had spoken of going, Dodo entreated her to stop, for she had a great fear of being left alone with Chesterford.

They had been out hunting, and Dodo had got home first. It was about three in the afternoon, and it had begun to snow. She had had lunch, and was sitting in the morning-room in a drowsy frame of mind. She was wondering whether Chesterford had returned, and whether he would come up and see her, and whether she was not too lazy to exert herself. She heard a carriage come slowly up the drive, and did not feel interested enough to look out of the window. She was sitting with her shoes off

warming her feet at the fire, with a novel in her lap, which she was not reading, and a cigarette in her hand. She heard the opening and shutting of doors, and slow steps on the stairs. Then the door opened and Mrs. Vivian came in.

Dodo had seen that look in her face once before, when she was riding in the Park with Jack, and a fearful certainty came upon her.

She got up and turned towards her.

"Is he dead?" she asked.

Mrs. Vivian drew her back into her seat.

"I will tell you all," she said. "He has had a dangerous fall hunting, and it is very serious. The doctors are with him. There is some internal injury, and he is to have an operation. It is the only chance of saving his life, and even then it is a very slender one. He is quite conscious, and asked me to tell you. You will not be able to see him for half an hour. The operation is going on now."

Dodo sat perfectly still. She did not speak a word; she scarcely even thought anything. Everything seemed to be a horrible blank to her.

"Ah God, ah God!" she burst out at last. "Can't I do anything to help? I would give my right hand to help him. It is all too horrible. To think that I—" She walked up and down the room, and then suddenly opened the door and went downstairs. She paced up and down the drawing-room, paused a moment, and went into his study. His papers were lying about in confusion on the table, but on the top was a guide-book to the Riviera. Dodo remembered his buying this at Mentone on their wedding-tour, and conscientiously walking about the town sight-seeing. She sat down in his chair and took it up. She remembered also that he had bought her that day a new volume of poems which had just come out, and had read to her out of it. There was in it a poem called "Paris and Helen." He had read that among others, and had said to her, as they were being rowed back to the yacht again that evening, "That is you and I, Dodo, going home."

On the fly-leaf of the guide-book he had written it out, and, as she sat there now, Dodo read it.

As o'er the swelling tides we slip That know not wave nor foam, Behold the helmsman of our ship, Love leads us safely home. His ministers around us move To aid the westering breeze, He leads us softly home, my love, Across the shining seas. My golden Helen, day and night Love's light is o'er us flung, Each hour for us is infinite, And all the world is young. There is none else but thou and I Beneath the heaven's high dome, Love's ministers around us fly, Love leads us safely home.

Dodo buried her face in her hands with a low cry. "I have been cruel and wicked," she sobbed to herself. "I have despised the best that any man could ever give me, and I can never make him amends. I will tell him all. I will ask him to forgive me. Oh, poor Chesterford, poor Chesterford!"

She sat there sobbing in complete misery. She saw, as she had never seen before, the greatness of his love for her, and her wretched, miserable return for his gift.

"It is all over; I know he will die," she sobbed. "Supposing he does not know me—supposing he dies before I can tell him. Oh, my husband, my husband, live to forgive me!"

She was roused by a touch on her shoulder. Mrs. Vivian stood by her.

"You must be quick, Dodo," she said. "There is not much time."

Dodo did not answer her, but went upstairs. Before the bedroom door she stopped.

"I must speak to him alone," she said. "Send them all out."

"They have gone into the dressing-room," said Mrs. Vivian; "he is alone."

Dodo stayed no longer, but went in.

He was lying facing the door, and the shadow of death was on his face. But he recognised Dodo, and smiled and held out his hand.

Dodo ran to the bedside and knelt by it.

"Oh, Chesterford," she sobbed, "I have wronged you cruelly, and I can never make it up. I will tell you all."

"There is no need," said he; "I knew it all along."

Dodo raised her head. "You knew it all?" she asked.

"Yes, dear," he said; "it was by accident that I knew it."

"And you behaved to me as usual," said Dodo.

"Yes, my darling," said he; "you wouldn't have had me beat you, would you? Don't speak of it—there is not much time."

"Ah, forgive me, forgive me!" she cried. "How could I have done it?"

"It was not a case of forgiving," he said. "You are you, you are Dodo. My darling, there is not time to say much. You have been very good to me, and have given me more happiness than I ever thought I could have had."

"Chesterford! Chesterford!" cried Dodo pleadingly.

"Yes, darling," he answered; "my own wife. Dodo, I shall see the boy soon, and we will wait for you together. You will be mine again then. There shall be no more parting."

Dodo could not answer him. She could only press his hand and kiss his lips, which were growing very white.

It was becoming a fearful effort for him to speak. The words came slowly with long pauses.

"There is one more thing," he said. "You must marry Jack. You must make him very happy—as you have made me."

"Ah, don't say that," said Dodo brokenly; "don't cut me to the heart."

"My darling," he said, "my sweet own wife, I am so glad you told me. It has cleared up the only cloud. I wondered whether you would tell me. I prayed God you might, and He has granted it me. Good-bye, my own darling, good-bye."

Dodo lay in his arms, and kissed him passionately.

"Good-bye, dear," she sobbed.

He half raised himself in bed.

"Ah, my Dodo, my sweet wife," he said.

Then he fell back and lay very still.

How long Dodo remained there she did not know. She remembered Mrs. Vivian coming in and raising her gently, and they left the darkened room together.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Picture to yourself, or let me try to picture for you, a long, low, rambling house, covering a quite unnecessary area of ground, with many gables, tall, red-brick chimneys, unexpected corners, and little bow windows looking out from narrow turrets-a house that looks as if it had grown, rather than been designed and built. It began obviously with that little grey stone section, which seems to consist of small rooms with mullion windows, over which the ivy has asserted so supreme a dominion. The next occupant had been a man who knew how to make himself comfortable, but did not care in the least what sort of appearance his additions would wear to the world at large; to him we may assign that uncompromising straight wing which projects to the right of the little core of grey stone. Then came a series of attempts to screen the puritanical ugliness of the offending block. Some one ran up two little turrets at one end, and a clock tower in the middle; one side of it was made the main entrance of the house, and two red-tiled lines of building were built at right angles to it to form a three-sided quadrangle, and the carriage drive was brought up in a wide sweep to the door, and a sun-dial was planted down in the grass plot in the middle, in such a way that the sun could only peep at it for an hour or two every day, owing to the line of building which sheltered it on every side except the north. So the old house went on growing, and got more incongruous and more delightful with every addition.

The garden has had to take care of itself under such circumstances, and if the house has been pushing it back in one place, it has wormed itself in at another, and queer little lawns with flower beds of old-fashioned, sweet-smelling plants have crept in where you least expect them. This particular garden has always seemed to me the ideal of what a garden should be. It is made to sit in, to smoke in, to think in, to do nothing in. A wavy, irregular lawn forbids the possibility of tennis, or any game that implies exertion or skill, and it is the home of sweet smells, bright colour, and chuckling birds. There are long borders of mignonette, wallflowers and hollyhocks, and many old-fashioned flowers, which are going the way of all old fashions. London pride, with its delicate spirals and star-like blossoms, and the red drooping velvet of love-lies-a-bleeding. The thump of tennis balls, the flying horrors of ring-goal, even the clash of croquet is tabooed in this sacred spot. Down below, indeed, beyond that thick privet hedge, you may find, if you wish, a smooth, well-kept piece of grass, where, even now—if we may judge from white figures that cross the little square, where a swinging iron gate seems to remonstrate hastily and ill-temperedly with those who leave these reflective shades for the glare and publicity of tennis—a game seems to be in progress. If you had exploring tendencies in your nature, and had happened to find yourself, on the afternoon of which I propose to speak, in this delightful garden, you would sooner or later have wandered into a low-lying grassy basin, shut in on three sides by banks of bushy rose-trees. The faint, delicate smell of their pale fragrance would have led you there, or, perhaps, the light trickling of a fountain, now nearly summer dry. Perhaps the exploring tendency would account for your discovery. There, lying back in a basket-chair, with a half-read letter in her hand, and an accusing tennis racquet by her side, you would have found Edith Staines. She had waited after lunch to get her letters, and going out, meaning to join the others, she had found something among them that interested her, and she was reading a certain letter through a second time when you broke in upon her. After a few minutes she folded it up, put it back in the

envelope, and sat still, thinking. "So she's going to marry him," she said half aloud, and she took up her racquet and went down to the tennis courts.

Ten days ago she had come down to stay with Miss Grantham, at the end of the London season. Miss Grantham's father was a somewhat florid baronet of fifty years of age. He had six feet of height, a cheerful, high-coloured face, and a moustache, which he was just conscious had military suggestions about it—though he had never been in the army—which was beginning to grow grey. His wife had been a lovely woman, half Spanish by birth, with that peculiarly crisp pronunciation that English people so seldom possess, and which is almost as charming to hear as a child's first conscious grasp of new words. She dressed remarkably well; her reading chiefly consisted of the Morning Post, French novels, and small books of morbid poetry, which seemed to her very chic, and she was worldly to the tips of her delicate fingers. She had no accomplishments of any sort, except a great knowledge of foreign languages. She argued, with much reason, that you could get other people to do your accomplishments for you. "Why should I worry myself with playing scales?" she said. "I can hire some poor wretch" (she never could quite manage the English "r") "to play to me by the hour. He will play much better than I ever should, and it is a form of charity as well."

Edith had made great friends with her, and disagreed with her on every topic under the sun. Lady Grantham admired Edith's vivacity, though her own line was serene elegance, and respected her success. Success was the one accomplishment that she really looked up to (partly, perhaps, because she felt she had such a large measure of it herself), and no one could deny that Edith was successful. She had enough broadness of view to admire success in any line, and would have had a vague sense of satisfaction in accepting the arm of; the best crossing-sweeper in London to take her in to dinner. She lived in a leonine atmosphere, and if you did not happen to meet a particular lion at her house, it was because "he was here on Monday, or is coming on Wednesday"; at any rate, not because he had not been asked.

Edith, however, felt thoroughly pleased with her quarters. She had hinted once that she had to go the day after to-morrow, but Nora Grantham had declined to argue the question. "You're only going home to do your music," she said. "We've got quite as good a piano here as you have, and, we leave you entirely to your own devices. Besides, you're mother's lion just now—isn't she, mother?—and you're not going to get out of the menagerie just yet. There is going to be a big feeding-time next week, and you will have to roar." Edith's remark about the necessity of going had been dictated only by a sense of duty, in order to give her hosts an opportunity of getting rid of her if they wished, and she was quite content to stop. She strolled down across the lawn to the tennis courts in a thoughtful frame of mind, and met Miss Grantham, who was coming to look for her.

"Where have you been, Edith?" she said. "They're all clamouring for you. Mother is sitting in the summer-house wondering why anybody wants to play tennis. She says none of them will ever be as good as Cracklin, and he's a cad."

"Grantie," said Edith, "Dodo's engaged."

"Oh, dear, yes," said Miss Grantham. "I knew she would be. How delightful. Jack's got his reward at last. May I tell everyone? How funny that she should marry a Lord Chesterford twice. It was so convenient that the first one shouldn't have had any brothers, and Dodo won't have to change her visiting cards; or have new handkerchiefs or anything. What a contrast, though!"

"No, it's private at present," said Edith. "Dodo has just written to me; she told me I might tell you. Do you altogether like it?"

"Of course I do," said Miss Grantham. "Only I should like to marry Jack myself. I wonder if he asked Dodo, or if Dodo asked him."

"I suppose it was inevitable," said Edith. "Dodo says that Chesterford's last words to her were that she should marry Jack."

"That was so sweet of him," murmured Miss Grantham. "He was very sweet and

dear and remembering, wasn't he?"

Edith was still grave and doubtful.

"I'm sure there was nearly a crash," she said. "Do you remember the Brettons' ball? Chesterford didn't like that, and they quarrelled, I know, next morning."

"Oh, how interesting," said Miss Grantham. "But Dodo was quite right to go, I think. She was dreadfully bored, and she will not stand being bored. She might have done something much worse."

"It seems to be imperatively necessary for Dodo to do something unexpected," said Edith. "I wonder, oh, I wonder—Jack will be very happy for a time," she added inconsequently.

Edith's coming was the signal for serious play to begin. She entirely declined to play except with people who considered it, for the time being, the most important thing in the world, and naturally she played well.

A young man, of military appearance on a small scale, was sitting by Lady Grantham in the tent, and entertaining her with somewhat unfledged remarks.

"Miss Staines does play so arfly well, doesn't she?" he was saying. "Look at that stroke, perfectly rippin' you know, what?"

Mr. Featherstone had a habit of finishing all his sentences with "what?" He pronounced it to rhyme with heart.

Lady Grantham was reading Loti's book of pity and death. It answered the double purpose of being French and morbid.

"What book have you got hold of there?" continued Featherstone. "It's an awful bore reading books, dontcherthink, what? I wish one could get a feller to read them for me, and then tell one about them."

"I rather enjoy some books," said Lady Grantham. "This, for instance, is a good one," and she held the book towards him.

"Oh, that's French, isn't it?" remarked Featherstone. "I did French at school; don't know a word now. It's an arful bore having to learn French, isn't it? Couldn't I get a feller to learn it for me?"

Lady Grantham reflected.

"I daresay you could," she replied. "You might get your man—tiger—how do you call him?—to learn it. It's capable of comprehension to the lowest intellect," she added crisply.

"Oh, come, Lady Grantham," he replied, "you don't think so badly of me as that, do you?"

Lady Grantham was seized with a momentary desire to run her parasol through his body, provided it could be done languidly and without effort. Her daughter had come up, and sat down in a low chair by her. Featherstone was devoting the whole of his great mind to the end of his moustache.

"Nora," she said, quietly, "this little man must be taken away. I can't quite manage him. Tell him to go and play about."

"Dear mother," she replied, "bear him a little longer. He can't play about by himself."

Lady Grantham got gently up from her chair, and thrust an exquisite little silver paper-knife between the leaves of her book.

"I think I will ask you to take my chair across to that tree opposite," she said to him, without looking at him.

He followed her, dragging the chair after him. Halfway across the lawn they met a footman bringing tea down into the ground.

"Take the chair," she said. Then she turned to her little man. "Many thanks. I won't detain you," she said, with a sweet smile. "So good of you to have come here this afternoon."

Featherstone was impenetrable. He lounged back, if so small a thing can be said to lounge, and sat down again by Miss Grantham.

"Fascinatin' woman your mother is," he said. "Arfly clever, isn't she? What? Knows French and that sort of thing. I can always get along all right in France. If you only swear at the waiters they understand what you want all right, you know."

Two or three other fresh arrivals made it possible for another set to be started, and Mr. Featherstone was induced to play, in spite of his protestations that he had quite given up tennis for polo. Lady Grantham finished her Loti, and moved back to the tea-table, where Edith was sitting, fanning herself with a cabbage leaf, and receiving homage on the score of her tennis-playing. Lady Grantham did not offer to give anybody any tea; she supposed they would take it when they wanted it, but she wished someone would give her a cup.

"What's the name of the little man and his moustache?" she asked Edith, indicating Mr. Featherstone, who was performing wild antics in the next court.

Edith informed her.

"How did he get here?" demanded Lady Grantham.

"Oh, he's a friend of mine. I think he came to see me," replied Edith. "He lives somewhere about. I suppose you find him rather trying. It doesn't matter; he's of no consequence."

"My dear Edith, between your sporting curate, and your German conductor, and your Roman Catholic cure, and this man, one's life isn't safe."

"You won't see the good side of those sort of people," said Edith. "If they've got rather overwhelming manners, and aren't as silent and bored as you think young men ought to be, you think they're utter outsiders."

"I only want to know if there are any more of that sort going to turn up. Think of the positions you put me in! When I went into the drawing-room yesterday, for instance,

before lunch, I find a Roman Catholic priest there, who puts up two fingers at me, and says 'Benedicite.'"

Edith lay back in her chair and laughed.

"How I should like to have seen you! Did you think he was saying grace, or did you tell him not to be insolent?"

"I behaved with admirable moderation," said Lady Grantham. "I even prepared to be nice to him. But he had sudden misgivings, and said, 'I beg your pardon, I thought you were Miss Staines.' I saw I was not wanted, and retreated. That is not all. Bob told me that I had to take a curate in to dinner last night, and asked me not to frighten him. I suppose he thought I wanted to say 'Bo,' or howl at him. The curate tried me. I sat down when we got to the table, and he turned to me and said, 'I beg your pardon'—they all beg my pardon—'but I'm going to say grace.' Then I prepared myself to talk night schools and district visiting; but he turned on me, and asked what I thought of Orme's chances for the St. Leger."

"Oh, dear! oh, dear!" cried Edith; "he told me afterwards that you seemed a very serious lady."

"I didn't intend to encourage that," continued Lady Grantham; "so I held on to district visiting. We shook our heads together over dissent in Wales. We split over Calvinism—who was Calvin? We renounced society; and I was going to work him a pair of slippers. We were very edifying. Then he sang comic songs in the drawing-room, and discussed the methods of cheating at baccarat. I was a dead failure."

"Anyhow, you're a serious lady," said Edith.

"That young man will come to a bad end," said Lady Grantham; "so will your German conductor. He ordered beer in the middle of the morning, to-day—the second footman will certainly give notice—and he smoked a little clay pipe after dinner in the dining-room. Then this afternoon comes this other friend of yours. He

says, 'Arfly rippin' what.'"

"He said you were arfly fascinatin' what," interpolated Miss Grantham, "when you went away to read your book. You were very rude to him."

Sir Robert Grantham had joined the party. He was a great hand at adapting his conversation to his audience, and making everyone conscious that they ought to feel quite at home. He recounted at some length a series of tennis matches which he had taken part in a few years ago. A strained elbow had spoiled his chances of winning, but the games were most exciting, and it was generally agreed at the time that the form of the players was quite first-class. He talked about Wagner and counterpoint to Edith. He asked his vicar abstruse questions on the evidence of the immortality of the soul after death; he discussed agriculture and farming with tenants, to whom he always said "thank ye," instead of "thank you," in order that they might feel quite at their ease; he lamented the want of physique in the English army to Mr. Featherstone, who was very short, and declared that the average height of Englishmen was only five feet four. As he said this he drew himself up, and made it quite obvious that he himself was six feet high, and broad in proportion.

A few more cups of tea were drunk, and a few more sets played, and the party dispersed. Edith was the only guest in the house, and she and Frank, the Oxford son, stopped behind to play a game or two more before dinner. Lady Grantham and Nora strolled up through the garden towards the house, while Sir Robert remained on the ground, and mingled advice, criticism, and approbation to the tennis players; Frank's back-handed stroke, he thought, was not as good as it might be, and Edith could, certainly put half fifteen on to her game if judiciously coached. Neither of the players volleyed as well as himself, but volleying was his strong point, and they must not be discouraged. Frank's attitude to his father was that of undisguised amusement; but he found him very entertaining.

They were all rather late for dinner, and Lady Grantham was waiting for them in the

drawing-room. Frank and his father were down before Edith, and Lady Grantham was making remarks on their personal appearance.

"You look very, hot and red," she was saying to her son, "and I really wish you would brush your hair better. I don't know what young men are coming to, they seem to think that everything is to be kept waiting for them."

Frank's attitude was one of serene indifference.

"Go on, go on," he said; "I don't mind."

Edith was five minutes later. Lady Grantham remarked on the importance of being in time for dinner, and hoped they wouldn't all die from going to bed too soon afterwards. Frank apologised for his mother.

"Don't mind her, Miss Staines," he said, "they're only her foreign manners. She doesn't know how to behave. It's all right. I'm going to take you in, mother. Are we going to have grouse?"

That evening Miss Grantham and Edith "talked Dodo," as the latter called it, till the small hours.

She produced Dodo's letter, and read extracts.

"Of course, we sha'n't be married till after next November," wrote Dodo. "Jack wouldn't hear of it, and it would seem very unfeeling. Don't you think so? It will be odd going back to Winston again. Mind you come and stay with us at Easter."

"I wonder if Dodo ever thinks with regret of anything or anybody," said Edith. "Imagine writing like that—asking me if I shouldn't think it unfeeling."

"Oh, but she says she would think it unfeeling," said Miss Grantham. "That's so sweet and remembering of her."

"But don't you see," said Edith, "she evidently thinks it is so good of her to have feelings about it at all. She might as well call attention to the fact that she always puts her shoes and stockings on to go to church."

"There's a lot of women who would marry again before a year was out if it wasn't for convention," said Miss Grantham.

"That's probably the case with Dodo," remarked Edith. "Dodo doesn't care one pin for the memory of that man. She knows it, and she knows I know it. Why does she say that sort of thing to me? He was a good man, too, and I'm not sure that he wasn't great. Chesterford detested me, but I recognised him."

"Oh, I don't think he was great," said Miss Grantham. "Didn't he always strike you as a little stupid?"

"I prefer stupid people," declared Edith roundly. "They are so restful. They're like nice; sweet, white bread; they quench your hunger as well as pâté de foie gras, and they are much better for you."

"I think they make you just a little thirsty," remarked Miss Grantham. "I should have said they were more like cracknels. Besides, do you think that it's an advantage to associate with people who are good for you? It produces a sort of rabies in me. I want to bite them."

"You like making yourself out worse than you are, Grantie," said Edith.

"I think you like making Dodo out worse than she is," returned Nora. "I always used to think you were very fond of her."

"I am fond of her," said Edith; "that's why I'm dissatisfied with her."

"What a curious way of showing your affection," said Miss Grantham. "I love Dodo, and if I was a man I should like to many her."

"Dodo is too dramatic," said Edith. "She never gets off the stage; and sometimes she plays to the gallery, and then the stalls say, 'How cheap she's making herself.' She has the elements of a low comedian about her."

"And the airs of a tragedy queen, I suppose," added Miss Grantham.

"Exactly," said Edith; "and the consequence is that she as a burlesque sometimes:

She is her own parody."

"Darling Dodo," said Grantie with feeling. "I do want to see her again."

"All her conduct after his death," continued Edith, "that was the tragedy queen; she shut herself up in that great house, quite alone, for two months, and went to church with a large prayer-book every morning, at eight. But it was burlesque all the same. Dodo isn't sorry like that. The gallery yelled with applause."

"I thought it was so sweet of her," murmured Grantie. "I suppose I'm gallery too."

"Then she went abroad," continued Edith, "and sat down and wept by the waters of Aix. But she soon took down her harp. She gave banjo parties on the lake, and sang coster songs."

"Mrs. Vane told me she recovered her spirits wonderfully at Aix," remarked Miss Grantham.

"And played baccarat, and recovered other people's money," pursued Edith. "If she'd taken the first train for Aix after the funeral, I should have respected her."

"Oh, that would have been horrid," said Miss Grantham; "besides, it wouldn't have been the season."

"That's true," said Edith. "Dodo probably remembered that."

"Oh, you sha'n't abuse Dodo any more," said Miss Grantham. "I think it's perfectly horrid of you. Go and play me something."

Perhaps the thought of Chesterford was in Edith's mind as she sat down to the piano, for she played a piece of Mozart's "Requiem," which is the saddest music in the world.

Miss Grantham shivered a little. The long wailing notes, struck some chord, within her, which disturbed her peace of mind.

"What a dismal thing," she said, when Edith had finished. "You make me feel like Sunday evening after a country church."

Edith stood looking out of the window. The moon was up, and the great stars were wheeling in their courses through the infinite vault. A nightingale was singing loud in the trees, and the little mysterious noises of night stole about among the bushes. As Edith thought of Chesterford she remembered how the Greeks mistook the passionate song of the bird for the lament of the dead, and it did not seem strange to her. For love, sometimes goes hand-in-hand with death.

She turned back into the room again.

"God forgive her," she said, "if we cannot."

"I'm not going to bed with that requiem in my ears," said Miss Grantham. "I should dream of hearses."

Edith went to the piano, and broke into a quick, rippling movement.

Miss Grantham listened, and felt she ought to know what it was.

"What is it?" she said, when Edith had finished.

"It is the scherzo from the 'Dodo Symphony,'" she said. "I composed it two years ago at Winston."

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Dodo had written to Edith from Zermatt, where she was enjoying herself amazingly. Mrs. Vane was there, and Mr. and Mrs. Algernon Spencer, and Prince Waldenech and Jack. As there would have been some natural confusion in the hotel if Dodo had called herself Lady Chesterford, when Lord Chesterford was also there, she settled to be called Miss Vane. This tickled Prince Waldenech enormously; it seemed to him a capital joke.

Dodo was sitting in the verandah of the hotel one afternoon, drinking black coffee and smoking cigarettes. Half the hotel were scandalised at her, and usually referred to her as "that Miss Vane"; the other half adored her, and went [on] expeditions with her, and took minor parts in her theatricals, and generally played universal second

fiddle.

Dodo enjoyed this sort of life. There was in her an undeveloped germ of simplicity, that found pleasure in watching the slow-footed, cows driven home from the pastures, in sitting with Jack—regardless of her assumed name—in the crocus-studded meadows, or by the side of the swirling glacier-fed stream that makes the valley melodious. She argued, with great reason, that she had already shocked all the people that were going to be shocked, so much that it didn't matter what she did; while the other contingent, who were not going to be shocked, were not going to be shocked. "Everyone must either be shocked or not shocked," she said, "and they're that already. That's why Prince Waldenech and I are going for a moonlight walk next week when the moon comes back."

Dodo had made great friends with the Prince's half-sister, a Russian on her mother's side, and she was reading her extracts out of her unwritten book of the Philosophy of Life, an interesting work, which varied considerably according to Dodo's mood. Just now it suited Dodo to be in love with life.

"You are a Russian by nature and sympathy, my dear Princess," she was saying, "and you are therefore in a continual state of complete boredom. You think you are bored here, because it is not Paris; in Paris you are quite as much bored with all your fêtes, and dances, and parties as you are here. I tell you frankly you are wrong. Why don't you come and sit in the grass, and look at the crocuses, and throw stones into the stream like me."

The Princess stretched out a delicate arm.

"I don't think I ever threw a stone in my life," she said dubiously. "Would it amuse me, do you think?"

"Not at first," said Dodo; "and you will never be amused at all if you think about it."

"What am I to think about then?" she asked.

"You must think about the stone," said Dodo decisively, "you must think about the

crocuses, you must think about the cows."

"It's all so new to me," remarked the Princess. "We never think about cows in Russia."

"That's just what I'm saying," said Dodo. "You must get out of yourself. Anything, does to think about, and nobody is bored unless they think about being bored. When one has the whole world to choose from, and only one subject in it that can make one feel bored, it really shows a want of resource to think about that. Then you ought to take walks and make yourself tired."

The Princess cast a vague eye on the Matterhorn.

"That sort of horror?" she asked.

"No, you needn't begin with the Matterhorn," said Dodo, laughing. "Go to the glaciers, and get rather cold and wet. Boredom is chiefly physical."

"I'm sure being cold and wet would bore me frightfully," she said.

"No, no—a big no," cried Dodo. "No one is ever bored unless they are comfortable. That's the great principle. There isn't time for it. You cannot be bored and something else at the same time. Being comfortable doesn't count; that's our normal condition. But you needn't be uncomfortable in order to be bored. It's very comfortable sitting here with you, and I'm not the least bored. I should poison myself if I were bored: I can't think why you don't."

"I will do anything you recommend," said the Princess placidly. "You are the only woman I know who never appears to be bored. I wonder if my husband would bore you. He is very big, and very good, and he eats a large breakfast, and looks after his serfs. He bores me to extinction. He would wear black for ten years if I poisoned myself."

A shade of something passed over Dodo's face. It might have been regret, or stifled remembrance, or a sudden twinge of pain, and it lasted an appreciable fraction of a

second.

"I can imagine being bored with that kind of man," she said in a moment.

The Princess was lying back in her chair,' and did not notice a curious hardness in Dodo's voice.

"I should so-like to introduce you to him," said she. "I should like to shut you up with him for a month at our place on the Volga. It snows a good deal there, and he goes out in the snow and shoots animals, and comes back in the evening with a red face, and tells me all about it. It is very entertaining, but a trifle monotonous. He does not know English, nor German, nor French. He laughs very loud. He is devoted to me. Do go and stay with him. I think I'll join you when you've been there three weeks. He is quite safe. I shall not be afraid. He writes to me every day, and suggests that he should join me here."

Dodo shifted her position and looked up at the Matterhorn.

"Yes," she said. "I should certainly be bored with him, but I'm not sure that I would show it."

"He wouldn't like you at all," continued the Princess. "He would think you loud. That is so odd. He thinks it unfeminine to smoke. He has great ideas about the position of women. He gave me a book of private devotions bound in the parchment from a bear he had shot on my last birthday."

Dodo laughed.

"I'm sure you need not be bored with him," she said. "He must have a strong vein of unconscious humour about him."

"I'm quite unconscious of it," said the Princess. "You cannot form the slightest idea of what he's like till you see him. I almost feel inclined to tell him to come here."

"Ah, but you Russian women have such liberty," said Dodo. "You can tell your husband not to expect to see you again for three months. We can't do that. An

English husband and wife are like two Siamese twins. Until about ten years ago they used to enter the drawing-room, when they were going out to dinner, arm-in-arm."

"That's very bourgeois," said the Princess. "You are rather a bourgeois race. You are very hearty, and pleased to see one, and all that. There's Lord Chesterford. You're a great friend of his, aren't you? He looks very distinguished. I should say he was usually bored."

"He was my husband's first cousin," said Dodo. Princess Alexandrina of course knew that Miss Vane was a widow. "I was always an old friend of his—as long as I can remember, that's to say. Jack and I are going up towards the Eiffel to watch the sunset. Come with us."

"I think I'll see the sunset from here," she said. "You're going up a hill, I suppose?"

"Oh, but you can't see it from here," said Dodo. "That great mass of mountain is in the way."

The Princess considered.

"I don't think I want to see the sunset after all," she said. "I've just found the Kreutzer Sonata. I've been rural enough for one day, and I want a breath of civilised air. Do you know, I never feel bored when you are talking to me."

"Oh, that's part of my charm, isn't it?" said Dodo to Jack, who had lounged up to where they were sitting.

"Dodo's been lecturing me, Lord Chesterford," said the Princess. "Does she ever lecture you?"

"She gave me quite a long lecture once," said he. "She recommended me to live in a cathedral town."

"A cathedral town," said the Princess. "That's something fearful, isn't it? Why did you tell him to do that?" she said.

"I think it was a mistake," said Dodo. "Anyhow, Jack didn't take my advice. I

shouldn't recommend him to do it now, but he has a perfect genius for being domestic. Everyone is very domestic in cathedral towns. They all dine at seven and breakfast at a quarter past eight—next morning, you understand. That quarter past is delightful. But Jack said he didn't want to score small successes," she added, employing a figure grammatically known as "hiatus."

"My husband is very domestic," said the Princess. "But he isn't a bit like Lord Chesterford. He would like to live with me in a little house in the country, and never have anyone to stay with us. That would be so cheerful during the winter months."

"Jack, would you like to live with your wife in a little house in the country?" demanded Dodo.

"I don't think I should ever marry a woman who wanted to," remarked Jack, meeting Dodo's glance.

"Imagine two people really liking each other better than all the rest of the world," said the Princess, "and living on milk, and love, and wild roses, and fresh eggs! I can't bear fresh eggs."

"My egg this morning wasn't at all fresh," said Dodo. "I wish I'd thought of sending it to your room."

"Would you never get tired of your wife, don't you think," continued the Princess, "if you shut yourselves up in the country? Supposing she wished to pick roses when you wanted to play lawn tennis?"

"Oh, Jack, it wouldn't do," said Dodo. "You'd make her play lawn tennis."

"My husband and I never thought of playing lawn tennis," said the Princess. "I shall try that when we meet next. It's very amusing, isn't it?"

"It makes you die of laughing," said Dodo, solemnly. "Come, Jack, we're going to see the sunset. Good-bye, dear. Go and play with your maid. She can go out of the room while you think of something, and then come in and guess what you've

thought of."

Jack and Dodo strolled up through the sweet-smelling meadows towards the Riffelberg. A cool breeze was streaming down from the "furrow cloven alls" of the glacier, heavy with the clean smell of pine woods and summer flowers, and thick with a hundred mingling sounds. The cows were being driven homewards, and the faint sounds of bells were carried down to them from the green heights above. Now and then they passed a herd of goats, still nibbling anxiously at the wayside grass, followed by some small ragged shepherd, who brushed his long hair away from his eyes to get a better look at this dazzling, fair-skinned woman, who evidently belonged to quite another order of beings from his wrinkled, early-old mother. One of them held out to Dodo a wilted little bunch of flowers, crumpled with much handling, but she did not seem to notice him. After they had passed he tossed them away, and ran off after his straying flock. Southwards, high above them, stretched the long lines of snow spread out under the feet of the Matterhorn, which sat like some huge sphinx, unapproachable, remote. Just below lay the village, sleeping in the last rays of the sun, which shone warmly on the red, weathered planks. Light blue smoke curled slowly up from the shingled roofs, and streamed gently down the valley in a thin, transparent haze.

"Decidedly, it's a very nice world," said Dodo. "I'm so glad I wasn't born a Russian. The Princess never enjoys anything at all, except telling one how bored she is. But she's very amusing, and I gave her a great deal of good advice."

"What have you been telling her to do," asked Jack.

"Oh, anything. I recommended her to sit in the meadows, and throw stones and get her feet wet. It's not affectation at all in her, she really is hopelessly bored. It's as easy for her to be bored as for me not to be. Jack, what will you do to me if I get bored when we're married?"

"I shall tell you to throw stones," said he.

"As long as you don't look at me reproachfully," said Dodo, "I sha'n't mind. Oh, look at the Matterhorn. Isn't it big?"

"I don't like it," said Jack; "it always looks as if it was taking notice, and reflecting how dreadfully small one is."

"I used to think Vivy was like that," said Dodo. "She was very good to me once or twice. I wonder what I shall be like when I'm middle-aged. I can't bear the thought of getting old, but that won't stop it. I don't want to sit by the fire and purr. I don't think I could do it."

"One won't get old all of a sudden, though," said Jack; "that's a great consideration. The change will come so gradually that one won't know it."

"Ah, don't," said Dodo quickly. "It's like dying by inches, losing hold of life gradually. It won't come to me like that. I shall wake up some morning and find I'm not young any more."

"Well, it won't come yet," said Jack with sympathy.

"Well, I'm not going to bother my head about it," said Dodo, "there isn't time. There's Maud and her little Spencer. He's a dear little man, and he ought to be put in a band-box with some pink cotton-wool, and taken out every Sunday morning."

Dodo whistled shrilly on her fingers to attract their attention.

Mr. Spencer had been gathering flowers and putting them into a neat, little tin box, which he slung over his shoulders. He was dressed in a Norfolk jacket carefully buttoned round his waist, with knickerbockers and blue worsted stockings. He wore a small blue ribbon in his top button-hole, and a soft felt hat. He carried his flowers home in the evening, and always remembered to press them before he went to bed. He and Maud were sitting on a large grey rock by the wayside, reading the Psalms for the seventeenth evening of the month.

Dodo surveyed her critically, and laid herself out to be agreeable.

"Well, Algy," she said, "how are the flowers going on? Oh, what a sweet little gentian. Where did you get it? We're going to have some theatricals this evening, and you must come. It's going to be a charade, and you'll have to guess the word afterwards. Jack and I are going to look at the sunset. We shall be late for dinner. What's that book, Maud?"

"We were reading the Psalms for the evening," said Maud.

"Oh, how dear of you!" said Dodo. "What a lovely church this makes. Algy, why don't you have service out of doors at Gloucester? I always feel so much more devotional on fine evenings out in the open air. I think that's charming. Good-bye. Jack and I must go on."

Dodo was a good walker, and they were soon among the pines that climb up the long steep slope to the Eiffel. Their steps were silent on the carpet of needles, and they walked on, not talking much, but each intensely conscious of the presence of the other. At a corner high up on the slope they stopped, for the great range in front of them had risen above the hills on the other side of the valley, and all the snow was flushed with the sunset.

Dodo laid her hand on Jack's.

"How odd it is that you and I should be here together, and like this," she said. "I often used to wonder years ago whether this would happen. Jack, you will make me very happy? Promise me that."

And Jack promised.

"I often think of Chesterford," Dodo went on. "He wished for this, you know. He told me so as he was dying. Did you ever know, Jack—" even Dodo found it hard to get on at this moment—"did you ever know—he knew all? I began to tell him, and he stopped me, saying he knew."

Jack's face was grave.

"He told me he knew," he said; "at least, I saw he did. I never felt so much ashamed. It was my fault. I would have given a great deal to save him that knowledge."

"God forgive me if I was cruel to him," said Dodo. "But, oh, Jack, I did try. I was mad that night I think."

"Don't talk of it," said he suddenly; "it was horrible; it was shameful."

They were silent a moment. Then Jack said,—

"Dodo, let us bury the thought of that for ever. There are some memories which are sacred to me. The memory of Chesterford is one. He was very faithful, and he was very unhappy. I feel as if I was striking his dead body when you speak of it. Requiescat."

They rose and went down to the hotel; the sun had set, and it grew suddenly cold.

The theatricals that night were a great success. Dodo was simply inimitable. Two maiden ladies left the hotel the next morning.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Dodo's marriage was announced in September. It was to be celebrated at the beginning of December, and was to be very grand indeed. Duchesses were expected to be nothing accounted of. She was still in Switzerland when it was made known, and events had developed themselves. The announcement came out in the following manner. She had taken her moonlight walk, but not with Prince Waldenech. She had mentioned to him incidentally that Jack was coming as well, and after dinner the Prince found he had important despatches waiting for him. Dodo was rather amused at the inadequacy of this statement, as no post had come in that morning. The thought that the Prince particularly wished to take a romantic walk with her was entertaining. Next morning, however, while Dodo was sitting in her room, looking out over the wide, green valley, her maid came in and asked if Prince Waldenech might have permission to speak to her.

"Good morning," said Dodo affably, as he entered. "I wish you had been with us last night. We had a charming walk, but Jack was dreadfully dull. Why didn't you come?"

The Prince twisted his long moustaches.

"Certainly I had no despatches," he declared with frankness; "that was—how do you call it?—oh, a white lie."

"Did you expect me to believe it?" asked Dodo.

"Assuredly not," he returned. "It would have been an insult to your understanding. But such statements are better than the truth sometimes. But I came here for another purpose—to say good-bye."

"You're not going?" said Dodo surprisedly.

"Unless you tell me to stop," he murmured, advancing to her.

Dodo read his meaning at once, and determined to stop his saying anything more.

"Certainly I tell you to stop," she said. "You mustn't break up our charming party so soon. Besides, I have a piece of news for you this morning. I ask for your congratulations."

"Ah, those despatches," murmured the Prince.

"No, it was not the fault of your despatches," said Dodo, laughing. "It was settled some time ago. I shall be Lady Chesterford again next year. Allow me to introduce the Marchioness of Chesterford elect to your Highness," and she swept him a little curtsey.

The Prince bowed.

"The Marquis of Chesterford is a very fortunate man," he said. "Decidedly I had better go away to-morrow."

Dodo felt annoyed with him. "I thought he was clever enough not to say that," she thought to herself.

"No, my dear Prince, you shall do nothing of the sort," she said. "You are very happy here, and I don't choose that you should go away—I tell you to stop. You said you would if I told you."

"I am a man of honour still," said he, with mock solemnity. He put both hands together and bowed. "I shall be the first to congratulate the Marquis," he said, "and may I hope the Marchioness will think with pity on those less fortunate than he."

Dodo smiled benignantly. He really had got excellent manners. The scene was artistic, and it pleased her.

"I should think you were too proud to accept pity," she said.

"Have you ever seen me other than humble—to you?" he asked.

"Take it then," said Dodo; "as much as your case requires. But I feel it is insolent of me to offer it."

"I take all the pity you have," said he, smiling gravely. "I want it more than any other poor devil you might think of bestowing it on."

He bowed himself gracefully out of the room. He and Dodo had been discussing English proverbs the day before, and Dodo asserted broadly that they were all founded on universal truths. The Prince thought that pity was quite a promising gift.

Dodo was a little uneasy after he had gone. She was always a trifle afraid of him, though, to do her justice, no one would have guessed it. He had acted the rejected lover in the theatricals of the week before, and his acting had been rather too good. The scene she had just gone through reminded her very forcibly of it. She had found that she could not get the play out of her head afterwards, and had had long waking dreams that night, in which the Prince appeared time after time, and her refusal got more faint as he pressed his suit. She felt that he was the stronger of the two, and such a scene as the last inspired her with a kind of self-distrust. "He will not make himself 'cheap,'" Dodo said to herself. She was very glad he was going to stop, and had been surprised to feel how annoyed she was when he said he had come to wish

good-bye. But she felt he had a certain power over her, and did not quite like it. She would take Jack out for a walk and make things even. Jack had no power over her, and she thought complacently how she could turn him round her little finger. Dear old Jack! What a good time they were going to have.

She went downstairs and met the Prince and Jack on the verandah. The former was murmuring congratulatory speeches, and Jack was saying "Thanks awfully" at intervals. He had once said to Dodo that the Prince was "an oily devil," which was putting it rather strongly. Dodo had stuck up for him. "You only say he's oily," she said, "because he's got much better manners than you, and can come into the room without looking ridiculous, and I rather like devils as a rule, and him in particular, though I don't say he is one. Anyhow he is a friend of mine, and you can talk about something else."

Jack followed Dodo into the square, and sat down by her.

"What made you tell that chap that we were engaged?" he asked.

"Oh, I had excellent reasons," said Dodo.

The memory of the interview was still rather strong in her mind, and she felt not quite sure of herself.

"No doubt," said Jack; "but I wish you'd tell me what they were."

"Don't talk as if you were the inquisition, old boy," she said. "I don't see why I should tell you if I don't like."

"Please yourself," said Jack crossly, and got up to walk away.

"Jack, behave this minute," said Dodo. "Apologise instantly for speaking like that."

"I beg its little pardon," said Jack contentedly.

He liked being hauled over the coals by Dodo.

"That's right; now, if you'll be good, I'll tell you. Has he gone quite away?"

"Quite; thank goodness," said Jack.

"Well," said Dodo, "I told him because he was just going to propose to me himself, and I wanted to stop him."

"Nasty brute," said Jack. "I hope you gave it him hot."

"That's a very rude thing to say, Jack," said she. "It argues excellent taste in him. Besides, you did it yourself. Nasty brute!"

"What right has he got to propose to you, I should like to know?" asked Jack.

"Just as much as you had."

"Then I ought to be kicked for doing it."

Dodo applied the toe of a muddy shoe to Jack's calf.

"Now, I've dirtied your pretty stockings," she said. "Serves you right for proposing to me. How dare you, you nasty brute!"

Jack made a grab at her foot, and made his fingers dirty.

"Jack, behave," said Dodo; "there are two thousand people looking."

"Let them look," said Jack recklessly. "I'm not going to be kicked in broad daylight within shouting distance of the hotel. Dodo, if you kick me again I shall call for help."

"Call away," said Dodo.

Jack opened his mouth and howled. An old gentleman, who was just folding his paper into a convenient form for reading, on a seat opposite, put on his spectacles and stared at them in blank amazement.

"I told you I would," remarked Jack parenthetically, "It's only Lord Chesterford," exclaimed Dodo, in a shrill, treble voice, to the old gentleman. "I don't think he's very well. I daresay it's nothing."

"Most distressin'," said the old gentleman, in a tone of the deepest sarcasm, returning to his paper.

"Most distressin'," echoed Dodo pianissimo to Jack, who was laughing in a hopeless internal manner.

Dodo led him speechless away, and they wandered off to the little, low wall that separates the street from the square.

"Now, we'll go on talking,", said Jack, when he had recovered somewhat. "We were talking about that Austrian. What did you say to him?"

"Oh, I've told you. I simply stopped him asking me by telling him I was going to marry someone else."

"What did he say then?" demanded Jack.

"Oh, he asked me for sympathy," said Dodo.

"Which you gave him?"

"Certainly," she answered. "I was very sorry for him, and I told him so; but we did it very nicely and politely, without stating anything, but only hinting at it."

"A nasty, vicious, oily brute," observed Jack.

"Jack, you're ridiculous," said she; "he's nothing of the sort. I've told him to come and see us when we're in England, and you'll have to be very polite and charming to him."

"Oh, he can come then," said Jack, "but I don't like him."

They strolled down the street towards the church, and Dodo insisted on buying several entirely useless brackets, with chamois horns stuck aimlessly about them.

"I haven't got any money," she observed. "Fork up, Jack. Seven and eight are fifteen and seven are twenty-two. Thanks."

Dodo was dissatisfied with one of her brackets before they reached the hotel again, and presented it to Jack.

"It's awfully good of you," said he; "do you mean that you only owe me fifteen?"

"Only fourteen," said Dodo; "this was eight francs. It will be very useful to you, and when you look at it, you can think of me," she observed with feeling.

"I'd sooner have my eight francs."

"Then you just won't get them," said Dodo, with finality; "and you sha'n't have that unless you say, 'Thank you.'"

The verandah was empty, as lunch had begun; so Jack said, "Thank you."

The news of their engagement soon got about the hotel, and caused a much more favourable view to be taken of Dodo's behaviour to Jack, in the minds of the hostile camp. "Of course, if she was engaged to Lord Chesterford all along," said the enemy, "it puts her conduct in an entirely different light. They say he's immensely rich, and we hope we shall meet them in London. Her acting the other night was really extremely clever."

Mrs. Vane gave quite a number of select little teas on the verandah to the penitent, and showed her teeth most graciously. "Darling Dodo, of course it's a great happiness to me," she would say, "and the Marquis is such a very old friend of ours. So charming, isn't he? Yes. And they are simply devoted to each other."—The speeches seemed quite familiar still to her.

Dodo regarded the sudden change in the minds of the "shocked section" with much amusement. "It appears I'm quite proper after all," she thought. "That's a blessing anyhow. The colonial bishop will certainly ask me to share his mitre, now he knows I'm a good girl."

"Jack," she called out to him as he passed, "you said the salon smelled like a church this morning. Well, it's only me. I diffuse an odour of sanctity, I find."

The Princess expressed her opinions on the engagement.

"I'm sorry that you can't marry my brother," she said. "You would have suited him admirably, and it would have been only natural for you to stay with your

brother-in-law. What shall I give you for a wedding present? There's the bear-skin prayer-book, if you like. Waldenech is very cross about it. He says you told him he mightn't go away, so he has to stop. Are you going out on the picnic? Waldenech's getting up a picnic. He's ordered champagne. Do you think it will be amusing? They will drink the health of you and Lord Chesterford. If you'll promise to reply in suitable terms I'll come. Why didn't you come and see me this morning? I suppose you were engaged. Of course my brother was proposing to you after breakfast, and then you had to go and talk to your young man. Come to the picnic, Dodo. You shall show me how to throw stones."

They were going to walk up to a sufficiently remote spot in the rising ground to the east of Zermatt, and find their lunch ready for them. The Prince had no sympathy with meat sandwiches and a little sherry out of a flask, and his sister had expressed her antipathy to fresh eggs; so he had told the hotel-keeper that lunch would be wanted, and that there were to be no hard-boiled eggs and no sandwiches, and plenty of deck-chairs.

The Princess firmly refused to walk as far, and ordered what she said "was less unlike a horse than the others"; and asked Dodo to wait for her, as she knew she wouldn't be in time. She was one of those people who find it quite impossible to be punctual at whatever time she had an engagement. She was always twenty minutes late, but, as Dodo remarked, "That's the same thing as being punctual when people know you. I think punctuality is a necessity," she added, "more than a virtue."

"Haven't you got a proverb about making a virtue of necessity?" said the Princess vaguely. "That's what I do on the rare occasions on which I am punctual. All my virtues are the result of necessity, which is another word for inclination."

"Yes, inclination is necessity when it's sufficiently strong," said Dodo; "consequently, even when it's weak, it's still got a touch of necessity about it. That really is a comfortable doctrine. I shall remember that next time I want not to go to

church."

"My husband is a very devout Roman Catholic," remarked the Princess. "He's got an admirable plan of managing such things. First of all, he does what his conscience—he's got a very fine conscience—tells him he shouldn't. It must be very amusing to have a conscience. You need never feel lonely. Then he goes and confesses, which makes it all right, and to make himself quite safe he gives a hundred roubles to the poor. He's very rich, you know; it doesn't matter to him a bit. That gets him an indulgence. I fancy he's minus about six weeks' purgatory. He's got a balance. I expect he'll give it me. You have to be very rich to have a balance. He pays for his pleasures down in hard cash, you see; it's much better than running up a bill. He is very anxious about my spiritual welfare sometimes."

"Does he really believe all that?" asked Dodo.

"Dear me, yes," said the Princess. "He has a most childlike faith. If the priest told him there was an eligible building site in heaven going cheap, he'd buy it at once. Personally I don't believe all those things. They don't seem to me in the least probable."

"What do you believe?" asked Dodo.

"Oh, I've got plenty of beliefs," said the Princess. "I believe it's wiser being good than bad, and fitter being sane than mad. I don't do obviously low things, I am sorry for the poor devils of this world, I'm not mean, I'm not coarse, I don't care about taking an unfair advantage of other people. My taste revolts against immorality; I should as soon think of going about with dirty nails. If I believed what the priests tell me I should be a very good woman, according to their lights. As it is, though my conduct in all matters of right and wrong is identical with what it would be, I'm one of the lost."

"English people are just as irrational in their way," said Dodo, "only they don't do such things in cold blood. They appeal to little morbid emotions, excited by Sunday

evening and slow tunes in four sharps. I went to a country church once, on a lovely summer evening, and we all sang, 'Hark, hark, my soul!' at the tops of our voices, and I walked home with my husband, feeling that I'd never do anything naughty any more, and Maud and her husband, and he and I, sang hymns after dinner. It was simply delicious. The world was going to be a different place ever afterwards, and I expected to die in the night. But I didn't, you know, and next morning all the difference was that I'd caught a cold sitting in a hayfield—and that was the end."

"No, it's no use," said the Princess. "But I envy those who have 'the religion,' as they say in our country. It makes things so much easier."

"What I couldn't help wondering," said Dodo, "was whether I should be any better if I had kept up the feeling of that Sunday night. I should have stopped at home singing hymns, I suppose, instead of going out to dinner; but what then? Should I have been less objectionable when things went wrong? Should I have been any kinder to—to anybody? I don't believe it."

"Of course you wouldn't," said the Princess. "You go about it the wrong way. We neither of us can help it, because we're not made like that. It would be as sensible to cultivate eccentricity in order to become a genius. People who have 'the religion' like singing hymns, but they didn't get the religion by singing hymns. They sing hymns because they've got it. What is so absurd is to suppose, as my husband does, that a hundred roubles at stated intervals produces salvation. That's his form of singing hymns, and the priests encourage him. I gave it up long ago. If I thought singing hymns or encouraging priests would do any good, I'd sell my diamonds and buy a harmonium, and give the rest away. But I don't think anything so absurd."

"David was so sensible," said Dodo. "I've got a great affection for David. He told his people to sing praises with understanding. You see you've got to understand it first. I wonder if he would have understood 'Hark, hark, my soul!' I didn't, but it made me feel good inside."

"Somebody said religion was morality touched with emotion," said the Princess. "My husband hasn't got any morality, and his emotions are those excited by killing bears. Yet the priests say he's wonderfully religious."

"There's something wrong somewhere," said Dodo.

The party were waiting for them when they came up. The Prince led Dodo to a place next him, and the Princess sat next Jack.

"I'm so sorry," said Dodo; "I'm afraid we're dreadfully late."

"My sister is never in time," said the Prince. "She kept the Emperor waiting half an hour once. His Imperial Majesty swore."

"Oh, you're doing me an injustice,", said she. "I was in time the other day."

"Let us do her justice," said the Prince. "She was in time, but that was because she forgot what the time was."

"That's the cause of my being unpunctual, dear," remarked the Princess. "To-day it was also because the thing like a horse wouldn't go, and Dodo and I talked a good deal."

Mrs. Vane was eating her chicken with great satisfaction. A picnic with a Prince was so much capital to her.

"I can't think why we don't all go and live in the country always," she said, "and have little picnics like this every day. Such a good idea of your Highness. So original—and such a charming day."

The Prince remarked that picnics were not his invention, and that the credit for the weather was due elsewhere.

"Oh, but you said last night you were sure it was going to be fine," said Mrs. Vane, floundering a little. "Dodo, dear, didn't you hear the Prince say so?"

"Here's to the health of our Zadkiel," said Dodo, "may his shadow, etc: Drink to old Zadkiel, Jack, the founder of the feast, who stands us champagne. I'll stand you a

drink when you come to see us in England. His Serenity," she said, emptying her glass.

"What a lot of things I am," murmured the Prince. "Don't forget I'm a poor devil whom you pity as well."

"Do you find pity a satisfactory diet?" asked Dodo saucily.

She was determined not to be frightened of him any more.

The Prince decided on a bold stroke.

"Pity is akin to love," he said below his breath.

But he had found his match, for the time being, at any rate.

"Don't mistake it for it's cousin, then," laughed Dodo.

The conversation became more general. The Princess said the mountains were too high and large, and she didn't like them. Jack remarked that it was purely a matter of degree, and the Princess explained that it was exactly what she meant, they were so much bigger than she was. Mr. Spencer plunged violently into the conversation, and said that Mount Everest was twice as high as the Matterhorn, and you never saw the top. The Princess said, "Oh," and Jack asked how they knew how high it was, if the top was never seen, and Mr. Spencer explained vaguely that they did it with sextants. Maud said she thought he meant theodolites, and Dodo asked a bad riddle about sextons. On the whole the picnic went off as well as could be expected, and Dodo determined to have lunch out of doors every day for the rest of her natural life.

After lunch Mr. Spencer and Maud wandered away to pick flowers, presumably. Mrs. Vane moved her chair into the shade, in such a position that she could command a view of the mountain, and fell asleep. Jack smoked a short black pipe, chiefly because the Prince offered him a cigar, and Dodo smoked cigarettes and ate cherries backwards, beginning with the stalk, and induced the Princess to do the same, receiving two seconds' start. "It's a form of throwing stones," Dodo explained.

The "most distressin'" old gentleman was sighted under a large white umbrella, moving slowly up the path a little below them, and Dodo insisted on inviting him to lunch, as it was certain that he had just left the table d'hôte. "He thought it simply charming of me," she said, as she came back. "He's quite forgiven Jack for shouting. Besides, I took him the Princess's compliments. He's English, you know."

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Edith had stayed on with the Granthams till nearly the end of August. She declined to have breakfast with the family, after she had been there about a week, because she said it spoiled her mornings, and used to breakfast by herself at seven or half-past, which gave her extra' two hours at her music; and Lady Grantham complained of being wakened in the middle of the night by funeral marches. So Edith promised to play with the soft pedal down, which she never did.

At lunch Sir Robert used to make a point of asking her how she had got on, and described to her the admirable band in the Casino at Monte Carlo. He was always extremely genial to her, and, when she played to them in the evening, he would beat time with one hand. Now and then he even told her that she was not playing staccato enough, or that he heard it taken rather quicker at Bayreuth.

Dodo had written to Edith saying that she was coming to stay with her in September, and that Edith must be at home by the second, because she would probably come that day or the third. Edith happened to mention this one night in the hearing of Lady Grantham, who had been firing off home-truths at her husband and son like a minute gun, in a low, scornful voice. This habit of hers was rather embarrassing at times. At dinner, for instance, that evening, when he had been airing his musical views to Edith as usual, she had suddenly said,—

"You don't know how silly you're making yourself, Bob. Everyone knows that you can't distinguish one note from another!"

Though Edith felt on fairly intimate terms with the family, there were occasions

when she didn't quite know how to behave. She attempted to continue her conversation with the Baronet, but Lady Grantham would not allow it.

"Edith, you know he doesn't know 'God save the Queen' when he hears it. You'll only make him conceited."

"She's only like this when she's here, Miss Staines," remarked Frank, alluding to his mother in the third person. "She's awfully polite when she's in London; she was to you the first week you were here, you know, but she can't keep it up. She's had a bad education. Poor dear!"

"Oh, you are a queer family," said Edith sometimes. "You really ought to have no faults left, any of you, you are so wonderfully candid to each other."

"Some people think mother so charming," continued Frank. "I never yet found out what her particular charm is."

On this occasion, when Edith mentioned that Dodo was coming to stay with her, Lady Grantham sounded truce at once, and left her unnatural offspring alone.

"I wish you'd ask me to come and stay with you, too," said she presently. "Bob and Frank will be going off partridge shooting all day, and Nora and I will be all alone, and they'll be sleepy in the evening, and snore in the drawing-room."

"I'd make her promise to be polite, Miss Staines," remarked Frank.

"I want to meet Lady Chesterford very much," she continued. "I hear she is so charming. She's a friend of yours; isn't she, Nora? Why have you never asked her to stay here? What's the good of having friends if you don't trot them out?"

"Oh, I've asked her more than once, mother," said Miss Grantham, "but she couldn't ever come."

"She's heard about ma at home," said Frank.

"I'm backing you, Frank," remarked the Baronet, who was still rather sore after his recent drubbing. "Go in and win, my boy."

"Bob, you shouldn't encourage Frank to be rude," said Lady Grantham. "He's bad enough without that."

"That's what comes of having a mamma with foreign manners. There's no word for 'thank you' in Spanish, is there, mother? Were you here with Charlie Broxton, Miss Staines? She told him he didn't brush his hair, or his teeth, and she hated little men. Charlie's five feet three. He was here as my friend."

"Do come," said Edith, when this skirmishing was over. "Nora will come with you, of course. We shall be only four. I don't suppose there will be anyone else at home."

"Hurrah," said Frank, "we'll have a real good time, father. No nagging in the evenings. We won't dress, and we'll smoke in the drawing-room."

"I long to see Dodo again," remarked Miss Grantham. "She's one of the few people I never get at all tired of."

"I know her by sight," said Lady Grantham. "She was talking very loud to Prince Waldenech when I saw her. It was at the Brettons'."

"Dodo can talk loud when she wants," remarked Miss Grantham. "Did you see her dance that night, mother? I believe she was splendid."

"She was doing nothing else," replied Lady Grantham.

"Oh, but by herself," said Edith. "She took a select party away, and tucked up her skirts and sent them all into raptures."

"That's so like Dodo," said Miss Grantham. "She never does anything badly. If she does it at all, it's good of its kind."

"I should like to know her," said Lady Grantham. The remark was characteristic.

Lady Grantham returned to the subject of Dodo in the course of the evening.

"Everyone says she is so supremely successful," she said to Edith. "What's her method?"

All successful people, according to Lady Grantham, had a method. They found out

by experience what rôle suited them best, and they played it assiduously. To do her justice, there was a good deal of truth in it with regard to the people among whom she moved.

"Her method is purely to be dramatic, in the most unmistakable way," said Edith, after some consideration. "She is almost always picturesque. To all appearance her only method is to have no method. She seems to say and do anything that comes into her head, but all she says and does is rather striking. She can accommodate herself to nearly any circumstances. She is never colourless; and she is not quite like anybody else I ever met. She has an immense amount of vitality, and she is almost always doing something. It's hopeless to try and describe her; you will see. She is beautiful, unscrupulous, dramatic, warm-hearted, cold-blooded, and a hundred other things."

"Oh, you don't do her justice, Edith," remarked Miss Grantham. "She's much more than all that. She has got genius, or something very like it. I think Dodo gives me a better idea of the divine fire than anyone else."

"Then the divine fire resembles something not at all divine on occasions," observed Edith. "I don't think that the divine fire talks so much nonsense either."

Lady Grantham got up.

"I expect to be disappointed," she said. "Geniuses are nearly always badly dressed, or they wear spectacles, or they are very short. However, I shall come. Come, Nora, it's time to go to bed."

Lady Grantham never said "good-night" or "good-morning" to the members of her family. "They all sleep like hogs," she said, "and they are very cheerful in the morning. They get on quite well enough without my good wishes. It is very plebeian to be cheerful in the morning."

Although, as I have mentioned before, Sir Robert was an adept at choosing his conversation to suit his audience, there was one subject on which he considered that

he might talk to anyone, and in which the whole world must necessarily take an intelligent and eager interest. The Romans used to worship the bones and spirits of their ancestors, and Sir Robert, perhaps because he was undoubtedly of Roman imperial blood, kept up the same custom. Frank used irreverently to call it "family prayers."

To know how the Granthams were connected with the Campbells, and the Vere de Veres, and the Stanleys, and the Montmorencies, and fifty other bluest strains, seemed to Sir Robert to be an essential part of a liberal education.

To try to be late for family prayers was hopeless. They were at no fixed hour, and were held as many times during the day as necessary. Sometimes they were cut down to a sentence or two; suggested by the mention of some ducal name; sometimes they involved a lengthy, pious orgie in front of the portraits. To-night Edith was distinctly to blame, for she deliberately asked the name of the artist who had painted the picture hanging over the door into the library.

Sir Robert, according to custom, seemed rather bored by the subject. "Let's see," he said; "I've got no head for names. I think that's the one, of my great-grandfather, isn't it? A tall, handsome man in peer's robes?"

"Now he's off." This sotto voce from Frank, who was reading Badminton on Cover Shooting.

Sir Robert drew his hand over his beautiful moustache once or twice.

"Ah, yes, how stupid of me. That's the Reynolds, of course. Reynolds was quite unknown when he did that portrait. Lord Linton, that was my great-grand-father—he was made an earl after that portrait was taken—saw a drawing in a little shop in Piccadilly, which took his fancy, and he inquired the name of the artist. The shopman didn't know; but he said that the young man came very often with drawings to sell, and he gave him a trifle for them. Well, Lord Linton sent for him, and gave him a commission to do his portrait, had it exhibited, and young Reynolds came into

notice. The portrait came into possession of my grandfather, who, as you know, was a younger son; don't know how, and there it is."

"It's a beautiful picture," remarked Edith.

"Ah, you like it? Lord Sandown, my first cousin, was here last week, and he said, 'Didn't know you'd been raised to the Peerage yet, Bob.' He thought it was a portrait of me. It is said to be very like. You'd noticed the resemblance, no doubt?"

"A tall, handsome man," remarked Frank to the fireplace.

"I don't know as much as I ought about my ancestors," continued Sir Robert, who was doing himself a gross injustice. "You ought to get Sandown on the subject. I found a curious old drawing the other day in a scrapbook belonging to my father. The name Grantham is printed in the centre of a large folio sheet, with a circle round it to imitate the sun, and from it go out rays in all directions, with the names of the different families with which we have intermarried."

"I haven't got any ancestors," remarked Edith. "My grandfather was a draper in Leeds, and made his fortune there. I should think ancestors were a great responsibility; you have to live up to them, or else they live down to you."

"I'm always saying to Frank," said Sir Robert, "that you have to judge a man by himself, and not by his family. If a man is a pleasant fellow it doesn't matter whether his family came over with the Conqueror or not. Our parson here, for instance, he's a decent sensible fellow, and I'm always delighted to give him a few days' shooting, or see him to dinner on Sunday after his services. His father was a tobacconist in the village, you know. There's the shop there now."

Edith rose to go.

Sir Robert lighted her candle for her.

"I should like to show you the few portraits we've got," he said. "There are some interesting names amongst them; but, of course, most of our family things are at

Langfort."

"My grandfather's yard measure is the only heirloom that we've got," said Edith. "I'll show it to Lady Grantham when she comes to stay with me."

Frank had followed them into the hall.

"Family prayers over yet, father?" he asked. "I shall go and smoke. I hope you've been devout, Miss Staines."

Edith left the Granthams two days after this, "to buy legs of mutton," she explained, "and hire a charwoman. I don't suppose there's anyone at home. But I shall have things straight by the time you come."

Sir Robert was very gracious, and promised to send her a short memoir he was writing on the fortunes of the family. It was to be bound in white vellum, with their arms in gilt upon the outside.

Edith, found no one at home but a few servants on board wages, who did not seem at all pleased to see her. She devoted her evening to what she called tidying, which consisted in emptying the contents of a quantity of drawers on to the floor of her room, and sitting down beside them. She turned them over with much energy for about half an hour, and then decided that she could throw nothing away, and told her maid to put them back again, and played her piano till bed-time.

Lady Grantham and Nora followed in a few days, and Dodo was to come the same evening. They were sitting put in the garden after dinner, when the sound of wheels was heard, and Edith went round to the front door to welcome her.

Dodo had not dined, so she went and "made hay among the broken meats," as she expressed it. Travelling produced no kind of fatigue in her; and the noise, and shaking, and smuts, that prey on most of us in railway carriages always seemed to leave her untouched. Dodo was particularly glad to get to England. She had had rather a trying time of it towards the end, for Jack and the Prince got on extremely badly together, and, as they both wished to be with Dodo, collisions were frequent.

She gave the story of her adventure to Edith with singular frankness as she ate her broken meats.

"You see, Jack got it into his head that the Prince is a cad and a brute," said Dodo. "I quite admit that he may be, only neither Jack nor I have the slightest opportunity for judging. Socially he is neither, and what he is morally doesn't concern me. How should it? It isn't my business to inquire into his moral character. I'm not his mother nor his mother confessor. He is good company. I particularly like his sister, whom you must come and see, Edith. She and the Prince are going to stay with us when we get back to Winston; and he knows how to behave. Jack has a vague sort of feeling that his morals ought to prevent him from tolerating the Prince, which made him try to find opportunities for disliking him. But Jack didn't interfere with me."

"No," said Edith; "I really don't see why private individuals shouldn't associate with whom they like. One doesn't feel bound to be friends with people of high moral character, so I don't see why one should be bound to dislike people of low ditto."

"That's exactly my view," said Dodo; "morals don't come into the question at all. I particularly dislike some of the cardinal virtues—and the only reason for associating with anybody is that one takes pleasure in their company. Of course one wouldn't go about with a murderer, however amusing, because his moral deficiencies-might produce unpleasant physical consequences to yourself. But my morals are able to look after themselves. I'm not afraid of moral cut-throats. Morals don't come into the social circle. You might as well dislike a man because he's got a sharp elbow-joint. He won't use it on your ribs, you know, in the drawing-room. To get under the influence of an immoral man would be different. We'll, I've finished. Where are the others? Give me a cigarette, Edith. I sha'n't shock your servants, shall I? I've given up shocking people."

Dodo and Edith strolled out, and Dodo was introduced to Lady Grantham.

"What an age you and Edith have been," said Miss Grantham. "I have been dying to

see you, Dodo."

"We were talking," said Dodo, "and for once Edith agreed with me."

"She never agrees with me," remarked Lady Grantham.

"I wonder if I should always agree with you then," said Dodo. "Do things that disagree with the same thing agree with one another?"

"What did Edith agree with you about?" asked Miss Grantham.

"I'm not sure that I did really agree with her," interpolated Edith.

"Oh, about morals," said Dodo. "I said that a man's morals did not matter in ordinary social life. That they did not come into the question at all."

"No, I don't think I do agree with you," said Edith. "All social life is a degree of intimacy, and you said yourself that you wouldn't get under the influence of an immoral man—in other words, you wouldn't be intimate with him."

"Oh, being intimate hasn't anything to do with being under a man's influence," said Dodo. "I'm very intimate with lots of people. Jack, for instance, but I'm not under his influence."

"Then you think it doesn't matter whether society is composed of people without morals?" said Edith.

"I think it's a bad thing that morals should deteriorate in any society," said Dodo; "but I don't think that society should take cognisance of the moral code. Public opinion don't touch that. If a man is a brute, he won't be any better for knowing that other people disapprove of him. If he knows that, and is worth anything at all, it will simply have the opposite effect on him. He very likely will try to hide it; but that doesn't make it any better. A whited sepulchre is no better than a sepulchre unwhitened. You must act by your own lights. If an action doesn't seem to you wrong nothing in the world will prevent your doing it, if your desire is sufficiently strong. You cannot elevate tone by punishing offences. There are no fewer criminals

since the tread-mill was invented and Botany Bay discovered."

"You mean that there would be no increase in crime if the law did not punish?"

"I mean that punishment is not the best way of checking crime, though that is really altogether a different question. You won't check immorality by dealing with it as a social crime."

There was a short silence, broken only by the whispering of the wind in the fir trees. Then on the stillness came a light, rippling laugh. Dodo got out of her chair, and plucked a couple of roses from a bush near her.

"I can't be serious any longer," she said; "not a single moment longer. I'm so dreadfully glad to be in England again. Really, there is no place like it. I hate the insolent extravagant beauty of Switzerland —it is like chromo lithographs. Look at that long, flat, grey distance over there. There is nothing so beautiful as that abroad."

Dodo fastened the roses in the front of her dress, and laughed again.

"I laugh for pure happiness," she continued. "I laughed when I saw the cliff of Dover to-day, not because I was sea-sick—I never am sea-sick—but simply because I was coming home again. Jack parted from me at Dover. I am very happy about Jack. I believe in him thoroughly."

Dodo was getting serious again in spite of herself. Lady Grantham was watching her curiously, and without any feeling of disappointment. She did not wear spectacles, she was, at least, as tall as herself, and she dressed, if anything, rather better. She was still wearing half-mourning, but half-mourning suited Dodo very well.

"Decidedly it's a pity to analyse one's feelings," Dodo went on, "they do resolve themselves into such very small factors. I am well, I am in England, where you can eat your dinner without suspicion of frogs, or caterpillars in your cauliflower. I had two caterpillars in my cauliflower at Zermatt one night. I shall sleep in a clean white bed, and I shall not have to use Keating. I can talk as ridiculously as I like, without thinking of the French for anything. Oh, I'm entirely happy."

Dodo was aware of more reasons for happiness than she mentioned. She was particularly conscious of the relief she felt in getting away from the Prince. For some days past she had been unpleasantly aware of his presence. She could not manage to think of him quite as lightly as she thought of anyone else. It was a continual effort to her to appear quite herself in his presence, and she was constantly rushing into extremes in order to seem at her ease. He was stronger, she felt, than she was, and she did not like it. The immense relief which his absence brought more than compensated for the slight blankness that his absence left. In a way she felt dependent on him, which chafed and irritated her, for she had never come under such a yoke before. She had had several moments of sudden anger against herself on her way home. She found herself always thinking about him when she was not thinking about anything else; and though she was quite capable of sending her thoughts off to other subjects, when they had done their work they always fluttered back again to the same resting-place, and Dodo was conscious of an effort, slight indeed, but still an effort, in frightening them off. Her curious insistence on her own happiness had struck Edith. She felt it unnatural that Dodo should mention it, and she drew one of two conclusions from it; either that Dodo had had a rather trying time, for some reason or other, or that she wished to convince herself, by constant repetition, of something that she was not quite sure about; and both of these conclusions were in a measure correct.

"Who was out at Zermatt when you were there?" inquired Miss Grantham.

"Oh, there was mother there, and Maud and her husband, and a Russian princess, Waldenech's sister, and Jack, of course," said Dodo.

"Wasn't Prince Waldenech there himself?" she asked.

"The Prince? Oh yes, he was there; didn't I say so?" said Dodo.

"He's rather amusing, isn't he?" said Miss Grantham. "I don't know him at all."

"Oh, yes," said Dodo; "a little ponderous, you know, but very presentable, and good

company."

Edith looked up suddenly at Dodo. There was an elaborate carelessness, she thought, in her voice. It was just a little overdone. The night was descending fast, and she could only just see the lines of her face above the misty folds of her grey dress. But even in that half light she thought that her careless voice did not quite seem a true interpretation of her expression. It might have been only the dimness of the shadow, but she thought she looked anxious and rather depressed.

Lady Grantham drew her shawl more closely round her shoulders, and remarked that it was getting cold. Edith got up and prepared to go in, and Miss Grantham nestled in her chair. Only Dodo stood quite motionless, and Edith noticed that her hands were tearing one of the roses to pieces, and scattering the petals on the grass.

"Are you going in, Dodo?" she asked; "or would you rather stop out a little longer?"

"I think I won't come in just yet," said Dodo; "it's so delightful to have a breath of cool air, after being in a stuffy carriage all day. But don't any of you stop out if you'd rather go in. I shall just smoke one more cigarette."

"I'll stop with you, Dodo," said Miss Grantham. "I don't want to go in at all. Edith, if you're going in, throw the windows in the drawing-room open, and play to us."

Lady Grantham and Edith went towards the house.

"I didn't expect her to be a bit like that," said Lady Grantham. "I always heard she was so lively, and talked more nonsense in half an hour than we can get through in a year. She's very beautiful."

"I think Dodo must be tired or something," said Edith. "I never saw her like that before. She was horribly serious. I hope nothing has happened."

The piano in the drawing-room was close to a large French window opening on to the lawn. Edith threw it open, and stood for a moment looking out into the darkness. She could just see Dodo and Nora sitting where they had left them, though they were

no more than two pale spots against the dark background. She was conscious of a strange feeling that there was an undercurrent at work in Dodo, which showed itself by a few chance bubbles and little sudden eddies on the surface, which she thought required explanation.

Dodo certainly was not quite like herself. There was no edge to her vivacity: her attempts not to be serious had been distinctly forced, and she was unable to keep it up. Edith felt a vague sense of coming disaster; slight but certain. However, she drew her chair to the piano and began to play.

Miss Grantham was conscious of the same sort of feeling. Since the others had gone in, Dodo had sat quite silent, and she had not taken her cigarette.

"You had a nice time then, abroad?" she remarked at length.

"Oh, yes," said Dodo, rousing herself. "I enjoyed it a good deal. The hotel was full of the hotel class, you know. A little trying at times, but not to matter. We had a charming party there. Algernon is getting quite worldly. However, he is ridiculously fond of Maud, and she'll keep him straight. Do you know the Prince?"

"Hardly at all," said Miss Grantham.

"What do you think of him, as far as you've seen?" asked Dodo.

"I think he is rather impressive," said Miss Grantham. "I felt I should do as he told me."

"Ah, you think that, do you?" asked Dodo, with the most careful carelessness. "He struck me that way, too, a little."

"I should think he was an instance of what Edith meant when she said that to be intimate with anyone was to be under their influence."

"Edith's awfully wrong, I think, about the whole idea," said Dodo, hastily. "I should hate to be under anyone's influence; yet, I think, the only pleasure of knowing people is to be intimate. I would sooner have one real friend than fifty

acquaintances."

"Did you see much of him?" asked Miss Grantham.

"Yes, a good deal," she said, "a great deal, in fact. I think Edith's right about intimacy as regards him, though he's an exception. In general, I think, she's wrong. What's that she's playing?"

"Anyhow, it's Wagner," said Miss Grantham.

"I know it," said Dodo. "It's the 'Tannhauser' overture. Listen, there's the Venus motif crossing the Pilgrim's march. Ah, that's simply wicked. The worst of it is, the Venus part is so much more attractive than the other. It's horrible."

"You're dreadfully serious to-night, Dodo," said Miss Grantham.

"I'm a little tired, I think," she said. "I was travelling all last night, you know. Come, let's go in."

Dodo went to bed soon afterwards. She said she was tired, and a little overdone. Edith looked at her rather closely as she said good-night.

"You're sure it's nothing more?" she asked. "There's nothing wrong with you, is there?"

"I shall be all right in the morning," said Dodo, rather wearily. "Don't let them call me till nine."

Dodo went upstairs and found that her maid had unpacked for her. A heap of books was lying on the table, and from among these she drew out a large envelope with a photograph inside. It was signed "Waldenech."

Dodo looked at it a moment, then placed it back in its envelope, and went to the window. She felt the necessity of air. The room seemed close and hot, and she threw it wide open.

She stood there for ten minutes or more quite still, looking out into the night. Then she went back to the table and took up the envelope again. With a sudden passionate

gesture she tore it in half, then across again, and threw the pieces into the grate.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Dodo slept long and dreamlessly that night; the deep, dreamless sleep which an evenly-balanced fatigue of body and mind so often produces, though we get into bed feeling that our brain is too deep in some tangle of unsolved thought to be able to extricate itself, and fall into the dim immensity of sleep. The waking from such a sleep is not so pleasant. The first moment of conscious thought sometimes throws the whole burden again on to our brain with a sudden start of pain that is almost physical. There is no transition. We were asleep and we are awake, and we find that sleep has brought us only a doubtful gift, for with our renewed strength of body has come the capability of keener suffering. When we are tired, mental distress is only a dull ache, but in the hard, convincing morning it strikes a deadlier and deeper pain. But sometimes Nature is more merciful. She opens the sluices of our brain quietly, and, though the water still rushes in turbidly and roughly, yet the fact that our brain fills by degrees makes us more able to bear the full weight, than when it comes suddenly with a wrenching and, perhaps, a rending of our mental machinery.

It was in this way that Dodo woke. The trouble of the day came to her gradually during the moments of waking. She dreamed she was waiting for Jack in the garden where she had been sitting the night before. It was perfectly dark, and she could not see him coming, but she heard a step along the gravel path, and started up with a vague alarm, for it did not sound like his. Then a greyness, as of dawn, began to steal over the night, and she saw the outline of the trees against the sky, and the outline of a man's figure near her, and it was a figure she knew well, but it was not Jack. On this dream the sense of waking was pure relief; it was broad day, and her maid was standing by her and saying that it was a quarter past nine.

Dodo lay still a few moments longer, feeling a vague joy that her dream was not true, that the helplessness of that grey moment, when she saw that it was not Jack,

was passed, that she was awake again, and unfettered, save by thoughts which could be consciously checked and stifled. It was with a vast sense of satisfaction that she remembered her last act on the evening before, of which the scattered fragments in the grate afforded ocular proof. She felt as if she had broken a visible, tangible fetter—one strand, at any rate, of the cord that hound her was lying broken before her eyes. If she had been quite securely tied she could not have done that..—

The sense of successful effort, with a visible result, gave her a sudden feeling of power to do more; the absence of bodily fatigue, and the presence of superfluous physical health, all seemed part of a different order of things to that of the night before. She got up and dressed quickly, feeling more like her own self than she had done for several days. The destruction of his photograph was really a great achievement. She had no idea how far things had gone till she felt the full effect of conscious effort and its result. She could see now exactly where she had stood on the evening before, very unpleasantly close to the edge of a nasty place, slippery and steep. Anyhow, she was one step nearer that pleasant, green-looking spot at the top of the slope—a quiet, pretty place, not particularly extensive, but very pleasing, and very safe.

The three others were half-way through breakfast when Dodo came down. Lady Grantham was feeling a little bored. Dodo flung open the door and came marching in, whistling "See the Conquering Hero comes."

"That's by Handel, you know, Edith," she said. "Handel is very healthy, and he never bothers you with abstruse questions in the scandalous way that Wagner does. I'm going to have a barrel-organ made with twelve tunes by Handel, you only have to turn the handle and out he comes. I don't mean that for a pun. Your blood be on your own head if you notice it. I shall have my barrel-organ put on the box of my victoria, and the footman shall play tunes all the time I'm driving, and I shall hold out my hat and ask for pennies. Some of Jack's tenants in Ireland have refused to pay their rents

this year, and he says we'll have to cut off coffee after dinner if it goes on. But we shall be able to have coffee after all with the pennies I collect. I talked so much sense last night that I don't mean to make another coherent remark this week."

Dodo went to the sideboard and cut a large slice of ham, which she carried back to her place on the end of her fork.

"I'm going for a ride this morning, Edith, if you've got a horse for me," she said. "I haven't ridden for weeks. I suppose you can give me something with four legs. Oh, I want to take a big fence again."

Dodo waved her fork triumphantly, and the slice of ham flew into the milk-jug. She became suddenly serious, and fished for it with the empty fork.

"The deep waters have drowned it," she remarked, "and it will be totally uneatable for evermore. Make it into ham-sandwiches and send it to the workhouse, Edith. Jambon au lait. I'm sure it would be very supporting."

"It's unlucky to spill things, isn't it?" Dodo went on. "I suppose it means I shall die, and shall go, we hope, to heaven, at the age of twenty-seven. I'm twenty-nine really. I don't look it, do I, Lady Grantham? How old are you, Edith? You're twenty-nine too, aren't you? We're two twin dewdrops, you and I; you can be the dewdrops, and I'll be the twin. I suppose if two babies are twins, each of them is a twin. Twin sounds like a sort of calico. Two yards of twin, please, miss. There was a horrid fat man in the carriage across France, who called me miss. Jack behaved abominably. He called me miss, too, and wore the broadest grin on his silly face all the time. He really is a perfect baby, and I'm another, and how we shall keep house together I can't think. It'll be like a sort of game."

Dodo was eating her breakfast with an immense appetite and alarming rapidity, and she had finished as soon as the others.

"I want to smoke this instant minute," she said, going to the door as soon as she had eaten all she wanted. "Where do you keep your cigarettes, Edith? Oh, how you

startled me!"

As she opened the door two large collies came bouncing in, panting from sheer excitement.

"Oh, you sweet animals," said Dodo, sitting down on the floor and going off at another tangent. "Come here and talk at once. Edith, may I give them the milky ham? Here you are; drink the milk first, and then eat the ham, and then say grace, and then you may get down."

Dodo poured the milk into two clean saucers, and set them on the floor. There were a few drops left at the bottom of the jug, and she made a neat little pool on the head of each of the dogs.

"What are their names?" she asked. "They ought to be Tweedledum and Tweedledee, or Huz and Buz, or Ananias and Sapphira, or Darby and Joan, or Harris and Ainsworth. It ought to be Harris and Ainsworth. I'm sure, no one man could have written all that rot himself. Little Spencer is very fond of Harrison Ainsworth; he said it was instructive as well as palatable. I don't want to be instructed, and it isn't palatable. I hate having little bits of information wrapped up and given to me to swallow, like a powder in jam. Did you have to take powders when you were little, Lady Grantham?"

Dodo's questions were purely rhetorical; they required no answer, and she did not expect one.

"It is much nicer being completely ignorant and foolish like me," she said. "Nobody ever expects me to know anything, or to be instructive on any subject under the sun. Jack and I are going to be a simple little couple, who are very nice and not at all wise. Nobody dislikes one if one never pretends to be wise. But I like people to have a large number of theories on every subject. Everyone is bound to form conclusions, but what I dislike are people who have got good grounds for their conclusions, who knock you slap down with statistics, if you try to argue with them. It's impossible to

argue with anyone who has reasons for what he says, because you get to know sooner or later, and then the argument is over. Arguments ought to be like Epic poems, they leave off, they don't come to an end."

Dodo delivered herself of these surprising statements with great rapidity, and left the room to get her cigarettes. She left the door wide open, and in a minute or two her voice was heard from the drawing-room, screaming to Edith.

"Edith, here's the 'Dodo Symphony'; come and play it to me this moment."

"There's not much wrong with her this morning," thought Edith, as she went to the drawing-room, where Dodo was playing snatches of dance music.

"Play the scherzo, Edith," commanded Dodo. "Here you are. Now, quicker, quicker, rattle it out; make it buzz."

"Oh, I remember your playing that so well," said Dodo, as Edith finished. "It was that morning at Winston when you insisted on going shooting. You shot rather well, too, if I remember right."

Lady Grantham had followed Edith, and sat down, with her atmosphere of impenetrable leisure, near the piano.

Dodo made her feel uncomfortably old. She felt Dodo's extravagantly high spirits were a sort of milestone to show, how far she herself had travelled from youth. It was impossible to conceive of Dodo ever getting middle-aged or elderly. She had racked her brains in vain to try to think of any woman of her own age who could possibly ever have been as insolently young as Dodo. She had the habit, as I have mentioned before, of making strangely direct remarks, and she turned to Dodo and said:—

"I should so like to see you ten years hence. I wonder if people like you ever grow old."

"I shall never grow old," declared Dodo confidently. "Something, I feel sure, will

happen to prevent that. I shall stop young till I go out like a candle, or am carried off in a whirlwind or something. I couldn't be old; it isn't in me. I shall go on talking nonsense till the end of my life, and I can't talk nonsense if I have to sit by the fire and keep a shawl over my mouth, which I shall have to do if I get old. Wherefore I never shall. It's a great relief to be certain of that. I used to bother my head about it at one time! and it suddenly flashed upon me, about ten days ago, that I needn't bother about it any more, as I never should be old."

"Would you dislike having to be serious very much?" asked Edith.

"It isn't that I should dislike it," said Dodo; "I simply am incapable of it. I was serious last night for at least an hour, and a feverish reaction has set in. I couldn't be serious for a week together, if I was going to be beheaded the next moment, all the time. I daresay it would be very nice to be serious, just as I'm sure it would be very nice to live at the bottom of the sea and pull the fishes' tails, but it isn't possible."

Dodo had quite forgotten that she had intended to go for a ride, and she went into the garden with Nora, and played ducks and drakes on the pond, and punted herself about, and gathered water-lilies. Then she was seized with an irresistible desire to fish, and caught a large pike, which refused to be killed, and Dodo had to fetch the gardener to slay it. She then talked an astonishing amount of perfect nonsense, and thought that it must be lunch-time. Accordingly, she went back to the house, and was found by Edith, a quarter of an hour later, playing hide-and-seek with the coachman's children, whom she had lured in from the stable-yard as she went by. The rules were that the searchers were to catch the hiders, and Dodo had entrenched herself behind the piano, and erected an impregnable barricade, consisting of a revolving bookcase and the music-stool. The two seekers entirely declined to consider that she had won, and Dodo, with a show of reason, was telling them that they hadn't caught her yet at any rate. The situation seemed to admit of no compromise and no solution, unless, as Dodo suggested, they got a pound or two of

blasting powder and destroyed her defences. However, a deus ex machina appeared in the person of the coachman himself, who had come in for orders, and hinted darkly that maternal vengeance was brewing if certain persons did not wash their hands in time for dinner, which was imminent.

"There's a telegram for you somewhere," said Edith to Dodo, as she emerged hot and victorious. "I sent a man out into the garden with it. The messenger is waiting for an answer."

Dodo became suddenly grave.

"I suppose he's gone to the pond," she said; "that's where I was seen last. I'll go and get it."

She met the man walking back to the house, having looked for her in vain. She took the telegram and opened it. It had been forwarded from her London house. It was very short.

"I arrive in London to-day. May I call? —"WALDENECH."

Dodo experienced, in epitome at that moment, all she had gone through the night before. She went to a garden-seat, and remained there in silence so long that the footman asked her: "Will there be an answer, my lady? The messenger is waiting."

Dodo held out her hand for the telegraph form. She addressed it to the caretaker at her London house. It also was very short:

"Address uncertain; I leave here to-day. Forward nothing."

She handed it to the man, and gave orders that it should go at once.

Dodo did not move. She sat still with her hands clasped in front of her, unconscious of active thought, only knowing that a stream of pictures seemed to pass before her eyes. She saw the Prince standing on her doorstep, learning with surprise that Lady Chesterford was not at home, and that her address was not known. She saw him turn away, baffled but not beaten; she saw him remaining in London day after day,

waiting for the house in Eaton Square to show some signs of life. She saw—ah, she dismissed that picture quickly.

She had one sudden impulse to call back the footman and ask for another telegraph form; but she felt if she could only keep a firm hand on herself for a few moments, the worst would be passed; and it was with a sense of overwhelming relief that she saw the telegraph boy walk off down the drive with the reply in his hand.

Then it suddenly struck her that the Prince was waiting for the answer at Dover Station.

"How savage he will be," thought Dodo. "There will be murder at the telegraph office if he waits for his answer there. Well, somebody must suffer, and it will be the telegraph boys."

The idea of the Prince waiting at Dover was distinctly amusing, and Dodo found a broad smile to bestow on the thought before she continued examining the state of her feelings and position. The Prince's influence over her she felt was local and personal, so to speak, and now she had made her decision, she was surprised at the ease with which it had been made. Had he been there in person, with his courtly presence and his serene remoteness from anything ordinary, and had said, in that smooth, well-modulated, voice, "May I hope to find you in to-morrow?" Dodo felt that she would have said "Come." Her pride was in frantic rebellion at these admissions; even the telegram she had sent was a confession of weakness. She would not see him, because she was afraid. Was there any other reason? she asked herself. Yes; she could not see him because she longed to see him.

"Has it come to that?" she thought, as she crumpled up the telegram which had fluttered down from her lap on to the grass. Dodo felt she was quite unnecessarily honest with herself in making this admission. But what followed? Nothing followed. She was going to marry Jack, and be remarkably happy, and Prince Waldenech should come and stay with them because she liked him very much, and she would be

delightfully kind to him, and Jack should like him too. Dear old Jack, she would write him a line this minute, saying when she would be back in London.

Dodo felt a sudden spasm of anger against the Prince. What right had he to behave like this? He was making it very hard for her, and he would get nothing by it. Her decision was irrevocable; she would not see him again, for some time at any rate. She would get over this ridiculous fear of him. What was he that other men were not? What was the position, after all? He had wanted to marry her; she had refused him because she was engaged to Jack. If there had been no Jack—well, there was a Jack, so it was unnecessary to pursue that any further. He had given her his photograph, and had said several things that he should not have said. Dodo thought of that scene with regret. She had had an opportunity which she had missed; she might easily have made it plain to him that his murmured speeches went beyond mere courtesy. Instead of that she had said she would always regard him as a great friend, and hoped he would see her often. She tapped the ground impatiently as she thought of missed opportunities. It was stupid, inconceivably stupid of her. Then he had followed her to England, and sent this telegram. She did not feel safe. She longed, and dreaded to see him again. It was too absurd that she should have to play this gigantic game of hide-and-seek. "I shall have to put on a blue veil and green goggles when I go back to London," thought Dodo. "Well, the seekers have to catch the hiders, and he hasn't caught me yet."

Meanwhile the Prince was smoking a cigar at Dover Station. The telegram had not come, though he had waited an hour, and he had settled to give it another half-hour and then go on to London. He was not at all angry; it was as good as a game of chess. The Prince was very fond of chess. He enjoyed exercising a calculating long-sightedness, and he felt that the Marchioness of Chesterford elect was a problem that enabled him to exercise this faculty, of which he had plenty, to the full.

He had a sublime sense of certainty as to what he was going to do. He fully intended

to marry Dodo, and he admitted no obstacles. She was engaged to Jack, was she? So much the worse for Jack. She wished to marry Jack, did she? So much the worse for her, and none the worse, possibly the better, for him. As it was quite certain that he himself was going to marry Dodo, these little hitches were entertaining than otherwise. It is more fun to catch your salmon after a quarter of an hour's rather exciting fight with him than to net him. Half the joy of a possession lies in the act of acquisition, and the pleasure of acquisition consists, at least in half of the excitement attendant on it. To say that the Prince ever regarded anyone's feelings would be understating the truth. The fact that his will worked its way in opposition to, and at the expense of others, afforded him a distinct and appreciable pleasure. If he wanted anything he went straight for it, and regarded neither man, nor devil, nor angel; and he wanted Dodo.

His mind, then, was thoroughly made up. She seemed to him immensely original and very complete. He read her, he thought, like a book, and the book was very interesting reading. His sending of the telegram with "Reply paid," was a positive stroke of genius. Dodo had told him that she was going straight to London, but, as we have seen, she did not stop the night there, but went straight on to Edith's home in Berkshire. There were two courses open to her; either to reply "Yes" or "No" to the telegram, or to leave it unanswered. If she left it "unanswered" it would delight him above measure, and it seemed that his wishes were to be realised. Not answering the telegram would imply that she did not think good to see him, and he judged that this decision was probably prompted by something deeper than mere indifference to his company. It must be dictated by a strong motive. His calculations were a little at fault, because Dodo had not stopped in London, but this made no difference, as events had turned out, to the correctness of his deductions.

He very much wished Dodo to be influenced by strong motives in her dealings with him. He would not have accepted, even as a gift, the real, quiet liking she had for Jack. Real, quiet likings seemed to him to be as dull as total indifference. He would

not have objected to her regarding him with violent loathing, that would be something to correct; and his experience in such affairs was that strong sympathies and antipathies were more akin to each other than quiet affection or an apathetic indifference were to either. He walked up and down the platform with the smile of a man who is waiting for an interesting situation in a theatrical representation to develop itself. He had no wish to hurry it. The by-play seemed to him to be very suitable, and he bought a morning paper. He glanced through the leaders, and turned to the small society paragraphs. The first that struck his eye was this: "The Marchioness of Chesterford arrived in London yesterday afternoon from the Continent."

He felt it was the most orthodox way of bringing the scene to its climax. Enter a newsboy, who hands paper to Prince, and exit. Prince unfolds paper and reads the news of—well, of what he is expecting.

He snipped the paragraph neatly out from the paper, and put it in his card-case. His valet was standing by the telegraph office, waiting for the message. The Prince beckoned to him.

"There will be no telegram," he said. "We leave by the next train."

The Prince had a carriage reserved for him, and he stepped in with a sense of great satisfaction. He even went so far as to touch his hat in response to the obeisances of the obsequious guard, and told his valet to see that the man got something. He soon determined on his next move—a decided "check," and rather an awkward one; and for the rest of his journey he amused himself by looking out of the window, and admiring the efficient English farming. All the arrangements seemed to him to be very solid and adequate. The hedges were charming. The cart horses were models of sturdy strength, and the hop harvest promised to be very fine. He was surprised when they drew near London. The journey had been shorter than he expected.

He gave a few directions to his valet about luggage, and drove off to Eaton Square.

The door was opened by an impenetrable caretaker.

"Is Lady Chesterford in?" asked the Prince.

"Her ladyship is not in London, sir," replied the man.

The Prince smiled. Dodo was evidently acting up to her refusal to answer his telegram.

"Ah, just so," he remarked. "Please take this to her, and say I am waiting."

He drew from his pocket a card, and the cutting from the Morning Post.

"Her ladyship is not in London," the man repeated.

"Perhaps you would let me have her address," said the Prince, feeling in his pockets.

"A telegram has come to-day, saying that her ladyship's address is uncertain," replied the caretaker.

"Would you be so good as to let me see the telegram?"

Certainly, he would fetch it.

The Prince waited serenely. Everything was going admirably.

The telegram was fetched. It had been handed in at Wokingham station at a quarter to one. "After she had received my telegram," reflected the Prince.

"Do you know with whom she has been staying?" he asked blandly.

"With Miss Staines."

The Prince was very much obliged. He left a large gratuity in the man's hand, and wished him good afternoon.

He drove straight to his house, and sent for his valet, whom he could trust implicitly, and who had often been employed on somewhat delicate affairs.

"Take the first train for Wokingham to-morrow morning," he said. "Find out where a Miss Staines lives. Inquire whether Lady Chesterford left the house to-day."

"Yes, your Highness."

"And hold your tongue about the whole business," said the Prince negligently, turning away and lighting a cigar. "And send me a telegram from Wokingham: 'Left yesterday,' or 'Still here.'"

The Prince was sitting over a late breakfast on the following morning, when a telegram was brought in. He read it, and his eyes twinkled with genuine amusement.

"I think," he said to himself, "I think that's rather neat."

CHAPTER TWENTY

If Dodo had felt some excusable pride in having torn up the Prince's photograph, her refusal to let him know where she was gave her a still more vivid sense of something approaching heroism. She did not blame anyone but herself for the position into which she had drifted during those weeks in Switzerland. She was quite conscious that she might have stopped any intimacy of this sort arising, and consequently the establishment of this power over her. But she felt she was regaining her lost position. Each sensible refusal to admit his influence over her was the sensible tearing asunder of the fibres which enveloped her. It was hard work, she admitted, but she was quite surprised to find how comfortable she was becoming. Jack really made a very satisfactory background to her thoughts. She was very fond of him, and she looked forward to their marriage with an eager expectancy, which, was partly, however, the result of another fear.

She was sitting in the drawing-room next day with Miss Grantham, talking about nothing particular very rapidly.

"Of course, one must be good to begin with," she was saying; "one takes that for granted. The idea of being wicked never comes into my reckoning at all. I should do lots of things if I didn't care what I did, that I shouldn't think of doing at all now. I've got an admirable conscience. It is quite good, without being at all priggish. It isn't exactly what you might call in holy orders, but it is an ecclesiastical layman, and has great sympathy with the Church. A sort of lay-reader, you know."

"I haven't got any conscience at all," said Miss Grantham. "I believe I am fastidious in a way, though, which prevents me doing conspicuously beastly things."

"Oh, get a conscience, Grantie," said Dodo fervently, "it is such a convenience. It's like having someone to make up your mind for you. I like making up other people's minds, but I cannot make up my own; however, my conscience does that for me. It isn't me a bit. I just give it a handful of questions which I want an answer upon, and it gives me them back, neatly docketed, with 'Yes' or 'No' upon them."

"That's no use," said Miss Grantham. "I know the obvious 'Yeses' and 'Noes' myself. What I don't know are the host of things that don't matter much in themselves, which you can't put down either right or wrong."

"Oh, I do all those," said Dodo serenely, "if I want to, and if I don't, I have an excellent reason for not doing them, because I am not sure whether they are right. When I set up my general advice office, which I shall do before I die, I shall make a special point of that for other people. I shall give decided answers in most cases, but I shall reserve a class of things indifferent, which are simply to be settled by inclination."

"What do you call indifferent things?" asked Miss Grantham, pursuing the Socratic method.

"Oh, whether you are to play lawn tennis on Sunday afternoon," said Dodo, "or wear mourning for second cousins, or sing alto in church for the sake of the choir; all that sort of thing."

"Your conscience evidently hasn't taken orders," remarked Miss Grantham.

"That's got nothing to do with my conscience," said Dodo. "My conscience doesn't touch those things at all. It only concerns itself with right and wrong."

"You're very moral this morning," said Miss Grantham. "Edith," she went on, as Miss Staines entered in a howling wilderness of dogs, "Dodo has discovered a conscience."

"Whose?" asked Edith.

"Why, my own, of course," said Dodo; "but it's no discovery. I always knew I had one."

"There's someone waiting to see you," said Edith. "I brought his card in."

She handed Dodo a card.

"Prince Waldenech," she said quietly to herself, "let him come in here, Edith. You need not go away."

Dodo got up and stood by the mantelpiece, and displayed an elaborate attention to one of Edith's dogs. She was angry with herself for needing this minute of preparation, but she certainly used it to the best advantage; and when the Prince entered she greeted him with an entirely natural smile of welcome.

"Ah, this is charming," she said, advancing to him. "How clever of you to find out my address."

"I am staying at a house down here," said the Prince, lying with conscious satisfaction as he could not be contradicted, "and I could not resist the pleasure."

Dodo introduced him to Edith and Miss Grantham, and sat down again.

"I sent no address, as I really did not know where I might be going," she said, following the Prince's lead. "That I was not in London was all my message meant. I did not know you would be down here."

"Lord Chesterford is in England?" asked the Prince.

"Oh, yes, Jack came with me as far as Dover, and then he left me for the superior attractions of partridge-shooting. Wasn't it rude of him?"

"He deserves not to be forgiven," said the Prince.

"I think I shall send you to call him out for insulting me," said Dodo lightly; "and you can kill each other comfortably while I look on. Dear old Jack."

"I should feel great pleasure in fighting Lord Chesterford if you told me to," said the

Prince, "or if you told him to, I'm sure he would feel equal pleasure in killing me."

Dodo laughed.

"Duelling has quite gone out," she said. "I sha'n't require you ever to do anything of that kind."

"I am at your service," he said.

"I wish you'd open that window then," said Dodo; "it is dreadfully stuffy. Edith, you really have too many flowers in the room."

"Why do you say that duelling has done out?" he asked. "You might as well say that devotion has gone out."

"No one fights duels now," said Dodo; "except in Prance, and no one, even there, is ever hurt, unless they catch cold in the morning air, like Mark Twain."

"Certainly no one goes out with a pistol-case, and a second, and a doctor," said the Prince; "that was an absurd way of duelling. It is no satisfaction to know that you are a better shot than your antagonist."

"Still less to know that he is a better shot than you," remarked Miss Grantham.

"Charming," said the Prince; "that is worthy of Lady Chesterford. And higher praise—"

"Go on about duelling," said Dodo, unceremoniously.

"The old system was no satisfaction, because the quarrel was not about who was the better shot. Duelling is now strictly decided by merit. Two men quarrel about a woman. They both make love to her; in other words, they both try to cut each other's throats, and one succeeds. It is far more sensible. Pistols are stupid bull-headed weapons. Words are much finer. They are exquisite sharp daggers. There is no unnecessary noise or smoke, and they are quite orderly."

"Are those the weapons you would fight Lord Chesterford with, if Dodo told you to?" asked Edith, who was growing uneasy.

The Prince, as Dodo once said, never made a fool of himself. It was a position in which it was extremely easy for a stupid man to say something very awkward. Lady Grantham, with all her talent for asking inconvenient questions, could not have formed a more unpleasant one. He looked across at Dodo a moment, and said, without a perceptible pause,—

"If I ever was the challenger of Lady Chesterford's husband, the receiver of the challenge has the right to choose the weapons."

The words startled Dodo somehow. She looked up and met his eye.

"Your system is no better than the old one," she said. "Words become the weapons instead of pistols, and the man who is most skilful with words has the same advantage as the good shot. You are not quarrelling about words, but about a woman."

"But words are the expression of what a man is," said the Prince. "You are pitting merit against merit."

Dodo rose and began to laugh.

"Don't quarrel with Jack, then," she said. "He would tell the footman to show you the door. You would have to fight the footman. Jack would not speak to you."

Dodo felt strongly the necessity of putting an end to this conversation, which was effectually done by this somewhat uncourteous speech. The fencing had become rather too serious to please her, and she did not wish to be serious. But she felt oppressively conscious of this man's personality, and saw that he was stronger than she was herself. She decided to retreat, and made a desperate effort to be entirely flippant.

"I hope the Princess has profited by the advice I gave her," she said. "I told her how to be happy though married, and how not to be bored though a Russian. But she's a very bad case."

"She said to me dreamily as I left," said the Prince, "'You'll hear of my death on the Matterhorn. Tell Lady Chesterford it was her fault.'"

Dodo laughed.

"Poor dear thing," she said, "I really am sorry for her. It's a great pity she didn't marry a day labourer and have to cook the dinner and slap the children. It would have been the making of her."

"It would have been a different sort of making," remarked the Prince.

"I believe you can even get blasé of being bored," said Miss Grantham, "and then, of course, you don't get bored any longer, because you are bored with it."

This remarkable statement was instantly contradicted by Edith.

"Being bored is a bottomless pit," she remarked. "You never get to the end, and the deeper you go the longer it takes to get out. I was never bored in my life. I like listening to what the dullest people say."

"Oh, but it's when they don't say anything that they're so trying," said Miss Grantham.

"I don't mind that a bit," remarked Dodo. "I simply think aloud to them. The less a person says the more I talk, and then suddenly I see that they're shocked at me, or that they don't understand. The Prince is often shocked at me, only he's too polite to say so. I don't mean that you're a dull person, you know, but he always understands. You know he's quite intelligent," Dodo went on, introducing him with a wave of her hand, like a showman with a performing animal. "He knows several languages. He will talk on almost any subject you wish. He was thirty-five years of age last May, and will be thirty-six next May."

"He has an admirable temper," said the Prince, "and is devoted to his keeper."

"Oh, I'm not your keeper," said Dodo. "I wouldn't accept the responsibility. I'm only reading extracts from the advertisement about you."

"I was only reading extracts as well," observed the Prince. "Surely the intelligent animal, who knows several languages, may read its own advertisement?"

"I'm not so sure about your temper," said Dodo, reflectively: "I shall alter it to 'is believed to have an admirable temper.'"

"Never shows fight," said the Prince.

"But is willing to fight if told to," said she. "He said so himself."

"Oh, but I only bark when I bite," said the Prince, alluding to his modern system of duelling.

"Then your bite is as bad as your bark," remarked Dodo, "which is a sign of bad temper. And now, my dear Prince, if we talk any more about you, you will get intolerably conceited, and that won't do at all. I can't bear conceited men. They always seem to me to be like people on stilts. They are probably not taller than oneself really, and they're out of all proportion, all legs, and no body or head. I don't want anyone to bring themselves down to my level when they talk to me. Conceited people always do that. They get off their stilts. If there's one thing that amuses me more than another, it is getting hold of their stilts and sawing them half through. Then, when they get up again they come down 'Bang,' and you say: 'Oh, I hope you haven't hurt yourself. I didn't know you went about on stilts. They are very unsafe, aren't they?'"

Dodo was conscious of talking rather wildly and incoherently. She felt like a swimmer being dragged down by a deep undercurrent. All she could do was to make a splash on the surface. She could not swim quietly or strongly out of its reach. She stood by the window playing with the blind cord, wishing that the Prince would not look at her. He had a sort of deep, lazy strength about him that made Dodo distrust herself—the indolent consciousness of power that a tiger has when he plays contemptuously with his prey before hitting it with one deadly blow of that soft cushioned paw.

"Why can't I treat him like anyone else?" she said to herself impatiently. "Surely I am not afraid of him. I am only afraid of being afraid. He is handsome, and clever, and charming, and amiable, and here am I watching every movement and listening to every word he says. It's all nonsense. Here goes."

Dodo plunged back into the room, and sat down in the chair next him.

"What a charming time we had at Zermatt," she said. "That sort of place is so nice if you simply go there in order to amuse yourself without the bore of entertaining people. Half the people who go there treat it as their great social effort of the year. As if one didn't make enough social efforts at home!"

"Ah, Zermatt," said the Prince, meditatively. "It was the most delightful month I ever spent."

"Did you like it?" said Dodo negligently. "I should have thought that sort of place would have bored you. There was nothing to do. I expected you would rush off as soon as you got there, and go to shoot or something."

"Like Lord Chesterford and the partridges," suggested Edith.

"Oh, that's different," said Dodo. "Jack thinks it's the duty of every English landlord to shoot partridges. He's got great ideas of his duty."

"Even when it interferes with what must have been his pleasure, apparently," said the Prince.

"Oh; Jack and I will see plenty of each other in course of time. I'm not afraid he will go and play about without me."

"You are too merciful," said the Prince.

"Oh, I sha'n't be hard on Jack. I shall make every allowance for his shortcomings, and I shall expect that he will make allowance for mine."

"He will have the best of the bargain;" said the Prince.

"You mean that he won't have to make much allowance for me?" asked Dodo. "My

dear Prince, that shows how little you really know about me. I can be abominable. Ask Miss Staines if I can't. I can make a man angry quicker than any woman I know. I could make you angry in a minute and a quarter, but I am amiable this morning, and I will spare you."

"Please make me angry," said the Prince.

Dodo laughed, and held out her hand to him.

"Then you will excuse my leaving you?" she said. "I've got a letter to write before the midday post. That ought to make you angry. Are you stopping to lunch? No? Au revoir, then. We shall meet again sometime soon, I suppose. One is always running up against people."

"Dodo shook hands with elaborate carelessness and went towards the door, which the Prince opened for her.

"You have made me angry," he murmured, as she passed out, "but you will pacify me again, I know."

Dodo went upstairs into her bedroom. She was half frightened at her own resolution, and the effort of appearing quite unconcerned had given her a queer, tired feeling. She heard a door shut in the drawing-room below, and steps in the hall. A faint flush came over her face, and she got up quickly from her chair and rah downstairs. The Prince was in the hall, and he did not look the least surprised to see Dodo again.

"Ah, you are just off?" she asked.

Then she stopped dead, and he waited as if expecting more. Dodo's eyes wandered round the walls and came back to his face again.

"Come and see me in London any time," she said in a low voice. "I shall go back at the end of the week."

The Prince bowed.

"I knew you would pacify me again," he said.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Dodo was up again in London at the end of the week, as she had told the Prince. Jack was also staying in town, and they often spent most of the day together; riding occasionally in the deserted Row, or sitting, as they were now, in Dodo's room in the Eaton Square house. They were both leaving for the country in a few days' time, where they had arranged to come across one another at various houses, and Dodo, at least, was finding these few days rather trying. She and Jack had arranged to have them together, quite alone, while they were in Switzerland, and Dodo had overlooked the fact that they might be rather hard to fill up. Not that she was disappointed in Jack. He was exactly what she had always supposed him to be. She never thought that he was very stimulating, though never dull, and she was quite conscious of enough stimulus in herself for that. For the rest he was quite satisfactory. But she was distinctly disappointed in herself. She felt as if her taste had been vitiated by drinking brandy. Mild flavours and very good bouquets of vintages that had pleased her before, sent no message from her palate to her brain. It was like the effect produced by the touch of hot iron on the skin, that forms a hard numb surface, which is curiously insensitive to touch. Dodo felt as if her powers of sensation had been seared in this way. Her perceptions no longer answered quickly to the causes that excited them; a layer of dull, unresponsive material lay between her and her world. She thought that her nerves and tissues were sound enough below. This numbness was only superficial, the burn would heal, and her skin would become pliant and soft again; and if she was conscious of all this and its corresponding causes, it could hardly be expected that Jack would be unconscious of it and its corresponding effects.

On this particular morning Dodo was particularly aware of it. It was raining dismally outside, and the sky was heavy and grey. The road was being repaired, and a traction engine was performing its dismal office in little aimless runs backwards and forwards. The official with a red flag had found there were no vehicles for him to

warn and he had sat down on a heap of stones, and was smoking. There was a general air of stagnation, a sense of the futility of doing anything, and no one was more conscious of it than Dodo. She felt that there was only one event that was likely to interest her, and yet, in a way, she shrank from that. It was the searing process over again.

She wondered whether it would do any good to tell Jack of the fact that the Prince was down at Wokingham. She found the burden of an unshared secret exceptionally trying. Dodo had been so accustomed to be before the footlights all her life, that anything of the nature of a secret was oppressive. Her conduct to her first husband she did not regard as such. It was only an admirable piece of by-play, which the audience fully appreciated. Did Dodo then never think of her late husband with tenderness? Well, not often.

A thought seldom remained long in Dodo's mind without finding expression. She turned round suddenly.

"Jack, Prince Waldenech was at Wokingham."

"What was he there for?" asked Jack quickly.

"I think he came to see me," remarked Dodo serenely.

"I hope you didn't see him," he replied.

Dodo felt a slight stimulus in this subject.

"I saw him," she said, "because he came to see me, as they say in the French exercise books. I couldn't hide my head under the hearthrug like an ostrich—hot that they hide their heads under hearth-rugs, but the principle is the same. He walked in as cool as a cucumber, and said, 'Howdy?' So we talked, and he said he'd be glad to call you out, and you'd be glad to call him out, and we generally chattered, and then I made him angry."

"Why did he propose to call me out?" asked Jack coldly.

"Oh, he said he wouldn't call you out," remarked Dodo. "He said nothing would induce him to. I never said he proposed to call you out. You're stupid this morning, Jack."

"That man is an unutterable cad."

Dodo opened her eyes.

"Oh, he's nothing of the kind," she said. "Besides, he's a great friend of mine, so even if he was a cad it wouldn't matter."

"How did you make him angry?" demanded Jack.

"I told him I was going away to write some letters. It was rather damping, wasn't it? I hadn't got any letters to write, and he knew it, and I knew he knew it, and so on."

Jack was silent. He had been puzzled by Dodo's comparative reserve during the last few days. He felt as if he had missed a scene in a play, that there were certain things unexplained. He had even gone so far as to ask Dodo if anything was the matter, an inquiry which she detested profoundly. She laid down a universal rule on this occasion.

"Nothing is ever the matter," she had said, "and if it was, my not telling you would show that I didn't wish for sympathy, or help, or anything else. I tell you all I want you to know."

"You mean something is the matter, and you don't want me to know it," said Jack, rather unwisely.

They had been riding together when this occurred, and at that point Dodo had struck her horse savagely with her whip, and put an end to the conversation by galloping furiously off. When Jack caught her up she was herself again, and described how a selection of Edith's dogs had kept the postman at bay one morning, until the unusual absence of barking and howling had led their mistress to further investigations, which were rewarded by finding the postman sitting in the boat-house, and

defending himself with the punt pole.

Jack was singularly easy-going, and very trustful, and he did not bother his head any more about it at the time. But we have to attain an almost unattainable dominion over our minds to prevent thoughts suddenly starting up in front of us. When a thought has occurred to one, it is a matter of training and practice to encourage or dismiss it, but the other is beyond the reach of the general. And as Dodo finished these last words, Jack found himself suddenly face to face with a new thought. It was so new that it startled him, and he looked at it again. At moments like these two people have an almost supernatural power of intuition towards each other. Dodo was standing in the window, and Jack was sitting in a very low chair, looking straight towards her, with the light from the window full on his face, and at that moment she read his thought as clearly as if he had spoken it, for it was familiar already to her.

She felt a sudden impulse of anger.

"How dare you think that?" she said.

Jack needed no explanation, and he behaved well.

"Dodo," he said gently, "you have no right to say that, but you have said it now. If there is not anything I had better know, just tell me so, for your own sake and for mine. I can only plead for your forgiveness. It was by no will of mine that such a thought crossed my mind. You can afford to be generous, Dodo."

Something in his speech made Dodo even angrier.

"You are simply forcing my confidence," she said. "If it was something you had better know, do you suppose that——"

She stopped abruptly.

Jack rose from his chair and stood by her in the window.

"You are not very generous to me," he said. "We are old friends though we are lovers."

"Take care you don't lose my friendship, then," said Dodo fiercely. "It is no use saying 'auld lang syne' when 'auld lang syne' is in danger. It would be like singing 'God save the Queen' when she was dying. You should never recall old memories when they are strained."

Jack was getting a little impatient, though he was not frightened yet.

"Dodo, you really are rather unreasonable," he said. "To begin with, you quarrel with an unspoken thought, and you haven't even given me a definite accusation."

"That is because it is unnecessary, and you know it," said Dodo. "However, as you like. You think you have cause to be jealous or foolish or melodramatic about Prince Waldenech. Dear me, it is quite like old times."

Jack turned on her angrily.

"If you propose to treat me as you treated that poor man, who was the best man I ever knew," he said, "the sooner you learn your mistake the better for us both. It would have been in better taste not to have referred to that."

"At present that is beside the point," said Dodo. "Was that your unspoken thought, or was it not?"

"If I would not insult you by speaking my thought whether you are right or not," said Jack, "I shall not insult you by answering that question. My answer shall take another form. Listen, Dodo. The Prince is in love with you. He proposed to you at Zermatt. That passionless inhuman piece of mechanism, his sister, told me how much he was in love with you. She meant it as a compliment. He is a dangerous, bad man. He forces himself on you. He went down to Wokingham to see you; you told me so yourself. He is dangerous and strong. For God's sake keep away from him. I don't distrust you; but I am afraid you may get to distrust yourself. He will make you afraid of crossing his will. Dodo, will you do this for me? It is quite unreasonable probably, but I am unreasonable when I think of you."

"Oh, my dear Jack," said Dodo impatiently, "you really make me angry. It is

dreadfully bad form to be angry, and it is absurd that you and I should quarrel. You've got such a low opinion of me; though I suppose that's as much my fault as yours. Your opinion is fiction, but I am the fact on which it is founded, and what do you take me for? The Prince telegraphed from Dover to ask if I would see him, and I deliberately sent no answer. How he found out where I was I don't know. I suppose he got hold of the telegram I sent here to say my address was uncertain. Does that look as if I wanted to see him so dreadfully?"

"I never said you did want to see him," said Jack. "I said he very much wanted to see you, and what you say proves it."

"Well, what then?" said Dodo. "You wanted to see me very much when I was married. Would you have thought it reasonable if Chesterford had entreated me never to see you—to keep away for God's sake, as you said just now?"

"I am not the Prince," said Jack, "neither am I going to be treated as you treated your husband. Do not let us refer to him again; it is a desecration."

"You mean that in the light of subsequent events it would have been reasonable in him to ask me to keep away from you?"

"Yes," said he.

Jack looked Dodo full in the face, in the noble shame of a confessed sin: In that moment he was greater, perhaps, and had risen higher above his vague self-satisfied indifference than ever before. Dodo felt it, and it irritated her, it seemed positively unpardonable.

"Perhaps you do not see that you involve me in your confession," she said with cold scorn. "I decline to be judged by your standards, thanks."

Jack felt a sudden immense pity and anger for her. She would not, or could not, accept the existence of other points of view than her own.

"Apparently you decline to consider the fact of other standards at all."

"I don't accept views which seem to me unreasonable," she said.

"I only ask you to consider this particular view. The story you have just told me shows that he is anxious to see you, which was my point. That he is dangerous and strong I ask you to accept."

"What if I don't?" she asked.

"This," said he. "When a man of that sort desires anything, as he evidently desires you, there is danger. If you are alive to it, and as strong as he is, you are safe. That you are not alive to it you show by your present position; that you are as strong as he, I doubt."

"You assume far too much," said Dodo. "What you mean by my present position I don't care to know. But I am perfectly alive to the whole state of the case. Wait. I will speak. I entirely decline to be dictated to. I shall do as I choose in this matter."

"Do you quite realise what that means?" said Jack, rising.

Dodo had risen too; she was standing before him with a great anger burning in her eyes. Her face was very pale, and she moved towards the bell.

When a boat is in the rapids the cataract is inevitable.

"It means this," she said. "He will be here in a minute or two; I told him I should be in at twelve. I am going to ring the bell and tell the man to show him up. You will stay here, and treat him as one man should treat another. If you are insolent to him, understand that you include me. You will imply that you distrust me. Perhaps you would ring the bell for me, as you are closer to it."

She sat down by her writing-table and waited.

Jack paused with his hand on the bell.

"I will be perfectly explicit with you," he said. "If you see him, you see him alone. I do not wish to hear what he has to say to you. As he enters the door I leave it. That is all. You may choose."

He rang the bell.

"There is no reason for you to wait till then," said Dodo. "I am going to see him as soon as he comes. Tell Prince Waldenech that I am in," she said to the footman. "Show him up as soon as he comes."

Jack leant against the chimney-piece.

"Well?" said Dodo.

"I am making up my mind."

There was a dead silence. "What on earth are we quarrelling about?" thought Jack to himself. "Is it simply whether I stop here and talk to that cad? I wonder if all women are as obstinate as this."

It did seem a little ridiculous, but he felt that his dignity forbade him to yield. He had told her he did not distrust her; that was enough. No, he would go away, and when he came back to-morrow Dodo would be more reasonable.

"I think I am going," remarked he. "I sha'n't see you again till to-morrow afternoon. I am away to-night."

Dodo was turning over the pages of a magazine and did not answer. Jack became a little impatient.

"Really, this is extraordinarily childish," he said. "I sha'n't stop to see the Prince because he is a detestable cad. Think it over, Dodo."

At the mention of the Prince, if Jack had been watching Dodo more closely, he might have seen a sudden colour rush to her face, faint but perceptible. But he was devoting his attention to keeping his temper, and stifling a vague dread and distrust, which he was too loyal to admit.

At the door he paused a moment.

"Ah, Dodo," he said, with entreaty in his voice.

Dodo did not move nor look at him.

He left the room without more words, and on the stair he met the Prince. He bowed silently to his greeting, and stood aside for him to pass.

The Prince glanced back at him with amusement.

"His lordship does me the honour to be jealous of me," he said to himself.

Next day Jack called at Dodo's house. The door was opened by a servant, whose face he thought he ought to know; that he was not one of Dodo's men he felt certain. In another moment it had flashed across him that the man had been with the Prince at Zermatt.

"Is Lady Chesterford in?" he asked.

The man looked at him a moment, and then, like all well-bred servants, dropped his eyes before he answered,—

"Her Serene Highness left for Paris this morning."

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*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK DODO: A DETAIL OF THE DAY. VOLUMES 1 AND 2 ***

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