THE GARDEN GOD

A TALE OF TWO BOYS

Forrest Reid

Edited by Michael Matthew Kaylor

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'Take this kiss upon the brow!'

EDGAR ALLAN POE

'Yea, to Love himself is pour'd
This frail song of hope and fear.
Thou art Love, of one accord
With kind Sleep to bring him near,
Still-eyed, deep-eyed, ah, how dear!
Master, Lord,
In his name implor'd, O hear!'

D. G. ROSSETTI

SECOND IMPRESSION

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At the Sign of the Phœnix
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TO

HENRY JAMES

THIS SLIGHT TOKEN
OF RESPECT
AND ADMIRATION

By the same Writer

THE KINGDOM OF TWILIGHT

I

Y dear Allingham,' he wrote, 'it is very charming of you to think of venturing into this remote corner of the world for no other reason than to renew our friendship, and I must beg of you to let as little time as possible elapse between your promise and its fulfilment. Not only do I consider your idea a delightful one, but also I venture to find it really courageous, since to look me up again, after so many years, must be to take something remarkably like a leap in the dark. Well! at all events I hope—perhaps I should say fear—that you may not discover in me any extraordinary change. Indeed, from this moment I throw myself entirely upon your mercy, plead guilty to all the charges you bring against me in your letter. It is perfectly true that in living here the life of a hermit—a hermit, I hasten to add, with a taste for the philosophy of Epicurus and Anatole France—I have not in the least fulfilled my duties as a good citizen. Doubtless I am not a good citizen. Doubtless, as you so kindly hint, I ought to have married; but I suppose even *you* will admit that it is now too late—too late for me to think of following your excellent example. I cannot, alas! even pretend that I want to follow it, want to forsake my wilderness. Ah, my dear fellow, I am incorrigible, and you need not expect to find in the middle-aged Graham Iddesleigh an any more satisfactory person than him you found so *un*satisfactory at Oxford. Do you remember all that I used to be in the old days?—unreasonable, impractical, quite a worthless fellow! Do you ever remember the old days at all? But of course you must, or you would not have desired to renew them. For myself, you know, it is the one great privilege, the one great occupation of my life—I mean remembering. You will scarce be pleased to learn this, I suppose;—that is, unless you are, with increasing years, grown more tolerant of idleness—a weakness which I confess I do not exactly gather from your letter. But you must forgive me for this and

countless other faults. Yes—I remember! Sometimes I remember too much! —remember, in other words, what never really *was;* what, alas! only might have been. You see, the dividing line is so apt to shift a little, grow dimmer, as the years pass. . . . And after all, it is only a kind of feline habit that was born in me, and that keeps me, like a cat, quiet in the sun, or before my fire, dreaming, wandering in the endless woods of Persephone. Over those woods a gentle twilight broods, and the soft shady paths wind about, meet and cross one another, and lose themselves again in cool leafy distances.

'Nevertheless, there have been times—moments of dreadful egotism let me call them—when I have told myself, as you so flatteringly tell me, that had I been born the son of a poor man I might have done something in the world, though exactly what, I am as careful as you yourself are to leave undefined. No! I'm afraid all my gifts may be reduced to this single capacity for sitting in the sun—a capacity that is not of immense value to other people, whatever pleasure it may give to myself. I have an idea, however, that had I lived in the days of Plato, he would have employed me to sweep the walks of the Academe, or mow the grass, or do something of that kind. Possibly, even to make myself useful by illustrating the doctrine of reminiscence, like the boy in the *Meno;* or I might have taken care of the books.

'This last, certainly; for I have a sneaking fondness for the very cobwebs that gather in the corners of a library. Last night I spent two or three delicious hours in looking over my own volumes, taking down one after another from the shelf, and slowly turning their leaves. Many of them, most of them in fact —for my tastes have not greatly changed—I had loved in my boyhood, and these were, I confess, the ones I lingered over longest. And, in a sense, turning their pages again in the light of this darker-risen day was like holding up a lamp to the past; and the soft, gentle dust of the dead years fell all about me, floated in the air I breathed, delicate, sweet, and sad.

'O wondrous seed of poetry I Happy the child into whose tender soul you have dropped at his birth! May he keep until his death the innocence and the heart of a boy, and may the burden of years and the cares of the world fall lightly upon him! . . .

He laid down his pen and turned toward the window, while a smile, a little sad, but singularly sweet and gentle, passed across his face.

After all! . . . Well, he supposed the years *had* fallen lightly upon him. If he took the trouble to look in the glass he must see that his hair was turning

grey, that his shoulders were a little stooped, that there were lines about his mouth and eyes. . . . And his life?—that too, perhaps, had taken a greyish tinge. . . . Monotonous? . . . ah yes, monotonous in truth: but even now he had only to close his eyes to bring up the light—the light. . . .

The view of the years that opened up behind him was in fact tranquil and pleasant enough; uneventful; like a broad, shady garden, an old-world, sleepy garden full of flowers still sweet and fresh. He had done little. As Allingham had pointed out (with something of the air of a man who has made a wonderful discovery), the years of his life had simply floated away from him —floated away just as in autumn dead leaves float down a river.

But there had been many things that had given him pleasure. On the whole he had been happy—happy after his fashion: and he had known, had felt, the most beautiful thing of all, 'the ecstasy and sorrow of love. . . .'

He looked out into the quiet evening. The garden lay before him, stretching from the window in the pale half-light. A fine misty rain had begun to fall and was slowly shutting out the world. Presently his gaze wandered back again to the room wherein he sat. It rested on dark oak carvings; on the sheen and sombreness of fine bindings; on a chipped and broken statue of a boy, in yellowish marble; and, lastly, on a modern portrait hanging above the great fireplace.

This was the only picture in the room, and the fading light had drawn most of the colour out of it, but his memory held up a lamp—a lamp of soft flame—by which he beheld the full length figure of a boy—a boy of fifteen, sixteen, slight, dark-complexioned, with delicately oval face, and long silky hair falling in a single great wave over his forehead. The features were very finely moulded; the mouth especially being quite perfect. A somewhat exotic looking youngster, extraordinarily aristocratic one imagined, even a little disdainful,—yes, that too, perhaps, despite the wonderful charm of expression.

Harold, youngest son of Aubrey Stewart Brocklehurst, Esquire. He remembered the name as he had seen it in a catalogue of the Royal Academy —how long ago? He remembered the strange conversation he had had later on with his father, when he must have laid bare his soul a little; he remembered the morning when, on coming downstairs, he had found the picture there, awaiting him.

Twenty—thirty years ago!—it seemed like yesterday. Surely his father had been very good to him! The picture, from what he had since heard of the character of Mr. Brocklehurst, had not been bought for nothing. . . . And Harold! . . .

Thus he had been when he had first met him; thus he was now; thus he would be for ever! For he would never grow old—he would be a boy always. Summer would follow summer and the fields would grow white to harvest, but Time would thread no silver in the dusk of his dark hair, nor dim his smile, nor make unshapely his shapely body.

Graham lay back in his chair and closed his eyes. He had already forgotten his unfinished letter to Allingham; he had forgotten everything—everything save the curious fantastic dream that had filled up the first part of his life—the great light—the light beyond. . . .

How had it begun? . . . Had it always been? . . . He tried to remember. . . .

Presently he made a movement to light a cigar. Nothing now was visible in the room save, very faintly, the broken statue, an antique version of the famous Spinario, which his father had come by, he knew not how, long ago, in one of his many wanderings through Greece. And it came suddenly into Graham's mind that this statue was the centre from which everything had radiated; the touchstone around which his whole life had revolved. *It* was the beginning, then—the starting point And yet—had it only begun with his life here? Had it not been before? . . . Two thousand years ago? . . . But the veil had descended—he could not see.

This Greek boy, at all events, had been his secret playmate throughout his childhood, the companion who had shared his numerous adventures, the companion of his dreams—day-dreams and sleeping-dreams. And his mind leapt back to the dawn of his life. He had been brought up by his father (his mother had died in giving him birth), brought up here, in this house; and until he had gone to school he had had no friend of his own age. His father had himself undertaken his education, had taught him to read Greek at an age when most boys are stumbling through the first page of their grammar, and before Graham had ever heard of either Shakespeare or Milton, he had read again and again many of the writings of Sophocles and Plato.

Given such influences—his unconventional upbringing, his ignorance of the world, his beautiful surroundings—was it a wonder that that strange faculty for dreaming with which he had been born should have been perfected—perfected until in broad daylight he would slip unconsciously

from one world to the other, and gravely tell his father of marvellous happenings, fantastic adventures, which never could have taken place? Yes, there had been magic influences at work in that sleepy garden, in those broad, soft lawns and quiet trees,—a magic, above all, in the dim rich music of the sea.

For through all his childhood a subtle music had whispered like an undersong—the music of water, the music of running water, of sighing water—seeming to shape his very soul, making it pliant, graceful, gentle and pure, giving to it that gift or malady of reverie, which was itself like the endless flowing away of a stream. The noise of water had been ever in his ears. At night, if he had chanced to awaken, he had heard the low sad wash of the waves; in the daytime he had often lain for hours on the bank of a stream that flowed among the roots of water-willows by the foot of the apple-orchard,—lain there and let his thoughts run on and on with the running water, so fresh! so clear! so pure! And in the rose-garden there was an old moss-stained fountain, a fountain that sang in the sunshine, and wept in the twilight, and sobbed in the night—a fountain that murmured through the noontide to a lazy boy, whispering of the wanderings of Odysseus, and of Jason and the golden fleece—a fountain that curved up against the blue and splashed back into a basin of broad green leaves—a fountain coloured by the rainbow of romance, and brushed by the outstretched wings of Love.

Sometimes in the evenings he would sit for a while with his father on the lawn before the house, or play a game of croquet with him; and sometimes in the mornings he did his lessons there, or in the side-garden, while the scent of roses, and the low booming whisper of the bees, drifted slowly past. And whenever he looked up he would see, stretching away from him, trim dark walks, and soft green turf, and brilliant flower-beds, all very still and quiet under a yellow summer sun—he would see arches of climbing roses, dahlias with their petals opened wide to the heat, the sunlight itself, like a stream of daffodils, falling from the deep blue sky. A place to dream the sleepy hours away! a place suggestive of, leading to, that inner contemplative life, to the boy, even then, so precious! And looking at it now, in retrospect, he was conscious of a drowsy calm that had hung everywhere and over everything, hardly stirring with the faint wind; an absolute freedom from all troublous things, from all the tumult and discord of the world. Attuned to such surroundings he had grown up; on hot afternoons lying in the dark, cool, fragrant shadow of a great beech tree that grew close to the house—not

reading, feeling rather than thinking, letting the impression of everything about him sink into his soul, to be afterwards an ever-present picture there, a picture of perfect beauty, of that ideal or spiritual beauty which, according to Plato, must lift one's spirit to God—willing to live and die just there, never wandering quite so far afield even, as those dark blue hills one could see, from the upper windows, melting into the sky.

A rather sensuous boy perhaps! One, certainly, for whom the actual colour, the physical charm of life, of the visible world, meant much. A gentle boy too; warm-hearted, loving and happy, innocent and pure. . . .

The visible world!—was it not almost sentient? From the trees and the sky, from the restless sea and the wind had emerged, at any rate, that imaginary playmate who had made his life beautiful; the messenger of Eros; the fair boy who had come to him from his strange garden, his meadow of asphodel.

And then—he had gone to school.

I I

HEY had indeed often discussed it. It had been perpetually there—a source of wonder and many questions—a thing which hovered and danced, drew near and retreated, a thing which could be referred to at any moment without notice or introduction, a kind of enchanted castle which grew up into the sky with lightning-like rapidity, and as quickly vanished. It had not been, however, until he was close on sixteen that the decisive step had been actually taken, that the vision had given place to reality.

His father brought him and departed again, leaving Graham with a sinking heart in the midst of his new world. How dreadfully different from anything he had ever known it was all going to be! For the first time in his life he felt thoroughly miserable.

Yet, in a way, he was to be singularly fortunate. Far sooner than might have been expected he dropped into his new life. He had never, of course, played either cricket or football, but he was naturally strong and agile, and in the former game he now made rapid progress. It was then that he learned how ready his new companions were with their praise and encouragement. If he had known more of the world, indeed, he might have marvelled not a little at his almost immediate popularity, for doubtless, at first, he could not but have seemed ‘rather queer’ to the others. Nevertheless they liked him, liked to be with him, and if they occasionally found him alarmingly innocent—well! somehow, it was only charming that he should be so. To be sure he *was,* now and again, made fun of in a way; but that way was quite the kindliest in the world, the very opposite from the way they might have taken had they been so minded, had their desire been to hurt, to torment him.

All this, however, the fact that his new friends had so at once and unreservedly welcomed him, had made it so tremendously easy for him,

seemed to Graham to be merely natural, and thus, in a sense, it probably defeated his father's main object in sending him to school at all; that object being, presumably, to familiarise him with the ways of actual life. From Graham, somehow, actual life was as far away as ever. It was all so bright, so charming; every one was so 'decent' to him, so nice; how in the world was he to know that 'niceness ' wasn't a thing to be counted upon; and that he, Graham Iddesleigh, wonderfully had been made an exception of? There seemed in fact to be hardly a boy who was not anxious to help him, who did not take a pleasure in watching him drop into the ways of the place; while such things as he really did do well—swimming, diving, running, leaping, translating Greek—were elaborately overpraised. The masters liked him also; and, what was more significant, the older boys, who ignored his contemporaries, took an interest in him, asked him to their studies, looked after him, wanted him to do the school credit.

He was happy. The days passed very quickly. Nevertheless, he had not quite learned to live the life the others lived, and there were times when he

felt homesick. One thing in particular he noticed (though he had made too many new friends to find much leisure for regret), and that was just that the old playmate of his dreams had ceased to visit him, that he could no longer even call up very clearly his image, remember what he was like. It was as if the change which had come into his everyday world had extended on into the dusky ways of sleep, and though he did not dwell upon it at all, yet he felt, obscurely, that something that had been had ceased to be, and that there was a blank, a void in his existence, which none of the many new pleasures and interests in his life would ever be able to fill.

I I I

N a fallen stone, under the shelter of a rough, loosely-piled wall, Graham sat. All around him the landscape stretched, field after field, bleak and bare in the cold wintry light of a February afternoon, while dark heavy clouds blew like puffs of smoke across the dull grey sky. From time to time a passing breath of wind shivered through the dry grass, and from time to time a pale yellowish light, like a dim reflection of some wan remote sunshine, washed through the clouds, brightening the country for a few moments. The boy's chin was supported between his hands, and he gazed out across the monotonous fields and naked hedges, listlessly, a little sadly, thinking of home, of the past. He felt tired; there was a dampness, a heaviness, in the air, which weighed upon his spirit; and something of his dejection was visible in the mere drooping of his head.

He had passed from the golden quiet of his home into the midst of a large public school, into a busier, noisier world, where the real and the ideal no longer melted into a single dreamy haze; and when he looked back across the narrow stream of time—those few intervening weeks!—he could not but marvel at its depth. His former life had fallen from him like the sinking of a picture in the fire, and he knew that it would never come again. It was over! . . . finished! . . . done with! . . . How strange! . . . Yet when he closed his eyes it unrolled itself like a broad scroll, clear in every detail . . . Then, when the voice of water, and the whisper of the wind in the trees and in the grass had been for him almost as the sound of human voices, and the broad open sky and sea as the sight of human faces—then, when such things had seemed to have the power to speak to him directly, to speak from their own soul to his—when Pan and his followers had been in every thicket by the way! Ah! gazing back upon it all from his present position, he found time to wonder—to wonder gravely, doubtfully—if that clear, pure atmosphere would ever

again droop its wings above him, if things would ever be again, even for a little, as before. Those long, peaceful summer days, and cool, lingering evenings, when he had sat upon the steps beside his father, watching him smoke his pipe, and chattering to him of the different ideas and plans that danced, or lingered in his mind, while the trees seemed to rest so softly in the quiet air, so softly against the sky! . . . A sudden wild longing for it all, for all his old life, arose within him, and in a passion of homesickness he flung himself down in the swaying, sapless grass, and seemed to hear the moaning of a sea that was breaking, miles and miles away, upon a curved rocky shore, to hear the harsh screams of the sea-gulls as they flew restlessly over the grey bare waste of water, and dipped to the tumbling waves.

All at once he was aroused by a foot-fall, a rustle in the grass, and still half-blinded by his dream, turned to face the intruder.

'What is the matter? Can I help you at all?'

The words were very gently spoken, and came to Graham with a curious familiarity and charm. But instead of answering he sat quite still, gazing fixedly at the stranger, his colour gradually deepening. Fascinated, spell-bound, his lips parted, his eyes opened wide, he hardly dared to move lest the vision should vanish. For some moments indeed he scarce drew his breath; for some moments it seemed as though his whole vital force were concentrated into one long steadfast gaze.

He who stood before him, nevertheless, was but a boy of about his own age and height, though more slightly built. For Graham, however, he was beautiful as an angel—was, in truth, a kind of angel, a 'son of the morning.' His skin—contrasting with the broad linen collar he wore—was of that dark, olive-brown hue which the Greeks, in their own boys, believed to be indicative of courage; his eyes were blue and dark and clear, his nose straight, his mouth extraordinarily fine, delicate; his dark hair, soft and silky, falling in a single great wave over his shapely forehead.

'Who are you?' Graham faltered.

The boy began to blush a little—then to smile. 'My name is Brocklehurst—Harold Brocklehurst. . . . Why do you look at me so strangely?'

His question made Graham suddenly conscious of his rudeness, and also of the childishness, the impossibility of the idea that had floated into his mind. 'I did not mean to,' he stammered, covered with confusion. 'I beg your pardon.' Then, with his eyes lowered: 'You remind me very much of some

one I know. . . . It is rather queer. . . . and. . . . and you took me by surprise. . . . I was so unprepared.'

'Unprepared!'

'Yes. . . . I was thinking of him—of the other—when you came up. . . . You don't understand, of course. It is the extraordinary likeness—and it *is* extraordinary'—he could not help looking at the boy again.

'But likeness to whom?' Brocklehurst wondered. 'And why should it startle you?'

'Ah, to whom?' Graham echoed enigmatically. His strange fancy still hung there in the air before him, hung about his interlocutor like a light, like a blaze of dazzling sunlight. 'I don't know,' he softly added.

'You don't know!' Brocklehurst paused, just a little taken aback. Then as he noticed the other's seriousness he began to laugh. 'Aren't you a rather queer fellow?' he suggested with a kind of charming easiness.

'We are both a little queer,' Graham answered. 'At least . . . I beg your pardon——'

'Oh, it's all right'

'You see—you see I have known you for so long that—that——' His explanation, whatever it might have been, died away.

'You mean you have *really* known me. Then you must have met me somewhere before to-day!' He tried to recall the occasion, but without success.

'It was not here,' Graham went on slowly, gravely. 'I—I can't tell you.' He looked with a wistful, questioning helplessness into his companion's face. 'If I were to tell you, should you laugh?'

'I don't know. At any rate you *want* to tell me?'

'Yes, I want to.'

'Well, fire away then.'

'It is something that is rather hard for me to say. . . . It will make you think me so childish, so silly. . . . You see you couldn't very well believe it unless—unless you yourself were to remember, just as I do—unless it were true——'

Brocklehurst glanced at him quickly. 'Remember having seen *you* somewhere? But I may easily have forgotten. As a matter of fact I have forgotten—so now.'

'Yes—so now. . . . But I know you, for all that—the sound of your voice even, the way you speak and stand there.'

‘I only came back this morning. I do not think you were here before Christmas.’

Graham shook his head. ‘It was not here,’ he murmured. Then suddenly gathering courage, and with his eyes half closed: ‘It was far away . . . in a garden . . . Oh, I can’t tell you . . . I can’t, unless you help me. . . . It slips from me so’ quickly. . . . When I try to reach it, it fades from me, though I know it is still there . . . there, somewhere’—he smiled a little timidly. ‘Do you wonder what I am talking about? . . . I am only trying to remember a dream—a dream I have had so often.’

‘And *I* have something to do with it?’

‘Oh yes; everything’—he spoke quietly, simply. ‘You were always there, you know. It belongs to you as much as it belongs to me. You have been meeting me there for years!’

There was that in his voice which made Brocklehurst, with exquisite tact, look carefully away from him. ‘I don’t quite follow you,’ he said softly. ‘I don’t think I quite know what you mean.’

‘My meaning is only that,’ Graham replied; ‘only what I have just told you.’ He paused as if trying to make it out more clearly for himself. ‘Don’t *you* sometimes dream?’ he asked.

‘Yes, of course.’

‘Well I has it never seemed to you that there must be another world than this we are living in now?—a world outside this, I mean, but still a real world?’

‘A dreamland?’

‘Call it what you like. Yes—a dreamland. But while we are there, you know, *it* is the real world, there is no other.’

Brocklehurst looked at him curiously. ‘But you don’t believe that, do you?’

‘Yes, I believe it—or I used to believe it. There is something about it in the *Theœstetus* of Plato.’

‘You have read Plato?’

‘Only a little. I used to read him with my father.’

‘And that is where you got your idea?’

‘Oh no; I have always had it It has been like a part of my life. . . . You see my dreams are rather peculiar . . . I go back in them always to the same place —this garden—and I carry the memory of one life with me into the other. . . . Do you understand now? I can’t put it any plainer, because I am a little

confused myself. Some day it may become clearer, and I may be able to tell you better.'

'Well!—till then——' and Brocklehurst drew himself up on to the wall and drummed with his heels against the stones.

'Tin then?'

'Do you talk in this way to every one?'

'You mean I had better not? How should I talk to other people, when even you do not understand me?'

The other boy was silent. He was thinking. 'What was I like?' he asked presently—'in your dreams, I mean?' Then quickly, and before his companion could reply, 'No; you need not tell me.'

'You do not care for me to talk to you in this way?' Graham questioned half sadly, and with a strange feeling of loneliness creeping over him. 'You were beautiful,' he whispered under his breath; 'more beautiful than any one I have ever seen.'

A long silence followed. If Brocklehurst were surprised by his new friend's last words, he at least showed nothing. The wind stirred faintly above their heads, and a flock of rooks flew homeward across the grey sky. It was already getting late. The world seemed to have floated into a clinging frosty haze, through which a golden moon gleamed, rising slowly up above the bare, desolate fields.

'We had better be going back,' Brocklehurst said. 'It is getting dark.'

They walked slowly toward the school through the gathering dusk. To feel his companion close beside him, and to be alone with him like this, gave Graham an exquisite pleasure. If only he could be brave enough to put his hand upon his shoulder! All the way home he kept telling himself he would do so when they reached such and such a point in the road; but each time a curious shyness deterred him, each time his courage failed him; and when they at last reached the school, and his opportunity was gone, he felt as if he had allowed something precious and unrecoverable to slip away for ever.

I V

GRAHAM lay upon his back, his eyes wide open. All around him he could hear the silence—a silence broken every now and again by some faint sound from one or another of the boys who shared his dormitory. It was more than an hour since the lights had been put out, and all save himself were fast asleep; but he lay awake still, thinking of the afternoon that had just passed, and of the strange emotion it had swept into his life. He wondered how it could have come about, and he pondered old tales he had read—some of them long ago—tales of a pagan world, in which this wonderful passion of friendship, then so common, had played its part. Returning to him now, they wore a new and added beauty, a meaning he had only dreamed before, but which at present filled his mind with a kind of heavenly radiance. Might no this own friendship be just the same? . . . Might not it, too, be something more than a mere romantic reverie, than the shadow of a beautiful dream? He felt an exquisite happiness in giving way to his tenderness, in letting his imagination run on and on, like a swift, strong river, in an ever-changing dream of love. It was as if by merely stretching out his hand he had touched the poetry, the soul of existence; it was as if by stretching out his hand he had awakened another spirit to beat its wings within his own.

‘Spirit of Beauty, that dost consecrate
With thine own hues all thou dost shine upon.’

So he might have sung had he known the lines. For he felt himself raised up as on the strong, swift wings of the morning, lifted to the very gate of Heaven. It was on such a love as this that the Platonic philosophy had been built; and now—now in his own life—it had come true. Fair, and pure, and

holy—down from the garden of God—it had fallen into his soul, had poured through the open gates of Heaven, to bathe him in its light He turned upon his pillow and smiled. He stretched out his arms wide to the great, fragrant mother-night, and she bent down over him, cool and dark and silent, and kissed him softly on his forehead, and on his mouth and eyes.

He could not sleep. A strange restlessness, a ‘spirit in his feet,’ seemed to draw him from his bed, and leaving his cubicle, he stood in his night-dress on the cold floor. A flood of moonlight lay across the room, and he watched it falling through the air, a silent, rapid stream.

How still everything was! how light! Softly, softly, on tip-toe, he made his way to the window, and climbing on to a chair, looked out.

In the grounds it was light with that same cold light, clear, yet not quite clear, earth and sky seeming to be blended in one strange misty radiance, pale, bluish, almost white. And the moonlight lay, still and dreamy, everywhere, more tangible, yet more shadowy, than the light of day. If one stretched out one’s hands, one might almost feel it, he thought, might almost brush it away like a great white silky cobweb of woven flame. The stone gable of the house stood out sharply black against the sky, and the shadows on the grass were black as ink. Above the long row of still and leafless trees he saw the belt of Orion, and to the right of that, the white, broken moon faintly edged with blue. It was like the dawning of some wonderful, icy day upon an unexplored, a new and mysterious world; and through the cold misty light he half expected to see the moving forms of those who live in the unknown.

He did indeed see a figure—a figure coming toward him, stepping slowly down a wide silver stair that reached from Heaven—a figure clad in fair armour, and with dark hair floating out against the stars. . . . He was calling to him from without . . . he beckoned with his hands . . . he waited, waited. . . .

A shudder ran through Graham’s body: he seemed no longer to be in the dormitory, but to stand somewhere beyond the gates of death. He clasped the bars of the window with his hands; he leaned against the iron bars; then he opened out his arms wide and smiled. . . .

‘What are you doing? . . . Iddesleigh! . . . Graham!’ It was Brocklehurst’s voice. His cubicle was next the window, and he had been awakened.

‘Nothing; nothing,’ Graham answered, startled, turning quickly round. ‘I was looking out. . . . I forgot. . . . Why are you not asleep?’ He went over to

his friend, and sat down by his side. Brocklehurst had already cuddled under the clothes again.

‘I was asleep until you wakened me. Why are you not in your bed? ’ he whispered. ‘Why were you standing there? What a mad thing to do at this time of year! You might kill yourself!’

‘Oh, I don’t take cold easily. I suppose I wasn’t thinking of what I was doing.’

‘But you should have put on your dressing-gown. You are only in your night-dress. At first I thought you were walking in your sleep. You looked like a white ghost there at the window. You will catch your death of cold now if you stay there. Come in here beside me if you want to talk.’

Graham got into the bed. ‘I was thinking of you,’ he said softly.

‘You’re a very strange fellow—aren’t you?’ Brocklehurst murmured.

‘Yes; I suppose so.’

‘Hush! Speak lower. If you were caught here with me, you know, there’d be the most frightful row. . . . What were you looking at out of the window?’

‘I don’t know. . . . I seemed to see——’

‘What?’

‘I can’t tell you. I almost forget.’

‘You *must* tell me.’

‘It was a knight . . . a young knight in armour.’

‘Out there on the grass?’

‘It was you. . . . Oh, I know there wasn’t really anything there,’ he added hastily—‘only the light of the moon on the ground.’

‘And all that you told me this afternoon—it, too, was nothing? ’

‘Yes—yes, it was. Some day I will tell you all about it, from the very beginning, but not now. It would take too long. . . . You see I was so much by myself before I came here. I had no one. And—and—I could not help speaking to you this afternoon. . . . You don’t understand how—how much it is all a part of my life—how much it means to me——’

He broke off abruptly, and for a little Brocklehurst said nothing.

‘Tell me about what you used to do at home, if you don’t mind,’ he whispered presently. Then he lay still, listening to a rather broken and wandering story, which very soon he grew too sleepy to follow. ‘You had better go back to your own bed now,’ he murmured drowsily. ‘It wouldn’t do for you to drop off asleep here. Don’t make any noise: some other chap may be awake.’

Graham rose obediently, but he still lingered in the cubicle, held by a vague yet very strong desire—desire to unburden himself of that which filled his soul, and which a feeling of shyness kept locked up in his breast. Then suddenly he overcame his cowardice, and kneeling down on the floor beside the bed, he kissed his friend as he lay there half asleep. That was all: he could not have spoken if he had tried to: even as it was his eyes were wet with tears. But he felt a kind of ecstasy of happiness as he stole back to his own bed, for it seemed to him that just then, when his lips had touched Harold's cheek, he had given himself to him for better or worse, had given him his life, his trust. In the morning, he knew, all would be a little different; in the morning he should have to come back to an everyday world. But he should be no longer alone there; oh, he should never be alone again. With his face buried in his pillow, and his cheek still a little damp, he prayed that all might be well, prayed that Harold might come to care for him; and day was breaking when at last he fell asleep.

V

E awoke with a feeling of delightful joyousness, a sense that something beautiful had happened. It was as if the summer were quite suddenly and unexpectedly come; as if the whole world were full of happiness and sunshine.

Then he remembered—remembered it all; and a strange passionate tenderness filled his heart. Yes! it *was* the summer—summer indeed—the sun shone all around him. At the same time he felt within him a deep and unaccountable shyness, which kept him from joining his friend, which kept him alone with his own thoughts until morning school was finished.

By then he had turned things over in his mind, by then he had come even to wonder a little at his first bewilderment. It all seemed now so natural, so only what he had awaited, had come here for. Already a thing without beginning, without end! It was simply there—there like the air he breathed—something that had wrapped itself about his life, his whole being. And it slid back and back, without a break, without a pause, back into the past. There had been no first meeting at all; he had no need even to ask a question; there was no ambiguity to be explained, still less an anomaly. He knew, he felt; and as day followed day, and week followed week, he knew and felt more and more. He listened to the undertone, listened to it growing deeper and more melodious, becoming at times almost articulate, pointing the way; only when he strained his ear for the word, the word at last, definite, decisive, it died back again into silence.

And yet he had had other moments—moments when he had seen, or had seemed to see, that Brocklehurst understood little enough of all that their friendship meant to him. How *could* he understand? Graham, at least, could never tell him. Ah, no one, no one but himself understood, no one but himself knew how the gentle tone of his friend's voice had a power to draw the tears

to his eyes, a power to sink into his inmost soul. Oh, he loved him so dearly! There was something in the very secrecy of his affection that permitted him to keep it passionately apart from everything else, from his life of everyday, from any vulgar or prosaic encroachment. He kept it in a place sacred, beautiful, quiet; a chapel within his own spirit, a chapel into whose soft light he passed from time to time to worship, to be alone there, alone there with his love, alone there before the altar he had decked with candles and flowers, with the white stainless flowers of his boyish admiration, his innocence and faith. . . .

Nevertheless, little by little, it was forced upon him—incredulous at first, reluctant to believe—that Brocklehurst's reputation was not a good one. Nothing very precise as yet; only a few vague rumours; but he knew, could easily see, that his friend was not liked. At first he had found this hard to credit, inconceivable almost; but when one boy after another practically advised him to drop his chum he could no longer close his eyes to the fact. Naturally he felt tremendously angry. It seemed so mean, so cowardly, so unfair; for no one, though all were willing enough to hint, to suggest, appeared able to tell him anything definite. He knew, of course, that Brocklehurst had been absent from the school for a while—had been removed, more than one boy quite plainly told him—but even were this the case (and Brocklehurst himself had never alluded to it), the fact of his having been brought back again, in Graham's opinion, openly, triumphantly, established his innocence. And innocence of what? When all was said and done, one could be sent away for merely asserting what one believed to be one's rights—for impatience of routine, a hundred things that did not in the least imply any serious fault. It must be confessed that in his heart of hearts he now and then wondered if assertion of his rights, any more than impatience of routine, could very greatly imperil a boy's popularity; but it was not until some time had elapsed that it actually occurred to him that he ought, after all, to speak to Brocklehurst himself of the matter, not telling him of course how far public opinion was against him, but putting him a little on his guard, giving him a little advice.

It was on a Sunday afternoon when they were out walking together—one of the latter days of spring—that he finally made up his mind to adopt this line of conduct; and he approached the subject at once, though at first a little hesitatingly, and in a rather roundabout fashion.

‘What are you going to be, Harold, when you grow up,’ he asked—‘when you leave school and college, I mean?’

Brocklehurst looked somewhat surprised. ‘Be!’ he echoed. ‘Oh, I can’t tell you that. I haven’t even thought about it yet. . . . Besides I don’t want to be anything in particular. I shall be myself, I suppose—just what I have always been.’

‘But I mean what shall you do?’ Graham persisted. ‘You’ll do *something, of* course. What do you think about when you are all alone?’

Brocklehurst smiled. ‘Very often of you,’ he said lightly. ‘Oh, I dare say I shall manage to drift along somehow or other. That is what I do now, you know.’

‘Drift?’

‘Yes. Don’t you think it rather charming?’ He spoke in the half-lazy, half-ironic fashion Graham had now grown accustomed to, but which he had noticed to have a curiously irritating effect upon other people. It was indeed just one of the innocent causes of Brocklehurst’s unpopularity that he had thought of alluding to, especially since it, more than anything else, tended to make his masters dislike him.

‘I haven’t any very strong hold upon things,’ Brocklehurst amplified. ‘Everything seems nice enough until I actually do it; but immediately afterwards it begins to bore me a little. As soon as you’ve tried a thing, you know, it’s apt to become the least bit tiresome. That is why I shouldn’t care to tie myself down to anything in particular.’

‘But you must, for all that, follow some definite way of life,’ Graham answered, dissatisfied.

‘My dear fellow, I only want to follow you.’

‘Me?’

‘Yes, you. I’m not joking at all. Since I’ve known you a great deal has changed. You’ve made

me see things in a different way. It’s perhaps rather extraordinary, but it’s true. You’re so—what shall I call it?—good.’

‘But you don’t see them in *my* way,’ Graham objected.

‘I know—I know. I dare say not even in a way you’d care for. But still there is a great difference from the old way. Only I can’t exactly tell you what it is, nor how long it will last Probably just as long as our friendship. That is why I want to keep close to you. I’ve been friends with other boys than you, you see,—even with some of those who try now to make you drop me. Look

at those two rows of trees, Graham, running side by side for a little, and then suddenly branching off in opposite directions.'

'Well?

'Well: they are like our destinies.'

Graham glanced at him. 'Why do you say that?' he asked a little strangely.

Brocklehurst smiled. 'That is, if our friendship is ever to be broken,' he explained.

'A real friendship can never be broken,' answered Graham slowly. 'If you think that ours can, then it is not a very great one—even now.'

Brocklehurst nodded his head. 'I wonder what you call a real friendship!'

'Oh, if you have to ask——!'

'It is only because I want you to tell me,' he said softly.

Graham smiled. Then suddenly he saw the opening for which he had been waiting. 'One of the signs of a real friendship is not to be afraid to speak openly to your friend of all that concerns both him and you.'

'Ah, that means you have something rather unpleasant to tell me, doesn't it?' Brocklehurst inquired with a not unkindly irony. 'Friends should have no secrets from each other, I expect?'

'They ought to share everything,' Graham replied simply; 'and more than anything else they ought to share their thoughts.'

Brocklehurst paused. 'Shall we sit down here,' he asked, with a faint sigh, 'before we begin?'

'You make it very hard for me,' Graham murmured, colouring a little.

'Ah, you mustn't mind that.'

They seated themselves on the trunk of a fallen tree, and a rather awkward silence followed.

Below them the ground sloped down, forming a little glen of trees and brambles, through which a narrow stream ran. The sunlight threading its way between the branches turned the raindrops upon the mossy grass to tiny globes of fire; and everywhere there was the fresh, life-giving smell of spring, of earth and moist vegetation. Brocklehurst sat with his chin between his hands; and his face, absolutely immobile, might have been carved in bronze. The corners of his mouth were drooped; and a deep line was drawn down his forehead between his eyes; his eyes, almost black in colour, gazed out straight before him. He appeared to be completely oblivious to Graham's

presence, to everything save his own thoughts, and the latter began to wonder a little as to what was passing in his mind.

And as he wondered a new world seemed to dawn upon his consciousness—a world where good and evil no longer stood so very far apart, were no longer so fixedly opposed to each other, so indissoluble as they had been, but were, rather, bound up together, inexplicably and hopelessly, almost defying disentanglement. A moment ago everything had been so clear, so plain before him; now, when he looked up, the sun was a little clouded over, and the whole colour and meaning of life stained with a darker hue. It seemed to him that he had been living in an atmosphere of dreamy idealism, the fruit of a plentiful lack of knowledge; and it did not occur to him that his ignorance had been beautiful, springing, as it did, not from stupidity, but from a peculiar type of mind, and an inexperience of life, of evil, even of sorrow. And a great compassion for the boy beside him welled up in his heart.

'Do you think I tell you everything, then?' Brocklehurst asked suddenly, a half-mocking smile hovering at the corners of his mouth, but in his voice just the faintest tremor.

Graham kept his eyes carefully averted from him. 'I think you would like to,' he answered slowly.

Brocklehurst shook his head. 'No; I shouldn't like to.'

'Well then, you—you can't trust me very much.'

'Ah, but I do trust you. . . . Why do you want to be so serious?' He smiled faintly. 'I notice that you keep all your seriousness for me, who am nevertheless supposed to be your chum.'

Graham looked doubtfully at him. 'Tell me that everything is all right,' he said, 'and I will believe you.'

'Everything is all right.'

There was a silence.

'Do you think you are keeping your promise?' Brocklehurst asked, with a little laugh.

'No; I suppose not.'

'What do you want to hear? What do you want me to tell you? It is foolish, isn't it, to bother about what is horrid, when there is so much that isn't?'

'In you, do you mean?'

'In me, if you like.'

Graham turned away while he tried to puzzle it out. Then once more facing his companion, he seemed to himself to risk everything in a single question: ‘Why were you sent home?’

Brocklehurst just perceptibly coloured. ‘You haven’t, you know, considering that you are my friend, a very overwhelming confidence in me.’

Graham looked down. ‘Yes, I have,’ he answered suddenly, impulsively. ‘You must forgive me. I am a pretty low kind of chap to have ever doubted you; but I’ll never do so again.’

‘Not even if another fellow comes along and tells you things?’

‘Never, so long as I live. . . . What a beast you must think me.’

Brocklehurst shook his head. ‘I only think that some one has been doing his best to turn you against me. I dare say it is natural enough. . . . You see, I used to get out at night—not very often, but now and again—and they didn’t understand.’

‘Get out?’

‘Yes; through one of the windows. . . . And because I didn’t take anybody into my confidence, they were sure I was up to no good. . . . I *had* to go. . . . I can’t explain.’

‘You mean, it *wasn’t* to do any harm?’

‘It was only to be out there—to breathe the air, to be under the sky.’

‘But in the daytime—couldn’t you——’

‘No. I wanted to run in the moonlight; to run over the meadows; to bathe in the river; to be free.’ ‘But why didn’t you tell them—when you knew what they thought?’

‘Oh, they are welcome to their thoughts. I’ve never in my life explained any of my actions, and I’m not going to begin now. Do you know——?’ he hesitated.

‘Know what?’

‘Only a strange fancy I used to have at such moments. It was rather queer’—he smiled shyly. ‘I used to feel just as if I had gone back to the life I had always been accustomed to—as if ‘I had just awakened, if you can understand—while the other, my ordinary life, appeared to be a kind of dull dream, a kind of captivity which I should have to return to, but which, nevertheless, was not real.’

Graham watched him a moment in silence. ‘Suppose—suppose your fancy were the truth!’

‘The truth! Oh, nonsense! How could it be?’ ‘Suppose you really did, long ago, live a life like that!’

‘Among woods and meadows and streams?’

‘Long ago, long ago——’

Brocklehurst shook his head.

‘The grass was soft under your feet,’ Graham whispered dreamily, ‘and there was the humming of bees——’

‘Where?—Where do you mean?’

‘And you played on the flute of Pan; and you bathed in the streams. . . . Do you remember?’

‘It was there that we first met?’

‘It was there that we ran in the sunlight over the green grass.’

‘It was there that we lay in the shadow of the trees.’

‘The deep sea: the dark sky: the sunshine: the

waving branches: the garden:—it is just as if I could see the reflection of them all in your eyes. . . . *Do* you remember?’

Brocklehurst shook his head again. ‘Only when you tell me,’—he laughed somewhat ruefully. ‘After all, it is *your* garden, you know. I can’t get there by myself.’

‘If we really could get there!’

‘Oh, well, I’ll come with you any time if you’ll show me the way.’

‘Suppose you had a dream,’ Graham said slowly, thoughtfully, ‘and in your dream you saw there was only *one* way—should you have the courage to take it? I mean, if it was a way that seemed to lead into the darkness?—death!’

‘Death!’ Brocklehurst looked at him as he repeated the word. ‘No,’ he half whispered, ‘not that—I hate the idea of it. I hate everything connected with it.’

‘Still——’

‘Have you ever seen a dead person?’

‘No.’

‘I have, then—once. . . . I was made to look. . . . It was my grandfather. . . . But I’ll never look again at anything of that kind—never—never—never. . . . He was so changed—you can’t think. . . . His face and hands were like wax. . . . His hands. . . . Oh, I didn’t like them. . . . I saw them that night after I had gone to bed . . . they were on the bedclothes . . . they came closer and

closer . . . it was horrible. . . . No, no, there was no garden for him, believe me!—nothing—nothing any more.’

V I

ND it seemed to Graham that nowhere, save only in a few poems, and in one or two passages of Plato, he could find the expression of a sentiment even approximating to that he felt for his friend. Many books he turned over, and such lines as caught his fancy he read again and again until he knew them by heart. Those portions of the *Sonnets* of Shakespeare which were least rhetorical, which appeared to spring from a genuine feeling, he learned in this way. Was not *his* friend, too, the ‘lord of his love,’ the ‘herald of the spring,’ the ‘lovely boy,’ the ‘rose of beauty,’ ‘music to hear’?—

‘For all that beauty that doth cover thee
Is but the seemly raiment of my heart.’

And again:—

Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer’s lease hath all too short a date:
. . . . . .
But thy eternal summer shall not fade.’

Nevertheless, it was in two poems by Rossetti, two poems of unsurpassable beauty, *The Stream’s Secret* and *Love’s Nocturn*, that he found, or thought he found, what he himself actually felt; their suggestion of a kind of impassioned mysticism appealing to him, being indeed but an echo of that curious vein of mysticism which from the first had entered into and made more wonderful his own love. These poems, altering the gender of the

personal pronouns, and thinking of Harold while he said them, he repeated over and over to himself, until in the end they became in his mind so bound up with his friend that he could not have imagined them in any other connection, that he could not have heard them without seeing Harold's face.

The spring passed quickly; summer was already here; and as Graham, fallen now completely into the ways of his new life, watched one day after another glide swiftly from him, sometimes he longed to stretch out his hand to stay this or that particular hour and keep it with him for ever.

On an afternoon in the beginning of July he had flung himself down in the shade, and was lying on his back among the long, sweet-smelling grass. He had been fielding out for more than an hour under a deep, cloudless sky, and he was a little tired and hot. His straw hat lay on the ground beside him, and he gazed up at the sky through the leafy branches of a tree that stretched above him like a gigantic parasol. The delicious summer heat, the stillness, made him feel rather drowsy; and he let his thoughts wander hither and thither on the wings of every idle fancy. Already the shouts from the cricketers reached him only as a far-off murmur, blended dreamily in his mind with the humming of a great black and yellow striped bee, which flitted noisily from cup to cup of a group of purple fox-gloves growing close at hand.

Days like this were very beautiful, he thought, and this old volcanic earth with its bright delicate covering, like a carpet, of grass and trees and flowers. And life!—yes; and life itself was beautiful! For the same life that was moving joyously within his young warm blood, was moving in the sap of tree and grass. What was it all? Whence did it spring? Every day a miracle was wrought when some delicate leaf, or the spiral of a new-born fern, unfolded itself in the soft air, or pushed up through the dark clinging soil. And this was life! And he was alive! He found an exquisite happiness in the thought that he himself was thus a part of nature, so close to nature in her simpler forms. It was as if—always alive to the charm of such things—he understood now for the first time the full meaning of the old Greek 'tree-worship,' realised, as it were, its origin, in his own emotions. That faculty for noting the listening soul, the spirit that is in leaf or plant, seemed to be a part of his very human nature, seemed as some ancient bond of relationship that bound him then, and would bind him for ever, to stiller and less perfect forms of life—to a whole world of pastoral divinities—the great god Fan himself; the Hamadryads,

who inhabit the forest trees; and Oreads, and Naiads, and Hyades—the deities of water-springs, and streams, and showers of summer rain.

As he thought of it a wave of joy seemed to raise him up suddenly on its strong, full flood; a deep happiness that had come to him often before in his solitude, and which, for the time at any rate, was sufficient. To live! to live! to live! it seemed to cry—that was enough; there was nothing else in the world. Ah, surely he must be happy so long as the sun shone and all nature sang with that great rhythmic chaunt of sensuous life! He closed his eyes that the exquisitely fresh and living smell of the earth, his mother, the cool sweet green smell of the swaying grass, might creep into his very being. How delicious it was just to lie there in the lush green grass, among the clear, floating shadows—to lie and think his thoughts as they drifted into his mind from the outer sunshine.

When he chose to look in their direction, he could see his schoolfellows eager still over their game of cricket; but he was content to watch them, content to look on, lazily, dreamily, through his half-dosed eyelids, following every now and then the swift curving passage of the ball through the air, when it rose above the fielders' heads.

And in everything, though in a somewhat misty fashion, he seemed to feel the personality, the influence, of Harold Brocklehurst. Was it not all—his extraordinarily vivid sense of life—bound up in some subtle way with the beauty of their friendship? Had not their friendship helped him to realise the mystery and loveliness of nature; helped him to make things out; helped to unseal his eyes? It was the force of a temperament that found expression very easily, which he felt to be working now upon his own simpler nature, his spirit, his mind,—altering everything around him, awakening a new beauty in familiar things, suggesting a wider, deeper, more mystical beauty where before he had only been conscious of a material impression. It carried with it, too, a hundred hints, memories, of a strangely familiar paganism, of a fresher, younger world; a hundred touches of poetry: —the sun, the climbing plant: Apollo, Dionysus:—strong, beautiful, swift. This boy!—what had he to do with them? Why should he suggest them? And then, in the background, a haunting sense of something darker, more fateful—tragic even!—again the legend of Dionysus; but more pitiable, quite human, vaguely pathetic and bewildering.

By and by he opened a copy of the *Phaedrus*, which he had worked through with his father, and began to read.

They had studied together most of the shorter dialogues, and the whole of the *Republic*, but the *Phaedrus* Graham cared for most. In its pages he had taken his first peep at philosophy—philosophy, as conceived by him, so near to, so replete with, poetry;—'Really, Phaedrus, you make a most charming guide.' Nay, it *was* poetry! deep, impassioned poetry! for with Plato, even the trees and streams, all the lovely things of the visible world, were made to play their parts. It was as if they possessed active and living souls. They had at least, the boy felt, a wonderful share in the development of one's *own* soul: they seemed to breathe about it an atmosphere of light and purity and happiness. In Plato's philosophy—so far as he understood it—there was little he could not accept. On one very hot, still day, for instance, a passing breath of wind on his face had suddenly awakened in him the recollection of a prior existence—faintly, vaguely, perhaps, but still quite clearly enough to stamp a definite impression on his mind.

And for him, of all writers, this old Greek had the most delightfully personal charm. As he read him, indeed, it seemed as if the peculiar beauty of his nature were exhaled gently from the printed pages—gently and very delicately—like, say, the faint perfume of a spray of sweet-briar he had dried a few days ago between them, and which now as he came suddenly upon it and held it to his lips, breathed still the ghostly shadow of its former fragrance. Surely no other books were so fair and sweet, so wise and true. In the charmed circle of their range, the coarser qualities of things were forgotten, the light was cleansed, the whole realm of the soul lay clear. He knew no other writings that flowed in with so gracious a charm upon one's spirit, filling it with a love for all that is beautiful and good, watering its 'wing-feathers': no others that exercised so humanising an influence upon one's character. For it was, in truth, before all else, a philosophy of life, of the highest life one may hope to lead here upon earth, or later on in heaven. A philosophy of love, too, necessarily I—and of beauty. Of all earthly things beauty approximated most nearly to its eternal idea: and love!—well, all desire for good and happiness, nay, even the working of philosophy itself—all that was only the gracious power of love. On these the path was builded, the Platonic ladder reaching from earth to heaven; for one climbed, after all, to those pure, colourless regions, to that radiant world of ideas, by Phaedo's golden hair.

Well! such a doctrine met most of the needs of his own spirit, and awakened in him, naturally, a very friendly feeling for its author; the kind of

affection we have for any one who has thought just the same thought, felt just the same joy or sorrow, that we are thinking and feeling now. As a young boy will linger one rung, though it be the lowest, in the Platonic ladder. Higher fair souls; fair virtues higher still; and highest of all the pure idea of Beauty itself, invisible to the eye of sense, but lying bright and clear before the vision of the mind, a glorious sight, to be viewed by those alone who have cleansed their souls of earthly passions:—'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.'

When he had finished the little introduction he closed the book and laid it upon the grass beside him. Nothing he had ever read, he thought, called up more vividly the impression, the very sound and smell of life out of doors. In each word was an exquisite suggestion of nature, of the open air, of the trees and green grass, and the cool shallow stream up which Socrates and Phaedrus had walked. The spirits that had haunted the bank under the plane-tree seemed now to haunt the pages of the dialogue. And indeed, as though magically changed, the elm above him had suddenly become a plane-tree. Nay! he could hear, actually hear, the trickle of the stream—could hear the chirping of the grasshoppers. And Phaedrus and Socrates!—yes, Phaedrus and Socrates were talking still: if he listened very intently he could make out the tones of their voices, even their words—if he closed his eyes he could see them.

'Beloved Pan, and all ye other gods who haunt this place, give me beauty in the inward soul; and may the outward and inward man be at one. May I reckon the wise to be the wealthy, and may I have such a quantity of gold as a temperate man and he only can bear and carry.—Phaedrus, need we anything more? The prayer I think is enough for me . . .'

The sounds about him drew farther and farther away as though fading back into dreamland. A clear light, pale green, like a reflection from some deep pool, was in the sky. The whole world was changed, and he seemed to be wandering in a country of gentle streams and meadows, while the green grass was gay with yellow daffodils.

The sunlight slanted lower, falling on the upper windows of the school. Was his dream less real than that soft light, he wondered? Did not both come from somewhere in the clouds? It explained so much; it pushed back, as it were, the horizon. Plato had believed in it Could it be, then, that there were

certain persons—like Plato, like himself—who were actually nearer to the unseen than others were? Surely things came to him, with the scent of flowers, with the sighing of wind, with the splash of the sea! There was a spirit which breathed upon him from the rustling trees and from the grass under his feet.

VII

HEN the summer holidays came round he brought his companion home with him. Hot and dusty after their journey and the long drive from the station, they were glad enough to catch a glimpse of the house when yet some distance away. And as the evening sun, washing the beeches with soft red-gold, fell obliquely on the upper windows, the effect for the young visitor was one of a singularly peaceful beauty, such as he had never before known. Standing back among the trees in the midst of that green terraced garden—a house of stillness and of charm—to him it appeared to be, as indeed it was, cut off completely from the outer world—the world, at least, as it had been for him; a London life, a hurried, anyhow existence when he joined his people in the holidays.

For Graham, also, to be home here once more was very pleasant. They dined in the great oak dining-room—the light of sunset streaming in across the table, catching the whiteness of damask, the deep crimson of roses half buried in their dark green leaves, the gleam of glass and old silver, and making the shaded candles to be but ornamental. On the dark panelled walls hung a few choice Dutch ‘genre’ paintings:—an ‘Interior,’ by Pieter de Hooch; a ‘Music Lesson,’ by Gerard Terburg; a ‘Frost Scene,’ by Adriaen van de Velde; a ‘Portrait,’ by Gerard Dou; but no picture, Graham thought, could ever be half so charming as the young boy sitting opposite him, the softly blended light playing upon his beautiful face, his delicate hands. Graham watched him with a curious feeling of pride. He noticed his delightful courteousness, his perfect breeding, his wonderful distinction. Yes, there was a great deal in birth, in blood! For even in his short experience of school life he had learned something of the hopelessness and vulgarity of a spreading democracy. And he saw with pleasure that his father had taken to

the boy, that he was not insensible to the deference of Harold's manner, his efforts to please, his easy grace.

After dinner the two boys wandered out of doors again, but went no further than the porch. Both were a little tired. Brocklehurst sat on one of the steps, and Graham half sat, half lay, a little below him, tracing with the point of a stick fantastic lines and figures in the gravel of the carriage sweep. The quiet of evening, of the perfect ending of a day, was all about them; and they sat in silence, that strange silence which seems to listen for the faint footfall of the hour that is approaching, the hour that is to be, the hour as yet so full of mystery, of hope, of the unknown.

The lawn stretched below them, smooth, greyish in the waning light Upon its shaven surface clumps of laurel, barbary, and rhododendron stood out as darker, bordering patches—stood out a little stiffly in the nearly windless air; and against the clear pale sky the trees of the avenue were still.

'How close that cloud is!' Graham murmured. 'Isn't it almost as if we ourselves were floating up to it?'

Yet notwithstanding the dreaminess of his mood, his senses were curiously alert Remote sounds and faint perfumes reached him, which at another hour he would not have been conscious of. And he noticed Brocklehurst's hands as they rested on the stone step: he noticed the fineness of the skin, darkened to a rich golden-brown by the sun; the tapering fingers; the tiny blue vein, scarce visible, on the inside of the wrist His hands were extraordinarily living, extraordinarily sensitive, expressive. They seemed made to touch the strings of musical instruments, to play upon some delicate lute or viol. He imagined that they must have some power in them to allay pain; he imagined them, cool and soothing, laid softly upon his own forehead, or over his mouth and eyes.

And suddenly Harold began to speak. 'It is very quiet here. . . . How strange you must have found everything when you first came to school!—after having been accustomed to this for so long.'

Graham smiled lazily. He felt very happy. It was as though a day he had long awaited had at last begun to break within his spirit, as though some perfect hour of life were here. And his present gladness was mingled somehow with all the happiness that had been before; with all the happiness he had ever known. He watched the dark leaves scarce tremulous against the

sky; he watched the dark grass, the gathering dusk everywhere; the night wind was soft upon his face.

The light grew more and more subdued; the outlines of things vaguer and vaguer.

‘I cannot tell you how glad I am to have you here, Harold,’ he whispered shyly.

‘It was very good of your father to ask me.’

‘To ask you! But it all belongs to you! It has all been waiting for you for so long—and now, at last, you have come.’ He spoke half-laughingly, but all his childish imaginings and dreams were stirring within him.

‘How dark it is getting!’

The last glimmer of twilight had in truth died out of the sky, and only a dim pallor seemed to hang in the air, a faint reflection from the hidden moon.

‘Listen!’

‘It is my father. He plays to himself every evening; he is very fond of music.’

The soft, clear notes of a violin were drawn out slowly across the stillness. The darkness, the charm of the night, helped to make them wonderfully expressive, and Brocklehurst almost held his breath to listen. When a pause came he gave a little sigh. ‘Why is beautiful music always so sad?’ he wondered; ‘so much sadder than anything else?’

‘Is it?’ Graham asked. ‘And yet you like it!’

‘Yes; there is nothing else I like so well. . . . I used to sing in the choir at school until my voice broke; but I have never learned very much.’

Graham raised himself a little. He leaned his chin on his companion’s shoulder and looked out into the darkness. And he felt Brocklehurst’s soft, warm cheek against his own.

‘You went to school when you were very young, Harold, didn’t you?’ he murmured.

‘No younger than most fellows. You, you know, came peculiarly late.’

‘My father liked to have me here . . . I have not been at school a year yet . . . but all those other years before I went seem very far away. I can look back at the past as if it had only been a single hour. Everything slips together into one golden point. . . . I wonder if, when a man is dying, it is like that—if, when he looks back, all his life gathers together into one long, long day—if all seems but a summer day—yesterday between sunrise and sunset——’

VIII

RADUALLY, as he rowed, the familiar landmarks grew smaller and the scene widened out, while the sprinkling of little cottages slid closer together. Beyond these, the spire of the church rose like a slender thread into the dark blue sky.

Brocklehurst's eyes rested upon his face, but he appeared to be quite unconscious of this, his own dark grey eyes fixed on some point in the remote.

At length he drew in his oars.

How far away the land seemed! All around, sea—sea unspotted by a single sail—sea stretching from world to world.

He lay back in the bow of the boat, and for a time appeared to have fallen into one of those reveries his companion knew so well.

And Brocklehurst began to murmur to himself while he dabbled his hand in the water.

'What?—What do you say?' At the sound of his friend's voice breaking through the fine meshes of his dream, Graham roused himself and made a movement to sit up.

Brocklehurst smiled. 'Nothing—nothing. I was only talking to myself.'

Graham looked at him. 'Doesn't it seem as if we were quite out of the world here, Harold? We shall never be more alone together than we are now. I can hardly remember when we came. . . . Do you think we shall ever go back?'

'Perhaps the sea round Ireland is haunted, like the sea of the Ancient Mariner.'

'And the sea across which Odysseus sailed. Surely almost every place is haunted by this time. If we rowed on a little further we might come to Circe's Island, or to the land of the Lotus-eaters, or to the home of Nausicaa.'

And even while he spoke they seemed to drift into a stiller air—or was it his fancy? His thoughts seemed to be borne into his mind from somewhere for away, and the faint lapping of the water against the boat recalled to him his dream.

‘Last night I went back there, Harold—I found the old way. . . . Shall I tell you? . . . You remember the curious dream that filled up so much of my life here. . . . I think it must be beginning to open out again.’

‘You mean about the boy whom you used to fancy as being in some way connected with me?’

Graham met his eyes. ‘Are you quite sure he wasn’t?’ he asked softly. ‘You must tell me, because just now, somehow, I am not quite certain myself.’

‘What has changed you, then? You used, you know, to be sufficiently sure. . . . Do you remember the day I found you out in the fields?’

‘The day you came to me? . . . You came when I called.’

‘Well, you were very certain then, weren’t you?’ He laughed a little at the other boy’s gravity.

‘That was the beginning,’ Graham murmured. ‘Do you know that from that day until last night I have never dreamed of you, nor of the place where I used to find you . . . never till last night.’

‘And last night you *did*?’

Graham glanced up at his companion. ‘It all came back,’ he answered simply. ‘You were there—just as before I went to school—but changed—a little changed.’ He tried to remember. ‘I can’t exactly say what the difference was,’ he went on slowly, turning it over in his mind. Then he paused, in his effort to puzzle it out ‘*Why* should you have come back?—after so long, I mean. Why, if you *were* coming, should you not have come sooner?’

‘Ah, I can’t tell you,’ smiled Brocklehurst ‘Perhaps if you had asked me last night !’

‘You would have told me? . . . You did tell me, but I don’t remember what you said. Somehow it has all grown very dim. Your being with me here, I think, has thrown the other back.’

‘But wasn’t it to tell you something that I returned?’

A peculiar, half-baffled expression passed across Graham’s face. ‘I thought I was going to remember,’ he sighed, ‘but it has gone again. . . . I suppose I shall never know now.’

‘Ah, well, I can’t help you any further.’ Brocklehurst watched him with some amusement.

‘No.’ He sighed again. Then he looked across once more at his companion. ‘As soon as I fell asleep I saw him—my dream-boy. I awoke, it seemed, on the sea-shore, at the very gate of his garden. And I heard his voice calling me—calling, calling. . . . Oh, I remembered his voice so well! I opened the gate, and he was there.’

He paused a moment, and his eyes grew dark with a strange shadow. And it was through this shadow that his next words seemed to drop, his voice becoming lower and lower, till at length it was scarce audible, scarce more than a whisper.

‘Who he is, what he is; if he indeed be your spirit, or if you only remind me of him, I suppose I shall never know. At times I think he must have been born with me, and have grown with the growth of my soul. Until I went to school, at any rate, as I have already told you, he was my only playmate. When I was a little boy I used to pretend he was in the garden with me, and I used to look for him here and there, just as if he were hiding from me in some game. . . . At night, I remember, when I had got into bed I used to wonder where he was just then, and if he would be waiting for me when I woke up in his country. And he always *was* waiting—standing there patiently, smiling, ready to welcome me. . . . Now and then I even went to bed earlier than usual, to see if I could by any chance get there before him; but I never could, because, I suppose, he lived there. . . .

‘And last night—I don’t know why—it was just the same. Everything happened as in the old days. . . . It is rather strange, for of late it had all grown a little dim and far away—faint, unreal even, when I tried to bring it back. . . . And I remember he took me to the edge of a pool, and when I looked into the water I saw reflected there my own room—a boy lying asleep in the bed—myself——’

He paused, smiling faintly, his whole face filled with the light of his memory. Brocklehurst watched him curiously.

‘Sometimes,’ he went on, ‘sometimes the wind, when it is not too loud, seems to bring back the sound of his voice . . . and his voice is just like yours, Harold. . . . Once, at school, I remember, I was sitting before the fire, half asleep and half awake, when suddenly he seemed to come very close to me, to be in the room, to be leaning over the back of my chair. Then I shut my eyes and I felt his soft hair brush against my cheek—and I waited—and oh, I

felt so happy. . . . All at once the door opened and you came in. . . . And you leaned over my chair just as he had done, while you talked to me.'

'You are making me feel very jealous,' said Brocklehurst with pretended seriousness. 'I expect you like him much better than you like me!'

'There is no difference . . . except——' He

stopped short while Brocklehurst began to laugh.

'Well, what were you going to say?'

Graham coloured a little. 'Let us change places. You can row back.'

Brocklehurst obeyed him, but he still kept his eyes fixed on Graham's face. 'What is the difference?' he persisted. 'What were you going to tell me?' 'Nothing—nothing,' Graham answered almost confusedly. 'It is just in his—his manner.'

'That means, I suppose, that he *is* nicer—after all!'

'No, it doesn't mean anything of the kind.'

'Well, it must mean something, you know. And if not that, why are you afraid to tell me?'

'I'm not afraid to tell you. . . . It means just that he likes—me.' He gazed down through the water.

Brocklehurst regarded him a little strangely. For a moment he seemed about to speak, but in the end, without saying anything, he dipped his oars and began to row back.

A long silence followed.

'Where shall we go now?' Brocklehurst asked gently. The boat was heading for the cliffs, which rose, dark and naked, out of the clear water.

'There is a place a little to the left where I think we can land if you would care to bathe.'

Brocklehurst brought the boat round to the desired spot, and they scrambled out on to a broad flat shelf of rock where, having made fast the rope, they sat for a while dangling their feet over the edge.

The sunlight made the water very clear and tempting. Floating faintly through the still afternoon came the notes of the church clock. From everywhere the salt, invigorating smell of seaweed just uncovered by the ebb tide was blown into their faces, and long trailing branches of it, golden-brown and grass-green in the sunlight, rose and sank with the swell. Here and there, a little lower down, sprays of a brighter colour were visible—pink and red and orange, like delicate, feathery coral.

‘This place and this weather are pleasant enough for Pan,’ Graham murmured. ‘Next month it will be all over, and we shall be going back to school. I wonder if it will ever be just so nice again.’

After their bathe they sat on the rocks, baking in the hot sun. ‘How brown your hands and face and neck are!’ said Graham lazily. ‘The rest of you seems so white. . . . I wonder if the Greeks ever made a statue of a diver? I don’t remember one.’ Then a sudden thought seemed to strike him and he sprang to his feet, his drowsiness suddenly gone. ‘Wait a moment,’ he cried. ‘Stand there. . . . Turn round just a little. . . .You must lean against the rock and hold this bit of seaweed in your hand; and you must cross your feet—like that. Oh! if you just had pointed ears, or the least little bit of a tail! . . . A Faun! A Faun! A young woodland Faun! . . . You are far nicer than the statue.’ And a look almost of wonder came into Graham’s face.

Next, making him sit down, he put him in the posture of the ‘Spinario,’ his old favourite; and then, raising him to his feet once more, he made him stand like the praying boy of the Berlin Museum, the ‘Adorante,’ his face and hands uplifted to the joy of the morning.

‘And now what else?’ he murmured. ‘You are too young for an athlete. Your body is too slender. I will make you into a youthful Dionysus instead. Let me put this seaweed in your hair. It is a wreath of vine.’

He placed him so that he leaned against the black, smooth rock, and the soft melting lines of the boy’s body shone out with an extraordinary beauty from the sombre background. Graham paused for a moment, and stepping back, shaded his eyes with his hand while he gazed fixedly at his work. A faint colour came into his cheeks and he advanced again. Very gently he pulled the brown waving hair over the boy’s forehead, and a little lower still, giving to his face a more feminine oval, like that of Leonardo’s ‘Bacchus. He pulled his head, too, slightly forward, bending it from the shapely neck; and with delicate fingers he half lowered the lids of the dark, clear blue eyes, till the upper lashes, long and curling, cast a shadow on the cheek below; and he parted the lips, ever so softly, till a strange dreamy smile seemed to play upon them.

The accuracy of his touch almost startled him, and his colour deepened as the boy’s beauty flowed in upon him, filling him with a curious pleasure. He laughed aloud. ‘You are just like one of the young gods,’ he cried. ‘I wonder if you really are one. Perhaps if we stay much longer we shall draw the others down from heaven.’

‘Isn’t that what you would like? I expect you still, deep down, have a kind of faith in them.’

‘Ah, how can I help having faith when one stands living before my eyes? All hail, dear Dionysus! child of fire and dew, and the creeping, delicate vine! . . . Should we not offer up a sacrifice, Harold? I have nothing here but these dry sea-fiowers which I gathered from the rock, but it is into the heart of the giver, and not at the gift, that the gods look. . . . Let us offer our slender garland to the presiding deity of the place.’

He knelt down, and laid the few sea-pinks, and the seaweed with which he had adorned his friend, on a little shelf of rock. ‘That is the altar,’ he said smiling, but more than half serious. Then he took Brocklehurst’s hand and pulled him down to kneel beside him while he prayed.

‘What god shall I give them to?’ he whispered.

‘You see they have so few worshippers left that they may be a little jealous of one another. We do not want the waves to rise up against us as they rose against Hippolytus.’

‘Give them to the unknown God.’

‘Hush!—they will hear you: they must be drawing very near.—O gods of Hellas! If anything in our lives have found favour in your sight, accept this, our gift, which, though it be poor, is given with our love; and we beg that you will grant to each of us that thing which may be best for him. . . . Harold, “need we anything more? The prayer, I think, is enough for me.”’

I X

HE could not quite say how it had happened. It had come so suddenly, so suddenly. And now, a few steps behind the others, he was walking toward the house. He had a feeling of sickness, of horror: a helpless misery, the meaning of which he shrank from realising, darkened his mind. Only he remembered—he could not help remembering: it was there before him with a curious vividness—the light of the afternoon sun on the long white road; the glare, the heat, something dark and motionless stretched in the dust—still, very still. . . .

Brocklehurst had been walking a few paces behind him, and close to the hedge. He had been pulling some wildflowers—a few had been scattered about him as he lay there on the road, so strangely quiet and white, a thin stream of red blood creeping through

his hair and widening out, forming a little patch of mud. . . . And when he had lifted him, the curious whiteness of his face!

Yet in a way he had escaped wonderfully. None of the wheels had touched him: just that single kick a little above his left ear. . . .

They had been walking slowly, Brocklehurst close to the hedge, he, Graham, in the middle of the road, when the terrified horses had come dashing round the corner, the drag swaying violently behind them, one of the reins hanging broken and useless. He remembered jumping to one side. His foot had slipped on something, and he had fallen. The dust, the noise, a wheel just touching his coat as he rolled himself out of the way. . . . He knew now that Brocklehurst had sprung at the horses' heads, had given him, it might be, that one extra moment. . . .

And now it was all over. Their long afternoon in the boat; on the rocks; their little act of pagan worship;—all that had been *this* afternoon, and it was

over. He was walking, a few steps behind the others, up the avenue toward the house.

X

IGHT at last.

Every one at length gone away; everything arranged; the house still and solemn.

His father had left him alone for a little with the dead boy. At last! . . .

His sorrow, which before the strangers he had kept swallowed down, he need hide no longer. There was no one to hear, no one to see. And he knelt beside the bed and stroked the smooth cold cheek. He kissed the cold mouth and stroked the soft dark hair from which all stain had been washed; and he put his arms about the body. And he remembered the boy as he had stood before him that afternoon in all his wonderful beauty. His tears fell fast and blindingly. The sobs rising to his throat almost choked him.

XI

AY followed day. Brocklehurst had been buried in the village churchyard; his father and one of his brothers (all of his family who had come over) were returned home again; the blinds were drawn up; the quiet flow of life, so harshly and unexpectedly interrupted, had dropped back into its accustomed channel; only for one boy a light had gone out for ever from the sky; a glory and a beauty, as he had known them once, had vanished from the world.

All day long he tried to be alone, tried to avoid his father; and whenever an opportunity presented itself he would escape to his own room or to some solitary place out of doors. It was almost as if he were afraid of human companionship, afraid of the sound of his own voice. And a curious unwillingness to mention Harold's name, or to allude to him in any way whatever, seemed to have taken possession of him, though he spent daily a longer and longer time at the boy's grave, remaining there for hours, until his father, who knew of these visits, grew anxious for his health and wished to take him away from home, offered to take him abroad—France, Italy, Greece—anywhere he liked. But Graham pleaded so desperately to be allowed to stay where he was that Mr. Iddesleigh had not the heart to refuse him—feared, indeed, that in his present state of mind it might do him more harm than good.

Little wonder that the boy's health began to give way; that he looked so pale and tired! The holidays were now almost over, but as yet nothing had been said about his going back to school, though Graham himself lived in secret dread of what he knew could not be put off for much longer. How, on the other hand, could he possibly resume the old life? The thought of what had been and never would be again—oh! that, he felt, he should not be able to bear—the dreariness, the loneliness, the hopelessness. Doubtless when he

had first gone to school he had also been alone—but the difference, the difference now would be incalculable. There were days, in truth, when it almost seemed to him that it would have been better if he had never been given his happiness, since so soon it was to be snatched from him; and even though deep in his heart he knew he would not forget it if he could, there were days when he thought it would be well if all the past could be effaced from his mind, rubbed out as figures are rubbed from a child's slate.

One afternoon he was sitting with his father in the library. It had been raining for the greater part of the day, and a fine drizzle was still falling, though the sky was beginning to clear. It had been raining, and the soft sound of the rain—the soft, dripping sound, and the sight of the blurred landscape, had somehow a soothing effect upon him. On his knee he held an open book over which his head was bent closely. A lassitude, mental and physical, was visible in his every little movement, even in the way he sat; and between his eyes and the printed page he looked at, there floated a dead boy's face. A physical weakness weighed heavily upon him, a kind of stagnation of the very sources of his life, the vital elements, sapping all power to rise above a certain fixed and gloomy train of thought;—it was as if some spring within him had been choked, dried up. . . . It was finished!—finished!—finished! The word repeated itself wearily in his mind, like the monotonous beating of a metronome. He felt hot and feverish, and there was a dull pain at the back of his head. It was almost as if he were sickening for something. . . .

Tired out, for his sleep of late was become very restless and broken, presently he fell into a kind of doze, from which he awakened, a few minutes later, to find his father gazing anxiously at him; and with sudden contrition he saw how selfish he had been in giving way thus to his grief.

'Are you very tired?' Mr. Iddesleigh asked gently. 'Come over here and sit by me.' He drew his son to him as he spoke, and Graham sat down on a stool at his feet.

What were you doing all this morning? Were you in the cemetery?'

Graham nodded.

Mr. Iddesleigh laid his hand on the boy's head. 'You go there so often!' he expostulated. 'It is not good for you, Graham. What do you think about when you go there all alone? What do you go there for?'

Graham hesitated. He clasped his hands about his knees, while he sat gazing out of the window. The rain had ceased and a pale sun was beginning

to peep out between the heavy clouds. For some moments he did not answer his father. The familiarity of everything about him was borne into his mind. How often he and his father had sat just as they were sitting now!—in this same room! It seemed to him that his life had been moving in a circle, and that he was beginning to return on a path he already knew. For a little the wings of some great spirit had drooped softly about his head. . . . 'Too like the lightning. . . .' His eyes filled and he bent down to hide his face.

'What is the matter?' Mr. Iddesleigh asked, but still without getting any reply. 'Tell me, Graham, are you thinking about Harold?'

'Do you wonder I never speak of him?'

'Is it too near? . . . But your silence makes you brood over it all the more.'

'I cannot help thinking of him,' Graham whispered. 'He gave me his life.' He rose from his stool, and walking to the window pressed his forehead against the cold glass.

The rain was still dripping from the trees, and there was a damp smell in the air; but the sky was clearing, and the sun was growing stronger and stronger. Presently, and without further word, the boy left the room.

XII

FOR a while he lingered near the house, restlessly, forlornly, but by and by he went down to the rocks, where he stood looking out over the sea.

Piled up on the horizon, like a vast range of purple-black hills, heavy masses of cloud drifted, scarce perceptibly, from east to west of the pale slate-blue sky; and where these rugged heaps were broken the heavens sank away in limitless wells of pure pale light, each edged with a border of bright grass-green. All the light of the day seemed gathered there—like a reflection from a world beyond—and Graham, as he stood at gaze before it, began to wonder if he should ever come any nearer to it than he was just there and then. In the *Phaedo* he had found many arguments for the immortality of the soul, but more lately he had realised, in his own life, the only one perhaps

that actually counted—and this no argument at all; but merely a very simple human desire, a desire to look again upon the face of his friend, the face of him who was buried in the grave.

He stooped down and leaned over the slowly-heaving water, watching it rise and sink back, and rise again and sink—over the dark, cold water that seemed nearly black against the rocks—lower still, and lower, till his hair almost brushed the surface.

‘O water whispering
Still through the dark into mine ears,—
As with mine eyes, is it not now with his?—
Mine eyes that add to thy cold spring,
Wan water, wandering water weltering,
This hidden tide of tears.’

Presently he went on a little farther, clambering back over the rocks, and taking a rough path which brought him eventually to the church. The place was quite deserted, as it almost always was, and he pushed open the gate. He walked over the soft grass till he came to Brocklehurst's grave, where he knelt down. The murmur of the sea rose from below—monotonous, very peaceful. Ah, were they not happiest who slept here with that dim music drawing them farther and farther from the world? An infinite melancholy drew its sombre wings about the boy's forehead—a melancholy not wholly sprung from his recent sorrow, but a kind of broader pity for all the suffering bound up with life:—pity, above all, for the young boy who lay now under the heavy earth, yet who had once been so bright and active upon it. He found it curiously hard to think of him as dead, out of existence. Was he not still, even in that dim shadowy world whither he had passed, conscious, sentient? Could he not still feel some faint emotion, some faint stirring of hushed joy or sorrow? Was not his heart still beating softly under the grass? He stretched himself upon the grave, lying full length, motionless. Face to face they lay, only a little earth between them; and far below he seemed to hear a breath drawn almost silently, to hear the slow, sad stream of a boy's tears falling, falling evermore. In the stillness he could hear his own heart beat—beat with the life that was flowing away from him in a wide, clear flame, the flame of a lamp burning swiftly up into the night.

The sun had set when he turned to go home. But as he passed the church door he noticed that it stood ajar, and went in. A bucket of water and a broom were in the porch, left there evidently for some purpose; but the church itself was empty.

He sat down for a while in one of the pews; then he knelt, leaning his face between his hands. A strong desire to pray had come over him. But pray to whom? Was this then, at last, to be the hour of the unknown God? . . . And a few words floated into his mind, came to him again and again, like a memory of some old tune, or line of poetry: 'Little children, love one another . . .' It seemed as if some one were stooping down over him, it seemed as if some one had kissed him, kissed him softly, had laid a gentle hand upon his head.

And a feeling of ineffable peace began to creep into his heart. Could it possibly be, then, that he was really nearer to the unseen world than others were? Now, surely, in some inexplicable way he had been drawn very very close—closer than ever before. He had a sense that something was about to happen, and that it would be something great, momentous, supreme. It was as

if he were upon the eve of some stupendous discovery; and he waited—waited till the signal should be given him—some sign which, unlike any others he had hitherto received, would come, this time, he knew, from without.

A profound stillness had fallen upon the church, like the closing in of heavy waters. The murmur of the sea had stopped.

Then across the hush there came a low sigh—a whisper as of the brushing together of innumerable leaves—a whisper which grew deeper and deeper, till at last it seemed the music of some wonderful summer, and Graham raised his head. Surely the light had grown marvellously clear and soft. A scent of many flowers was in the air; a murmur of a fountain.

And as he knelt, motionless, the walls of the church sank away from before him, and there—standing there in that radiance of perfect light—ah, there, at last, was Harold!

He stood in his garden, and he was more beautiful than Graham had ever yet beheld him . . . he stretched out his hands . . . he smiled. . . . His feet were pale on the dark rich grass with its powder of crocuses. Above his head the branches of the trees almost met, forming a delicate roof, a roof of green leaves, a green trellis very finely woven, through which the light, mingled with a falling music of little feathered throats, floated down soft and cool. All around him was that wonderful liquid light, and the music of water, listless, plashing, as it dropped into some dim, cool, green-lipped basin of stone. And over everything there hung a calm so deep, and pure, and holy, that all Graham's sorrow seemed to melt away before it into one impassioned sense of gratitude, and love, and peace.

'Oh, I am coming—I am coming,' he sobbed, rising to his feet, and taking a step forward, quickly, blindly. For a moment he stood there, swaying with a curious movement from side to side; then he gave a little moan and fell forward heavily on his face.

XIII

WHEN he opened his eyes he was lying in bed, in his own room. The light was darkened: there was a faint smell of drugs in the air: and a figure was moving noiselessly about, preparing something at a small table. He had been ill, then! . . . but for how long?

He heard a slight noise as of the door being very carefully opened, and he saw his father come into the room, walking on tiptoe. Graham kept his eyes closed that they might not know he had awakened. Things were beginning to come back to him, and for just a few minutes longer he wanted to keep that cool darkness about him.

He felt a strange languor through all his body; he felt too weak to do anything but lie there in the softened light, and in the twilight of his soul. It would be soon enough to awaken in a little—not just yet—in a little. . . .

And all that was thirty years ago. His father was long dead. Every one was dead.

Dawn had crept into the room, grey and ghostly. He shivered and looked round. His letter, unfinished, lay there on the table. Everything seemed cold, desolate, lifeless. He got up and stretched himself, for he felt stiff and cramped. Scarce worth while, now, to go to bed! He walked over to the window and looked out into the breaking day. The world seemed very old and cheerless. Was it the chill of approaching age in his own blood, he wondered, that made him find it so? He smiled a strange, dim little smile. Best, then, to sit by the fire and doze!

He came back to the table, and leaning over it, buried his face in his hands.

T H E E N D