THE FIRST AND SECOND LADY CHATTERLEY NOVELS

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LADY CHATTERLEY'S LOVER
VERSION 1

Ours is essentially a tragic age, but we refuse emphatically to be tragic about it.

This was Constance Chatterley's position. The war landed her in a dreadful situation, and she was determined not to make a tragedy out of it.

She married Clifford Chatterley in 1917, when he was home on leave. They had a month of honeymoon, and he went back to France. In 1918 he was very badly wounded, brought home a wreck. She was twenty-three years old.

After two years, he was restored to comparative health. But the lower part of his body was paralysed for ever. He could wheel himself about in a wheeled chair, and he had a little motor attached to a bath chair, so that he could even make excursions in the grounds at home.

Clifford had suffered so much, that the capacity for suffering had to some extent left him. He remained strange and bright and cheerful, with his ruddy, quite handsome face, and his bright, haunted blue eyes. He had so nearly lost life, that what remained to him seemed to him precious. And he had been so much hurt, that something inside him had hardened, and could feel no more.

Constance, his wife, was a ruddy, country-looking girl, with soft brown hair and sturdy body and a great deal of rather clumsy vitality. She had big, wondering blue eyes and a slow, soft voice, and seemed a real quiet maiden.

As a matter of fact, she was one of those very modern, brooding women who ponder all the time, persistently and laboriously. She had been educated partly in Germany, in Dresden;☆ indeed she had been hurried home when the war broke out. And though it filled her now with bitter, heavy irony to think of it, now that Germany, the German guns at least, had ruined her life, yet she had been most happy in Dresden. Or perhaps not happy, but thrilled. She had been profoundly thrilled, by the life, by the music, and by the Germanic, abstract talk, the sort of philosophising. The endless talk about things had thrilled her soul. The philosophy students, the political economy students, the young professors, literary or ethnological, classic or scientific, how they had talked! and how she had answered them back! and how they had listened! and how *she* had listened to them, because they listened to her!

Came the war, and she had to feel bitter about it all. But Clifford, who was an old friend and a Cambridge intellect, was by no means a narrow patriot. He fought for his country, but he sympathised

entirely with the young intelligent Germans who were, like himself, caught up in the huge machine that they hated. Clifford would still read Hauptmann, or Rainer Maria Rilke☆ aloud to Constance, when he was home on leave. Which pleased her very much. She felt she wanted to be "above" the war, and at least, above the war patriotism which exasperated her so much.

But by the time the *Untergang des Abendlands*☆ appeared, Clifford was a smashed man, and her life was smashed. She was young, and remorselessly, almost crudely healthy. Under the blow, she just went silent. And she remained silent, pondering, pondering with an endless unresolved vagueness.

They removed to Wragby in 1920. It was Clifford's home. His father had died, and he was now a baronet Wragby Hall☆ was a low, long old house, rather dismal, in a very fine park, in the midst of newly-developed colliery districts. You could hear the chuff of winding-engines, and the rattle of the sifting screens, and you could smell the sulphur of burning pit-hills, when the wind blew in a certain direction over the park.

Constance was now Lady Chatterley, with a crippled husband, a dreary old house in a defaced countryside, and a rather inadequate income. She determined to make the best of it. She could work and read and ponder, and she was the lonely, absolute mistress of the establishment. It pleased her to manage carefully, to live within their income. It pleased her to entertain anyone, anyone who would interest Clifford. But he preferred to be alone. She went on from day to day, from day to day, in a strange plodding way. And she had a peculiar comely beauty of her own, healthy and quiet and shy-seeming, but really withheld. And strangely isolated in herself, being unquestioned mistress in her own surroundings!

Clifford did not weigh upon her. He occupied himself, reading, writing, painting, pulling himself round the fine old gardens in his chair, or slowly, softly trundling across the park and into the wood, in his motor-chair. He gave orders to the gardeners and the wood-cutters and the game-keeper. He watched over his small estate. Sometimes, in the autumn, he would go in his chair, very slowly, into the wood, and wait for a shot at a pheasant. And sometimes, when he had great courage, he would take his paints and work at a small picture. He had once had a passion for painting, though he did little now. But he seemed almost happy, more happy than before his catastrophe.

Only occasionally he was anxious about Constance. She was very good to him; she loved him in her peculiar, neutral way. And he, of course, felt he could not live without her. They were true companions, as in the old days, before they married.

But, of course, there was the tragedy that had fallen upon them! He could never be a husband to her. She lived with him like a married nun, a sister of Christ. It was more than that, too. For of course they had had a month of real marriage. And Clifford knew that in her nature was a heavy, craving physical desire. He knew.

He himself could not brood. The instinct of self-preservation was so strong in him, he could only contemplate the thrill and the pleasure of life, or else fall into apathy. He would have days of apathy, which swallowed up what would else have been bitterness and anguish. Then the thrill of life returned. That he could go in his motor-chair into the woods, and, if he remained silent, see the squirrels gathering nuts, or a hedgehog nosing among dead leaves!! Each time, it seemed like something he had captured in the teeth of fate. He felt a peculiar triumph over doom and death, even over life itself.—Only, he practically never went outside the park gates: He could not bear the miners to stare at him with commiseration. He did not mind his own gardeners and wood-men and gamekeeper so much. He paid them.

Sometimes Constance would walk beside his chair, into the park or the wood. Then she would sit under a tree, and the strange triumphant thrill he felt, in being alive and in the midst of life, would be a nervous gratification to her. He was reading Plato again, and would talk to her about the dialogues, often holding her hand as he sat.

"It's awfully funny—strikes me as funny, *now*," he said, "the excitement they got out of argument, and reason, and thought. They're awfully like little boys who have just discovered that they can think, and are beside themselves about it. They're so thrilled, that nothing else matters, only thinking and knowledge.—I suppose, far, far back, man must in the same way have discovered sex in himself, and been thrilled by *that* beyond all bounds.—Knowledge, nothing but mental knowledge! But Columbus discovering America was nothing to those early Greeks discovering that they'd got logical, reasoning *minds*.—It impresses me, even now!—Because, of course, my hand holding your hand seems to me as real as thought: doesn't it to you? It is as important as a piece of knowledge, don't you think?

My hand holding your hand!—After all, that's life too! And it's what one couldn't do, after death. If one were dead, one's spirit still might think. I still might *think*, and I do believe, with Socrates, that I should *know* even more fully. But I couldn't hold your hand, could I? At least not actually physically. Though perhaps, of course, there would still be some sort of connection, some sort of clasp, perhaps more vital really. Perhaps I could still keep hold of your hand, even if I were dead. What do you think?"

His big, bright, hard blue eyes were very strange, as they gazed into her face. His strong hand gripped her hand weirdly. She saw in him the triumphant thrill of conquest. He had made a weird conquest of something!

But in his thrill of triumph, she felt chilled, as if the frost of his egoism nipped her. Was he so triumphant? What about herself, and *her* life: *her* bodily life? What about her own hand, that he gripped as if it were some trophy he would carry off to the other side the grave? She felt chilled and depressed, and a misery surged up in her. After all, she didn't have much to feel triumphant about—except his remarkable recovery. But if he was mutilated, what about herself? Her body had never been broken. She had not dragged herself out of the grave. On the contrary, she felt as if she were just being buried up to the waist, to keep him company.—She was heavily silent and unresponsive.

A twist, a shadow, like an angry resentment went over his face.

"I know dear," he said, "that in a sense you're the worst loser. I know how I depend on you: live on you, in a sense."

"You know I want you to," she murmured.

"I know! Yet there's no getting away from it, you're denied a very serious part of life: And the fact that you *are* denied it might work inside you, against your knowing it, and do you a lot of harm.—I want to speak of it now, so you'll know.—I don't want you to feel that you've brought me a sacrifice. I don't want you to feel like that, because I don't believe you're the right sort of woman to sacrifice that part of yourself. In fact, I married you because you were—a full-sexed woman. You *did* want me, before this happened, didn't you?"—She murmured an assent. "Oh, I know, and it's bitter. And I know you will go on wanting, even though I'm put out of your life forever, in that respect. It's rather horrible, but we've got to make the best of it. I want to say this to you: if ever there is another man whom you really want, whom you really want to make love to you:

don't let the thought of me stop you. You go ahead, and live your own life. My danger is that I might be a dog in the manger to you. I don't want to be: so I tell you now. I know what happens to women who suppress their sex while they're young: there's hell to pay later. So I don't want you to do it. I wouldn't like you to make yourself cheap: and I know you won't make it any harder on me than you need. But if ever you meet a man whom you absolutely want, for your sexual life, take him. Have a lover if you have to!—"

He spoke bravely, and a little glibly. Evidently he had thought it all out. And evidently it was only hypothetical to him: an abstract man, an abstract love affair: it was easily dismissed, in his head.

She, sitting on a fallen tree holding his hand, let her head droop and said nothing. Strange feelings surged in her.

And as if the intense emotion in the air around them had attracted other life than their own, a spaniel suddenly ran out of a path and came scenting towards them, touching Constance's hand with its soft nose, and lifting its head agitatedly. At the same time they heard footsteps. The game-keeper, Parkin, came out of the cross-path on to the riding.

Constance released her husband's hold. Clifford glanced round, rousing from the apathy into which he had sunk. The gamekeeper touched his hat, and was crossing the riding to disappear into the path on the other side, making a faint sound to call his dog.

"Oh I say Parkin!"—Clifford pulled himself up a bit in his chair.

"Sir Clifford!" said the man, stopping.

"Turn my chair round for me, and get me in the wheel-tracks. It's less trouble for me."

The man came striding without a word. He was alert, smallish for a game-keeper, and very quiet. Constance knew that some time ago, his wife had gone off with a neighbouring collier, leaving him in his cottage with his little girl of five. Since that time, he had lived alone and kept to himself, giving his child into the care of his mother in the village.

His gun slung over his shoulder, he took hold of the back of Sir Clifford's chair in silence. Only his quick brown eyes glanced into the face of the young wife, as she stood beside the chair. Their eyes met for a second, but Constance, strangely disturbed in herself, scarcely noticed him. The man, however, silent and shut off as he was, felt the blueness and the unresolved trouble in the eyes of the young woman. But his face closed to its usual shut-off, expressionless look, the mouth shut under the rather big, ragged moustache.

He turned the chair carefully, and brought it into the wheel-tracks where it would go most easily.

"Na shall I wheel yer, or would yer rather manage for yerself?" he asked, in a broad local accent, but speaking gently.

"You can wheel me if you like," said Sir Clifford.

"Ay!" said the man.

They set off in silence, each one looking straight ahead without communication. The brown dog ran softly scenting. Last yellow leaves fluttered down.

They came to the edge of the wood, and saw the open park, with the big beech-trees on its slopes, sheep feeding on the grass. In the grey day, the old house on the summit of the slope, among old trees, seemed timeless and utterly forsaken.

The gamekeeper stared changelessly ahead, steering the chair carefully, and keeping himself obliterated. His brown moustache seemed to go fiercely in front of him. But he was vaguely thinking of my lady's blue eyes with their indescribable trouble. She was but a girl after all. Ay, the war hit the gentry hard! Sir Clifford crippled as he was, she'd neither the pleasure of a young wife with her husband, nor yet children to look forward to. Ay my word, there was trouble in *her* young eyes, poor thing! And everybody spoke so well of her!

He thought of his own wife, who had gone loose while he was away at the war. She didn't have to put up with what this young thing had! No! If she'd had more to suffer perhaps she'd not have gone off, like a trollops, with a collier who drank. But let her go, and let her stay. It was good riddance.—There were nice women in the world. Look at this young thing, married to Sir Clifford, and quiet and soft-spoken! Ay! He wasn't the only one with troubles. This poor lass had got it worse than himself! And she was so quiet and soft-spoken, she was hardly like a lady; she was the sort of woman a man might go a long way to find, nowadays.—Well, everybody must bear their own troubles, and eat their own peck of dirt.

Constance came out of the cloud of her blind agitation at last, and became aware of the game-keeper as he pushed the heavy chair in silence. The colour was red in his face, with exertion, but he held himself detached, quite out of contact. In his aloofness he had a peculiar clear-cut presence, she remembered he always stood out very distinct from his background, whenever she had seen him. This distinctness, this clarity in his presence gave her a certain impression

of beauty, beauty that men rarely have. He was not handsome, with that rather big moustache. Yet he had a certain distinctness, such as wild animals and birds have. She wondered if he had cared for that wife, a florid, common woman. He must have suffered from her commonness, without knowing it. Now he kept himself quite alone, detached, in that stone cottage at the end of the wood. She knew nothing about him: she had just looked on him as one of the Wragby dependents. She knew he was a very sharp game-keeper.

Sir Clifford let himself be wheeled along, apathetic. And so they came home, and Clifford rested before tea.

The days of autumn followed one another into winter. Constance took as little heed as possible. If the days would go by, one after the other, unmarked, she was willing to let them. She had her duties to the house, certain responsibilities to the village, and there was always Clifford. He required her attention and occupied her feelings almost as young children would have done.

The only thing that troubled her were strange violent disturbances within herself, with which she could not reckon. She had recurrent, violent dreams, of horses,☆ of a mare which had been feeding quietly, and suddenly went mad. And she would get up in the morning with a terrible anger upon her, so that, if she had not controlled herself, she could have bullied the servants cruelly, and have spoken to Clifford in savage derision. On the tip of her tongue were the terrible, torturing things she wanted to say to Clifford, as he sat propped up so bright and coldly alert, in bed, or lay so apathetic.

She never said the things. But she came nearer and nearer to saying them; and at last she was so frightened, when she got up in the morning in one of these demoniacal tempers, that she would hurry out into the park, to walk herself calm. At such times her face was blank with ugly passion, and her eyes wide with fear of herself. "I am possessed, I know I am possessed," she would say to herself pathetically, rushing forward impelled by some savage power in her breast. She could have killed something, someone. It was a great cruelty surging in her.

And in the park, and on the edge of the wood, a reminiscence would come back at her. It was here that something, something had happened. She looked round, into the secret of the place. And it came upon her again, her dream of horses. Surely there was a group of horses, and a mare that would go mad, and lash at the others with her heels, and tear them with her teeth!

She stood frozen with fear. But no horses were there.

In the wood she heard the report of a gun, as if in echo of her own feelings. She walked on, down the wet drive, over the wet, decaying leaves. And as she went, she heard the sound of a voice, and a child's crying. At once she listened keenly. The child was sobbing, and someone was murmuring consoling her. She hastened forward, all her disconnected anger fastening upon the supposition that someone was hurting a child. She strode on, her face hot, her eyes shining, her body surging with haste.

Down a narrow path she saw them, a little girl in a purple coat and a mole-skin cap, crying, and Parkin, the keeper, bending over her. "Tha doesna want him to bite a' th' little bunny-rabbits, does ta, an' then eat 'em? Tha doesna want him to jump on the hen pheasants, when they sittin' nestlin' down, an' bite their necks through, does ta? He wor a bad 'un. Look at him, an then cry for him. Look at him!"

The man's voice was strangely caressive, and yet irritated, and the child would not be comforted. Constance strode up, still with blazing face and eyes, determined that some injury had been done to the child.

"What is it?" she demanded abruptly.

The man stood up and touched his cap hastily.

"Why I shot that there old Tom cat, as has been havin' his own way in here for a month or two," he said, in a hard voice, pointing to the body of a great brindled cat that lay stretched out on the path. "An' my little gel here, she thinks she must needs scraight☆ for him." To the child, he added, "Come on, come on, naa! My lady's lookin' at yer! Shut it up."

He was mild enough so far with the child, but the irritable impatience was gathering in his voice, his eyes were beginning to harden. It was obvious the child was afraid of him.

Constance bent down to the little girl.

"What is it? what is it, dear? Don't cry! It was a nasty bad pussy that scratched the little bunnies and killed them. There! don't you cry!" and she gently wiped the face of the motherless child with her handkerchief. It was obvious the little thing was afraid of the man, her father. Constance felt a resentment against him. No wonder his wife had left him. Constance felt that he did not really like his little girl.

"Were you going to have her with you all day?" she asked him.

"Mother's at the house," he said, jerking his head in the direction of the cottage. "She mostly comes a Sat'days, to clean up a bit."

Constance felt he was polite under compulsion. She felt he disliked her because she was a woman.

"I should take her home, then, to her granny.—What's your name, dear?"

The child peeped at her with dark, wilful, resentful eyes.

"Connie Parkin," she said.

"Come then," said Constance, smiling faintly. "I'll take you home, while Parkin, while your father does what he has to do."

"You don't have to, my lady," said the man.

"I'll do it," said Constance, leading the child by the hand.

She felt the man standing watching them go, with dislike. He disliked women, and despised them. He was merely stupid.

At the cottage, the little old energetic woman, with smuts of black-lead on her nose, was busy polishing the fireplace. She started when the child ran in to her, and, turning, she saw her ladyship.

"Why, whatever—!" she said.

"Goodmorning!" said Constance. "I brought your little girl home. She was frightened when her father shot a poaching cat."

"Did you ever! It's very kind of you, Mum, I'm sure! What do you say to the lady for bringing you home, Connie?"

"Thank you!" said Connie, looking at Constance with bold dark eyes, but putting her finger self-consciously in her mouth.

"Thank you Mum!" repeated the old woman to the child.

But the girl twisted, and would not say it. The collier people would never say "my lady", if they could help it. The child even balked at "Mum!" It was a sort of self-conscious clumsiness.

"I knowed there'd be ructions of some sort, when he would take her off with him in the wood. He's not that easy to get on with, at the best of times. Well, thank yer very much for bringin' her home, I'm sure."

The old woman was overwhelmed by the attention, at the same time she resented being caught black-leading the grate, and with smuts on her nose.

Constance walked back to the hall, very much aware again of the cold distance between herself and the people. They were not hostile. But they were relieved when she went.

She was quite glad to get back to Clifford, and her own *milieu*.

The common people somehow made her angry. A bold-eyed child, that of Parkin's!—

That evening, it was very pleasant to sit in Clifford's study while he read aloud to her. At least, one's pride was soothed.

The following Saturday, Clifford wished to speak to Parkin. But it had been raining too heavily for the chair to go out. In the afternoon Constance walked over with the message. She liked having some aim, in her walk.

The front door of the cottage was shut, and nobody came. She walked round to the back, and suddenly, in the yard, came upon Parkin washing himself. He had taken off his shirt, as the colliers do, and rolled his breeches on his hips, and was ducking his head in the bowl of water. Constance retired immediately, and went back into the wood, to stroll around for a time.

But in the dripping gloom of the forest, suddenly she started to tremble uncontrollably. The white torso of the man had seemed so beautiful to her, splitting the gloom. The white, firm, divine body, with that silky firm skin! Never mind the man's face, with the fierce moustache and the resentful, hard eyes! Never mind his stupid personality! His body in itself was divine, cleaving through the gloom like a revelation.—Clifford, even at his best, had never had that silky, rippling firmness, the more-than-human loveliness.

It was with great difficulty she brought herself to go back to the cottage and knock at the door. She stood on the threshold and trembled inwardly. Previously, she had never even thought of him as anything but an instrument, a gamekeeper. It seemed to her almost wrong, that he should have that pure body.

She heard him coming downstairs. He was dressing to go to town. She stammered as he stood before her, in his clean suit and new neck-tie and Sunday trousers. She stammered almost uncontrollably as she delivered her message, and he listened, watching her with those hard eyes.

She did not like his face. She realised that she was weary of peoples' faces, and of their mechanical personalities, and of the monotonous, impertinent things they always thought. Could it be possible, the star-like, lonely body was hidden under that ridiculous clean shirt and neck-tie?

"All right, my lady! I know what Sir Clifford wants. I'll see to it."

She turned away. And as she went into the gloom, she felt him watching her. He would be thinking something stupid and mean! Let

him think. He was nothing. Even in spite of that hidden loveliness of body, he was nothing. She was extremely bored by common, stupid people.

Yet in her bedroom at night, she looked at her own nude body, and wondered if anyone would see in it that visionary beauty she had seen for a moment in the man's. Would a man see that loveliness in her?

She slipped on her night-dress dejectedly. What was the good! What was the good of anything? Clifford, who was a nice man, was for her bodiless. And men who had beautiful bodies, had common, stupid faces she was not interested in, and common, stupid voices she never wanted to hear.

Clifford read to her nearly every evening. Sometimes he was tired. His crippled condition brought him wearinesses that in themselves were an anaesthetic. But he had a great pleasure in reading to her, all kinds of books. He loved amusing books most of all, now. He was reading *Hajji Baba*.☆ And Constance listened with bent head, as she sewed or embroidered. She had not bobbed her hair.☆ The knot of soft brown hair lay silkily in her neck. And he never knew the thoughts that went on, in her modest-seeming, maidenly head. He was so occupied, and gratified to have her there, and so busy, as it were, avoiding repining.

He laughed very much at Hajji Baba, when that hero was so utterly repelled by seeing the naked faces of English women. Oh, if the women had only covered their faces, what fire of passion would have run through Hajji's body! But seeing all the naked indecency of their countenances, his fire was quenched.

This amused Clifford immensely. Constance lifted her head and gazed at him with her big blue eyes, so pondering and touching.

"Don't you think it *is* rather a pity that we never see anything of people but their faces?" she said. "Don't you think the face is probably the worst part of most people?"

"You mean if they covered their faces and walked with their bodies naked?" he laughed. "That's an idea! Like Renoir!☆ He said he always tried to make the face unimportant, just merely a part of the body."

"Yes!" she said. "Why should we always see nothing but a face, for a person. I'm sure it's wrong."

"Perhaps!" he said. "But I suppose the face reveals the personality, after all."

"Mayn't there be something else, besides the personality? something which never comes out?"

He pondered this: something else, besides the personality? The idea made him uneasy. He looked closely at his wife. But she was sewing so quietly.

"What would there be, besides the personality?" he said.

She looked up at him, with her brooding, remorseless blue eyes.

"Mightn't the body have a life of its own?—perhaps truer than the personality?"

"The body?—the stomach and heart and lungs?" he said.

But she was thinking of something else.

"Why is a torso, in sculpture, often so lovely, without a head? It has a life of its own."

"Perhaps it does!" he assented. But he was not attending. It was dangerous ground for him, and the shrewdest instinct of self-preservation kept him off it. He began to read again.

But she had a new vague idea to ponder: the body, living a pure, untouched life of its own, apart from the face with all its complexities and frustrations and vulgarity! Faces were nearly always common. Even her own face had in it a discontent which she herself could see.

She put a thick veil over her face, like a Mohammedan woman, leaving only her eyes. And thus she stood naked before her mirror, and looked at her slow, golden-skinned, silent body. It was beautiful too, and with a silent, sad, pure appeal. Her breasts were also eyes, and her navel was sad, closed, waiting lips. It all spoke, in another, silent language, without the cheapness of words.

But then the mood left her again, and she entirely forgot her body. It was Christmas, and she was extremely busy. Extremely sane and sensible and busy. She could not bear even to touch with the edge of her thoughts those lunatic ideas about the body. Thank heaven she'd got over that nonsense. She had a thousand things to do.

They had some visitors for the Christmas and the New Year, mostly Clifford's friends and relatives. Everybody was very nice, and Clifford was in good form. It seemed all rather exciting and thrilling, almost at pre-war level.

Clifford's aunt, Lady Eva Rolleston☆ was staying a few days. She had the remains of the *grande dame* about her, being daughter of one of the really big families. But she had rather got into disrepute, what with gambling and brandy. Still, there she was, a widow now, tall and

slim and unobtrusive, a bit *distraite*,☆ her blue eyes rather vacant and her fine nose a little reddened. And still she was the *grande dame*. She was so very simple, for one thing, and in her rather blank unobtrusiveness there was still a power of commanding deference. She sipped her brandy with a noble *sang froid*,☆ indifferent to all the comment in the world.

Constance liked her, and at the same time was depressed by her. Lady Eva was somehow like a ghost, in her black clothes and her curious naïveté, which was almost girlish and winning. Yet the odd, straightforward girlishness rested upon a very hard determination never to yield one inch, essentially, to anybody on earth. A hard imperviousness and isolation, like the Matterhorn,☆ was at the bleak centre of Lady Eva.

And she rather despised her niece Constance. The vague blue eyes would rest upon the comely young niece with strange detachment. Constance was always warmly, almost tenderly deferential to her aunt, Lady Eva. And her aunt despised her a little, but was indifferent. The daughter of the old R.A.☆ was not of the ruling class. It was not in her to rule. Constance could run a house very well. It was in her to be obeyed. But she could not rule, she had not the ruling nature. Clifford was better, that way.

Constance knew that, by the *grande dame* in her aunt, she was despised. But after all, the *grande dame* in Aunt Eva was only her last trick, her trump card, as it were. It was a master trump only up to a certain point. Unless you felt a little sorry for the finely-made lady fallen slightly into disrepute, the *grand-damerie*, as Clifford called it, wasn't trumps at all. It was impudence.

"My dear, I think you're so wonderful, I do really," said Lady Eva, as she sat in Constance's own sitting-room.

"Why?" asked Constance, half candid, half expecting a snare.

"The way you are with Clifford. I think it's wonderful, really. You must have a wonderful nature."

"Why?" asked Constance again.

"The poor boy, crippled as he is!—not more than half a man, you might say. Of course it's the right half, for people like me. He *is* so witty and entertaining. But for a wife, I'm not so sure at all."

"Oh, but Clifford is all right, I assure you," said Constance. "He's almost perfect, as a husband."

"Oh yes, I can see that. He takes a lot of trouble to keep you interested. Oh, he's a clever boy. No doubt, but for that accident in

the war, he'd be a perfect husband. But as it is, you must suffer terribly, from deprivation: deprived of one side of life."

"But I don't!" said Constance. "I'm not deprived of anything I want. I'm not really."

Lady Eva fetched her a vague glance.

"I'm so awfully glad if you're not," she said. "It would be so awful if you were. Nothing is so bad for you as to forego things in your youth, so that they come on you again when you're getting too old for them. Nothing is so bad for a woman, as she gets on in life, as the feeling that she's missed something: perhaps the most important thing."

"But what *is* the most important thing?" asked Constance.

"That I don't know. But it's something to do with men. I was faithful to my husband. I don't say I wish I hadn't been. But I used to wish, dreadfully, I had had something else. It is a dreadful feeling, to feel you're going to die without having had what you were born for, in a way."

"But what *are* we born for?" asked Constance heavily. "It seems to me we are born for so many things. Or perhaps we're not born for anything at all. It's just a question of making our minds up about it."

"I don't know, I'm sure," said Lady Eva. "When I was young, I thought I wanted reform, politics, and all that kind of thing. Well, I had that. We were in politics till we hardly knew anything else but politics, my husband and I. And of course ours was a love-match—and there are the three children. Yet towards the end, when I was forty six or so, I felt I'd lived absolutely for nothing. The one thing I'd really wanted, I'd never had it at all. And then it was too late. It's the most miserable thing a woman can feel.—I think women should experiment more. We get things into our heads, and that shuts us off from everything else. If women were more open-minded, and experimented more to find out what they want, I'm sure they'd find something."

"But what? What is there to find?" asked the puzzled Constance.

"I don't know. But we get things into our heads. I got it into my head that I wanted romantic love, and politics, something in the George Meredith line.☆ Well I got it. And it wasn't what I really wanted at all. Women should be awfully careful about the things they're *sure* they want. They're nearly always wrong, Dead Sea apples☆ when they've got them."

"But what do you think you *might* have had, that might have satisfied you?"

"I don't know exactly. But I think if I'd loved a good-looking jolly policeman for a time, I might feel better. Anyhow, that's what I think, *now*, that I wanted."

Constance began to laugh silently.

"It seems so very simple," she said.

"Doesn't it!" said Lady Eva. "But I could no more have done it, when I was young, than fly. I could never have let a jolly young policeman have his way with me—that is, not until I'd turned him into something that was no longer a jolly young policeman. I couldn't. And now I wish I had. Doesn't it seem absurd, for an old woman to be saying?"

Lady Eva was not an old woman, she was well under sixty. But she accepted her youth as over.

"It does seem rather queer," said Constance.

"That's why I wanted to warn you. Try and get what you want, in your youth. An elderly woman possessed by vain regrets is worse than possessed with devils."

Constance looked searchingly at her aunt.

"Thank you for warning me," she said. "But *really*, I think I've got everything I want.—And women *are* a nuisance, don't you think?—even to themselves. I don't think it's a question of a policeman more or less, really. We should be dissatisfied by the time we reach fifty, whatever we had. I'm sure policemen's wives are dissatisfied, as they grow older, worse than we are."

"I don't know," said Lady Eva. "I don't think so.—But you're so much cleverer than I am."

"I'm not clever," said Constance. "Only I think I've got what I want—" She tailed off rather vaguely, and Lady Eva glanced at her with remote eyes, knowing her niece was lying, and hiding something. Then there was something to hide! She thought there must be.

Constance also was aware of her own lie. Why was she so barefaced. Her aunt would think all sorts of things.

The guests departed, the intimacy evaporated, and the sense that it had all been sham came down upon the lonely young couple. They had begun to live in a world apart, of their own. Then suddenly they had accepted the other, that outside world. Now they felt dejected and exhausted. They fell back in irritable exhaustion.

Clifford had a good deal of pain again, and suffered in a sort of

ashy silence. Constance did what she could for him. She gave her life for him, for the time. If she could ever have made him better, she would not have minded. But what was broken was broken. And a sense of uselessness began to deaden her soul.

Her own strength and bloom began to leave her. She thought of her lie to her aunt: "I've got what I want."—What had she got? Misery, anger, and a horrible blank life ahead.

Her courage and her strength began to fail. She kept her ruddy colour, which seemed inevitable to her. But she grew thinner and thinner. The pulse in her thin neck showed she was failing.

When her sister Hilda came to see her, in March, there was an immediate outcry.

"Connie! why whatever's the matter with you? You're as thin as a rail, your clothes hang on you like rags! You are ill! Whatever's the matter?"

Hilda had only one sister in the world, and no brothers. Instantly she became fierce. She went in to Clifford.

"What's the matter with Connie?" she demanded of him. "Why is she wasting away?"

"She *is* thinner," he said. "I wish you could do something for her."

The strange egoism of his type appalled Hilda. He was such a gentleman! He had such good manners, and was so extremely considerate. He tried all he could not to trouble his young wife. He bore his pains in silence, and his long hours of misery alone. He forebore to call her, tried never to disturb her, tried always to be cheerful, to make her know how indebted he was to her. He was the soul of a gentleman.

Yet he never felt Constance really as another flowing life, flowing its own stream. He idealised her, perhaps: she was a beautiful life flowering beside his own. But he never warmly *felt* her, not for a moment. The old, wild warmth which Hilda felt for Connie, and Connie for Hilda, was something out of his sphere: something to be suppressed.

With Hilda, there came a new breath of revolt and passion into the house. Hilda had got tired of her "devoted" husband, who pawed her and petted her but never for a moment came forth naked to her, out of his amiable and would-be-manly shell. So she had left him, departed bag and baggage, with her two children, and was living in Scotland. She had come to spend a week with Connie.

Constance was examined by a doctor: nothing organically wrong

with her. Constance was whisked off to London to a specialist, for she complained of pains at the heart. Nothing organically wrong with her: neuralgia of the nerves of the heart, brought on, like all neuralgia, by being run down, by living off the nerves, under the pressure of the will. She needed relaxation from the state of tension into which she had fallen.

"You must come with me to Scotland, Connie."

But Connie refused. Already Hilda had brought a nurse into the house, a quiet, well-behaved, elderly woman, to attend to Sir Clifford. Clifford had acquiesced, with a little bitterness in his willingness to do the best for Constance. And so Constance would not leave him.

A nurse being in the house, however, she took her thoughts more off him. She did not cease to care for him. She would always care for him. But the strain of anxiety on his behalf was less.

It was a curious relationship, that of the husband and wife. In some respects, they were exceedingly intimate, very near to one another. When he held her hand, sometimes, in the silence of the evening, there would seem a great peace between them, and a wonderful togetherness. They were almost like two souls, free from the body and all its weariness; two souls going hand in hand along the upper road that skirts the heaven of perfection.

Then they would talk quietly together, about the soul and immortality. Clifford was deeply concerned with the question of immortality. His view was the old-fashioned Platonist view:☆ the soul of the earnest seeker after truth, after that which is essence, pure and enduring, would reach the upper levels where absolute truth, absolute justice shines in the great eternal gleam that at last satisfies the hurt heart of man.

The two horses that draw the chariot of the soul, the savage, rough-eared, unmanageable black one, and the delicate, beautiful white one, these too occupied the imagination of Clifford. "It seems to me," he said to her, "that my hairy-eared savage horse got his death-blow in the war, and if I struggle up to the shiny levels of heaven, it will be with only one horse to my chariot."

"I don't think you're right, dear," she said, after she had pondered what he said. "Think what savage tempers you still go into, though you do control them."

"I suppose you're right. Yes! I suppose you're about right, Con. It's the black horse, sure enough. Yes, I suppose it is. Gone a bit vicious, very likely."

He went off into a muse. He was so anxious for immortality, so anxious to feel that he would at last plunge and struggle on to that wide lane which is heaven's rampart, whence one can look down again on to earth, before one turns into the full glow of the innermost heaven. He accepted the imagery of the Phaedrus myth. And he was so much afraid that, with only his white horse of pure yearning, the black horse of lust dead in him, he would never come to the heights. One horse would never get him up the steep.

"Only one horse to my chariot," his thoughts ran in bitterness.

But perhaps Constance was right. The black horse was there after all, less obvious and rampageous, maybe, but perhaps more vicious. He remembered the terrible moods that would come upon him, when he would like to destroy the world, to crush mankind to death. Yes, that was lust! That was the black horse, all right.

He was relieved. He had been so much afraid that his hairy-eared horse was dead.

And he was surprised. Did he then love the black brute of the soul, that he was ready to howl like a lost soul, at the thought that the brute was dead in him?

"I should have missed my black horse, if I'd thought he was dead in me, Con," he said, looking at her with hard, shining eyes that frightened her.

"You need only remember how you feel about your uncle Everett," said Constance calmly.

Clifford's uncle Everett was one of the old-fashioned arrogant sort, with all the tough insolence of his class superiority. Clifford couldn't stand him.

"You're a thorough-paced mystic, I'm afraid, my boy. Well well, perhaps just as well! You've got a sensible little woman for a wife."

This sort of thing roused serpents and tigers in Clifford's soul, and he had to lie silent, for he knew it was useless.

"I'm glad my horse with the blood-shot eyes isn't dead, though," he said meditatively to her. "By Jove, I think he could bite off the top of Uncle Everett's cranium with one snap!—I'm glad he's not dead."

"The gods still have a black horse and a white horse to their chariots, don't they, as they drive round the heavens?" she asked.

"By Jove they do! And got 'em both in perfect running order! Only we poor mortals can't manage Blackie," he said cheerfully.

"Don't you think it's rather cruel, the way Socrates☆ drives his black horse?—jerking him back till his mouth and tongue are full of

blood, and bruising his haunches? Don't you think one could manage a horse better than that?"

Clifford looked at her keenly. She had found the taint of bullying, even in Socrates. Even Socrates was a bully! And in her heart of hearts, Constance was quite determined against any sort of bullying.

"Perhaps not a vicious horse," he said.

"But perhaps Blackie isn't so vicious. Don't you think, if one asked him what he truly wanted, he's as much right to it as the white horse, or the driver? Only Socrates thinks he must only have his mouth cut, and be thwarted."

Clifford pondered this. Constance was quite good at thinking in symbols. The symbols of Plato's myths were perfectly familiar to her. She and Clifford used them as ordinary interchange. But Constance, instead of thinking Socrates perfect, was always taking another line.

"What do you mean exactly by the black horse, in this case?" he asked her.

"Doesn't it mean the bodily satisfactions?" she said. "Doesn't it mean the body straining after the goal of its own gratification? Whether it's biting the top of Uncle Everett's head off, or anything else?"

"I suppose it does," he said. "But you can't say that it would be right to bite off the top of Uncle Everett's cranium, as a vicious horse might do it, can you?"

She put down her sewing, and looked at him.

"Well!" she said slowly. "If I were you, I should one day bite the top of Uncle Everett's head right off. I mean, make him look the brainless fool he is. I should do it deliberately. I should consider my black horse had a right to the bite."

She returned to her sewing, and he, all in a flutter, pondered the new attitude to the black horse.

"You would say the black horse has a right to all his desires?" he asked.

"Well, wouldn't you? Only at the right time, and in the right order. Don't you think, instead of the white horse and the driver both struggling to thwart the black one, they should say to him: Gently! Gently! Go gently, and we'll go with you! Go quietly, without overturning the chariot, and we'll drive right in to the place you want."

He looked at her shrewdly.

"Do you think it would answer?" he said.