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Defoe Abbot Melville Montaigne Cooper Emerson Hugo
Stoker Wilde Christie Maupassant Haggard Chesterton Molière Eliot Grimm
Garnett Engels Schiller Byron Maupassant
Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka
Cotton Dostoyevsky Kipling Doyle Willis
Baum Henry Nietzsche
Leslie Dumas Flaubert Turgenev Balzac
Stockton Vatsyayana Crane
Burroughs Verne
Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Busch
Homer Tolstoy Whitman Twain
Darwin Zola Lawrence Dickens Plato
Potter Freud Jowett Stevenson Andersen
Kant London Descartes Cervantes Burton Hesse Harte
Poe Aristotle Wells Voltaire Cooke
Hale James Hastings Shakespeare Chambers Irving
Bunner Richter Chekhov da Shaw Wodehouse
Doré Dante Pushkin Alcott
Swift Chekhov Newton



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A Fountain Sealed

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A FOUNTAIN SEALED

by

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'Tante,' etc.

I

Three people were sitting in a small drawing-room, the windows of which looked out upon a wintry Boston street. It was a room rather empty and undecorated, but the idea of austerity was banished by a temperature so nearly tropical. There were rows of books on white shelves, a pale Donatello cast on the wall, and two fine bronze vases filled with roses on the mantelpiece. Over the roses hung a portrait in oils, very sleek and very accurate, of a commanding old gentleman in uniform, painted by a well-known German painter, and all about the room were photographs of young women, most of them young mothers, with smooth heads and earnest faces, holding babies. Outside, the snow was heaped high along the pavements and thickly ridged the roofs and lintels. After the blizzard the sun was shining and all the white glittered. The national colors, to a patriotic imagination, were pleasingly represented by the red, white and blue of the brick houses, the snow, and the vivid sky above.

The three people who talked, with many intimate pauses of silence, were all Bostonians, though of widely different types. The hostess, sitting in an easy chair and engaged with some sewing, was a girl of about twenty-six. She wore a brown skirt of an ugly cut and shade and a white silk shirt, adorned with a high linen collar, a brown tie and an old-fashioned gold watch-chain. Her forehead was too large, her nose too short; but her lips were full and pleasant and when she smiled she showed charming teeth. The black-rimmed glasses she wore emphasized the clearness and candor of her eyes. Her thick, fair hair was firmly fastened in a group of knobs down the back of her head. There was an element of the grotesque in her appearance and in her careful, clumsy movements, yet, with it, a quality almost graceful, that suggested homely and wholesome analogies,—freshly-baked bread; fair, sweet linen; the safety and content of evening firesides. This was Mary Colton.

The girl who sat near the window, her furs thrown back from her shoulders, a huge muff dangling from her hand, was a few years younger and exceedingly pretty. Her skin was unusually white, her hair unusually black, her velvety eyes unusually large and dark. In her attitude, lounging, graceful, indifferent, in her delicate face, the straight, sulky brows, the coldly closed lips, the coldly observant eyes, a sort of permanent discontent was expressed, as though she could find, neither in herself nor in the world, any adequate satisfaction. This was Rose Packer.

The other guest, sitting sidewise on a stiff chair, his hand hanging over the back, his long legs crossed, was a young man, graceful, lean and shabby. He was clean-shaven, with brown skin and golden hair, an unruly lock lying athwart his forehead. His face, intent, alert, was veiled in an indolent nonchalance. He looked earnest, yet capricious, staunch, yet sensitive, and one felt that, conscious of these weaknesses, he tried to master or to hide them.

These three had known one another since childhood. Jack's family was old and rich; Mary's old and poor; Rose Packer's new and of fantastic wealth. Rose was a young woman of fashion and her whole aspect seemed to repudiate any closeness of tie between herself and Mary, who passed her time in caring for General Colton, her invalid father, attending committees, and, as a diversion, going to "sewing-circles" and symphony concerts; but she was fonder of Mary than of any one else in the world. Rose, who had, as it were, been brought up all over the world, divided her time now between two continents and quaintly diversified her dancing, hunting, yachting existence by the arduous study of biology. Jack, in appearance more ambiguous than either, looked neither useful nor ornamental; but, in point of fact, he was a much occupied person. He painted very seriously, was something of a scholar and devoted much of his time and most of his large fortune to intricate benevolences. His shabby clothes were assumed, like the air of indolence; his wealth irked him and, full of a democratic transcendentalism, he longed to efface all the signs that separated him from the average toiler. While Rose was quite ignorant of her own country west of the Atlantic seaboard, Jack had wandered North, South, West. As for Mary, she had hardly left Boston in her life, except to go to the Massachusetts coast in summer and to pay a rare visit now and then to

New York. It was of such a visit that she had been talking to them and of the friend who, since her own return home only a few days before, had suffered a sudden bereavement in the death of her father. Jack Pennington, also a near friend of Imogen Upton's, had just come from New York, where he had been with her during the mournful ceremonies of death, and Mary Colton, after a little pause, had said, "I suppose she was very wonderful through it all."

"She bore up very well," said Jack Pennington. "There would never be anything selfish in her grief."

"Never. And when one thinks what a grief it is. She is wonderful," said Mary.

"You think every one wonderful, Molly," Rose Packer remarked, not at all aggressively, but with her air of quiet ill-temper.

"Mary's enthusiasm has hit the mark this time," said Pennington, casting a glance more scrutinizing than severe upon the girl.

"I really can't see it. Of course Imogen Upton is pretty—remarkably pretty—though I've always thought her nose too small; and she is certainly clever; but why should she be called wonderful?"

"I think it is her goodness, Rose," said Mary, with an air of gentle willingness to explain. "It's her radiant goodness. I know that Imogen has mastered philosophies, literatures, sciences—in so far as a young and very busy girl can master them, and that very wise men are glad to talk to her; but it's not of that one thinks—nor of her great beauty, either. Both seem taken up, absorbed in that selflessness, that loving-kindness, that's like a higher kind of cleverness—almost like a genius."

"She's not nearly so good as you are, Molly. And after all, what does she do, anyway?"

Mary kept her look of leniency, as if over the half-playful naughtinesses of a child. "She organizes and supports all sorts of charities, all sorts of reforms; she is the wisest, sweetest of hostesses; she takes

care of her brother; she took care of her father;—she takes care of anybody who is in need or unhappy."

"Was Mr. Upton so unhappy? He certainly looked gloomy;—I hardly knew him; Eddy, however, I do know, very well; he isn't in the least unhappy. He doesn't need help."

"I think we all need help, dear. As for Mr. Upton,—you know," Mary spoke very gravely now, "you know about Mrs. Upton."

"Of course I do, and what's better, I know her herself a little. *Elle est charmeuse.*"

"I have never seen her," said Mary, "but I don't understand how you can call a frivolous and heartless woman, who practically deserted her husband and children, *charmeuse*;—but perhaps that is all that one can call her."

"I like frivolous people," said Rose, "and most women would have deserted Mr. Upton, if what I've heard of him was true."

"What have you heard of him?"

"That he was a bombastic prig."

At this Mary's pale cheek colored. "Try to remember, Rose, that he died only a week ago."

"Oh, he may be different now, of course."

"I can't bear to hear you speak so, Rose. I did know him. I saw a great deal of him during this last year. He was a very big person indeed."

"Of course I'm a pig to talk like this, if you really liked him, Molly."

But Mary was not to be turned aside by such ambiguous apology. "You see, you don't know, Rose. The pleasure-seeking, worldly people among whom you live could hardly understand a man like Mr. Upton. Simply what he did for civic reform,—worked himself to death over it. And his books on ethics, politics. It isn't a question of my liking him. I don't know that I ever thought of my feeling for

him in those terms. It was reverence, rather, and gratitude for his being what he was."

"Well, dear, I do remember hearing men, and not worldly men, as you call them, either, say that his work for civic reform amounted to very little and that his books were thin and unoriginal. As for that community place he founded at, where was it?—Clackville? He meddled that out of life."

"He may have been Utopian, he may have been in some ways ineffectual; but he was a good man, a wonderful, yes, Rose, a wonderful man,"

"And do you think that Molly has hit the mark in this, too?" Rose asked, turning her eyes on Pennington. He had been listening with an air of light inattention and now he answered tersely, as if conquering some inner reluctance by over-emphasis, "Couldn't abide him."

Rose laughed out, though with some surprise in her triumph; and Mary, redder than before, rejoined in a low voice, "I didn't expect you, Jack, to let personal tastes interfere with fair judgment."

"Oh, I'm not judging him," said Jack.

"But do you feel with me," said Rose, "that it's no wonder that Mrs. Upton left him."

"Not in the least," Pennington replied, glad, evidently, to make clear his disagreement. "I don't know of any reason that Mrs. Upton had for deserting not only her husband but her children."

"But have they been left? Isn't it merely that they prefer to stay?"

"Prefer to live in their own country? among their own people? Certainly."

"But she spends part of every year with them. There was never any open breach."

"Everybody knew that she would not live with her husband and everybody knew why," Mary said. "It has nearly broken Imogen's heart. She left him because he wouldn't lead the kind of life she wanted to lead—the kind of life she leads in England—one of mere pleasure and self-indulgent ease. She hasn't the faintest conception

of duty or of patriotism. She couldn't help her husband in any way, and she wouldn't let him help her. All she cares for is fashion, admiration and pretty clothes."

"Stuff and nonsense, my dear! She doesn't think one bit more about her clothes than Imogen does. It requires more thought to look like a saint in velvet than to go to the best dressmaker and order a trousseau. I wonder how long it took Imogen to find out that way of doing her hair."

"Rose! — I must beg of you — I love her."

"But I'm saying nothing against her!"

"When I think of what she is suffering now, what you say sounds cruelly irreverent. Jack, I know, feels as I do."

"Yes, he does," said the young man. He got up now and stood, very tall, in the middle of the room looking down at Mary. "I must be off. I'll bring you those books to-morrow afternoon — though I don't see much good in your reading d'Annunzio."

"Why, if you do, Jack?" said Mary, with some wonder. And the degree of intimate equality in the relations of these young people may be gaged by the fact that he appeared to receive her rejoinder as conclusive.

"Well, he's interesting, of course, and if one wants to understand modern decadence in an all-round way —"

"I want to understand everything," said Mary. "And please bring your best Italian dictionary with them."

"Before you go, Jack," said Rose, "pray shut the register. It's quite stifling in here."

"Far too hot," said Jack, showing his impartiality of spirit by his seconding of Rose's complaint, for it was evident she had much displeased him. "I've often told you, Mary, how bad it was for you. That's why you are so pale."

"I'm so sorry. Have you been feeling it much? Leave the door into the hall open."

"And do cast one glance, if only of disapprobation, upon me, Jack," Rose pleaded in mock distress.

"You are a very amusing child, Rose, sometimes," was Pennington's only answer.

"He's evidently very cross with me," said Rose, when he was gone. "While you are not—you who have every right to be, angelic Molly."

"I hope you didn't realize, Rose, how you were hurting him."

"I?" Rose opened wide eyes. "How, pray?"

"Don't you know that he is devoted to Imogen Upton?"

"Why, who isn't devoted to her, except wicked me?"

"Devoted in particular—in love with her, I think," said Mary.

Rose's face took on a more acutely discontented look, after the pause in which she seemed, though unrepentantly, to acquiesce in a conviction of ineptitude. "Really in love with her?"

"I think so; I hope so."

"How foolish of him," said Rose. Mary, at this, rested a gaze so long and so reproachful upon her that the discontent gave way to an affectionate compunction. "The truth is, Mary, that I'm jealous; I'm petty; I'm horrid. I don't like sharing you. I like you to like me most, and not to find other people wonderful."

"If you own that you are naughty, Rose, dear, and that you try hard to be naughtier than you really are, I can't be angry with you. But it does hurt me, for your own sake, to see you—really malicious, dear."

"Oh, dear! Am I that?"

"Really you are."

"Because I called Imogen Upton a saint in velvet?—and like her mother so much, much more?"

"Yes, because of that—and all the rest. As for jealousy, one doesn't love people more because they are wonderful. One is glad of them and one longs to share them. It's one of my dearest hopes that you may come to care for Imogen as I do—and as Jack does."

Rose listened, her head bent forward, her eyes, ambiguous in their half-ironic, half-tender, meaning, on her friend; but she only said, "I shall remain in love with you, Mary." She didn't say again, though she was thinking it, that Jack was very foolish.

II

"Darling, darling Mother:

"I know too well what you have been feeling since the cable reached you; and first of all I want to help you to bear it by telling you at once that you could not have reached him in time. You must not reproach yourself for that.

"I am shattered by this long day. Father died early this morning, but I must hold what strength I have, firmly, for you, and tell you all that you will want to hear. He would have wished that; you know how he felt about a selfish yielding to grief.

"He seemed quite well until the beginning of this week—five days ago—but he was never strong; the long struggle that life must always mean to those who face life as he did, wore on him more and more; for others' sakes he often assumed a buoyancy of manner that, I am sure,—one feels these things by intuition of those one loves—often hid suffering and intense weariness. It was just a case of the sword wearing out the scabbard. A case of, 'Yes, uphill to the very end.' I know that you did not guess how fragile the scabbard had become, and you must not reproach yourself, darling, for that either. We are hardly masters of the intuitions that warn us of these things. Death teaches us so much, and, beside him, looking at his quiet face, so wonderful in its peace and triumph, I have learned many lessons. He has seemed to teach me, in his silence, the gentler, deeper sympathy with temperament. You couldn't help it, darling, I seem to understand that more and more. You weren't at the place, so to speak, where he could help you. Oh, I want to be so tender with you, my mother,—and to help you to wise, strong tenderness toward yourself.

"On Tuesday he worked, as usual, all morning; he had thrown himself heart and soul, as you know, into our great fight with civic corruption—what a worker he was, what a fighter! He was so wonderful at lunch, I remember. I had my dear little Mary Colton with

me and he held us both spellbound, talking, with all his enthusiasm and ardor, of politics, art, life and the living of life. Mary said, when she left me that day, that to know him had been one of the greatest things in her experience. In the afternoon he went to a committee meeting at the Citizens' Union. It was bitterly cold and though I begged him to be selfish for once and take a cab, he wouldn't—you remember his Spartan contempt of costly comforts—and I can see him now, going down the steps, smiling, shaking his head, waving his hand, and saying with that half-sad, half-quizzical, smile of his, 'Plenty of people who need bread a good deal more than I need cabs, little daughter.' So, in the icy wind, he walked to the cable-car, with its over-heated atmosphere. He got back late, only in time to dress for dinner. Several interesting men came and we had a splendid evening, really wonderful talk, *constructive* talk, vitalizing, inspiring, of the world and the work to be done for it. I noticed that father seemed flushed, but thought it merely the interest of the discussion. He did not come down to breakfast next morning and when I went to him I found him very feverish. He confessed then that he had caught a bad chill the day before. I sent for the doctor at once, and for a little while had no anxiety. But the fever became higher and higher and that night the doctor said that it was pneumonia.

"Dearest, dearest mother, these last days are still too much with me for me to feel able to make you see them clearly. It is all a tragic confusion in my mind. Everything that could be done was done to save him. He had nurses and consultations—all the aids of science and love. I wired for Eddy at once, and dear Jack Pennington was with me, too, so helpful with his deep sympathy and friendship. I needed help, mother, for it was like having my heart torn from me to see him go. He was very calm and brave, though I am sure he knew, and once, when I sat beside him, just put out his hand to mine and said: 'Don't grieve overmuch, little daughter; I trust you to turn all your sorrow to noble uses.' He spoke only once of you, dear mother, but then it was to say: 'Tell her—I forgive. Tell her not to reproach herself.' And then—it was the saddest, sweetest summing up, and it will comfort you—'She was like a child.' At the end he simply went—sleeping, unconscious. Oh, mother, mother!—forgive these tears, I am weak.... He lies now, up-stairs, looking so beauti-

ful—like that boyish portrait, you remember, with the uplifted, solemn gaze—only deeper, more peaceful and without the ardor....

"Darling mother, don't bother a bit about me. Eddy and Jack will help me in everything, all our friends are wonderful to us.—Day after to-morrow we are to carry him to his rest.—After that, when I feel a little stronger, I will write again. Eddy goes to you directly after the funeral. If you need me, cable for me at once. I have many ties and many claims here, but I will leave them all to spend the winter with you, if you need me. For you may not feel that you care to come to us, and perhaps it will be easier for you to bear it over there, where you have so many friends and have made your life. So if I can be of any help, any comfort, don't hesitate, mother dear.

"And—oh, I want to say it so lovingly, my arms around you—don't fear that I have any hardness in my heart toward you. I loved him—with all my soul—as you know; but if, sometimes, seeing his patient pain, I have judged you, perhaps, with youth's over-severity,—all that is gone now. I only feel our human weakness, our human need, our human sorrow. Remember, darling, that our very faults, our very mistakes, are the things that may help us to grow higher. Don't sink into a useless self-reproach. 'Turn your sorrow to noble uses.' Use the past to light you to the future. Build on the ruins, dear one. You have Eddy and me to live for, and we love you. God bless you, my darling mother.

"IMOGEN."

This letter, written in a large, graceful and very legible hand, was being read for the third time by the bereaved wife as she sat in the drawing-room of a small house in Surrey on a cold November evening. The room was one of the most finished comfort, comfort its main intention, but so thoroughly attained that beauty had resulted as if unconsciously. The tea-table, the fire, the wide windows, their chintz curtains now drawn, were the points around which the room had so delightfully arranged itself. It was a room a trifle overcrowded, but one wouldn't have wanted anything taken away, the graceful confusion, on a background of almost austere order, gave the happiest sense of adaptability to a variety of human needs and whims. Mrs. Upton had finished her own tea, but the flame still

burned in waiting under the silver urn; books and reviews lay in reach of a lazy hand; lamps, candle-light and flowers made a soft radiance; a small *griffon* dozed before the fire. The decoration of the room consisted mainly in French engravings from Watteau and Chardin, in one or two fine black lacquer cabinets and in a number of jars and vases of Chinese porcelain, some standing on the floor and some on shelves, the neutral-tinted walls a background to their bright, delicate colors.

Mrs. Upton was an appropriate center to so much ease and beauty. In deep black though she was, her still girlish figure stretched out in a low chair, her knees crossed, one foot held to the fire, she did not seem to express woe or the poignancy of regret. The delicate appointments of her dress, the freshness of her skin, her eyes, bright and unfatigued, suggested nothing less than a widow plunged in remorseful grief. Her eyes, indeed, were thoughtful, her lips, as she read her daughter's communication, grave, but there was much discrepancy between her own aspect and the letter's tone, and, letting it drop at last, she seemed herself aware of it, sighing, glancing about her at the Chinese porcelain, the tea-table, the dozing dog. She didn't look stricken, nor did she feel so. The first fact only vaguely crossed her mind; the latter stayed and her face became graver, sadder, in contemplating it. She contemplated it for a long time, going over a retrospect in which her dead husband's figure and her own were seen, steadily, sadly, but without severity for either.

Since the shock of the announcement, conveyed in a long, tender cable over a week ago, she had had no time, as it were, to cast up these accounts with the past. Her mind had known only a confused pain, a confused pity, for herself and for the man whom she once had loved. The death, so long ago, of that young love seemed more with her than her husband's death, which took on the visionary, picture aspect of any tragedy seen from a distance, not lived through. But now, in this long, firelit leisure, that was the final summing of it all. She was grave, she was sad; but she could feel no severity for herself, and, long ago, she had ceased to feel any for poor Everard. They had been greatly mistaken in fancying themselves made for each other, two creatures could hardly have been less so; but Everard had been a good man and she,—she was a

harmless woman. Both of them had meant well. Of course Everard had always, and for everything, meant a great deal more than she, in the sense of an intentional shaping of courses. She had always owned that, had always given his intentions full credit; only, what he had meant had bored her—she could not find it in herself now to fix on any more self-exonerating term. After the first perplexed and painful years of adjustment to fundamental disappointment she had at last seen the facts clearly and not at all unkindly, and it seemed to her that, as far as her husband went, she had made the best of them. It was rather odious of her, no doubt, to think it now, but it seemed the truth, and, seen in its light, poor little Imogen's exhortations and consolations were misplaced. Once or twice in reading the letter she had felt an inclination to smile, an inclination that had swiftly passed into compunction and self-reproach.

Yes, there it was; she could find very little of self-reproach within her in regard to her husband; but in regard to Imogen her conscience was not easy, and as her thoughts passed to her, her face grew still sadder and still graver. She saw Imogen, in the long retrospect,—it was always Imogen, Eddy had never counted as a problem—first as a child whom she could take abroad with her for French, German, Italian educational experiences; then as a young girl, very determined to form her own character, and sure, with her father to second her assurance, that boarding-school was the proper place to form it. Eddy was also at school, and Mrs. Upton, with the alternative of flight or an unbroken tête-à-tête with her husband before her, chose the former. There was no breach, no crash; any such disturbances had taken place long before; she simply slid away, and her prolonged absences seemed symbols of fundamental and long recognized divisions. She came home for the children's holidays; built, indeed, the little house among the Vermont hills, so that she might, as it were, be her husband's hostess there. She hoped, through the ambiguous years, for Imogen's young-womanhood; looking forward to taking her place beside her when the time came for her first steps in the world. But here, again, Imogen's clear-cut choice interfered. Imogen considered girlish frivolities a foolish waste of time; she would take her place in the world when she was fully equipped for the encounter; she was not yet

equipped to her liking and she declared herself resolved on a college course.

Imogen had been out of college for three years now, but the routine of Mrs. Upton's life was unchanged. The rut had been made too deep for her to climb out of it. It had become impossible to think of reentering her husband's home as a permanent part of it. Eddy was constantly with her in England in the intervals of his undergraduate life; but how urge upon Imogen more frequent meetings when her absence would leave the father desolate? The summers had come to be their only times of reunion and Mrs. Upton had more and more come to look forward to them with an inward tremor of uncertainty and discomfort. For, under everything, above everything, was the fact, and she felt herself now to be looking it hard in the face, that Imogen had always, obviously, emphatically, been fondest of her father. It had been from the child's earliest days, this more than fondness, this placid partizanship. In looking back it seemed to her that Imogen had always disapproved of her, had always shown her disapproval, gently, even tenderly, but with a sad firmness. Her liberation from her husband's standard was all very well; she cared nothing for Imogen's standard either, in so far as it was an echo, a reflection; only, for her daughter not to care for her, to disapprove of her, to be willing that she should go out of her life,—there was the rub; and the fact that she should be considering it over a tea-table in Surrey while Imogen was battling with all the somber accompaniments of grief in New York, challenged her not to deny some essential defect in her own maternity. She was an honest woman, and after her hour of thought she could not deny it, though she could not see clearly where it lay; but the recognition was but a step to the owning that she must try to right herself. And at this point,—she had drawn a deep breath over it, straightening herself in her chair,—her friends came in from their drive and put an end to her solitude.

For the first years of her semi-detached life Mrs. Upton had been as gay as a very decorous young grass-widow can be. Her whole existence, until her marriage, which had dropped, or lifted, her to graver levels, had been passed among elaborate social conditions, and wherever she might go she found the protection of a recognized background. She had multitudes of acquaintances and these sur-