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She always hummed when she passed his door. In some respects, he reflected, she was a very self-conscious girl. He believed also that the brusque bumpings, the lively jug-and-basin sounds, which now came through the wall, were similarly subtly challenging and alluding to himself. A rather mystifying creature, of whom he knew, really, nothing—for all their chaff and friendliness. Her afternoon had been spent in goodness. She had been over to see her sick “Auntie” (as she so naïvely and characteristically called her) at Clapham.

By and by she called out to him, through the wall, chanting his name in two distinct syllables.

“Bo—ob ! ”

“Ullo ! ”

“What’s the time, Bob ? ”

“Five To ! ”

Ella’s retort was a mumble and a bump.

“*What ?* ”

“*Nuth—thing !* ”

Silence.

They had five more minutes. They did not speak again. The hush in the house beneath them once more asserted itself. It was the hush of behind-scenes just before the show. These two, high up here, quietly preparing and making themselves decent, were aware of the part they played, and of their shared distinction from the besieging many.

He was now all but ready. He put on his white coat, and fixed his white apron. He then went over to his mirror, in front of which he crouched eagerly to brush his hair—a soothing and reviving operation in itself.

His own reflection gave little dissatisfaction. The clear, clean skin; the clear, clean teeth; the firm clean-shaven features; the nous, efficiency, and yet frankness of his face; the dark, well-kept hair; the dark brown eyes, set rather far back—all these collectively were as bracing to a remorseful spirit as you could wish. He was, however, not an Englishman. His American and Irish parentage gleamed from him—most particularly his American. His father had been (and it was his