

"Has he—has he killed him?"  
 "By no means. Mr. Deschamps departed from the Cap Martin Hotel at six o'clock this evening and left no address. So that is ended."

### The Journey Home

A WEEK later we went home. Miss Oakwood offered various reasons for this sudden departure:

1. No longer should I be of any use to her. Lovers were of no use to anybody but themselves.

2. Another railway strike was imminent. The last had held up returning English travellers at places like Lyon, dull places, barren of any form of excitement, for sixty-four hours, without food, drink or warmth. She would take no risks.

3. Uncle Tom had written an agitated letter in reply to mine confessing my sins, saying if I did not return home immediately he should come and fetch me, though he was in the grip of an attack of lumbago. He would be sorry if such a proceeding should upset Miss Oakwood, but there were millions of unattached females wandering about the face of the globe who would be ready to jump into my shoes. So come I must, and at once. Miss Oakwood chose to laugh inordinately at this epistle, and remarked that men were selfish beasts!

4. That she knew I was just dying to acquaint my family with my news and produce Martin, so the sooner we went the better.

So the day previous to our departure arrived, and after our packing was finished Martin and I went round saying "Good-bye" to all the people and places and things I had learnt to know so well and love so much.

A little later we wandered along the flower-bedecked terrace of the Beau-Séjour garden, and I whispered last words of love to the stony white rambler rose on the old wall which was creeping higher and higher, a

white wraith, up the palm tree behind, and to the wistaria which fell in cascades over the stone balcony. I lifted one of the heavy, exquisite plumes in which the bees had happily hummed throughout the day and inhaled its scent, and thanked it for giving us so much pleasure.

"We are not grateful enough to the lovely things of this earth," I said; "we take them all for granted, and sometimes I wonder if they are hurt."

Miss Oakwood, when I finally went in to dress, wondered a trifle sharply why I was so late. "The hold-all won't meet." She was staring at it with a resentful, oblique eye. With a strong pull on the straps I compelled it to meet. "It will burst before we arrive home," she said despondently. I cheered her to the best of my ability. Already the spirit of gloom and truculence that animated her on a railway journey was beginning to exhibit itself, and my heart sank. I told Martin of her pugilistic attitude on the journey out, and what I feared was before us on the morrow, and he chose to be amused.

"I have never seen her even ruffled in my life," he said.

"You won't say the same thing within twenty-four hours from now," was my reply.

I was right.

We had not left Mentone Station before he became anxious. At Cannes, when a person—a mild, timid-looking woman—entered our compartment, making up our complement of four—we were again travelling *courette*—this restlessness turned into marked anxiety, for Miss Oakwood eyed the mild person as though she were an intrusive bull, and by the time we had arrived at the dinner hour he had become downright angry.

"It's extraordinary!" he whispered, as we stood for a moment alone in the corridor. "If I did not love her so, I should say it was abomin-

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