

J. M. Barrie

Tommy and Grizel

 Publio

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Minden jog fenntartva!

PART I

CHAPTER I HOW TOMMY FOUND A WAY

O.P. Pym, the colossal Pym, that vast and rolling figure, who never knew what he was to write about until he dipped grandly, an author in such demand that on the foggy evening which starts our story his publishers have had his boots removed lest he slip thoughtlessly round the corner before his work is done, as was the great man's way—shall we begin with him, or with Tommy, who has just arrived in London, carrying his little box and leading a lady by the hand? It was Pym, as we are about to see, who in the beginning held Tommy up to the public gaze, Pym who first noticed his remarkable indifference to female society, Pym who gave him—But alack! does no one remember Pym for himself? Is the king of the *Penny Number* already no more than a button that once upon a time kept Tommy's person together? And we are at the night when they first met! Let us hasten into Marylebone before little Tommy arrives and Pym is swallowed like an oyster.

This is the house, 22 Little Owlet Street, Marylebone, but which were his rooms it is less easy to determine, for he was a lodger who flitted placidly from floor to floor according to the state of his finances, carrying his apparel and other belongings in one great armful, and spilling by the way. On this particular evening he was on the second floor front, which had a fireplace in the corner, furniture all his landlady's and mostly horsehair, little to suggest his calling save a noble saucerful of ink, and nothing to draw attention from Pym, who lolled, gross and massive, on a sofa, one leg over the back of it, the other drooping, his arms extended, and his pipe, which he could find nowhere, thrust between the buttons of his waistcoat, an agreeable pipe-rack. He wore a yellow dressing-gown, or could scarcely be said to wear it, for such of it as was not round his neck he had converted into a cushion for his head, which is perhaps the part of him we should have turned to first. It was a big round head, the plentiful gray hair in tangles, possibly because in Pym's last flitting the comb had dropped over the banisters; the features were ugly and beyond life-size, yet the forehead had altered little except in colour since the day when he was near being made a fellow of his college; there was sensitiveness left in the thick nose, humour in the eyes, though they so often watered; the face had gone to flabbiness at last, but not without some lines and dents, as if the head had resisted the body for a space before the whole man rolled contentedly downhill.

He had no beard. "Young man, let your beard grow." Those who have forgotten all else about Pym may recall him in these words. They were his one counsel to literary aspirants, who, according as they took it, are now bearded and prosperous or shaven and on the rates. To shave costs threepence, another threepence for loss of time—nearly ten pounds a year, three hundred pounds since Pym's chin first bristled. With his beard he could have bought an annuity or a cottage in the country, he could have had a wife and children, and driven his dog-cart, and been made a church-warden. All gone, all shaved, and for what? When he asked this question he would move his hand across his chin with a sigh, and so, bravely to the barber's.

Pym was at present suffering from an ailment that had spread him out on that sofa again and again—acute disinclination to work.

Meanwhile all the world was waiting for his new tale; so the publishers, two little round men, have told him. They have blustered, they have fawned, they have asked each other out to talk it over behind the door.

Has he any idea of what the story is to be about?

He has no idea.

Then at least, Pym—excellent Pym—sit down and dip, and let us see what will happen.

He declined to do even that. While all the world waited, this was Pym's ultimatum:

"I shall begin the damned thing at eight o'clock."

Outside, the fog kept changing at intervals from black to white, as lazily from white to black (the monster blinking); there was not a sound from the street save of pedestrians tapping with their sticks on the pavement as they moved forward warily, afraid of an

embrace with the unknown; it might have been a city of blind beggars, one of them a boy.

At eight o'clock Pym rose with a groan and sat down in his stocking-soles to write his delicious tale. He was now alone. But though his legs were wound round his waste-paper basket, and he dipped often and loudly in the saucer, like one ringing at the door of Fancy, he could not get the idea that would set him going. He was still dipping for inspiration when T. Sandys, who had been told to find the second floor for himself, knocked at the door, and entered, quaking.

"I remember it vividly," Pym used to say when questioned in the after years about this his first sight of Tommy, "and I hesitate to decide which impressed me more, the richness of his voice, so remarkable in a boy of sixteen, or his serene countenance, with its noble forehead, behind which nothing base could lurk."

Pym, Pym! it is such as you that makes the writing of biography difficult. The richness of Tommy's voice could not have struck you, for at that time it was a somewhat squeaky voice; and as for the noble forehead behind which nothing base could lurk, how could you say that, Pym, you who had a noble forehead yourself?

No; all that Pym saw was a pasty-faced boy sixteen years old, and of an appearance mysteriously plain; hair light brown, and waving defiance to the brush; nothing startling about him but the expression of his face, which was almost fearsomely solemn and apparently unchangeable. He wore his Sunday blacks, of which the trousers might with advantage have borrowed from the sleeves; and he was so nervous that he had to wet his lips before he could speak. He had left the door ajar for a private reason; but Pym, misunderstanding, thought he did it to fly the more readily if anything was flung at him, and so concluded that he must be a printer's devil. Pym had a voice that shook his mantelpiece ornaments; he was all on the same scale as his ink-pot. "Your Christian name, boy?" he roared hopefully, for it was thus he sometimes got the idea that started him.

"Thomas," replied the boy.

Pym gave him a look of disgust "You may go," he said. But when he looked up presently, Thomas was still there. He was not only there, but whistling—a short, encouraging whistle that seemed to be directed at the door. He stopped quickly when Pym looked up, but during the remainder of the interview he emitted this whistle at intervals, always with that anxious glance at his friend the door; and its strained joviality was in odd contrast with his solemn face, like a cheery tune played on the church organ.

"Begone!" cried Pym.

"My full name," explained Tommy, who was speaking the English correctly, but with a Scots accent, "is Thomas Sandys. And fine you know who that is," he added, exasperated by Pym's indifference. "I'm the T. Sandys that answered your advertisement."

Pym knew who he was now. "You young ruffian," he gasped, "I never dreamt that you would come!"

"I have your letter engaging me in my pocket," said Tommy, boldly, and he laid it on the table. Pym surveyed it and him in comic dismay, then with a sudden thought produced nearly a dozen letters from a drawer, and dumped them down beside the other. It was now his turn to look triumphant and Tommy aghast.

Pym's letters were all addressed from the Dubb of Prosen Farm, near Thrums, N.B., to different advertisers, care of a London agency, and were Tommy's answers to the "wants" in a London newspaper which had found its way to the far North. "X Y Z" was in need of a chemist's assistant, and from his earliest years, said one of the letters, chemistry had been the study of studies for T. Sandys. He was glad to read, was T. Sandys, that one who did not object to long hours would be preferred, for it seemed to him that those who objected to long hours did not really love their work, their heart was not in it, and only where the heart is can the treasure be found.

"123" had a vacancy for a page-boy, "Glasgow Man" for a photographer; page-boy must not be over fourteen, photographer must not be under twenty. "I am a little over fourteen, but I look less," wrote T. Sandys to "123"; "I am a little under twenty," he wrote to "Glasgow Man," "but I look more." His heart was in the work.

To be a political organizer! If "H and H," who advertised for one, only knew how eagerly the undersigned desired to devote his life to political organizing!

In answer to "Scholastic's" advertisement for janitor in a boys' school, T. Sandys begged to submit his name for consideration.

Undoubtedly the noblest letter was the one applying for the secretaryship of a charitable society, salary to begin at once, but the candidate selected must deposit one hundred pounds. The application was noble in its offer to make the work a labour of love, and almost nobler in its argument that the hundred pounds was unnecessary.

"Rex" had a vacancy in his drapery department. T. Sandys had made a unique study of drapery.

Lastly, "Anon" wanted an amanuensis. "Salary," said "Anon," who seemed to be a humourist, "salary large but uncertain." He added with equal candour: "Drudgery great, but to an intelligent man the pickings may be considerable." Pickings! Is there a finer word in the language? T. Sandys had felt that he was particularly good at pickings. But amanuensis? The thing was unknown to him; no one on the farm could tell him what it was. But never mind; his heart was in it.

All this correspondence had produced one reply, the letter on which Tommy's hand still rested. It was a brief note, signed "O.P. Pym," and engaging Mr. Sandys on his own recommendation, "if he really felt quite certain that his heart (treasure included) was in the work." So far good, Tommy had thought when he received this answer, but there was nothing in it to indicate the nature of the work, nothing to show whether O.P. Pym was "Scholastic," or "123," or "Rex," or any other advertiser in particular. Stop, there was a postscript: "I need not go into details about your duties, as you assure me you are so well acquainted with them, but before you join me please send (in writing) a full statement of what you think they are."

There were delicate reasons why Mr. Sandys could not do that, but oh, he was anxious to be done with farm labour, so he decided to pack and risk it. The letter said plainly that he was engaged; what for he must find out slyly when he came to London. So he had put his letter firmly on Pym's table; but it was a staggerer to find that gentleman in possession of the others.

One of these was Pym's by right; the remainder were a humourous gift from the agent who was accustomed to sift the correspondence of his clients. Pym had chuckled over them, and written a reply that he flattered himself would stump the boy; then he had unexpectedly come into funds (he found a forgotten check while searching his old pockets for tobacco-crumbs), and in that glory T. Sandys escaped his memory. Result, that they were now face to face.

A tiny red spot, not noticeable before, now appeared in Tommy's eyes. It was never there except when he was determined to have his way. Pym, my friend, yes, and everyone of you who is destined to challenge Tommy, 'ware that red light!

"Well, which am I?" demanded Pym, almost amused, Tommy was so obviously in a struggle with the problem.

The saucer and the blank pages told nothing. "Whichever you are," the boy answered heavily, "it's not herding nor foddering cattle, and so long as it's not that, I'll put my heart in it, and where the heart is, there the treasure—"

He suddenly remembered that his host must be acquainted with the sentiment.

Easy-going Pym laughed, then said irritably, "Of what use could a mere boy be to me?"

"Then it's not the page-boy!" exclaimed Tommy, thankfully.

"Perhaps I am 'Scholastic,'" suggested Pym.

"No," said Tommy, after a long study of his face.

Pym followed this reasoning, and said touchily, "Many a schoolmaster has a red face."

"Not that kind of redness," explained Tommy, without delicacy.

"I am 'H and H,'" said Pym.

"You forget you wrote to me as one person," replied Tommy. "So I did. That was because I am the chemist; and I must ask you, Thomas, for your certificate."

Tommy believed him this time, and Pym triumphantly poured himself a glass of whisky, spilling some of it on his dressing-gown.

"Not you," said Tommy, quickly; "a chemist has a steady hand."

"Confound you!" cried Pym, "what sort of a boy is this?"

"If you had been the draper you would have wiped the drink off your gown," continued Tommy, thoughtfully, "and if you had been 'Glasgow Man' you would have sucked it off, and if you had been the charitable society you wouldn't swear in company." He flung out his hand. "I'll tell you who you are," he said sternly, "you're 'Anon.'"

Under this broadside Pym succumbed. He sat down feebly. "Right," he said, with a humourous groan, "and I shall tell you who you are. I am afraid you are my amanuensis!"

Tommy immediately whistled, a louder and more glorious note than before.

"Don't be so cocky," cried Pym, in sudden rebellion. "You are only my amanuensis if you can tell me what that is. If you can't—out you go!"

He had him at last! Not he!

"An amanuensis," said Tommy, calmly, "is one who writes to dictation. Am I to bring in my box? It's at the door."

This made Pym sit down again. "You didn't know what an amanuensis was when you answered my advertisement," he said.

"As soon as I got to London," Tommy answered, "I went into a bookseller's shop, pretending I wanted to buy a dictionary, and I looked the word up."

"Bring in your box," Pym said, with a groan.

But it was now Tommy's turn to hesitate. "Have you noticed," he asked awkwardly, "that I sometimes whistle?"

"Don't tell me," said Pym, "that you have a dog out there."

"It's not a dog," Tommy replied cautiously.

Pym had resumed his seat at the table and was once more toying with his pen. "Open the door," he commanded, "and let me see what you have brought with you."

Tommy obeyed gingerly, and then Pym gaped, for what the open door revealed to him was a tiny roped box with a girl of twelve sitting on it. She was dressed in some dull-coloured wincey, and looked cold and patient and lonely, and as she saw the big man staring at her she struggled in alarm to her feet, and could scarce stand on them. Tommy was looking apprehensively from her to Pym.

"Good God, boy!" roared Pym, "are you married?"

"No," cried Tommy, in agony, "she's my sister, and we're orphans, and did you think I could have the heart to leave Elspeth behind?" He took her stoutly by the hand.

"And he never will marry," said little Elspeth, almost fiercely; "will you, Tommy?"

"Never!" said Tommy, patting her and glaring at Pym.

But Pym would not have it. "Married!" he shouted. "Magnificent!" And he dipped exultantly, for he had got his idea at last. Forgetting even that he had an amanuensis, he wrote on and on and on.

"He smells o' drink," Elspeth whispered.

"All the better," replied Tommy, cheerily. "Make yourself at home, Elspeth; he's the kind I can manage. Was there ever a kind I couldna manage?" he whispered, top-heavy with conceit.

"There was Grizel," Elspeth said, rather thoughtlessly; and then Tommy frowned.

CHAPTER II

THE SEARCH FOR THE TREASURE

Six years afterwards Tommy was a famous man, as I hope you do not need to be told; but you may be wondering how it came about. The whole question, in Pym's words, resolves itself into how the solemn little devil got to know so much about women. It made the world marvel when they learned his age, but no one was quite so staggered as Pym, who had seen him daily for all those years, and been damning him for his indifference to the sex during the greater part of them.

It began while he was still no more than an amanuensis, sitting with his feet in the waste-paper basket, Pym dictating from the sofa, and swearing when the words would not come unless he was perpendicular. Among the duties of this amanuensis was to remember the name of the heroine, her appearance, and other personal details; for Pym constantly forgot them in the night, and he had to go searching back through his pages for them, cursing her so horribly that Tommy signed to Elspeth to retire to her tiny bedroom at the top of the house. He was always most careful of Elspeth, and with the first pound he earned he insured his life, leaving all to her, but told her nothing about it, lest she should think it meant his early death. As she grew older he also got good dull books for her from a library, and gave her a piano on the hire system, and taught her many things about life, very carefully selected from his own discoveries.

Elspeth out of the way, he could give Pym all the information wanted. "Her name is Felicity," he would say at the right moment; "she has curly brown hair in which the sun strays, and a blushing neck, and her eyes are like blue lakes."

"Height!" roared Pym. "Have I mentioned it?"

"No; but she is about five feet six."

"How the — could you know that?"

"You tell Percy's height in his stocking-soles, and when she reached to his mouth and kissed him she had to stand on her tiptoes so to do."

Tommy said this in a most businesslike tone, but could not help smacking his lips. He smacked them again when he had to write: "Have no fear, little woman; I am by your side." Or, "What a sweet child you are!"

Pym had probably fallen into the way of making the Percys revel in such epithets because he could not remember the girl's name; but this delicious use of the diminutive, as addressed to full-grown ladies, went to Tommy's head. His solemn face kept his secret, but he had some narrow escapes; as once, when saying good-night to Elspeth, he kissed her on mouth, eyes, nose, and ears, and said: "Shall I tuck you in, little woman?" He came to himself with a start.

"I forgot," he said hurriedly, and got out of the room without telling her what he had forgotten.

Pym's publishers knew their man, and their arrangement with him was that he was paid on completion of the tale. But always before he reached the middle he struck for what they called his honorarium; and this troubled them, for the tale was appearing week by week as it was written. If they were obdurate, he suddenly concluded his story in such words as these:

"Several years have passed since these events took place, and the scene changes to a lovely garden by the bank of old Father Thames. A young man sits by the soft-flowing stream, and he is calm as the scene itself; for the storm has passed away, and Percy (for it is no other) has found an anchorage. As he sits musing over the past, Felicity steals out by the French window and puts her soft arms around his neck. 'My little wife!' he murmurs. *The End—unless you pay up by messenger.*"

This last line, which was not meant for the world (but little would Pym have cared though it had been printed), usually brought his employers to their knees; and then, as Tommy advanced in experience, came the pickings—for Pym, with money in his pockets, had important engagements round the corner, and risked intrusting his amanuensis with the writing of the next instalment, "all except the bang at the end."

Smaller people, in Tommy's state of mind, would have hurried straight to the love-passages; but he saw the danger, and forced his Pegasus away from them. "Do your day's toil first," he may be conceived saying to that animal, "and at evenfall I shall let you out to browse." So, with this reward in front, he devoted many pages to the dreary adventures of pretentious males, and even found a certain pleasure in keeping the lady waiting. But as soon as he reached her he lost his head again.

"Oh, you beauty! oh, you small pet!" he said to himself, with solemn transport.

As the artist in him was stirred, great problems presented themselves; for instance, in certain circumstances was "darling" or "little one" the better phrase? "Darling" in solitary grandeur is more pregnant of meaning than "little one," but "little" has a flavour of the patronizing which "darling" perhaps lacks. He wasted many sheets over such questions; but they were in his pocket when Pym or Elspeth opened the door. It is wonderful how much you can conceal between the touch on the handle and the opening of the door, if your heart is in it.

Despite this fine practice, however, he was the shyest of mankind in the presence of women, and this shyness grew upon him with the years. Was it because he never tried to uncork himself? Oh, no! It was about this time that he, one day, put his arm round Clara, the servant—not passionately, but with deliberation, as if he were making an experiment with machinery. He then listened, as if to hear Clara ticking. He wrote an admirable love-letter—warm, dignified, sincere—to nobody in particular, and carried it about in his pocket in readiness. But in love-making, as in the other arts, those do it best who cannot tell how it is done; and he was always stricken with a palsy when about to present that letter. It seemed that he was only able to speak to ladies when they were not there. Well, if he could not speak, he thought the more; he thought so profoundly that in time the heroines of Pym ceased to thrill him.

This was because he had found out that they were not flesh and blood. But he did not delight in his discovery: it horrified him; for what he wanted was the old thrill. To make them human so that they could be his little friends again—nothing less was called for. This meant slaughter here and there of the great Pym's brain-work, and Tommy tried to keep his hands off; but his heart was in it. In Pym's pages the ladies were the most virtuous and proper of their sex (though dreadfully persecuted), but he merely told you so at the beginning, and now and again afterwards to fill up, and then allowed them to act with what may be called rashness, so that the story did not really suffer. Before Tommy was nineteen he changed all that. Out went this because she would not have done it, and that because she could not have done it. Fathers might now have taken a lesson from T. Sandys in the upbringing of their daughters. He even sternly struck out the diminutives. With a pen in his hand and woman in his head, he had such noble thoughts that his tears of exaltation damped the pages as he wrote, and the ladies must have been astounded as well as proud to see what they were turning into.

That was Tommy with a pen in his hand and a handkerchief hard by; but it was another Tommy who, when the finest bursts were over, sat back in his chair and mused. The lady was consistent now, and he would think about her, and think and think, until concentration, which is a pair of blazing eyes, seemed to draw her out of the pages to his side, and then he and she sported in a way forbidden in the tale. While he sat there with eyes riveted, he had her to dinner at a restaurant, and took her up the river, and called her "little woman"; and when she held up her mouth he said tantalizingly that she must wait until he had finished his cigar. This queer delight enjoyed, back he popped her into the story, where she was again the vehicle for such glorious sentiments that Elspeth, to whom he read the best of them, feared he was becoming too good to live.

In the meantime the great penny public were slowly growing restive, and at last the two little round men called on Pym to complain that he was falling off; and Pym turned them out of doors, and then sat down heroically to do what he had not done for two decades—to read his latest work.

"Elsbeth, go upstairs to your room," whispered Tommy, and then he folded his arms proudly. He should have been in a tremble, but latterly he had often felt that he must burst if he did not soon read some of his bits to Pym, more especially the passages about the hereafter; also the opening of Chapter Seventeen.

At first Pym's only comment was, "It is the same old drivel as before; what more can they want?"

But presently he looked up, puzzled. "Is this chapter yours or mine?" he demanded.

"It is about half and half," said Tommy.

"Is mine the first half? Where does yours begin?" "That is not exactly what I mean," explained Tommy, in a glow, but backing a little; "you wrote that chapter first, and then I—I—"

"You rewrote it!" roared Pym. "You dared to meddle with—" He was speechless with fury.

"I tried to keep my hand off," Tommy said, with dignity, "but the thing had to be done, and they are human now."

"Human! who wants them to be human? The fiends seize you, boy! you have even been tinkering with my heroine's personal appearance; what is this you have been doing to her nose?"

"I turned it up slightly, that's all," said Tommy.

"I like them down," roared Pym.

"I prefer them up," said Tommy, stiffly.

"Where," cried Pym, turning over the leaves in a panic, "where is the scene in the burning house?"

"It's out," Tommy explained, "but there is a chapter in its place about—it's mostly about the beauty of the soul being everything, and mere physical beauty nothing. Oh, Mr. Pym, sit down and let me read it to you."

But Pym read it, and a great deal more, for himself. No wonder he stormed, for the impossible had been made not only consistent, but unreadable. The plot was lost for chapters. The characters no longer did anything, and then went and did something else: you were told instead how they did it. You were not allowed to make up your own mind about them: you had to listen to the mind of T. Sandys; he described and he analyzed; the road he had tried to clear through the thicket was impassable for chips.

"A few more weeks of this," said Pym, "and we should all three be turned out into the streets."

Tommy went to bed in an agony of mortification, but presently to his side came Pym.

"Where did you copy this from?" he asked. "It is when we are thinking of those we love that our noblest thoughts come to us, and the more worthy they are of our love the nobler the thought; hence it is that no one has done the greatest work who did not love God."

"I copied it from nowhere," replied Tommy, fiercely; "it's my own."

"Well, it has nothing to do with the story, and so is only a blot on it, and I have no doubt the thing has been said much better before. Still, I suppose it is true."

"It's true," said Tommy; "and yet—"

"Go on. I want to know all about it."

"And yet," Tommy said, puzzled, "I've known noble thoughts come to me when I was listening to a brass band."

Pym chuckled. "Funny things, noble thoughts," he agreed. He read another passage: "It was the last half-hour of day when I was admitted, with several others, to look upon my friend's dead face. A handkerchief had been laid over it. I raised the handkerchief. I know not what the others were thinking, but the last time we met he had told me something, it was not much—only that no woman had ever kissed him. It seemed to me that, as I gazed, the wistfulness came back to his face. I whispered to a woman who was present, and stooping over him, she was about to—but her eyes were dry, and I stopped her. The handkerchief was replaced, and all left the room save myself. Again I raised the handkerchief. I cannot tell you how innocent he looked."

"Who was he?" asked Pym.

"Nobody," said Tommy, with some awe; "it just came to me. Do you notice how simple the wording is? It took me some time to make it so simple."

"You are just nineteen, I think?"

"Yes."

Pym looked at him wonderingly.

"Thomas," he said, "you are a very queer little devil."

He also said: "And it is possible you may find the treasure you are always talking about. Don't jump to the ceiling, my friend, because I say that. I was once after the treasure, myself; and you can see whether I found it."

From about that time, on the chances that this mysterious treasure might spring up in the form of a new kind of flower, Pym zealously cultivated the ground, and Tommy had an industrious time of it. He was taken off his stories, which at once regained their elasticity, and put on to exercises.

"If you have nothing to say on the subject, say nothing," was one of the new rules, which few would have expected from Pym. Another was: "As soon as you can say what you think, and not what some other person has thought for you, you are on the way to being a remarkable man."

"Without concentration, Thomas, you are lost; concentrate, though your coat-tails be on fire.

"Try your hand at description, and when you have done chortling over the result, reduce the whole by half without missing anything out.

"Analyze your characters and their motives at the prodigious length in which you revel, and then, my sonny, cut your analysis out. It is for your own guidance, not the reader's.

"I have often noticed,' you are always saying. The story has nothing to do with you. Obliterate yourself. I see that will be your stiffest job.

"Stop preaching. It seems to me the pulpit is where you should look for the treasure. Nineteen, and you are already as didactic as seventy."

And so on. Over his exercises Tommy was now engrossed for so long a period that, as he sits there, you may observe his legs slowly lengthening and the coming of his beard. No, his legs lengthened as he sat with his feet in the basket; but I feel sure that his beard burst through prematurely some night when he was thinking too hard about the ladies.

There were no ladies in the exercises, for, despite their altercation about noses, Pym knew that on this subject Tommy's mind was a blank. But he recognized the sex's importance, and becoming possessed once more of a black coat, marched his pupil into the somewhat shoddy drawing-rooms that were still open to him, and there ordered Tommy to be fascinated for his future good. But it was as it had always been. Tommy sat white and speechless and apparently bored; could not even say, "You sing with so much expression!" when the lady at the pianoforte had finished.

"Shyness I could pardon," the exasperated Pym would roar; "but want of interest is almost immoral. At your age the blood would have been coursing through my veins. Love! You are incapable of it. There is not a drop of sentiment in your frozen carcass."

"Can I help that?" growled Tommy. It was an agony to him even to speak about women.

"If you can't," said Pym, "all is over with you. An artist without sentiment is a painter without colours. Young man, I fear you are doomed."

And Tommy believed him, and quaked. He had the most gallant struggles with himself. He even set his teeth and joined a dancing-class; though neither Pym nor Elspeth knew of it, and it never showed afterwards in his legs. In appearance he was now beginning to be the Sandys of the photographs: a little over the middle height and rather heavily built; nothing to make you uncomfortable until you saw his face. That solemn countenance never responded when he laughed, and stood coldly by when he was on fire; he might have winked for an eternity, and still the onlooker must have thought himself mistaken. In his boyhood the mask had descended scarce below his mouth, for there was a dimple in the chin to put you at ease; but now the short brown beard had come, and he was for ever hidden from the world.

He had the dandy's tastes for superb neckties, velvet jackets, and he got the ties instead of dining; he panted for the jacket, knew

all the shop-windows it was in, but for years denied himself, with a moan, so that he might buy pretty things for Elspeth. When eventually he got it, Pym's friends ridiculed him. When he saw how ill his face matched it he ridiculed himself. Often when Tommy was feeling that now at last the ladies must come to heel, he saw his face suddenly in a mirror, and all the spirit went out of him. But still he clung to his velvet jacket.

I see him in it, stalking through the terrible dances, a heroic figure at last. He shuddered every time he found himself on one leg; he got sternly into everybody's way; he was the butt of the little noodle of an instructor. All the social tortures he endured grimly, in the hope that at last the cork would come out. Then, though there were all kinds of girls in the class, merry, sentimental, practical, coquettish, prudes, there was no kind, he felt, whose heart he could not touch. In love-making, as in the favourite Thrums game of the dambrod, there are sixty-one openings, and he knew them all. Yet at the last dance, as at the first, the universal opinion of his partners (shop-girls, mostly, from the large millinery establishments, who had to fly like Cinderellas when the clock struck a certain hour) was that he kept himself to himself, and they were too much the lady to make up to a gentleman who so obviously did not want them.

Pym encouraged his friends to jeer at Tommy's want of interest in the sex, thinking it a way of goading him to action. One evening, the bottles circulating, they mentioned one Dolly, goddess at some bar, as a fit instructress for him. Coarse pleasantries passed, but for a time he writhed in silence, then burst upon them indignantly for their unmanly smirching of a woman's character, and swept out, leaving them a little ashamed. That was very like Tommy.

But presently a desire came over him to see this girl, and it came because they had hinted such dark things about her. That was like him also.

There was probably no harm in Dolly, though it is man's proud right to question it in exchange for his bitters. She was tall and willowy, and stretched her neck like a swan, and returned you your change with disdainful languor; to call such a haughty beauty Dolly was one of the minor triumphs for man, and Dolly they all called her, except the only one who could have given an artistic justification for it.

This one was a bearded stranger who, when he knew that Pym and his friends were elsewhere, would enter the bar with a cigar in his mouth, and ask for a whisky-and-water, which was heroism again, for smoking was ever detestable to him, and whisky more offensive than quinine. But these things are expected of you, and by asking for the whisky you get into talk with Dolly; that is to say, you tell her several times what you want, and when she has served every other body you get it. The commercial must be served first; in the barroom he blocks the way like royalty in the street. There is a crown for us all somewhere.

Dolly seldom heard the bearded one's "good-evening"; she could not possibly have heard the "dear," for though it was there, it remained behind his teeth. She knew him only as the stiff man who got separated from his glass without complaining, and at first she put this down to forgetfulness, and did nothing, so that he could go away without drinking; but by and by, wherever he left his tumbler, cunningly concealed behind a water-bottle, or temptingly in front of a commercial, she restored it to him, and there was a twinkle in her eye.

"You little rogue, so you see through me!" Surely it was an easy thing to say; but what he did say was "Thank you." Then to himself he said, "Ass, ass, ass!"

Sitting on the padded seat that ran the length of the room, and surreptitiously breaking his cigar against the cushions to help it on its way to an end, he brought his intellect to bear on Dolly at a distance, and soon had a better knowledge of her than could be claimed by those who had Dollied her for years. He also wove romances about her, some of them of too lively a character, and others so noble and sad and beautiful that the tears came to his eyes, and Dolly thought he had been drinking. He could not have said whether he would prefer her to be good or bad.

These were but his leisure moments, for during the long working hours he was still at the exercises, toiling fondly, and right willing to tear himself asunder to get at the trick of writing. So he passed from exercises to the grand experiment.

It was to be a tale, for there, they had taken for granted, lay the treasure. Pym was most considerate at this time, and mentioned woman with an apology.

"I have kept away from them in the exercises," he said in effect, "because it would have been useless (as well as cruel) to force you to labour on a subject so uncongenial to you; and for the same reason I have decided that it is to be a tale of adventure, in which the heroine need be little more than a beautiful sack of coals which your cavalier carries about with him on his left shoulder. I am afraid we must have her to that extent, Thomas, but I am not asking much of you; dump her down as often as you like."

And Thomas did his dogged best, the red light in his eye; though he had not, and never could have had, the smallest instinct for story-writing, he knew to the finger-tips how it is done; but for ever he would have gone on breaking all the rules of the game. How he wrestled with himself! Sublime thoughts came to him (nearly all about that girl), and he drove them away, for he knew they beat only against the march of his story, and, whatever befell, the story must march. Relentlessly he followed in the track of his men, pushing the dreary dogs on to deeds of valour. He tried making the lady human, and then she would not march; she sat still, and he talked about her; he dumped her down, and soon he was yawning. This weariness was what alarmed him most, for well he understood that there could be no treasure where the work was not engrossing play, and he doubted no more than Pym that for him the treasure was

in the tale or nowhere. Had he not been sharpening his tools in this belief for years? Strange to reflect now that all the time he was hacking and sweating at that novel (the last he ever attempted) it was only marching towards the waste-paper basket!

He had a fine capacity, as has been hinted, for self-deception, and in time, of course, he found a way of dodging the disquieting truth. This, equally of course, was by yielding to his impulses. He allowed himself an hour a day, when Pym was absent, in which he wrote the story as it seemed to want to write itself, and then he cut this piece out, which could be done quite easily, as it consisted only of moralizings. Thus was his day brightened, and with this relaxation to look forward to be plodded on at his proper work, delving so hard that he could avoid asking himself why he was still delving. What shall we say? He was digging for the treasure in an orchard, and every now and again he came out of his hole to pluck an apple; but though the apple was so sweet to the mouth, it never struck him that the treasure might be growing overhead. At first he destroyed the fruit of his stolen hour, and even after he took to carrying it about fondly in his pocket, and to rewriting it in a splendid new form that had come to him just as he was stepping into bed, he continued to conceal it from his overseer's eyes. And still he thought all was over with him when Pym said the story did not march.

"It is a dead thing," Pym would roar, flinging down the manuscript,—*"a dead thing because the stakes your man is playing for, a woman's love, is less than a wooden counter to you. You are a fine piece of mechanism, my solemn-faced don, but you are a watch that won't go because you are not wound up. Nobody can wind the artist up except a chit of a girl; and how you are ever to get one to take pity on you, only the gods who look after men with a want can tell.*

"It becomes more impenetrable every day," he said. "No use your sitting there tearing yourself to bits. Out into the street with you! I suspend these sittings until you can tell me you have kissed a girl."

He was still saying this sort of thing when the famous "Letters" were published—T. Sandys, author. "Letters to a Young Man About to be Married" was the full title, and another almost as applicable would have been "Bits Cut Out of a Story because They Prevented its Marching." If you have any memory you do not need to be told how that splendid study, so ennobling, so penetrating, of woman at her best, took the town. Tommy woke a famous man, and, except Elspeth, no one was more pleased than big-hearted, hopeless, bleary Pym.

"But how the —— has it all come about!" he kept roaring.

"A woman can be anything that the man who loves her would have her be," says the "Letters"; and "Oh," said woman everywhere, "if all men had the same idea of us as Mr. Sandys!"

"To meet Mr. T. Sandys." Leaders of society wrote it on their invitation cards. Their daughters, athirst for a new sensation, thrilled at the thought, "Will he talk to us as nobly as he writes?" And oh, how willing he was to do it, especially if their noses were slightly tilted!

CHAPTER III SANDYS ON WOMAN

"Can you kindly tell me the name of the book I want?"

It is the commonest question asked at the circulating library by dainty ladies just out of the carriage; and the librarian, after looking them over, can usually tell. In the days we have now to speak of, however, he answered, without looking them over:

"Sandys's 'Letters,'"

"Ah, yes, of course. May I have it, please?"

"I regret to find that it is out."

Then the lady looked naughty. "Why don't you have two copies?" she pouted.

"Madam," said the librarian, "we have a thousand."

A small and very timid girl of eighteen, with a neat figure that shrank from observation, although it was already aware that it looked best in gray, was there to drink in this music, and carried it home in her heart. She was Elspeth, and that dear heart was almost too full at this time. I hesitate whether to tell or to conceal how it even created a disturbance in no less a place than the House of Commons. She was there with Mrs. Jerry, and the thing was recorded in the papers of the period in these blasting words: "The Home Secretary was understood to be quoting a passage from 'Letters to a Young Man,' but we failed to catch its drift, owing to an unseemly interruption from the ladies' gallery."

"But what was it you cried out?" Tommy asked Elspeth, when she thought she had told him everything. (Like all true women, she always began in the middle.)

"Oh, Tommy, have I not told you? I cried out, 'I'm his sister.'"

Thus, owing to Elspeth's behaviour, it can never be known which was the passage quoted in the House; but we may be sure of one thing—that it did the House good. That book did everybody good. Even Pym could only throw off its beneficent effects by a tremendous effort, and young men about to be married used to ask at the bookshops, not for the "Letters," but simply for "Sandys on Woman," acknowledging Tommy as the authority on the subject, like Mill on Jurisprudence, or Thomson and Tait on the Differential Calculus. Controversies raged about it. Some thought he asked too much of man, some thought he saw too much in women; there was a fear that young people, knowing at last how far short they fell of what they ought to be, might shrink from the matrimony that must expose them to each other, now that they had Sandys to guide them, and the persons who had simply married and risked it (and it was astounding what a number of them there proved to be) wrote to the papers suggesting that he might yield a little in the next edition. But Sandys remained firm.

At first they took for granted that he was a very aged gentleman; he had, indeed, hinted at this in the text; and when the truth came out ("And just fancy, he is not even married!") the enthusiasm was doubled. "Not engaged!" they cried. "Don't tell that to me. No unmarried man could have written such a eulogy of marriage without being on the brink of it." Perhaps she was dead? It ran through the town that she was dead. Some knew which cemetery.

The very first lady Mr. Sandys ever took in to dinner mentioned this rumour to him, not with vulgar curiosity, but delicately, with a hint of sympathy in waiting, and it must be remembered, in fairness to Tommy, that all artists love sympathy. This sympathy uncorked him, and our Tommy could flow comparatively freely at last. Observe the delicious change.

"Has that story got abroad?" he said simply. "The matter is one which, I need not say, I have never mentioned to a soul."

"Of course not," the lady said, and waited eagerly.

If Tommy had been an expert he might have turned the conversation to brighter topics, but he was not; there had already been long pauses, and in dinner talk it is perhaps allowable to fling on any faggot rather than let the fire go out. "It is odd that I should be talking of it now," he said musingly.

"I suppose," she said gently, to bring him out of the reverie into which he had sunk, "I suppose it happened some time ago?"

"Long, long ago," he answered. (Having written as an aged person, he often found difficulty in remembering suddenly that he was two and twenty.)

"But you are still a very young man."

"It seems long ago to me," he said with a sigh.

"Was she beautiful?"

"She was beautiful to my eyes."

"And as good, I am sure, as she was beautiful."

"Ah me!" said Tommy.

His confidante was burning to know more, and hoping they were being observed across the table; but she was a kind, sentimental creature, though stout, or because of it, and she said, "I am so afraid that my questions pain you."

"No, no," said Tommy, who was very, very happy.

"Was it very sudden?"

"Fever."

"Ah! but I meant your attachment."

"We met and we loved," he said with gentle dignity.

"That is the true way," said the lady.

"It is the only way," he said decisively.

"Mr. Sandys, you have been so good, I wonder if you would tell me her name?"

"Felicity," he said, with emotion. Presently he looked up. "It is very strange to me," he said wonderingly, "to find myself saying these things to you who an hour ago were a complete stranger to me. But you are not like other women."

"No, indeed!" said the lady, warmly.

"That," he said, "must be why I tell you what I have never told to another human being. How mysterious are the workings of the heart!"

"Mr. Sandys," said the lady, quite carried away, "no words of mine can convey to you the pride with which I hear you say that. Be assured that I shall respect your confidences." She missed his next remark because she was wondering whether she dare ask him to come to dinner on the twenty-fifth, and then the ladies had to retire, and by the time he rejoined her he was as tongue-tied as at the beginning. The cork had not been extracted; it had been knocked into the bottle, where it still often barred the way, and there was always, as we shall see, a flavour of it in the wine.

"You will get over it yet; the summer and the flowers will come to you again," she managed to whisper to him kind-heartedly, as she was going.

"Thank you," he said, with that inscrutable face. It was far from his design to play a part. He had, indeed, had no design at all, but an opportunity for sentiment having presented itself, his mouth had opened as at a cherry. He did not laugh afterwards, even when he reflected how unexpectedly Felicity had come into his life; he thought of her rather with affectionate regard, and pictured her as a tall, slim girl in white. When he took a tall, slim girl in white in to dinner, he could not help saying huskily:

"You remind me of one who was a very dear friend of mine. I was much startled when you came into the room."

"You mean some one who is dead?" she asked in awe-struck tones.

"Fever," he said.

"You think I am like her in appearance?"

"In every way," he said dreamily; "the same sweet—pardon me, but it is very remarkable. Even the tones of the voice are the same. I suppose I ought not to ask your age?"

"I shall be twenty-one in August." "She would have been twenty-one in August had she lived," Tommy said with fervour. "My dear young lady—"

This was the aged gentleman again, but she did not wince; he soon found out that they expect authors to say the oddest things, and this proved to be a great help to him.

"My dear young lady, I feel that I know you very well."

"That," she said, "is only because I resemble your friend outwardly. The real me (she was a bit of philosopher also) you cannot know at all."

He smiled sadly. "Has it ever struck you," he asked, "that you are very unlike other women?"

"Oh, how ever could you have found that out?" she exclaimed, amazed.

Almost before he knew how it came about, he was on terms of very pleasant sentiment with this girl, for they now shared between them a secret that he had confided to no other. His face, which had been so much against him hitherto, was at last in his favour; it showed so plainly that when he looked at her more softly or held her hand longer than is customary, he was really thinking of that other of whom she was the image. Or if it did not precisely show that, it suggested something or other of that nature which did just as well. There was a sweet something between them which brought them together and also kept them apart; it allowed them to go a certain length, while it was also a reason why they could never, never exceed that distance; and this was an ideal state for Tommy, who could be most loyal and tender so long as it was understood that he meant nothing in particular. She was the right kind of girl, too, and admired him the more (and perhaps went a step further) because he remained so true to Felicity's memory.

You must not think him calculating and cold-blooded, for nothing could be less true to the fact. When not engaged, indeed, on his new work, he might waste some time planning scenes with exquisite ladies, in which he sparkled or had a hidden sorrow (he cared not which); but these scenes seldom came to life. He preferred very pretty girls to be rather stupid (oh, the artistic instinct of the man!), but instead of keeping them stupid, as he wanted to do, he found himself trying to improve their minds. They screwed up their noses in the effort. Meaning to thrill the celebrated beauty who had been specially invited to meet him, he devoted himself to a plain woman for whose plainness a sudden pity had mastered him (for, like all true worshippers of beauty in women, he always showed best in the presence of plain ones). With the intention of being a gallant knight to Lady I-Won't-Tell-the-Name, a whim of the moment made him so stiff to her that she ultimately asked the reason; and such a charmingly sad reason presented itself to him that she immediately invited him to her riverside party on Thursday week. He had the conversations and incidents for that party ready long before the day arrived; he altered them and polished them as other young gentlemen in the same circumstances overhaul their boating costumes; but when he joined the party there was among them the children's governess, and seeing her slighted, his blood boiled, and he was her attendant for the afternoon.

Elspeth was not at this pleasant jink in high life. She had been invited, but her ladyship had once let Tommy kiss her hand for the first and last time, so he decided sternly that this was no place for Elspeth. When temptation was nigh, he first locked Elspeth up, and then walked into it.

With two in every three women he was still as shy as ever, but the third he escorted triumphantly to the conservatory. She did no harm to his work—rather sent him back to it refreshed. It was as if he were shooting the sentiment which other young men get rid of more gradually by beginning earlier, and there were such accumulations of it that I don't know whether he ever made up on them. Punishment sought him in the night, when he dreamed constantly that he was married—to whom scarcely mattered; he saw himself coming out of a church a married man, and the fright woke him up. But with the daylight came again his talent for dodging thoughts that were lying in wait, and he yielded as recklessly as before to every sentimental impulse. As illustration, take his humorous passage with Mrs. Jerry. Geraldine Something was her name, but her friends called her Mrs. Jerry.

She was a wealthy widow, buxom, not a day over thirty when she was merry, which might be at inappropriate moments, as immediately after she had expressed a desire to lead the higher life. "But I have a theory, my dear," she said solemnly to Elspeth, "that no woman is able to do it who cannot see her own nose without the help of a mirror." She had taken a great fancy to Elspeth, and made many engagements with her, and kept some of them, and the understanding was that she apprenticed herself to Tommy through Elspeth, he being too terrible to face by himself, or, as Mrs. Jerry expressed it, "all nose." So Tommy had seen very little of her, and thought less, until one day he called by passionate request to sign her birthday-book, and heard himself proposing to her instead!

For one thing, it was twilight, and she had forgotten to ring for the lamps. That might have been enough, but there was more: she read to him part of a letter in which her hand was solicited in marriage. "And, for the life of me," said Mrs. Jerry, almost in tears, "I cannot decide whether to say yes or no."

This put Tommy in a most awkward position. There are probably men who could have got out of it without proposing; but to him there seemed at the moment no other way open. The letter complicated matters also by beginning "Dear Jerry," and saying "little Jerry" further on—expressions which stirred him strangely.

"Why do you read this to me?" he asked, in a voice that broke a little.

"Because you are so wise," she said. "Do you mind?"

"Do I mind!" he exclaimed bitterly. ("Take care, you idiot!" he said to himself.)

"I was asking your advice only. Is it too much?"

"Not at all. I am quite the right man to consult at such a moment, am I not?"

It was said with profound meaning; but his face was as usual.

"That is what I thought," she said, in all good faith.

"You do not even understand!" he cried, and he was also looking longingly at his hat.

"Understand what?"

"Jerry," he said, and tried to stop himself, with the result that he added, "dear little Jerry!" ("What am I doing!" he groaned.)

She understood now. "You don't mean—" she began, in amazement.

"Yes," he cried passionately. "I love you. Will you be my wife?" ("I am lost!")

"Gracious!" exclaimed Mrs. Jerry; and then, on reflection, she became indignant. "I would not have believed it of you," she said scornfully. "Is it my money, or what? I am not at all clever, so you must tell me."

With Tommy, of course, it was not her money. Except when he had Elspeth to consider, he was as much a Quixote about money as Pym himself; and at no moment of his life was he a snob.

"I am sorry you should think so meanly of me," he said with dignity, lifting his hat; and he would have got away then (which, when you come to think of it, was what he wanted) had he been able to resist an impulse to heave a broken-hearted sigh at the door.

"Don't go yet, Mr. Sandys," she begged. "I may have been hasty. And yet—why, we are merely acquaintances!"

He had meant to be very careful now, but that word sent him off again. "Acquaintances!" he cried. "No, we were never that."

"It almost seemed to me that you avoided me."

"You noticed it!" he said eagerly. "At least, you do me that justice. Oh, how I tried to avoid you!"

"It was because—"

"Alas!"

She was touched, of course, but still puzzled. "We know so little of each other," she said.

"I see," he replied, "that you know me very little, Mrs. Jerry; but you—oh, Jerry, Jerry! I know you as no other man has ever known you!"

"I wish I had proof of it," she said helplessly.

Proof! She should not have asked Tommy for proof. "I know," he cried, "how unlike all other women you are. To the world you are like the rest, but in your heart you know that you are different; you know it, and I know it, and no other person knows it."

Yes, Mrs. Jerry knew it, and had often marvelled over it in the seclusion of her boudoir; but that another should have found it out was strange and almost terrifying.

"I know you love me now," she said softly. "Only love could have shown you that. But—oh, let me go away for a minute to think!" And she ran out of the room.

Other suitors have been left for a space in Tommy's state of doubt, but never, it may be hoped, with the same emotions. Oh, heavens! if she should accept him! He saw Elspeth sickening and dying of the news.

His guardian angel, however, was very good to Tommy at this time; or perhaps, like cannibals with their prisoner, the god of sentiment (who has a tail) was fattening him for a future feast; and Mrs. Jerry's answer was that it could never be.

Tommy bowed his head.

But she hoped he would let her be his very dear friend. It would be the proudest recollection of her life that Mr. Sandys had entertained such feelings for her.

Nothing could have been better, and he should have found difficulty in concealing his delight; but this strange Tommy was really feeling his part again. It was an unforced tear that came to his eye. Quite naturally he looked long and wistfully at her.

"Jerry, Jerry!" he articulated huskily, and whatever the words mean in these circumstances he really meant; then he put his lips to her hand for the first and last time, and so was gone, broken but brave. He was in splendid fettle for writing that evening. Wild animals sleep after gorging, but it sent this monster, refreshed, to his work.

Nevertheless, the incident gave him some uneasy reflections. Was he, indeed, a monster? was one that he could dodge, as yet; but suppose Mrs. Jerry told his dear Elspeth of what had happened? She had said that she would not, but a secret in Mrs. Jerry's breast was like her pug in her arms, always kicking to get free. "Elspeth," said Tommy, "what do you say to going north and having a sight of Thrums again?"

He knew what she would say. They had been talking for years of going back; it was the great day that all her correspondence with old friends in Thrums looked forward to.

"They made little of you, Tommy," she said, "when we left; but I'm thinking they will all be at their windows when you go back."

"Oh," replied Thomas, "that's nothing. But I should like to shake Corp by the hand again."

"And Aaron," said Elspeth. She was knitting stockings for Aaron at that moment.

"And Gavinia," Tommy said, "and the Dominie."

"And Ailie."

And then came an awkward pause, for they were both thinking of that independent girl called Grizel. She was seldom discussed. Tommy was oddly shy about mentioning her name; he would have preferred Elspeth to mention it: and Elspeth had misgivings that this was so, with the result that neither could say "Grizel" without wondering what was in the other's mind. Tommy had written twice to Grizel, the first time unknown to Elspeth, but that was in the days when the ladies of the penny numbers were disturbing him, and, against his better judgment (for well he knew she would never stand it), he had begun his letter with these mad words: "Dear Little Woman." She did not answer this, but soon afterwards she wrote to Elspeth, and he was not mentioned in the letter proper, but it carried a sting in its tail. "P.S.," it said "How is Sentimental Tommy?"