

Conrad | Heart of Darkness

Fremdsprachentexte | Englisch

Joseph Conrad
Heart of Darkness

Herausgegeben von Bernhard Reitz

Reclam

RECLAMS UNIVERSAL-BIBLIOTHEK Nr. 14128

1984, 2021 Philipp Reclam jun. Verlag GmbH,

Siemensstraße 32, 71254 Ditzingen

Satz, Druck und Bindung: Eberl & Koesel GmbH & Co. KG,

Am Buchweg 1, 87452 Altusried-Krugzell

Printed in Germany 2021

RECLAM, UNIVERSAL-BIBLIOTHEK und

RECLAMS UNIVERSAL-BIBLIOTHEK sind eingetragene Marken

der Philipp Reclam jun. GmbH & Co. KG, Stuttgart

ISBN 978-3-15-014128-1

www.reclam.de

Heart of Darkness

The *Nellie*¹, a cruising yawl, swung to her anchor without a flutter of the sails, and was at rest. The flood had made, the wind was nearly calm, and being bound down the river, the
 5 only thing for it was to come to and wait for the turn of the tide.

The sea-reach of the Thames stretched before us like the beginning of an interminable waterway. In the offing the sea and the sky were welded together without a joint, and
 10 in the luminous space the tanned sails of the barges drifting up with the tide seemed to stand still in red clusters of canvas sharply peaked, with gleams of varnished sprits. A haze rested on the low shores that ran out to sea in vanishing flatness. The air was dark above Gravesend², and farther
 15 back still seemed condensed into a mournful gloom, brooding motionless over the biggest, and the greatest, town on earth.

The Director of Companies was our captain and our host. We four affectionately watched his back as he stood in
 20 the bows looking to seaward. On the whole river there was nothing that looked half so nautical. He resembled a pilot, which to a seaman is trustworthiness personified. It was

2 **cruising yawl**: Segeljacht. | 7 **sea-reach**: Mündungsgebiet. | 8 **offing**: Seeraum, offene See. | 9 **to weld**: zusammenschmieden, verschmelzen. |
 10 **luminous**: lichterfüllt. | **tanned**: lohfärben. | **barge**: Lastkahn. |
 11 **cluster**: Schwarm. | 12 **canvas**: Segeltuch. | **to varnish**: lackieren. |
sprit: Spriet (Stange, an der das sog. Sprietsegel aufgespannt wird). |
 13 **haze**: Dunst. | 15 **mournful**: traurig. | 16 **to brood**: brüten. |
 19 **affectionately** (adv.): liebevoll. | **in the bows**: am Bug. | 21 **nautical**:
 nautisch.

difficult to realize his work was not out there in the luminous estuary, but behind him, within the brooding gloom.

Between us there was, as I have already said somewhere, the bond of the sea. Besides holding our hearts together through long periods of separation, it had the effect of making us tolerant of each other's yarns – and even convictions. The Lawyer – the best of old fellows – had, because of his many years and many virtues, the only cushion on deck, and was lying on the only rug. The Accountant had brought out already a box of dominoes, and was toying architecturally with the bones. Marlow sat cross-legged right aft, leaning against the mizzen-mast. He had sunken cheeks, a yellow complexion, a straight back, an ascetic aspect, and, with his arms dropped, the palms of hands outwards, resembled an idol. The director, satisfied the anchor had good hold, made his way aft and sat down amongst us. We exchanged a few words lazily. Afterwards there was silence on board the yacht. For some reason or other we did not begin that game of dominoes. We felt meditative, and fit for nothing but placid staring. The day was ending in a serenity of still and exquisite brilliance. The water shone pacifically; the sky, without a speck, was a benign immensity of unstained light; the very mist on the Essex marshes

2 **estuary**: Flussmündung, Meeresbucht. | 6 **tolerant**: duldsam. | **yarn**: Seemannsgarn. | 7 **Lawyer**: Rechtsanwalt. | 9 **Accountant**: Buchhalter, Wirtschaftsprüfer. | 10 f. **to toy architecturally with the bones**: mit den Dominosteinen bauen. | 12 **aft**: achtern. | **mizzen-mast**: Besanmast. | 13 **complexion**: Gesichtsfarbe. | **ascetic**: asketisch. | 15 **idol**: Götzenbild. | 19 **meditative**: besinnlich. | 20 **placid**: gelassen. | 21 **serenity**: Klarheit. | **exquisite**: außergewöhnlich. | 22 **pacifically** (adv.): friedlich. | **immensity**: Unermesslichkeit. | 23 **unstained**: fleckenlos. **marsh**: Marschland.

was like a gauzy and radiant fabric, hung from the wooded rises inland, and draping the low shores in diaphanous folds. Only the gloom to the west, brooding over the upper reaches, became more sombre every minute, as if angered
5 by the approach of the sun.

And at last, in its curved and imperceptible fall, the sun sank low, and from glowing white changed to a dull red without rays and without heat, as if about to go out suddenly, stricken to death by the touch of that gloom brood-
10 ing over a crowd of men.

Forthwith a change came over the waters, and the serenity became less brilliant but more profound. The old river in its broad reach rested unruffled at the decline of day, after ages of good service done to the race that peopled its
15 banks, spread out in the tranquil dignity of a waterway leading to the uttermost ends of the earth. We looked at the venerable stream not in the vivid flush of a short day that comes and departs for ever, but in the august light of abiding memories. And indeed nothing is easier for a man who
20 has, as the phrase goes, “followed the sea” with reverence and affection, than to evoke the great spirit of the past upon the lower reaches of the Thames. The tidal current runs to and fro in its unceasing service, crowded with memories of men and ships it had borne to the rest of home or to the

1 **gauzy**: gazeartig. | **fabric**: Gewebe. | 2 **to drape**: drapieren. | **diaphanous**: durchsichtig. | 4 **reach**: Bereich. | **sombre**: düster. | 6 **imperceptible**: unmerklich. | 11 **forthwith**: sogleich. | 12 **profound**: tiefgründig. | 13 **unruffled**: glatt. | 15 **tranquil**: ruhig. | 16 **uttermost**: äußerst. | 17 **venerable**: ehrwürdig. | **vivid**: lebhaft. | **flush**: Erröten. | 18 **august**: erhaben. | **to abide**: fort dauern, bleiben. | 21 **to evoke**: beschwören. | 22 **tidal current**: Gezeitenstrom.

battles of the sea. It had known and served all the men of whom the nation is proud, from Sir Francis Drake to Sir John Franklin³, knights all, titled and untitled – the great knights-errant of the sea. It had borne all the ships whose names are like jewels flashing in the night of time, from the *Golden Hind* returning with her round flanks full of treasure, to be visited by the Queen's Highness and thus pass out of the gigantic tale, to the *Erebus* and *Terror*, bound on other conquests – and that never returned. It had known the ships and the men. They had sailed from Deptford, from Greenwich, from Erith⁴ – the adventurers and the settlers; kings' ships and the ships of men on 'Change; captains, admirals, the dark "interlopers" of the Eastern trade, and the commissioned "generals" of East India fleets⁵. Hunters for gold or pursuers of fame, they all had gone out on that stream, bearing the sword, and often the torch, messengers of the might within the land, bearers of a spark from the sacred fire. What greatness had not floated on the ebb of that river into the mystery of an unknown earth! ... The dreams of men, the seed of commonwealths, the germs of empires.

The sun set; the dusk fell on the stream, and lights began to appear along the shore. The Chapman lighthouse, a three-legged thing erect on a mud-flat, shone strongly. Lights of ships moved in the fairway – a great stir of lights

4 **knight-errant**: fahrender Ritter. | 6 **Hind**: Hirschkuh, Hindin. | **flank**: Flanke. | 8 **gigantic**: gigantisch, riesenhaft. | 12 **men on 'Change**: Makler. | 13 **interloper**: Schleichhändler. | 14 **to commission**: bestellen. | 16 **torch**: Fackel. | 19 **ebb**: Ebbe. | 20 **commonwealth**: Gemeinwesen. | 21 **germ**: Keim. | 23 **lighthouse**: Leuchtturm. | 24 **mud-flat**: Watt. | 25 **fairway**: Fahrwasser.

going up and going down. And farther west on the upper reaches the place of the monstrous town was still marked ominously on the sky, a brooding gloom in sunshine, a lurid glare under the stars.

5 “And this also,” said Marlow suddenly, “has been one of the dark places of the earth.”

He was the only man of us who still “followed the sea.” The worst that could be said of him was that he did not represent his class. He was a seaman, but he was a wanderer,
10 too, while most seamen lead, if one may so express it, a sedentary life. Their minds are of the stay-at-home order, and their home is always with them – the ship; and so is their country – the sea. One ship is very much like another, and the sea is always the same. In the immutability of their
15 surroundings the foreign shores, the foreign faces, the changing immensity of life, glide past, veiled not by a sense of mystery but by a slightly disdainful ignorance; for there is nothing mysterious to a seaman unless it be the sea itself, which is the mistress of his existence and as inscrutable
20 as Destiny. For the rest, after his hours of work, a casual stroll or a casual spree on shore suffices to unfold for him the secret of a whole continent, and generally he finds the secret not worth knowing. The yarns of seamen have a direct simplicity, the whole meaning of which lies within the
25 shell of a cracked nut. But Marlow was not typical (if his propensity to spin yarns be excepted), and to him the

2 **monstrous:** ungeheuerlich. | 4 **lurid:** gespenstisch. | **glare:** Glanz. |

11 **sedentary:** sesshaft. | 14 **immutability:** Unveränderlichkeit. |

16 **to veil:** verschleiern. | 17 **disdainful:** verächtlich. | 19 **inscrutable:**

unergründlich. | 20 **casual:** gelegentlich. | 21 **stroll:** Bummel. | **spree:** vernügter Abend. | 25 **typical:** typisch. | 26 **propensity:** Neigung.

meaning of an episode was not inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze, in the likeness of one of these misty halos that sometimes are made visible by the spectral illumination of moonshine.

5

His remark did not seem at all surprising. It was just like Marlow. It was accepted in silence. No one took the trouble to grunt even; and presently he said, very slow –

“I was thinking of very old times, when the Romans first came here, nineteen hundred years ago⁶ – the other day ... 10
Light came out of this river since – you say Knights? Yes; but it is like a running blaze on a plain, like a flash of lightning in the clouds. We live in the flicker – may it last as long as the old earth keeps rolling! But darkness was here yesterday. Imagine the feelings of a commander of a fine – what 15
d’ye call ’em? – trireme in the Mediterranean, ordered suddenly to the north; run overland across the Gauls in a hurry; put in charge of one of these craft the legionaries – a wonderful lot of handy men they must have been, too – used to build, apparently by the hundred, in a month or 20
two, if we may believe what we read⁷. Imagine him here – the very end of the world, a sea the colour of lead, a sky the colour of smoke, a kind of ship about as rigid as a concertina – and going up this river with stores, or orders, or what you like. Sand-banks, marshes, forests, savages, – precious 25
little to eat fit for a civilized man, nothing but Thames

1 **kernel**: Kern. | 2 **to envelop**: umhüllen. | 4 **halo**: Hof, Ring. | **spectral**: geisterhaft. | 8 **to grunt**: knurren, brummen. | 13 **flicker**: Aufflackern. | 16 **trireme**: Triere, Dreiruderer. | 17 **the Gauls**: die beiden Gallien in römischer Zeit. | 18 **craft**: Fahrzeug. | **legionary**: Legionär. | 23 f. **concertina**: Ziehharmonika. | 25 f. **precious little**: kaum etwas.

water to drink. No Falernian wine⁸ here, no going ashore.
 Here and there a military camp lost in a wilderness, like a
 needle in a bundle of hay – cold, fog, tempests, disease,
 exile, and death, – death skulking in the air, in the water, in
 5 the bush. They must have been dying like flies here. Oh,
 yes – he did it. Did it very well, too, no doubt, and without
 thinking much about it either, except afterwards to brag of
 what he had gone through in his time, perhaps. They were
 men enough to face the darkness. And perhaps he was
 10 cheered by keeping his eye on a chance of promotion to the
 fleet at Ravenna⁹ by-and-by, if he had good friends in
 Rome and survived the awful climate. Or think of a decent
 young citizen in a toga – perhaps too much dice, you
 know – coming out here in the train of some prefect, or
 15 tax-gatherer, or trader even, to mend his fortunes. Land in a
 swamp, march through the woods, and in some inland post
 feel the savagery, the utter savagery, had closed round
 him, – all that mysterious life of the wilderness that stirs in
 the forest, in the jungles, in the hearts of wild men. There's
 20 no initiation either into such mysteries. He has to live in
 the midst of the incomprehensible, which is also detesta-
 ble. And it has a fascination, too, that goes to work upon
 him. The fascination of the abomination – you know, im-
 agine the growing regrets, the longing to escape, the pow-
 25 erless disgust, the surrender, the hate.”

4 **exile**: Verbannung. | **to skulk**: lauern. | 7 **to brag**: prahlen. | 10 **promo-
 tion**: Beförderung. | 13 **dice**: Würfel, würfeln. | 14 **prefect**: Präfekt. |
 15 **tax-gatherer**: Steuereintreiber. | 17 **savagery**: Barbarei. | 20 **initiation**:
 Einweihung, Aufnahmezeremonie. | 21 **incomprehensible**: unfassbar,
 unbegreiflich. | **detestable**: verabscheuungswürdig. | 23 **abomination**:
 Abscheu, Greuel.

He paused.

“Mind,” he began again, lifting one arm from the elbow, the palm of the hand outwards, so that, with his legs folded before him, he had the pose of a Buddha preaching in European clothes and without a lotus-flower¹⁰ – “Mind, none of us would feel exactly like this. What saves us is efficiency – the devotion to efficiency. But these chaps were not much account, really. They were no colonists; their administration was merely a squeeze, and nothing more, I suspect. They were conquerors, and for that you want only brute force – nothing to boast of, when you have it, since your strength is just an accident arising from the weakness of others. They grabbed what they could get for the sake of what was to be got. It was just robbery with violence, aggravated murder on a great scale, and men going at it blind – as is very proper for those who tackle a darkness. The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much. What redeems it is the idea only. An idea at the back of it; not a sentimental pretence but an idea; and an unselfish belief in the idea – something you can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to ...”

He broke off. Flames glided in the river, small green flames, red flames, white flames, pursuing, overtaking, joining, crossing each other – then separating slowly or

3 **palm**: Handfläche. | 7 **efficiency**: Leistung, Tüchtigkeit. | **chap**: Bursche, Kerl. | 9 **squeeze**: Ausbeutung. | 10 **brute**: roh. | 14 f. **to aggravate**: erschweren. | 15 **scale**: Maßstab. | 16 **to tackle**: anpacken, in Angriff nehmen. | 20 **to redeem**: erlösen, wiedergutmachen. | 21 **pretence**: Vorwand.

hastily. The traffic of the great city went on in the deepening night upon the sleepless river. We looked on, waiting patiently – there was nothing else to do till the end of the flood; but it was only after a long silence, when he said, in a hesitating voice, “I suppose you fellows remember I did once turn fresh-water sailor for a bit,” that we knew we were fated, before the ebb began to run, to hear about one of Marlow’s inconclusive experiences.

“I don’t want to bother you much with what happened to me personally,” he began, showing in this remark the weakness of many tellers of tales who seem so often unaware of what their audience would best like to hear; “yet to understand the effect of it on me you ought to know how I got out there, what I saw, how I went up that river to the place where I first met the poor chap. It was the farthest point of navigation and the culminating point of my experience. It seemed somehow to throw a kind of light on everything about me – and into my thoughts. It was sombre enough, too – and pitiful – not extraordinary in any way – not very clear either. No, not very clear. And yet it seemed to throw a kind of light.

I had then, as you remember, just returned to London after a lot of Indian Ocean, Pacific, China Seas – a regular dose of the East – six years or so¹¹, and I was loafing about, hindering you fellows in your work and invading your homes, just as though I had got a heavenly mission to civilize you. It was very fine for a time, but after a bit I did get tired of resting. Then I began to look for a ship – I should

8 **inconclusive**: nicht überzeugend, ergebnislos. | 16 **to culminate**: gipfeln. | 24 **to loaf**: herumlungern.

think the hardest work on earth. But the ships wouldn't even look at me. And I got tired of that game, too.

Now when I was a little chap I had a passion for maps. I would look for hours at South America, or Africa, or Australia, and lose myself in all the glories of exploration. At that time there were many blank spaces on the earth, and when I saw one that looked particularly inviting on a map (but they all look that) I would put my finger on it and say, When I grow up I will go there. The North Pole was one of these places, I remember. Well, I haven't been there yet, and shall not try now. The glamour's off¹¹. Other places were scattered about the Equator, and in every sort of latitude all over the two hemispheres. I have been in some of them, and ... well, we won't talk about that. But there was one yet – the biggest, the most blank, so to speak – that I had a hankering after.

True, by this time it was not a blank space any more. It had got filled since my boyhood with rivers and lakes and names. It had ceased to be a blank space of delightful mystery – a white patch for a boy to dream gloriously over. It had become a place of darkness. But there was in it one river especially, a mighty big river, that you could see on the map, resembling an immense snake uncoiled, with its head in the sea, its body at rest curving afar over a vast country, and its tail lost in the depths of the land. And as I looked at the map of it in a shop-window, it fascinated me as a snake would a bird – a silly little bird. Then I remembered there

11 **glamour**: Zauber, Glanz. | 12 f. **latitude**: geographische Breite. |

13 **hemisphere**: Hemisphäre, Erdhalbkugel. | 16 **to hanker**: sich sehnen nach. | 23 **to uncoil**: entrollen.

was a big concern, a Company for trade on that river. Dash it all! I thought to myself, they can't trade without using some kind of craft on that lot of fresh water – steamboats!

Why shouldn't I try to get charge of one? I went on along
5 Fleet Street, but could not shake off the idea. The snake had charmed me.

You understand it was a Continental concern, that Trading society; but I have a lot of relations living on the Continent, because it's cheap and not so nasty as it looks, they
10 say.

I am sorry to own I began to worry them. This was already a fresh departure for me. I was not used to get things that way, you know. I always went my own road and on my own legs where I had a mind to go. I wouldn't have believed
15 it of myself; but, then – you see – I felt somehow I must get there by hook or by crook. So I worried them. The men said 'My dear fellow,' and did nothing. Then – would you believe it? – I tried the women. I, Charlie Marlow, set the women to work – to get a job. Heavens! Well, you see, the
20 notion drove me. I had an aunt, a dear enthusiastic soul. She wrote: 'It will be delightful. I am ready to do anything, anything for you. It is a glorious idea. I know the wife of a very high personage in the Administration, and also a man who has lots of influence with,' etc., etc. She was deter-
25 mined to make no end of fuss to get me appointed skipper of a river steamboat, if such was my fancy¹³.

I got my appointment – of course; and I got it very quick. It appears the Company had received news that one of their

1 **concern:** Konzern. | 9 **nasty:** garstig. | 16 **by hook or by crook:** auf Biegen und Brechen. | 23 **personage:** Persönlichkeit. | 25 **skipper:** Kapitän.

captains had been killed in a scuffle with the natives. This was my chance, and it made me the more anxious to go. It was only months and months afterwards, when I made the attempt to recover what was left of the body, that I heard the original quarrel arose from a misunderstanding about some hens. Yes, two black hens. Fresleven – that was the fellow's name, a Dane¹⁴ – thought himself wronged somehow in the bargain, so he went ashore and started to hammer the chief of the village with a stick. Oh, it didn't surprise me in the least to hear this, and at the same time to be told that Fresleven was the gentlest, quietest creature that ever walked on two legs. No doubt he was; but he had been a couple of years already out there engaged in the noble cause, you know, and he probably felt the need at last of asserting his self-respect in some way. Therefore he whacked the old nigger mercilessly, while a big crowd of his people watched him, thunderstruck, till some man – I was told the chief's son – in desperation at hearing the old chap yell, made a tentative jab with a spear at the white man – and of course it went quite easy between the shoulderblades. Then the whole population cleared into the forest, expecting all kinds of calamities to happen, while, on the other hand, the steamer Fresleven commanded left also in a bad panic, in charge of the engineer, I believe. Afterwards nobody seemed to trouble much about Fresleven's remains, till I got out and stepped into his shoes. I couldn't let it rest, though; but when an opportunity offered at last to meet

1 **scuffle**: Rauferei. | 15 **to whack**: verprügeln. | 17 **thunderstruck**: wie vom Donner gerührt. | 19 **tentative**: zaghaft. | **jab**: Stoß. | 22 **calamity**: Unheil. | 25 **remains**: sterbliche Überreste.

my predecessor, the grass growing through his ribs was tall enough to hide his bones. They were all there. The supernatural being had not been touched after he fell. And the village was deserted, the huts gaped black, rotting, all askew within the fallen enclosures. A calamity had come to it, sure enough. The people had vanished. Mad terror had scattered them, men, women, and children, through the bush, and they had never returned. What became of the hens I don't know either. I should think the cause of progress got them, anyhow. However, through this glorious affair I got my appointment, before I had fairly begun to hope for it.

I flew around like mad to get ready, and before forty-eight hours I was crossing the Channel to show myself to my employers, and sign the contract. In a very few hours I arrived in a city that always makes me think of a whited sepulchre. Prejudice no doubt. I had no difficulty in finding the Company's offices. It was the biggest thing in the town, and everybody I met was full of it. They were going to run an over-sea empire, and make no end of coin by trade.

A narrow and deserted street in deep shadow, high houses, innumerable windows with venetian blinds, a dead silence, grass sprouting between the stones, imposing carriage archways right and left, immense double doors standing ponderously ajar. I slipped through one of these cracks,

2 f. **supernatural**: übernatürlich. | 4 **to gape**: klaffen, gähnen. | 5 **askew**: schief. | **enclosure**: Umzäunung. | 17 **sepulchre**: Grabmal. | **prejudice**: Vorurteil. | 22 **innumerable**: zahllos. | **venetian blind**: Jalousie, Roll-laden. | 23 **to sprout**: sprießen. | **to impose**: beeindrucken. | 24 **archway**: Arkade, Bogengang. | 25 **ponderously** (adv.): massig, gewichtig. | **ajar**: angelehnt, halb offen.

went up a swept and ungarnished staircase, as arid as a desert, and opened the first door I came to. Two women, one fat and the other slim, sat on straw-bottomed chairs, knitting black wool. The slim one got up and walked straight at me – still knitting with down-cast eyes – and only just as I began to think of getting out of her way, as you would for a somnambulist, stood still, and looked up. Her dress was as plain as an umbrella-cover, and she turned round without a word and preceded me into a waiting-room. I gave my name, and looked about. Deal table in the middle, plain chairs all round the walls, on one end a large shining map, marked with all the colours of a rainbow. There was a vast amount of red – good to see at any time, because one knows that some real work is done in there, a deuce of a lot of blue, a little green, smears of orange, and, on the East Coast, a purple patch, to show where the jolly pioneers of progress drink the jolly lager-beer. However, I wasn't going into any of these. I was going into the yellow. Dead in the centre. And the river was there – fascinating – deadly – like a snake. Ough! A door opened, a whitehaired secretarial head, but wearing a compassionate expression, appeared, and a skinny forefinger beckoned me into the sanctuary. Its light was dim, and a heavy writing-desk squatted in the middle. From behind that structure came out an impression of pale

1 **ungarnished**: schmucklos. | **arid**: reizlos. | 3 **slim**: schlank. | **straw-bottomed chair**: Stuhl mit geflochtenem Sitz. | 7 **somnambulist**: Schlafwandler. | 10 **deal table**: Holztisch. | 14 **a deuce of a lot**: verteufelt viel. | 16 **pioneer**: Pionier. | 21 **compassionate**: mitleidig. | 22 **to beckon**: winken. | **sanctuary**: Allerheiligste. | 23 **to squat**: hocken, gedrunken dastehen. | 24 **structure**: Bauwerk, Gefüge.

plumpness in a frock-coat. The great man himself. He was five feet six, I should judge, and had his grip on the handle-end of ever so many millions. He shook hands, I fancy, murmured vaguely, was satisfied with my French. *Bon voyage*.

In about forty-five seconds I found myself again in the waiting-room with the compassionate secretary, who, full of desolation and sympathy, made me sign some document. I believe I undertook amongst other things not to disclose any trade secrets. Well, I am not going to.

I began to feel slightly uneasy. You know I am not used to such ceremonies, and there was something ominous in the atmosphere. It was just as though I had been let into some conspiracy – I don't know – something not quite right; and I was glad to get out. In the outer room the two women knitted black wool feverishly. People were arriving, and the younger one was walking back and forth introducing them. The old one sat on her chair. Her flat cloth slippers were propped up on a foot-warmer, and a cat reposed on her lap. She wore a starched white affair on her head, had a wart on one cheek, and silver-rimmed spectacles hung on the tip of her nose. She glanced at me above the glasses. The swift and indifferent placidity of that look troubled me. Two youths with foolish and cheery counte-

1 **plumpness**: Drallheit. | **frock-coat**: Gehrock. | 4 **vaguely** (adv.): unbestimmt, unklar. | **Bon voyage** (frz.): Gute Reise. | 8 **desolation**: Vereinsamung, Trostlosigkeit. | 10 **to disclose**: verraten. | 14 **conspiracy**: Verschwörung. | 19 **to prop**: stützen. | **to repose**: ruhen. | 20 **to starch**: stärken. | 21 **wart**: Warze. | **silver-rimmed**: silbergefasst. | 23 **placidity**: Gelassenheit.

nances were being piloted over, and she threw at them the same quick glance of unconcerned wisdom. She seemed to know all about them and about me, too. An eerie feeling came over me. She seemed uncanny and fateful. Often far away there I thought of these two, guarding the door of Darkness, knitting black wool as for a warm pall, one introducing, introducing continuously to the unknown, the other scrutinizing the cheery and foolish faces with unconcerned old eyes. *Ave!* Old knitter of black wool. *Morituri te salutant*. Not many of those she looked at ever saw her again – not half, by a long way. 5 10

There was yet a visit to the doctor. ‘A simple formality,’ assured me the secretary, with an air of taking an immense part in all my sorrows. Accordingly a young chap wearing his hat over the left eyebrow, some clerk I suppose, – there must have been clerks in the business, though the house was as still as a house in a city of the dead – came from somewhere upstairs, and led me forth. He was shabby and careless, with inkstains on the sleeves of his jacket, and his cravat was large and billowy, under a chin shaped like the toe of an old boot. It was a little too early for the doctor, so I proposed a drink, and thereupon he developed a vein of joviality. As we sat over our vermouths he glorified the Company’s business, and by-and-by I expressed casually my surprise at him not going out there. He became very 15 20 25

3 **eerie**: unheimlich. | 4 **uncanny**: nicht geheuer. | 6 **pall**: Decke. | 8 **to scrutinize**: genau prüfen. | 9 **Ave!** (lat.): Sei gegrüßt! | **Morituri te salutant** (lat.): Die Todgeweihten grüßen dich. | 12 **formality**: Formalität. | 18 **upstairs**: in einem oberen Stockwerk. | **shabby**: schäbig. | 20 **cravat**: Halsbinde, Krawatte. | **billowy**: wellig, wogend. | 23 **joviality**: Heiterkeit. | 24 **by-and-by**: allmählich.

cool and collected all at once. 'I am not such a fool as I look, quoth Plato to his disciples,' he said sententiously, emptied his glass with great resolution, and we rose.

The old doctor felt my pulse, evidently thinking of something else the while. 'Good, good for there,' he mumbled, and then with a certain eagerness asked me whether I would let him measure my head. Rather surprised, I said Yes, when he produced a thing like calipers and got the dimensions back and front and every way, taking notes carefully. He was an unshaven little man in a threadbare coat like a gaberdine, with his feet in slippers, and I thought him a harmless fool. 'I always ask leave, in the interests of science, to measure the crania of those going out there,' he said. 'And when they come back, too?' I asked. 'Oh, I never see them,' he remarked; 'and, moreover, the changes take place inside, you know.' He smiled, as if at some quiet joke. 'So you are going out there. Famous. Interesting, too.' He gave me a searching glance, and made another note. 'Ever any madness in your family?' he asked, in a matter-of-fact tone. I felt very annoyed. 'Is that question in the interests of science, too?' 'It would be,' he said, without taking notice of my irritation, 'interesting for science to watch the mental changes of individuals, on the spot, but ...' 'Are you an alienist?' I interrupted. 'Every doctor should be – a little,' answered that original, imperturbably. 'I have a little theo-

2 **disciple**: Schüler. | **sententiously** (adv.): lehrhaft. | 4 **pulse**: Puls-schlag. | 5 f. **to mumble**: murmeln. | 8 **caliper**: Greifzirkel. | 9 **dimension**: Abmessung. | 10 **threadbare**: abgetragen. | 11 **gaberdine**: Gabardine, Kammgarn. | 13 **cranium** (lat., pl. *crania*): Schädel. | 19 **matter of fact**: selbstverständlich. | 22 **irritation**: Aufregung, Reizung. | 24 **alienist**: Nervenarzt. | 25 **imperturbably** (adv.): unerschütterlich.

ry which you Messieurs who go out there must help me to
 prove. This is my share in the advantages my country shall
 reap from the possession of such a magnificent depen-
 dency. The mere wealth I leave to others. Pardon my ques-
 tions, but you are the first Englishman coming under my
 observation ...’ I hastened to assure him I was not in the
 least typical. ‘If I were,’ said I, ‘I wouldn’t be talking like this
 with you.’ ‘What you say is rather profound, and probably
 erroneous,’ he said, with a laugh. ‘Avoid irritation more
 than exposure to the sun. Adieu. How do you English say,
 eh? Good-bye. Ah! Good-bye. Adieu. In the tropics one
 must before everything keep calm.’ ... He lifted a warning
 forefinger. ... ‘*Du calme, du calme. Adieu.*’

One thing more remained to do – say good-bye to my ex-
 cellent aunt. I found her triumphant. I had a cup of tea – the
 last decent cup of tea for many days – and in a room that
 most soothingly looked just as you would expect a lady’s
 drawing-room to look, we had a long quiet chat by the fire-
 side. In the course of these confidences it became quite plain
 to me I had been represented to the wife of the high digni-
 tary, and goodness knows to how many more people be-
 sides, as an exceptional and gifted creature – a piece of good
 fortune for the Company – a man you don’t get hold of every
 day. Good heavens! and I was going to take charge of a two-
 penny-half-penny river-steamboat with a penny whistle at-
 tached! It appeared, however, I was also one of the Workers,

3 f. **dependency**: abhängiges Gebiet, Kolonie. | 9 **erroneous**: irrig,
 falsch. | 10 **exposure**: Aussetzung. | 11 **tropics**: die Tropen. | 13 **Du calme**
 (frz.): Ruhe. | 15 **triumphant**: triumphierend. | 17 **soothingly** (adv.):
 beruhigend. | 20 f. **dignitary**: Würdenträger. | 22 **gifted**: begabt.

with a capital – you know. Something like an emissary of light, something like a lower sort of apostle. There had been a lot of such rot let loose in print and talk just about that time, and the excellent woman, living right in the rush of all
5 that humbug, got carried off her feet. She talked about ‘weaning those ignorant millions from their horrid ways,’ till, upon my word, she made me quite uncomfortable. I ventured to hint that the Company was run for profit.

‘You forget, dear Charlie, that the labourer is worthy of
10 his hire,’ she said, brightly. It’s queer how out of touch with truth women are. They live in a world of their own, and there had never been anything like it, and never can be. It is too beautiful altogether, and if they were to set it up it
15 ed fact we men have been living contentedly with ever since the day of creation would start up and knock the whole thing over.

After this I got embraced, told to wear flannel, be sure to write often, and so on – and I left. In the street – I don’t
20 know why – a queer feeling came to me that I was an impostor. Odd thing that I, who used to clear out for any part of the world at twenty-four hours’ notice, with less thought than most men give to the crossing of a street, had a moment – I won’t say of hesitation, but of startled pause, be-
25 fore this commonplace affair. The best way I can explain it

1 **emissary**: Bote, Abgesandter. | 2 **apostle**: Apostel. | 3 **rot**: kompletter Blödsinn. | 5 **humbug**: Humbug, Unsinn. | 6 **to wean**: entwöhnen, abbringen (von). | **horrid**: entsetzlich. | 10 **hire**: Lohn. | 14 f. **to confound**: verwirren. | 18 **flannel**: Flanell. | 20 f. **impostor**: Betrüger. | 21 **to clear out**: davonmachen, verschwinden. | 24 **hesitation**: Zögern, Bedenken. | 25 **commonplace**: alltäglich.