

letter. The whole proceedings were fertile in that unintended humour which is the redeeming feature of modern popular government. By Christmas Eve, however, they had perforce come to an end; and I felt that I owed to them one of the keenest pleasures of life—the pleasure they caused me by their cessation. The day after Christmas Day I came up to London to collect some necessaries I had already ordered for my journey. If it had not been that I found myself thus occupied, I should hardly even yet have realised that I was on the point of starting. I dined out twice, I went to the theatre once. Everything happened in such a natural and habitual way that it seemed as if it would go on happening so indefinitely; and I felt as if I were dreaming, rather than as if I were awake, when, on the fourth evening, somewhere about eight o'clock, I found myself muffled on the platform at Charing Cross, with the curves of the huge roof glimmering dimly in the gaslight, and a wind, which seemed like a message from foreign seas, sweeping in through the open arch at the end, along the chimneys of the dark Continental train.

Five minutes later I was drifting out into the night, and my thoughts dwelt regretfully on a room not yet two miles away from me, where a pear half eaten was still perhaps lying on a dessert plate, with a glass half full, as if waiting for me to return to them; and on another room, where a bed which I should not sleep in was still tumbled with the last disorders of packing.