

visit ; they were too far parted now ; and there was no flavour after all in the long-anticipated *Do you remember ?*

It does not ease the burden of the past to share its recollections ; for with each plunge into it, each withdrawal, something is left behind that weighs more heavily than the memory ; something that can never be shared or imparted—a sense of accumulating unease, surprise and contrast, of going alone, in unsuspected isolation, on one's way ; and worse, a comfortless suggestion that the way—life, in fact—is without continuity. Is it possible to look back from the present as if one watched the reel of a moving picture wound smoothly the reverse way from its close : to say, that time and that hour brought one inevitably, with only apparent deviation, to this hour, this place ? No, as one rushes headlong, flying with Time, portions of life split off and float away, one little world after another ; and looking back, one sees them behind one as stars and constellations. Old burning pieces of experience shine now from their fixed places with unimpassioned ray ; perhaps that fragment torn apart with cruellest wrench and most shattering concussion now hangs there, close indeed, but cold, all fires extinct, like that dead star the moon. And between these little lights lies trackless darkness : chaos and old night close up on one's heels, swallow the path for ever.

Yet, though one never can recapture, turn in one's

course and revisit, there come now and then—at a sound, a scent, a word—intimations from the past ; live threads waver out, throwing feelers after hints of affinity. Misgiving comes, bewilderment, hope, surmise—a host of witnesses, striving to shape the spiritual shape of what has been ; till it seems in a moment all will be linked, gathered up into unity and purpose.

And if memory had lost its savour, thought Norah, it had also lost its sting. It was through Clare that she had first met Jimmy : they could both recall the time when he had been the chief part of her daily life ; and, trying his name aloud in the ears of another for the first time in a decade, she had felt the easing of a secret strain. It was easier than she had feared. Somehow, because Clare knew he had once been so violently an individual, so fiercely a factor in reality, it was less hard, in her company, to think of him from a great distance, almost as a symbol now for first love, first grief.

It is true that we grow older, as Clare said ; we can mark the very day when we cease to suffer vain longing to torment us ; and then the thorny companionship of youth is at an end. It might be, thought Norah, that with the return of Clare, this