

OVERLOOKED

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Overlooked by Maurice Baring

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MAURICE BARING

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By

Maurice Baring

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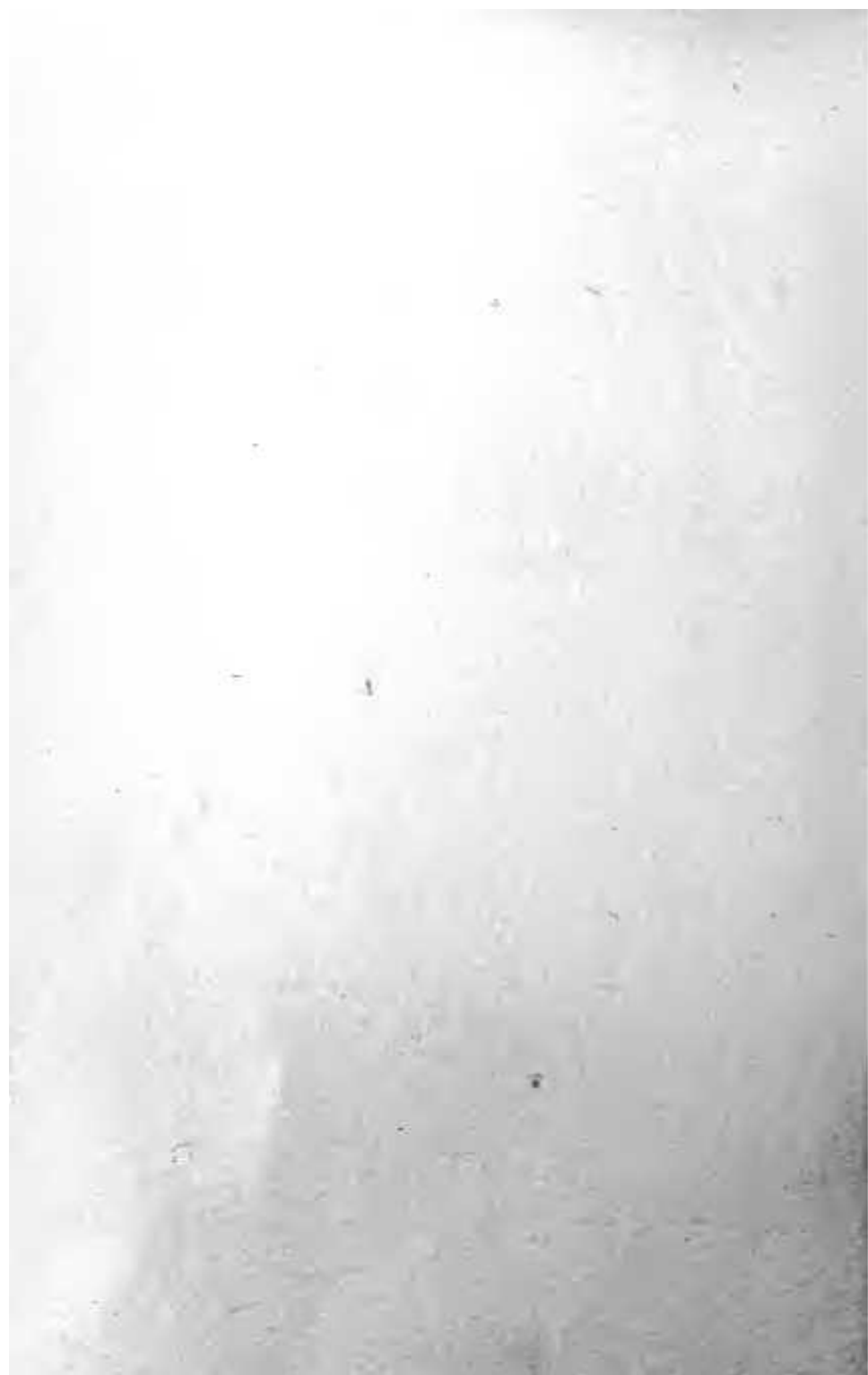
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PART I

THE PAPERS OF ANTHONY KAY

CHAPTER I

WHEN my old friend and trusted adviser, Doctor Kennaway, told me that I must go to Haréville and stay there a month or, still better, two months, I asked him what I could possibly do there. The only possible pastime at a watering-place is to watch. A blind man is debarred from that pastime.

He said to me : " Why don't you write a novel ? "

I said that I had never written anything in my life. He then said that a famous editor, of the *Figaro*, I think, had once said that every man had one newspaper article in him. Novel could be substituted for newspaper article. I objected that, although I found writing on my typewriter a soothing

occupation, I had always been given to understand by authors that correcting proofs was the only real fun in writing a book. I was debarred from that. We talked of other things and I thought no more about this till after I had been at Haréville a week.

When I arrived there, although the season had scarcely begun, I made acquaintances more rapidly than I had expected, and most of my time was taken up in idle conversation.

After I had been drinking the waters for a week, I made the acquaintance of James Rudd, the novelist. I had never met him before. I have, indeed, rarely met a novelist. When I have done so they have either been elderly ladies who specialized in the life of the Quartier-Latin, or country gentlemen who kept out all romance from their general conversation, which they confined to the crops and the misdeeds of the Government.

James Rudd did not certainly belong to either of these categories. He was passionately interested in his own business. He did not seem in the least inclined to talk about anything else. He took for granted I had read all his works. I think he supposed that even the blind could hardly have failed to do

that. Some of his works have been read to me. I did not like to put it in this way, lest he should think I was calling attention to the absence of his books in the series which have been transcribed in the Braille language. But he was evidently satisfied that I knew his work. I enjoyed the books of his which were read to me, but then, I enjoy any novel. I did not tell him that. I let him take for granted that I had taken for granted all there was to be taken for granted. I imagine him to wear a faded Venetian-red tie, a low collar, and loose blue clothes (I shall find out whether this is true later), to be a non-smoker—I am, in fact, sure of that—a practical teetotaler, not without a nice discrimination based on the imagination rather than on experience, of French vintage wines, and a fine appreciation of all the arts. He is certainly not young, and I think rather weary, but still passionately interested in the only thing which he thinks worthy of any interest. I found him an entertaining companion, easy and stimulating. He had been sent to Haréville by Kennaway, which gave us a link. Kennaway had told him to leave off writing novels for five weeks if he possibly