

THE SECRET PLACES OF THE HEART

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The Secret Places of the Heart by H. G. Wells

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H. G. WELLS

**THE SECRET PLACES
OF THE HEART**

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The Secret Places of the Heart

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
1. THE CONSULTATION	1
2. LADY HARDY	24
3. THE DEPARTURE	29
4. AT MAIDENHEAD	46
5. IN THE LAND OF THE FORGOTTEN PEOPLES	108
6. THE ENCOUNTER AT STONEHENGE . . .	137
7. COMPANIONSHIP	187
8. FULL MOON	240
9. THE LAST DAYS OF SIR RICHMOND HARDY	283



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CHAPTER THE FIRST

THE CONSULTATION

§ 1

THE maid was a young woman of great natural calmness; she was accustomed to let in visitors who had this air of being annoyed and finding one umbrella too numerous for them. It mattered nothing to her that the gentleman was asking for Dr. Martineau as if he was asking for something with an unpleasant taste. Almost imperceptibly she relieved him of his umbrella and juggled his hat and coat on to a massive mahogany stand. "What name, Sir?" she asked, holding open the door of the consulting room.

"Hardy," said the gentleman, and then yielding it reluctantly with its distasteful three-year-old honour, "Sir Richmond Hardy."

The door closed softly behind him and he found himself in undivided possession of the

The Secret Places of the Heart

large indifferent apartment in which the nervous and mental troubles of the outer world eddied for a time on their way to the distinguished specialist. A bowl of daffodils, a handsome bookcase containing bound Victorian magazines and antiquated medical works, some paintings of Scotch scenery, three big armchairs, a buhl clock, and a bronze Dancing Faun, by their want of any collective idea enhanced rather than mitigated the promiscuous disregard of the room. He drifted to the midmost of the three windows and stared out despondently at Harley Street.

For a minute or so he remained as still and limp as an empty jacket on its peg, and then a gust of irritation stirred him.

"Damned fool I was to come here," he said. . . . "*Damned* fool!

"Rush out of the place? . . ."

"I've given my name. . . ."

He heard the door behind him open and for a moment pretended not to hear. Then he turned round. "I don't see what you can do for me," he said.

"I'm sure *I* don't," said the doctor. "People come here and talk."

There was something reassuringly inaggressive about the figure that confronted Sir Richmond. Dr. Martineau's height wanted at